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of

OBEDIENCE

WILLARD AND MARGUERITE

B E E C H E R



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**SIN**  
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WILLARD AND MARGUERITE  
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THIS BOOK WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE EFFORTS  
AND DEDICATION OF CHARLES DEFANTI

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND THE FOUNDATION

The late Willard and Marguerite Beecher were trained for their work in the field of human relationships by the late Dr. Alfred Adler, founder of Individual Psychology. They taught, lectured, and served as clinical psychologists and consultants for more than 30 years. The Beechers co-directed their own counselling service in New York City, specializing in parent-child guidance, adult counselling, group discussions, and personnel consultation work for several business firms. They also lectured to a variety of psychological, religious, social, and educational organizations.

The Willard & Marguerite Beecher Foundation is a non-profit organization formed with the Beechers' knowledge and approval. It is operated exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes by furthering, through clinical study, laboratory research, publication, and teaching, the knowledge in the principles of Willard and Marguerite Beecher as exemplified in their books and writings.

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*PARENTS ON THE RUN*

*SIN OF OBEDIENCE*

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## **FOREWORD *by Marguerite Beecher***

This is a memorial book in honor of my late husband. The essays in this book, which he wrote, are based on both his published and his unpublished manuscripts. They were inspired by our study with the late Dr. Alfred Adler, founder of the school of Individual Psychology.

After we began our study of Individual Psychology, the first two books we read of Dr. Adler's were *What Life Should Mean to You* and *Understanding Human Nature*. These two books so expanded our horizons that we decided to search out other books that Adler or his disciples had written. Thus, our library about human behavior began to expand rapidly.

Dr. Adler used to encourage his students to learn what was being said or written in the field of human relations. In a seminar, he would say, for example: "Next week there is to be a lecture on Mental Hygiene at the Academy of Medicine and one of us will go to hear what is being said." And more than one always went!

As time went on, our library on human behavior, which already included the writings of Individual Psychologists, as well as those of Emerson, Thoreau, and Vaihinger (*The Philosophy of As-If*), began to include the writings of the Social Anthropologists such as Ruth Benedict and Margaret Meade and of the General Semanticists such as Alfred Korzybski and Stuart Chase. At the same time, we became involved with Eastern Philosophy, through the work of such people as Alan Watts and J. Krishnamurd, as well as with Economics, through such writers as Thorstein Vehlen.

The messages in these and other books we found helpful adjuncts in our work as Adlerian therapists and in our teaching, lectures, and writing. Some of the messages also influenced the essays in this memorial book.

***THIS BOOK WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE EFFORTS AND  
DEDICATION OF CHARLES DEFANTI.***

# PREFACE

Willard Beecher had the sublime knack of relieving people of their bad habits. Though he recognized that most of us will fight desperately to remain the way we are (“Habit never rests”), he understood that mistaken or painful behavior is the result of poor training. Willard's amazing skill was for showing people how and where they could find superior training and demolish “mistaken certainties” which needlessly limited their lives. To do so, he challenged most of our personal prejudices as well as those of Western Civilization.

Few people would more vigorously disclaim “disciples” than Willard, since he thought that followers of any sort too readily abdicate their self-reliance and initiative, and emotional dependence he regarded as the single (and perhaps the only) enemy of mental health. Nevertheless, there are living today several thousand people who feel they owe their emotional well-being and happiness to their fortuitous meeting with this extraordinary man (many divide their lives into the “pre-Willard” and “post-Willard” periods).

A diminutive man, his large nose and ears, together with the totally bald head of his later life, combined to give Willard a fairly elfin appearance. Yet, from the moment he stood before you, ramrod straight and impeccable through even his eighth decade, you felt you had finally found someone who knew the riddle of life. His splendid baritone voice teased you out of your pretenses, divided motives, and self-delusions until you could giggle at them as he did. Though he felt that a tactless truth was always an assault, he never lied to us, since people always need awareness — which includes the truth — to meet reality head on. We were amused that though he claimed not to “understand” poetry, his speech was laced with more poetical phrases than we had ever heard. He was, legally, a therapist, but he had “clients,” never patients, since he knew your progress would be retarded if you allowed yourself the luxury of being a “sick” person. He broke other rules as well. He ignored “professional distance,” as clients past and present turned into friends, and as we became close to Willard and his beloved wife and partner, Marguerite, no doubt remained that they lived their philosophy, which grew out of their joint study with Dr. Alfred Adler, founder of Individual Psychology, and inspired them to establish and co-direct the Beecher Counselling Service.

Finally, though Willard was not afraid of death, he often said to us: “I sure hope there's a hole in the curtain on the other side so I can peek through — it's all so damned interesting here.” As our final tribute to Willard, we recognized our obligation to stand independently of him. A month after his death, many of his friends met for a joyous celebration of him. The merry eye behind the curtain was with us. I think.

*Charles DeFanti*

# 1 / *The Sin of Obedience*

The most common mistake found in human behavior is obedience. Unfortunately, it is often considered a virtue and many parents, employers, teachers, and supervisors strive to train individuals to be obedient. But, as a goal in itself, it has dangerous consequences and we must strive to uproot it wherever we find it; whether in ourselves or others.

Obedience is, in fact, a feeble-minded child of fear, a form of abject dependence on others. An obedient person is no more than a physical extension of the will of another: he is a mindless automaton and therefore a most dangerous entity. A man without his own sense of authority, the obedient person is freely exploited by others for evil purposes as well as good. No one in fact, has the *right* to be obedient, since life demands that each of us be squarely responsible for his or her acts.

The final authority for our actions must come from the confronting situation. Mankind, like other species, is constantly pressed by necessity. But looking to authority figures or leaders to answer our needs has always proven to be folly. A famous labor leader once said, "If I could lead my constituents into the Promised Land, I would not do so, because if I could lead them in, then someone else could lead them out again." We must be guided by something more basic than human leadership. Only the basic demands of the situation are reliable leaders and guides. We are not safe as individuals as long as the need is not fulfilled. We must stand on our own convictions of where the need exists and no one must be permitted to lead us away from it.

An obedient person, however, behaves like a child who must lean on an authority figure for support. He is willing to accept no responsibility for himself or others. He is merely a tool which other people can use for good or evil. Cooperation for him is impossible; obedience is his only option. He makes the authority figure responsible for his welfare. When things go well, he praises and when things go badly, he blames the one who controls him. Note that he *never* blames himself. He has surrendered his own internal authority so that he can be free of personal responsibility as he is free to hold others responsible when things go badly. He uses his authority figure as a crutch in the expectation that he will be carried toward success on the efforts of the leader he obeys.

It is not often recognized that DISOBEDIENCE is in fact a form of obedience. Most people mistakenly believe that disobedient people are really *not* obeying. In reality, however, the disobedience is obedience in reverse: all "negativism" is reverse obedience. When the stubborn person is told to move forward, he halts or moves backwards. Nonetheless, he is responding to the command of the authority figure rather than acting on his own will. He does not choose his course of action since his motivation was supplied by another. He is not, therefore, responding to the needs of the

situation so he does not act from his own authority.

This negative obedience wastes incalculable amounts of human energy. Once the rebellious person surmises what is expected of him, conditioned reflex thrusts him immediately into reverse. He exerts a force equal and opposite to any expectation we have of him. The negative child is restless in school or church where the situation demands silence; but he sits like a zombie at a party where he should be dancing or socializing. He is invariably late when he should be early and early when he should be late. He expresses his supine obedience by always obstructing the will of a group or an authority figure. On no occasion does he have any mind of his own.

We are constantly amazed at the number of such people who sabotage themselves even when it would appear to be much to their advantage to cooperate with their environment. But they are the victims of conditioned responses and are obliged to obey in reverse and not participate. As obedient beings, they have no choice, for they have abdicated their free will by being obedient.

It is likely that most of the ills of this world are the direct result of these two kinds of obedience. Emulation and competition are two of the abject symptoms of the disease. Many people will bankrupt themselves to buy things they never thought of until the next door neighbor buys them. Others will avoid parties if they can't be seen in the very latest styles. This is the tragedy of positive obedience (here called "imitation"). Two imitative individuals are in fact working for each other, but without salaries. Clearly, all involved in such an arrangement are impoverished. The Joneses whom we are keeping up with become the boss.

The most tragic form of negative obedience is juvenile delinquency. Most people have never recognized that the so-called "delinquent" is tied hand and foot by obedience. His behavior is mostly negative feedback to authorities upon whom he is totally dependent. The delinquent, however, cannot escape from his subservient situation because he devoutly believes that he functions on his own initiative. His pride renders him totally blind to his own enslavement. His obsessive need to oppose "the establishment" often causes him to describe himself as "born to lose." Often he will tattoo this motto on his chest.

A delinquent would not care to disobey the authority of his gang. The code and ethics of gang behavior are absolute in his mind. He takes pride in obeying their slightest shade of whim or control. His dependence on gang opinion is both his sword and his compass. Whether he is a leader or a follower in the gang, he is firmly bound by the law of this code. His status and security hinge on obedience as he is willing to lose his life rather than obey. He may not allow himself to like anyone who is outside the gang even if that person is friendly to him. All outsiders must be regarded as enemies and opposed (i.e., negatively obeyed) automatically on this basis.

Individuals caught in this negative obedience are trapped in the mistaken certainty that they are strong-minded individuals who think and act quite independently. Accordingly, neither kindness nor severity serves to alter their behavior. And nothing may ever change unless we explode this mistaken conviction about their independence. The only thing we may do is to show them the pattern of their own activities: they have nothing whatever to say about their own behavior, which is determined by the authority either of the gang or those outside the gang. We have found that if we act as a mirror of this kind, it frequently produces a flash of insight which shocks them dramatically. An alcoholic man who drank obsessively attended a clinic, where he complained mostly against his stepfather for whom he worked and of whom he was very jealous. He opposed this man whenever he could and was hostile to his mother because she loved her second husband. The therapist recognized this negative obedience and asked the patient, "Why are you so obedient to your stepfather?" The man screamed in fury: "I never did anything for *him* in my life!" The therapist then demonstrated to him how he toiled endlessly to oppose his stepfather and suggested that the patient send the man a bill for all those hours of labor. The insight that he was laboring free (if negatively) for his stepfather dealt a staggering blow to this man. His fury lasted for several days. But every time he found himself opposing the stepfather, he got angrier still because now he realized the true extent of his obedience. It was only a matter of weeks, however, before he was able to think in earnest for himself and not be positively or negatively obedient to anyone.

How, then, does an emotionally mature individual orient his behavior if he is to avoid obedience? Also, how many men cooperate if they do not follow a leader? These questions pose no problem for people who have their own authority. When a group of such individuals begin to work together, each consciously delegates his authority to the coordinator or leader just as long as the latter leads them in a direction compatible with the accomplishment of the *basic needs of the situation*, which determine what must be done by the group. The individuals are in general agreement with the basic objective and have their inner consent to strive for its accomplishment. They function together as equals to achieve mutual security and in doing so cooperate with rather than obey their leader.

Cooperation, therefore, is the OPPOSITE of obedience, which is activity by individuals who refuse to take responsibility for what they do at the command of another. Cooperation is activity shared among co-workers, each of whom has his own inner consent for what he does. Obedience is infantile whereas cooperation characterizes the behavior of emotionally mature individuals.

We ought not close the subject of obedience without noticing the blame heaped on leaders by followers who do not get what they want from them. Followers do not follow for nothing; they expect the leader to enrich them for their devotion. If he fails to



do so, he is held responsible for the failure, as was Mussolini after Italy's defeat in World War II.

The mature individual chooses his course of action with full awareness that he may also make mistakes. If things go wrong, he blames no one but himself for his own bad choice. But the obedient person empowers the leader to make choices and then punishes (blames) him for the failure. It is fashionable to blame parents if we are not successful as adults. Whole schools of psychology are based on accusing parents wherever an individual is off the proper course. Unfortunately, many use this blame as an excuse to remain unproductive and obstructive. They use this as additional motivation to avoid developing a mind of their own. But those who go through life trying to pass off servile obedience as if it were responsibility or cooperation merely indulge themselves in persisting infantilism in order to get a free ride in life. They wish to go from infancy to senility without bothering to achieve maturity. As obedient slaves they can blame others when things go badly. They try to feel secure by hiding behind others. The tragedy here is that reality inevitably breaks through such dishonesty and everyone must eventually pay for the damage caused by his own irresponsibility, no matter how hard he tries to excuse it as being the fault of others.

No adult has the moral right to remain obedient; obedience is for children, those who are justifiably immature. Nature excuses dependency in children; but it is unforgiving of anything but self-reliance in adults.

## 2 / *Understanding Anger*

No specific emotion may be understood unless we first recognize the role or purpose emotions play in our lives. Emotions are not things in themselves which have a will of their own and the power to make us do things contrary to our own purposes. They are never *causes* of anything we do, though people like to believe they are. Emotion is, in fact, only steam we generate to give us the energy to do something we have intended to do anyhow; emotion is the percussion cap that propels us faster to our target.

Emotion is never “caused” by anyone or anything outside ourselves. Thus, no person is ever the victim of his or her emotions nor is he powerless to control them. As their sole creator, each individual fashions his emotions to suit his purposes, whatever that may be at any given time. Thus, no one around us has the power to make us either sad or happy; amazing as it may seem, each of us is just as happy as he or she intends to be! Whatever we are doing at the moment is what we intend to do, even though we are often more than willing to disclaim responsibility for our behavior. We invent a convenient split in our personality (the Good-I at war with the Bad-Me) as a cop-out for avoiding full responsibility for what we do. Invariably, we blame the Bad-Me for our hostile actions.

Nonetheless, emotions are never more than fuel or steam to move us either toward or away from confronting situations. Emotions then have either a conjunctive or a disjunctive effect on us depending on our evaluation of the target, for the nervous system cannot be activated without a clear directive — and it responds only to “yes” or “no”; “yes-but” does not work. You can't tell the body to stand up and sit down at the same time. The intellect, dealing with phenomena at the level of words, can conjure up such concepts as “friendly competition;” but the nervous system is unable to respond to such “nonsense” directions. “Friendly” is a “moving-toward” word, while “competition” is a “fight-against” term. Clearly, you can't advance or withdraw simultaneously. You either compete or you avoid competing. At the level of *action* contradictory movements do not take place. And NO ONE ENJOYS LOSING. This explains why we must examine the action-level at all times to see what kind of emotion we are creating to give us steam and what use we are making of this energy.

As often as not, we find people's mouths proclaiming one thing while their feet are doing something quite the opposite. Emerson once said, “I can't hear what you are saying for what you are doing.” What happens is inevitably what we intend to happen, not what we declare our intentions to be. With this fact in mind, what then is the purpose of anger?

Anger manifests itself in two ways; actively and passively. But it is invariably an explosion aimed at another person in an attempt to intimidate or subordinate him in

order to gain an advantage for the one experiencing the anger. Its ultimate goal is to work the energy to kill if necessary the one who threatens us or frustrates our movement toward our goal. No animal, including man, fights except when he is afraid. Thus, any frustration or our movement toward a goal releases anger to dynamite the obstruction blocking our path. As a protective measure, anger is always supported by a feeling of self-righteousness which we create to justify releasing our fury full blast. The two emotions fortify each other.

In real life, however, not many opportunities turn up where we may release our anger without fear of retaliation. There is always an enemy or villain perceived where there is anger. So we cautiously temper our anger according to our estimate of his or her ability to pay us back in kind. Doing so guarantees us that there is no such thing as an “ungovernable temper.” Though we are bullies at heart, we pick only weaker victims for our open anger. More often, we must choose covert anger as the safer expression of our rages. But this safety is an illusion; oblique hostility is fully as disjunctive and dangerous as open anger even though we manage to plough under its manifestations.

Two very remarkable examples of ploughed-under rage are apathy and depression. With these, we swallow our spit, which then poisons us and we use the resulting illness to sabotage and disrupt our enemies. Unfortunately, we thus spoil the game not only for others but for ourselves. In fact, all terms such as “disappointment,” “sadness,” “blues,” “disenchantment,” etc. point to degrees of repressed rage. Our purpose in experiencing them is to punish by sabotage those who offend us. Such hidden anger is the root cause of ulcers, colitis, migraine headaches, and every kind of psychosomatic illness. Adler described these disturbances as “organ-jargon;” we use our organs to express the distress of the soul. Though our mouths assent to our moving forward, we lack our inner consent and our gut-level reaction is “NO!”

Anger is invariably an attempt to displace the responsibility for our behavior on someone else. It points the finger of blame at someone else. But note that while the hand is pointing, three other fingers point straight back, accusing the accuser! Anger stops, however, the moment we cease pointing and take full responsibility for any and all complaints. All complaints are, in fact, simply complaints about one's own character. **NO ONE HAS THE RIGHT TO MAKE THE OTHER PERSON OR THING RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OR HER OWN HAPPINESS OR WELFARE.** We can never feel let down unless we have been leaning upon. **THE ONLY CURE FOR ANGER IS TO INCREASE ONE'S OWN SELF-RELIANCE.** Once you are self-sufficient and no longer lean on anyone, you will have nothing to complain about and nothing whatsoever to be angry about.

We must also notice that there is no such thing as “self-blame” and “self-punishment.” No one is capable of hating himself. Apparent self-hate is merely an excuse to sabotage oneself with alcohol, drugs, and similar things as a result of self-

pity and the desire for revenge on an imaginary enemy — usually someone close to the self-saboteur. No one would sabotage himself on a desert island. The sufferer doesn't mind suffering in silence — just as long as everyone else knows about it!

### 3 / *Thoughts on Serenity*

Serenity is the condition of the mind when we have given up all demands and expectations of achieving rewards. We can have no desire for a goal or purpose, for objectives and ambitions are hostile to the spontaneous working of the mind.

The desire for rewards — aims, goals, ambitions, and expectations — bring fear. Desire itself automatically produces the fear of not achieving the desire. You cannot want a goal without becoming anxious about the goal's escaping you.

Fear is a biological mechanism which injects hormones and other substances into the blood in order to prepare you for either fight or flight. Muscles become tense and rigid as blood pressure is altered for combat. In this condition, the individual is unable to act in a spontaneous, free, and natural way. In the state of serenity, the mind is like a bowl filled to the brim with water. In its fluid state, it is in perfect condition to deal with confronting problems. This is the natural state of the mind, free of the tension of desire, with which all activity is performed without conscious effort or strain.

But any yearning after a goal, purpose, or reward instantly introduces fear, as spontaneity vanishes and the mind freezes along with the muscles. In this rigid condition, we are ruled by anxiety as we begin to control, manipulate, evade, distort, and otherwise substitute guilt in the place of spontaneous action.

It is essential to our welfare, however, that the mind be serene at all times. We may keep it that way by letting go of goals, ambitions, aims, the desire for recognition, and similar distracting impulses. If we can “let go and walk on,” effectively achieving a state of *non-attachment* in which we are non-demanding, non-expecting, we can experience spontaneity and allow things to happen. Thus we meet all confronting situations in a State of Democracy, wherein we let things happen by themselves and we experience movement from within ourselves. Once we have let go of the unfortunate habit of wishful thinking, serenity takes over, automatically dealing with the problems of the movement.

Our *aim*, however, must not be “to achieve serenity,” for we become tense once we have any goal at all. We must simply be *constantly aware* of wishful thinking, aims, ambitions, desire for recognition, goals, and similar pit-*Ms* which attach us to any goal or object. When we become accustomed to noticing our grasping habits of mind and how those build up fear, then we are free to “let go and walk on” in a state of serene discovery. When we let things happen, there is an end to violence — the violence of ambition, desire, and grasping for things or recognition.

## 4 / Democracy

The word “democracy” turns up in the writing and speech of people throughout the world whenever present and future events are discussed. They feel either that there is too much of it or too little, but no one seems wholly indifferent to the concept.

Serious confusion exists about the meaning of this word. Crusades are organized for the preservation and extension of it although people fail to understand its provisions. No common purpose can be achieved, however, without a common understanding between those who strive. Unfortunately, there seem to be as many different interpretations attached to the word “democracy” as there are people who hear and use it.

An unfortunate defect of language is that words can often obscure situations as much as they clarify them. When we become aware that a symbolic device like “democracy” has acquired too many meanings, the best remedy is to abandon the purely verbal level of definition (i.e., explaining the meaning of words with other words) and try to approach the non-verbal situation for which the symbol stands. We must try to describe *what happens* at the non-verbal level of action itself — *in terms of Junction*.

To understand the function of Democracy, we must go back many years in the history of human relationships and view the manner in which people related to each other and how things have changed. When the curtain rose on recorded civilization, men were living in groups as they do today. All groups had patterned arrangements called social organizations. During the period of settling down, one or several men gained a position of personal power and dominance for themselves from which they could command the actions of the majority of men. These dominant figures were called masters, kings, chieftains, etc., while the subservient group was called followers, servants, slaves, fellahs, and so on. This manner of relationship is now known by us as the Master-Slave or Dominance-Submission kind of social organization.

Almost without exception, there was a great disparity between the advantages each group derived from this relationship. All advantages went to those with power, and most disadvantages to those allowed only to serve. Although the subordinates were made to believe that they enjoyed their particular “security,” there was no notion that some kind of human relationship could be formed that would tend to distribute both the advantages and the disadvantages more equitably. If a fight developed between the dominant and the submissive and the latter won, the result was merely a transfer of power from one group to the other. At no time was there the pretense of diminishing the distance between top-dog and underdog, or to give up the exploitation of the many by the few.

But as conditions for the human race changed, the power relationships were altered.

As mankind strove for more security and ability, technology, including arms, gunpowder, boats, steam, and electricity, put power into the hands of more and more people. It became more difficult for one or even a few to exercise the same degree of personal domination over the masses as in the past. History is a description of countless large and small revolutions fought to diminish the power and advantage held by any minority over the majority. As the power of one group grew less absolute, the powers of the others advanced and with them the personal advantages enjoyed by all. Accordingly, the Ruler was obliged to become more responsible for his actions since he had to share a larger portion of the disadvantages of his subjects.

In spite of these shifts in authority and power, there was no change in the opinion that there must always be some who rule and others who are ruled. It was still assumed that certain people were, *de jure* or *de facto*, destined to command others. This basic assumption about power and superiority was not challenged even as a concept until as recently as the American and French Revolutions. Only then did there begin to emerge the general opinion that government should be by agreement of the governed, i.e., that final authority should rest in the hands of the many rather than in the will of the few.

Thereafter, a few countries developed governmental forms which permitted each citizen to have a part in making the laws of the land. It was decreed that all men were "equal" before the law and at the polls, and *political* equality was almost achieved. But men had lived since the infancy of the human race with customs which permitted great disparity in social and economic privileges. They were so accustomed to these inequities that they believed them irremediable. As a result, even in the so-called "Democracies," men did not use their political equality to remove the inequalities in social and financial status which they had inherited from the past. Exploitation of the majority by a smaller minority went merrily on its way. "Equality before the law" did not mean that the laws were framed to achieve equality of privilege and a common bond of responsibility for all, for mutual good.

Ruth Benedict states in her book, *Patterns of Culture*, that "no man ever looks on the world with pristine eyes. He sees it edited by a definite set of customs and institutions and ways of thinking. Even in his philosophical probings, he cannot go behind these stereotypes; his very concepts of the true and the false will have reference to his particular customs." Thus, men have not used political equality to remedy the social and financial inequalities inherited from the past. We are blinded by custom and oblivious to the obvious. Certain religions have admonished us to bear one another's burdens, and great teachers have insisted that our common situation can only be improved as we eliminate exploitation and competition for personal superiority.

Thus, we have been consistently urged to train ourselves in a new manner of relationships. Words such as Equality, Fraternity, and Democracy were adopted to describe thoughts and strivings in this direction, but the customs of the old pattern of

Dominance and Submission still remain to be replaced, hopefully, sometime in the future. It is folly to pretend that we have come to the place where we want Fair Play, Democracy, Fraternity, or Equality if we mean by those terms that we must give up the struggle for Special Privilege and the power to exploit weaker peoples.

There is no power on earth able to keep men from having what they want — if they truly want it. Psychologically speaking, Democracy is a way of regarding the rights and privileges of the other fellow. It is a frame of mind in which a man realizes that his personal security and advantage depend on guaranteeing that all others are made secure. This is a very different mind-set from the one we habitually employ whereby each man believes his personal advancement can be accomplished only if he deprives another. Perhaps no one understood this better than Adler when he invented the concept of Social Interest. He never lost sight of the problems of Superiority/Inferiority, since Individual Psychology is a philosophy aimed at those who have made mistakes about ideas of power and dominance so that they may find the path toward mutuality.

Those inclined to exploit and exclude others tend to point out that people are not born “equal” and that democracy is therefore impossible. What they mean is that we are not alike in all respects: we have the same fundamental needs and are injured by the same poisons or guns. The fact that some are more gifted in one respect or another is an advantage to all when *share and share alike for the common good* is the social goal; the community is enriched by the differences. All contributions, different as they may be, are necessary. Insofar as each man gives his best, all make an equal contribution. When all men gain the inner consent to dedicate their best to the commonwealth, democracy will be realized.

Nonetheless, men still want personal success rather than equality and mutual gain. The prizes of civilization are still delivered to the swift and strong. Predatory power is glorified and rewarded, and envied and emulated, even by children. We cannot hope that children will train themselves for non-predatory pursuits while this situation remains. Certainly we cannot hope that democracy will grow where only the strong are rewarded.

Psychological, economic, or social or any other form of democracy cannot hope to establish themselves against the implacable force of Custom. But customs change when they can no longer function. The spread of technology has always rotted the hold of autocratic, irresponsible, specially privileged groups. Customs and mores die, to be replaced by others more in tune with transformed situations. At present, many human beings find themselves living not amid chronic scarcities and famines but potential abundance for all.

This last fact alone brings hope for the achievement of social and economic equality. When men try to distribute the abundant products of machines by devices of distribution



which evolved in an age of scarcity, they fail. Panicked, they try to create artificial scarcities by unemployment, destruction of goods, wars, and so on. But all unsocial techniques of this kind must fail. In time, necessity will require the development of new means of distribution appropriate to abundance rather than scarcity. One day, everyone will be more adequately fed, housed, clothed, and educated if for no better reason than to keep the machines running.

When this happens, the old pattern of dominance and submission, will give way. Men desire to dominate only in the hope of keeping other men hungry, while the latter are obsequious only because they desire food. As soon as the disease of physical want is relieved by abundance, the prizes will no longer fall to the swift and strong; they will be given to those who are helpful and cooperative. All will become helpful and cooperative since no one will be able to improve his lot by aggression and exploitation.

Adler concludes his book, *What Life Should Mean To You*, with the statement that the human race has not begun to show its potentialities, since they can be developed only insofar as men can learn to reinforce the skills and abilities of one another through cooperation instead of curtailing them in competition and mutual sabotage by striving for personal gain at the expense of other people. Any social arrangements which permit dominance/submission relationships to flourish retard the development of the human race. The richness of humanity blooms only when each man feels responsible for the welfare of all other men as well as for himself. Any other human relationship breeds irresponsibility and degenerates into exploitation of one by another.

We must, then, understand the word "Democracy" as referring to a form of living that we have not yet achieved on this earth, a situation which we can create as an antidote to the calamities of the present. Let it represent a scenario in which men cease seeking personal salvation and enrichment at the expense of others and discover the genuine benefits of mutual striving for mutual enrichment. Each man will give his best gift for the common good.

## ***5 / The Problem of the Twentieth Century***

Our common habits for living together were established long before machines began to do our work for us. Unfortunately, the way of life that suited men who survived by the work of their hands will not accommodate modern man, for whom machines have assumed most of the manual labor. We now live in an age of power, and the following discussion is an attempt to predict the development of the human race depending on how we use this power. Power is like a razor. It must be used wisely. We never give a razor to a baby; but some wry Fate has given the rather infantile human race limitless power faster than we have developed the wisdom to use it. Now we must grow up or perish: the choice is ours.

While the human race was still young, man had only his own muscles and a glint of practical experience to help him wrest food and shelter from this unwilling earth. Of all the animals inhabiting this ball of mud, few are so poorly prepared by nature for physical survival. Man evolved weak, hairless, clawless, and otherwise badly fitted for defending himself. Moreover, he endures a longer childhood than other animals, and must be as much as twenty years old before he can fend for himself. The only reason he has managed to survive has been his ability to join with his fellow creatures and divide the task of gaining security. Alone, he could only have perished.

In prehistoric days, man suffered a most frugal kind of existence. He was the ready prey of vicious animals, famine, and disease, while he had only his two hands to help him. But a series of lucky accidents brought him fire, tools, weapons, and other gadgets which mitigated his fate. He learned to domesticate and cultivate grains, and such rudimentary advances were passed on to succeeding generations as man moved along the path to conscious production of necessities. As he became more efficient at doing so, larger populations became possible and the human race spread over the face of the earth.

But human fecundity always outstripped the ability of mankind to provide the means of subsistence; scarcities always existed. Famine, disease, and wars waged to steal from other tribes suppressed the total population to a number that could be fed and supported on the amount of materials that could be produced by primitive means. But man slowly gained in his race against continuing disaster as discoveries multiplied, with each one making life easier for the group and consequently encouraging survival for ever-larger numbers.

Although man has existed on this earth for tens of millions of years, for only about five thousand has he been able to leave any written record of himself. Only the most rudimentary existence has been enjoyed by mankind for the vast bulk of its history, and some primitive civilizations never even discovered the use of metal, let alone

horsepower to make work lighter. As long as man relied only on his own hands, back, and domestic animals to furnish power, the race always tended to reproduce faster than its ability to develop subsistence and shelter. Periodic famine, wars, and pestilence would have had to compensate for the overpopulation that accrued during the tat years. Not until the last part of the Eighteenth Century with the invention of the steam engine did man get his first real chance to win the race against starvation. Though wind and water had harnessed inanimate power to some degree, steam was the first true technological breakthrough. For the first time in history, vast multiples of the productive power of man became a genuine possibility. Almost simultaneously, the Spinning Jenny and the power loom were invented. The Age of Abundance, in theory at least, was soon to be upon us and the lives of everyone in the world were about to be changed.

At the time the steam engine was invented, the peoples of the Western World had lived for many years in the Era of Handicrafts. The fireside was both the social and the industrial unit. Spinning, weaving, shoemaking, and other crafts were practiced mainly in the home. Master craftsmen taught their skills to their children who became the craftsmen of the following generation. Except for cities, which were seaports surviving by commerce, life was confined mostly to small villages which were virtually self-sufficient so that little communication took place between one community and the next.

Unemployment was virtually unknown, for all the members of each family unit had to work from dawn to dusk to provide enough for itself and the small surplus necessary to exchange for necessities it could not produce. There was little or no formal schooling for anyone, and children began to help their parents as soon as they were able to manipulate the simplest tools. After working their entire lives, old people retired to the fireside of their children and continued whatever tasks could be managed by their failing bodies. Almost everyone toiled at something throughout life, and still it was not possible to supply the needs of everyone.

The first dramatic changes in mankind's way of life were signalled by the invention of the Spinning Jenny, the power loom, and the steam engine. These devices and fireside production could not coexist and the home could no longer continue as the industrial unit of the community. People had to migrate to those spots where the new machines were located so the modern city began to develop around these concentrations of power and invention. Suddenly, the very old and the very young were out of jobs. The stability of the family life gave way under the uprooting influences of factories. As people went on the move, there came the end of the craftsman and the era of handicraft. People lost their roots in the community once they became hired hands instead of craftsmen.

One of the most lasting products of the age of handicraft was the viewpoint on private property or ownership that emerged during that period. These views remain with us today almost unchanged though we now live in the Age of Power. Endless

difficulties have resulted. When everything was made by hand, it seemed both natural and right that a man should own what he produced. This theory was described as the Natural Rights of Man, in which the craftsman was a godlike creator and his creations were his to dispose of as he saw fit.

The advent of the machine introduced a nonhuman factor into the picture that was once so simple. Now it was the machine that was the creator, not the man. To whom, then, did the product belong? Philosophically, this problem has never been answered, and it is the ghost at the banquet of potential abundance today. In practice the problem was solved easily enough: the man who owned the machines kept the product and gave the man a “wage.” As hired hands emerged, the craftsman who put his heart into his work soon passed out of existence during what we call the Industrial Revolution.

Early inventions were still mostly lucky accidents; not until later was the Age of Inventing Inventions. The Nineteenth Century was spent perfecting and spreading the usefulness of those inventions that inaugurated the Industrial Revolution and in expanding the commerce made possible by vastly increased production. But this proliferation of business created the Merchant Prince and later the Businessman.

In the earliest days, a single man or a few partners owned the means of production. They ran the factories and also handled the financial arrangements of their enterprise. In the sharp competition that developed, it became necessary for them to delegate the running of the factory to “experts” while they turned their entire attention to financial management. The ready surpluses piled up by the machine caused sharp fluctuations in prices that had to be watched. Thus, what we call the Profit System came into existence and it became the job of the businessman to watch only the net profit of his efforts. If production grew too fast, he had to stop production or slow it to the pace necessary to maximize net gains for himself.

Quite aside, but certainly not apart from all these swift developments, another tendency was growing almost unnoticed. This advance would have been impossible except for the efforts of an irreligious group of men who had no legitimate place in their own time — the scientists. Men had been satisfied to ascribe all phenomena to supernatural forces. Gods-kindly and gods-bilious “caused” both the good and bad events that befell mankind. For any change, men had to appeal to their gods through a priestcraft supported for just that purpose. However, after thousands of years, alchemists began to find the natural laws of matter while seeking ways to change base metal into gold. In time, alchemy evolved into science, which began to clear away the fog of supernatural mystery and illuminate dependable relationships that men could refer to, such as those in chemistry, physics, mechanics, electricity, medicine, and higher mathematics.

The habit of thinking in terms of scientific laws spread throughout the general

population. People were jolted when they realized that most diseases arose from micro-organisms rather than God's desire to punish them. Plagues and virulent diseases were conquered, and thousands lived who would have died in earlier generations.

Similarly, when men came to realize the potentialities of machines, they began to fashion many ways of relieving themselves of the slow, tedious manual processes of their fathers. Machines could produce more goods in a shorter time with less labor. Thus, people could not only live longer but in greater security. Man was on the path that would soon lead him to victory over Scarcity, the oldest enemy of the human race.

All of the above advances were made before the current century. But around 1900 came the most startling advance of all: the science of inventing inventions developed and techniques of modern research evolved. The amount of scientific information had grown and spread so widely that these principles were applied to all kinds of human needs. Each discovery made possible countless other discoveries and inventions multiplied with increasing rapidity. Where it took a hundred years for people to become accustomed to the impact of the steam engines and other early technologies, we of the Twentieth Century have had to adjust in fewer than fifty years to devices much more staggering to the imagination. Each invention has enormously magnified the power of each individual, even though our "morals" are still grounded in the Eighteenth Century. Fate has, indeed, placed a razor in the hands of a baby.

Now the Age of Abundance is upon us. Man need never again go hungry or cold unless he wishes to do so. Natural resources abound, machines necessary to convert them into goods exist, and men are trained to operate these machines. Furthermore, we can manufacture as many machines as we desire and we can train many more to run the machines, just as we can enrich the soil to produce abundant food and train people everywhere to do likewise. The whole world now has the capability to support itself free from want and almost free from disease.

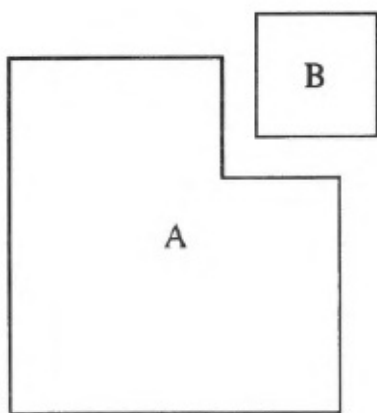
Nevertheless, many people today are still cold, hungry, and sick. It is far easier to invent an invention, unfortunately, than it is to change a habit of thought — especially if this habit is practically as old as the race. Men have lived so long with the fear of hunger and scarcity that they have no methods for surviving with abundance. In the past, when men starved, they did so because it was impossible for them to produce enough to eat. The Twentieth Century was the first, however, to see men cold, hungry, and idle in the midst of plenty! For the first twelve years of the Great Depression in the United States, there were stores of merchandise, fertile ground, natural resources, trained manpower, machines, and technical know-how, yet they all went unused. Why?

The problem was one of distribution. At the beginning of the Depression, no one could understand what had happened to the economy. Businessmen believed that the situation would right itself, but as years passed, it became evident that there existed a

fundamental sickness too severe to cure itself. Some people realized that the solution of the problem of production did not carry along with it the solution to the problem of distribution. Since, during the Age of Scarcities, there could never be enough goods to support all the population in any degree of security, it is not surprising that customs and habits grew up to determine how goods and services should be apportioned among themselves. Laws governing “Ownership” were formed to keep property in the hands of those who held property and to make it difficult for those who had none to get hold of goods and services.

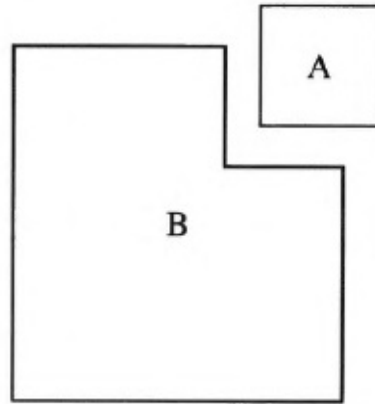
Since there was never enough for all, any increase for one person or group had to be made at the expense of others — there was no way to increase the total store of goods; someone had to produce things and also be obliged (by law and custom) to surrender more than his share to the few who controlled his production.

This, of course, was a workable arrangement during the Age of Chronic Scarcities, for it guaranteed the survival of a portion of the race in times of famine. Another benefit lay in the fact that this group was relieved of the heaviest burdens so that it could develop the arts and sciences in its leisure. Unfortunately, the majority had to suffer.



*Figure 1: Before — mankind learned how to invent inventions and run them by inanimate power, all the inhabitants of the world working to full capacity, could not produce enough to escape chronic SCARCITY.*

Group A worked to support B, and in times of extreme hardship (war, famine, etc. ) A (the masses) were sacrificed to preserve B (the elite who controlled production).



*Figure 2: After — mankind learned to invent inventions and run them with power taken from coal, oil, and waterpower. Now, a small fraction of the world (A) can produce enough goods for themselves and the remaining population of the world. Each year, as inventions improve, fewer workers are needed in production. Thus, the trend of modern civilization is toward unemployment.*

As commerce and industry grew, a price system was developed to simplify the distribution of goods and services. We now call this the Profit System, the basic idea of which was to give as little as possible for a maximum return. The ideal of Profit is, in fact, to get something for nothing and anything approximating this ideal is described as a “good bargain.”

Then, as now, our method of distributing was designed to produce goods at the smallest cost and charge whatever the market will bear. During the infancy of the industrial age, this tended to work, since it prevented people from trying to buy more than could be produced. But it also kept the majority of them in poverty while forcing them to keep producing at the greatest possible speed. It would not have been sensible in those days to allow the easy dissipation of goods, and the profit system effectively thwarted this danger.

Under the profit system, if more goods are produced than the amount that can be purchased by the total wages paid, a surplus will exist. This excess is called “overproduction,” although it bears no relation to the needs of men who are actually hungry: the Great Depression was said to have resulted from “overproduction,” despite the fact that some people were eating crusts from garbage cans. The ugly fact is that “overproduction” only means that we have produced more than can be sold at a profit to the owner.

Overproduction is the vicious by-product of machine age technology coupled with the price system. When goods were produced by hand, the time consumed making each article prevented overproduction of every kind. But as machines became more efficient, each could do the work of many men, but they never received in wages an amount equivalent to the increased production.

This was compensated, to some degree, by a fall in overall prices of goods. But

under the profit system, there was always a larger profit for the owner than for the worker; the old system was not modified as technology advanced. Moreover wages and employment opportunities actually shrank, because younger and older groups were no longer needed. And because wages and employment did not spread along with production, larger amounts of goods were produced than could be sold inside industrialized countries. The so-called “overproduction” was shipped to South America, Canada, China, and other countries which had no machines. In return, we received raw materials and useless gold, which we could accept without disturbing our something-for-nothing policy. But technology began to spread everywhere as many countries which supplied raw materials industrialized and began to •'overproduce- Everywhere businessmen made sure that the selling price remained far ahead of the cost of production, even though agricultural countries began to fabricate their own materials.

Contrary to popular opinion, the two World Wars were not fought to gain access to raw materials — they were fought to win and extend new dumping grounds for “overproduced” materials. No longer able to market our overproduction at home, we fought with other industrialized nations for the remnants of the world market.

Why have we been unable to utilize our *actual* production? At no time have we given our own citizens all the necessities of life, since there are millions who are still badly fed, clothed, housed, and doctored. Why not use our bounty to enrich the lives of those in need, especially the inhabitants of our country? Why were we unable to engage our unemployed to work on the unprocessed raw materials and machines which lay idle during the Great Depression? The reason is that our Profit System won't allow us to do so. As we have noted, our legal and cultural systems regarding goods and property were developed during an age of worldwide poverty. So long as scarcity continues, the system works splendidly. But when abundance begins to appear, the same system crumbles; it was never designed to deal with plentitude! The “businessman” who operates so successfully when wealth is scarce is hamstrung when Plenty abounds. He, however, has persisted thanks to a myth that still surrounds him — the superstition that *he* created the proliferation of goods that now surrounds us — and the businessman frequently believes this himself, although the facts do not bear him out. In fact, the engineer and the scientist made possible the techolony for production, while working people used these techniques to manufacture the goods. The businessman merely engineered the exploitation of their efforts for his personal profit – nothing more.

Engineers, ordinary workmen, and machines, undirected by businessmen and unhampered by the price system could produce most efficiently until the need for goods was satisfied. But the price system still exists, under the guardianship of the businessman. As production spirals to the point of overproduction (where profits are threatened), it is the job of the businessman to administer the proper amount of sabotage in the form of layoffs, slowdowns, and unemployment to maintain that degree of



scarcity necessary to the functioning of the price system. Though the profit system once aided the survival of the human race, it now obstructs any further spread of the benefits of technology. The price system and our antiquated notions about property combine to prevent us from living in a genuine Age of Abundance.

For example, at the beginning of the Great Depression, we killed little pigs, ploughed under corn, and dumped coffee into the ocean in order to *artificially* create scarcities and protect the profit system. With our present system, we simply cannot tolerate the thought of Plenty. We do not know how to live together if most of us are not at least partly cold, hungry, and sick.

How then did we get through the Great Depression? Actually, we did not get through it: we simply changed the businessmen at the top. Under the early New Deal, some of the surplus goods were distributed to the underlying population by a number of “unprofitable” means designed to rid the system of burdensome “overproduction” which existed. But the price system could not allow this dispersion to go on forever. The businessmen in high office were better able to administer their businesslike sabotage on a grander scale in order to create new scarcities. Whenever workingmen worked and wheels turned, abundance grew again and a new Depression loomed. The process was interrupted by World War II, since nothing is “overproduced” in wartime.

Clearly, solutions other than war were necessary. Businessmen joined together and agreed to limit competition by forming monopolies (or cartels) the principle function of which is to protect profit by keeping down production. Thus, a fraternity was formed for the single purpose of maintaining high prices by limiting production and wages. A cartel is, effectively, a private government which has no responsibility to any electorate; its life-blood is profit and only profit.

The advances offered by engineers and scientists are bought and utilized only if they serve to increase profits – otherwise they are shelved. Progress must be subordinated to profit or else there can be no progress. For this reason, monopoly has been an instrument opposing progress since all monopolies are designed to limit production. In truth, our biggest problem now is to distribute abundance, but cartels are determined to insure that the poor shall always be with us.

It is impossible to say when or if equitable distribution will be achieved. Certainly, no change is possible until people have changed their beliefs and habits and they seldom do so except in the face of great necessity. Can we expect to see such a radical alteration?

Strangely enough, our salvation will probably come through the profit system itself, though in a way no one would expect. The businessman is the custodian of the rites and practices of the price system and he is also the one who sits high in government circles to administer our common affairs. We may be sure, then, that he will have much to do

with bringing about any change. Since his basic function is the maintenance of the profit system and the accumulation of profits for himself, he becomes vulnerable when no further profit is possible. Such a time is rapidly approaching, and may even be here.

Fortunately for us all, the businessman himself does not serve any genuine purpose in the current era; the engineer and the scientist have become the indispensable men. Common necessity will force us to make and distribute goods whether or not businessmen make profits. Failing to earn money in his apparently dominant situation, he will turn over the problems of production to engineers and the task of distribution to anyone who will handle it. Most likely, this will be some government agency.

“Profits,” most likely, will then disappear. They come mostly from the underlying population and are always created at the expense of someone else. A truly fair exchange cannot involve any profit, since someone, somewhere, must take less than the actual value of his contribution. Thus far, the inequity has been arranged by law and custom so that the burden has fallen on the working classes, as wages are kept low and the number of employed is maintained at a minimum.

Since the total wages paid eventually become the sum of the buying power of the underlying population, this problem rapidly becomes worse after any war. Increased efficiency of machines developed during wartime shrinks the base of employment, driving more people out of work. These are fed from a relief or “welfare” fund which is charged to those who are employed, thus further reducing the latter's power to buy their own increased production. Moreover, they must pay for the war from their shrunken earnings by carrying an increased tax burden, leaving them with even less buying power. Added to this, they must support expanded armies and navies and pay disability pensions to veterans and shoulder other costs of bureaucracy left over from the war years.

In short, the buying power of wage earners steadily shrinks and they are unable to buy the products which they themselves produce. When sales fall off, the businessman will cut employment again and again and thus, the underlying population, which eventually must pay all costs, will, in fact, be unable to pay ANY costs! This group, upon which the businessman depends for this “free income,” will be bankrupt and no one will be left to whom the tariff can be passed. We can foresee the end of the price system – and of the businessman.

So far, we have experienced one major breakdown that threatened the whole price system. Before the Depression, “overproduction” had produced the spiral of unemployment we saw in the 1930's. As buying power failed, more unemployment resulted which further reduced buying power, producing more unemployment, and so on. By the time of the Bank Holiday, businessmen had given up all hope of stopping the decline and were prepared to surrender the machine to anyone who could make it work,

regardless of his methods. Not only could they not make profits any longer, they could not protect the profits left over from the past – capital too was slipping out of their hands. What the Bank Holiday did was to pour money in at the *bottom*, thus salvaging the *semblance* of a price system.

It is not unthinkable that worse depressions may come. Businessmen seem unable to function in peacetime situations, and if they were unable to make profits when world problems were fewer and less complex, they certainly are unable to unravel the chaos of the present day, especially while we have no wartime controls.

With the motivation of personal gain removed, the businessman becomes but another citizen of this world rather than a mystical being with arcane powers. Like the rest of us, he will have to seek direct means to gain a root-over his head and food to eat. His previous experience will be a handicap rather than a help; trained to think in terms of scarcity, he will experience especial difficulty in adjusting to the opposite approach.

Probably, the forthcoming economic breakdown will be handled on a worldwide rather than on a national basis. Only one thing is certain: the resulting system will have small resemblance to what exists now. The Battle of Production has been won, and the Battle of Distribution is in the making. It will begin with the abdication of the businessman and it will end only when methods have been found to distribute Abundance.

## 6 / *Idolatry*

Nothing is so permanently crippling as a mistaken certainty persistently clung to as if it were an essential truth. We are taught that we must learn and pursue “high ideals” and not settle for anything less than “the very best-as it is set forth to us. Unfortunately, since we are not encouraged to be critical of these elevated goals, they become the root of our dissatisfactions and maladaptations. We are presented with patterns that do not correspond to reality, and thus we are prevented from seeing and coping with the needs of confronting situations. The Ideal Picture in our imagination leads us to reject and deplore the actual possibilities of situations facing us.

The word “ideals” might more accurately be spelled “I-D-O-L-S,” since we treat them as the latter. We lean on, depend on, and pursue ideals in the same way we would seek to fulfill our wishes by placating or invoking the idol. Dependence on high ideals is, in fact, idolatry.

Though in the Bible God warned mankind against worshipping idols (things man created for himself to depend on), it is not made fully clear that dependence on such man-made gods focuses our attention outside ourselves and we expect salvation to come from these false gods. Thus, we are prevented from meeting the confronting situations of our life in a spontaneous and adequate way. Anyone who leans on ideals, dreams, and similar idols for solutions finds that he is enslaved and rigid in his attachments to them. He finds himself alienated, as if some giant magnet had pulled him out of the present scene and thrown him into the fictitious areas we call the past and the future. During such times, we are out of contact with reality.

The human nervous system is designed to respond to only one signal at a time. If it tries to answer to conflicting demands at the same time, it goes into a dither. No man can serve two masters; for human beings there are only two sources of authority or initiative — Self-Power and Other-Power. Any idol or idealized concept we invent is a kind of Other-Power to which we respond at the expense of our Self-Power. We establish idols in order to rid ourselves of Self-Power by shifting responsibility for our welfare outside ourselves.

By this trick, we make it seem that we just go along for the ride with outside authority. We become subservient, obedient, and compliant to our self-made idols and we place our words into their mouths. We imitate our original condition as infants when we were able to lean on parents and parent figures who seemed to us like gods when they offered support, comfort, and protection.

Of course, when we were children, our attachment and dependence on Other-Powers was inescapable, since we lacked the strength and judgment to activate our Self-Power. But as adults, we may not continue lifting other people's heads higher than our own. We

may not use idols to create artificial Father/Child relationships so that we can avoid the responsibility for managing our own affairs. We may not demand that “God,” or our Idols and Ideals guarantee our comfort and security as our parents did when we were children.

The logic of community living demands cooperation for survival, and cooperation is possible only between those who are able to stand alone and offer their own contributions. The community cannot survive if it grants adults the right to lean on Other-Power, because, in the final analysis, Other-Power is an illusion; there are only other people. Cooperation can take place only among equals, not between leaders and followers, masters and slaves, superiors and inferiors. Those who lean and depend can only enact poor parodies of the Parent-Child relationship. Participants in such illusory relationships behave as if they were caught in an endlessly revolving door, with each following the other, getting nowhere by their efforts.

Adler enjoyed the paradox, “Two is less than one.” He meant that in dependent relationships, participants do not form even one responsible unit. Each confirms the other's irresponsibility and adds to it his own, as long as he fosters the dependency. All Idols induce a subaltern state of mind! The individual who is tied to an Idol exists in a hypnotic trance induced by the imagined Other-Power that is presumably controlling him. To this Idol he abdicates his own initiative and spontaneity in order to become a non-entity able only to respond mechanically to the will of Other-Power.

Thus we can understand “alienation.” An alien is a person who no longer lives in his own land under his own laws. He now lives under Other-Power, which makes the laws, levies taxes, and sets rewards or penalties without consulting the alien. His welfare is manipulated as if he were a puppet of the Idol he has chosen as his master. He remains a man without a country just as long as he refuses to use his own Self-Power for his direction.

It is easy to see, then, how we can avoid growing up as free and responsible adults by continuing our infantile habits of dependence on Other-Power. We can invoke custom, tradition, ideals, and numerous other imaginary forces as the Other-Powers on which to lean. Thus, we substitute craven obedience for spontaneity and initiative. We cling to Outside Authority rather than take our stand as adult individuals, while we cling to the stance of irresponsible infants at an age when life demands that we function on our own.

When and if we learn to depend on Self-Power, our center of gravity comes within ourselves, and we find no difficulty in standing on our own feet. We are not thwarted when we wish to move about because we are not attached or tied to anything outside ourselves. But when we depend on Other-Power, our center of gravity moves to that force on which we depend. We remain constantly off balance and we fall to the ground

if Other-Power deserts us. The sobering fact is that NO ONE CAN FEEL LET DOWN IF HE HAS NOT BEEN LEANING UPON!

Nature punishes dependent creatures by allowing them to fall victim to those who are more independent and self-reliant. In the state of Nature, there is no such thing as “good” dependency (except for infants), and the old hen who doesn't want to look after herself is caught by the fox for his dinner. Each living creature has been endowed with the potential for self-reliance, but he will develop this faculty only from his daily living experience of meeting and confronting circumstances. But he will be led into slavery if he sets up idols and bows down to them. The Buddhist monk, Rinzai, believed we must destroy every trace of subservience to idols. He said, “If on your way you meet the Buddha, kill him ... O you disciples of the truth, make an effort to free yourselves from every object ... O you with eyes of moles, I say to you: No Buddha, No teaching, No discipline! What are you ceaselessly looking for in your neighbor's house? Don't you understand that you are putting a head higher than your own? What then is lacking to you in yourselves? That which you have at this moment does not differ from that of which the Buddha is made.”

## 7 / *What Is The Force That Heals?*

Only one force has the actual power to heal our mental, emotional, and social ills: that is Common Sense. This is because mental and emotional sufferings come about only when an individual or a community lacks common sense in some area that is vital to the welfare of the individuals within it. Heretofore, psychological healing has been regarded as a deep, mysterious, unfathomed process that can be worked only by a few trained and dedicated individuals who perform priestly rites for the salvation of those in need. The public at large has not known or even suspected the direct relationship between mental health and common sense. The two always exist in direct ratio to each other, so those who are defective in mental and emotional health suffer because they are not guided by or are defective in common sense. Any attempt at therapy that is devoid of common sense is quite useless and any therapy that helps does so because it somehow manages to mobilize this faculty. No matter how expensive, involved, long, and drawn out, direct or indirect the therapy may be, its effectiveness is directly proportionate to the amount of common sense it enables us to bring to the problem facing us.

Those enjoying robust mental and emotional health immediately see this relationship if it is pointed out to them, while those whose mental or emotional health is in jeopardy are repelled by the idea of any such correlation. The latter are fearful of being judged or tied to others by any common denominators, especially common sense. They seek special recognition and fear that their imagined power, value, or status may be lowered if they accept anything in common with those around them. They are fighting for special privilege and personal recognition and a private world of their own making. They are committed to the cult of personal superiority and personal aggrandizement. The game they play is “Big Me and Little You.”

But the vital role played in our daily lives by common sense may be understood immediately if we realize that *common sense is to our mental and emotional lives what our monetary system is to our commercial lives*. Any economy must have money with a stable value regardless of what part of the country it will be spent in. Thus, when anyone says something costs a dollar, each of us knows immediately how much that amount represents in terms of the hours of labor we must give to earn it and whether the object we wish to buy is worth that amount of labor to us.

By the same token, we could not exchange the ideas, emotions, and facts of our inner-lives with each other if we did not depend on common sense as the basis of exchange. Our language and our actions are like our money in that with it we can make judgments about ourselves regarding what we intend, hope for, or want. No communication could take place between individuals unless the majority of our words and actions had a

significance commonly understood by all among us. Accordingly, every breakdown in communications brings some degree of harm. The signs, signals, reports, messages, orders, requests, replies, and other forms of communication become the threads of the fabric we call “sense of community” or “common sense.” We dare not break a thread of it any more than the government can allow counterfeit money into circulation.

Though counterfeit money is a major danger to social well-being, the threat it poses is nowhere near as great as that of “counterfeit sense,” otherwise known as “private logic” or the absence of common sense. Alfred Adler was one of the first psychologists to point out the critical role played by the sense of community in the life of any individual, group, or nation. Speaking of psychotics, he observed that even during their childhood, they were noticeably “cold to common sense” and that the main feature of a psychosis is that common sense has been supplanted by Private Logic. The same is true, Adler added, of the neurotic, though to a lesser degree. Common sense demands the existence of Reality; the psychotic denies it completely, whereas the neurotic says “Yes ... but” to it. In other words, the neurotic denies that the claims of common sense are binding on him, but, unlike the psychotic, he admits the validity of such claims on all others.

Since common sense is the only certain cure for mistakes in human relationships and the yardstick of all mental health, we should make it the target of all our efforts and work relentlessly to challenge any falsifications or distortions of it. Human beings cannot survive financially in our world unless we maintain a mutually advantageous exchange of goods for goods (fellowship for fellowship); no one can endure a position of permanent inferiority any more than a merchant can continue in business if he loses money on every sale.

Any individual who is having serious difficulties in his mental, social, or emotional life has them because he is trying to solve problems in a way that is deficient in common sense; the Private Logic he is employing is anti-survival in its effect, since something is wrong with his sense of community. His previous life experience has provided him with a private logic that does not fulfill the needs of confronting situations. Thus, he becomes thwarted in his movements which now work at cross purposes with other people. He suffers the loss of support that comes whenever there is a breakdown in cooperation, a term which refers simply to the mutually productive exchange of goods for goods so that men may ensure their common survival within a community as they are intended to do.

The therapist must recognize the multitude of synonymous terms for common sense: social feeling, social interest, social awareness, the brotherhood of Man, the Golden Rule, Democracy, Fraternity, *sup specie aeternitatis*, and so on. With so many terms that describe the same basic force, it is not surprising if we have failed to understand that there is only one virtue – the sense of community. Nothing else can act as a



corrective for emotional, social, or mental problems in human beings. Thus, common sense is irresistible and operates on all levels of being. The farther an individual or community departs from it, the sooner they are driven back to it as an automatic corrective of their mistaken ways. Since Hitler's nonsense about Aryan Supremacy was part of his peculiar logic, it limited and distorted his personal expression so that most of his energy was spent hating and fighting everyone around him. His behavior was destined either to destroy him or to force him back to common sense once it became fruitless to lash out uselessly against the community. But when his entire nation adopted his lack of common sense, abdicating its collective sense of community along with him, then the rest of the world had to combine their sense of community to negate his error. "The mills of the gods grind slowly but they grind exceedingly fine," goes the old saying; the needs of community living act as a Law of Compensation that insists on repayment for injustices, just as a gun recoils when it is fired. The higher the waves are tossed by the wind, the deeper will be the valleys between them.

It is this impersonal Law of Mutuality that gives common sense its irresistible power either to correct us or to destroy us if it is lacking in us. Smaller violations of common sense are not overlooked any more than the larger ones; each encumbers us with a debt to be repaid. We might nibble food in secret, but we carry the resulting overweight where everyone can see it.

It has become fashionable in some quarters to scoff at common sense. We are urged to be "sophisticated" and avoid common sense as a stigmata of mediocrity. Any kind of matter-of-factness is often regarded as "square" or hopelessly middle-class. Being "sophisticated" usually means we must not bring the humanities into our deliberations. In fact, some psychologies have been built with an express effort to avoid "morals" as implied by our sense of community. But a man in a social vacuum would be without meaning or purpose. By the same token, any psychology not founded on a sense of community is a private language which will have no significance in our common lives. A fish has no awareness of the water in which he swims because he is so much a part of it; but he becomes dramatically aware as soon as he is removed from it or the water becomes polluted. Like the fish, we have a blind-spot to common sense until our violations become so flagrant that we are forced to recognize the sense of community when it strikes back at us. Examples of this are common whenever disaster strikes in a community. People who never associated with each other under ordinary circumstances suddenly join forces to preserve the community.

Common sense or sense of community is basic to any cooperation, so a person finds that the need for it follows him wherever he goes. Even in a mental hospital, the degree of it he possesses determines whether he is placed in a disturbed ward or a convalescent ward. Patients are in fact "graded" according to their ability to cooperate or show sense of community. A person is not placed in a mental hospital in the first

place unless he is judged seriously wanting in common sense. The whole process of testing sanity is called “reality testing,” which is, in essence, nothing more than comparing an individual's ideas and actions against common sense as it is generally defined in the environment.

Many customs, conventions, and habits may exist in our society, however, which are not in tact “common sense.” Sociologists speak of the “cultural lag” in every society; there are conventional kinds of behavior that might have been useful at one time but now simply impede the community. We must keep the same sharp watch on our conventions as we do on our dollar bills to see that neither are debased. We must not allow anything to dilute our common sense. We should distrust everything that passes unchallenged in the name of common sense, just as we examine our money.

What, then, is the acid test of common sense? It is whether any situation, custom, law, habit, or whatever encourages and provides for the *mutual welfare* of the whole race or whether it merely grants special privileges to some at the expense of others. Slavery, for example, was accepted here during the last century, during which time people found justification for it in Holy Writ, common practice, and countless other ways. But no one could ever square it with common sense; no free man would ever agree to sell himself or his family into slavery, since this institution lacks the element of mutual advantage which is indispensable for mutual survival. We must also remember that common sense may be social custom, but not all social custom is necessarily common sense.

A further difficulty is that common sense exists at the non-verbal level of events and does not depend on intellect for its existence. We might say that it is a direct expression of the instinct for survival itself, because violations of it bring forms of punishment which tend to drive us back from dangerous paths. Common sense always moves to create a world that is fit for the survival of human animals, so it never remains silent when we are living in a mistaken way with our fellow men. Violations bring pain to warn us of our danger.

Psychic pain is similar to physical pain since it has a similar function in our lives. Physical pain serves to warn us when we are injuring our bodies so that we do not do irreparable damage. Without pain, we might walk in badly fitted shoes until we ruin our feet. Psychic pain appears when we violate common sense; it tries to prevent us from becoming asocial or anti-social. The fears and other emotional ills we feel when we ignore common sense tell us that we are not living properly and warn us to revise our course of action immediately.

Fortunately for us all, common sense is wholly independent of status, wealth, formal or class education, geography, race, or other circumstantial factors. Simple peasants may have more of it than monarchs, and often have had throughout history. We find countless instances in the past where the scholars and intellectuals of the time were

teaching either plain nonsense or principles that were anti-survival, though not recognized as such. But since their teaching did not square with common sense, the bad results of their teaching eventually discredited them and forced people to turn back to common sense for the answers to their problems. The intellect can fly higher than the white eagle, and often further afield; but it cannot go further or higher than common sense allows without being brought back to earth and to the uses of mankind.

Those of us who lack common sense may find it easy to believe that human behavior is “very deep” and that we must turn to “deep therapy” if we hope to improve our behavior. It does not occur to us that all deviations from common sense plunge us into situations that will end unfortunately, since they lack a principle of mutual benefit in their structure. No kind or amount of psychotherapy can ever help until it manages somehow to restore the sense of community in the confronting situation that is giving trouble. The methods and theories of psychotherapy in use today are almost innumerable. Some are so obscure and removed from common sense that they defy comprehension – even by their disciples. According to some investigators, one method or theory heals about as well as any other. This would seem to contradict our thesis that only common sense can heal the problems in interpersonal relationships. But the very *process* of treatment obliges individuals to cooperate even though what they say to each other may or may not make particular sense. The close relationship and mutual good they will experience at the non-verbal level tends to de-confuse and encourage them regardless of any other factors involved.

We do not mean to imply that obscure theories are just as valid as those that are clear and matter-of-fact. It is unfortunate that many individuals have been taught that common sense has no place in psychotherapy and that it ought not to be valued or trusted. The very least effect such thinking can have on us is that our self-reliance and self-confidence are inevitably weakened if we are not guided by common sense. More catastrophically, we may stand to lose all our powers of evaluation and self-direction so that we become wholly gullible and dependent on anything that may be touted as a therapeutic instrument. Without the checks and balances of community sense, we can fall into beliefs in witchcraft and reliance on priests or devil-dancers who advance claims to powers of healing.

Science and the scientific approach to problem-solving are based on common sense and the common sense approach to situations in life. Anything that cannot be made to fit into a scheme of common understanding so that it can be understood by everyone is discarded as being unprovable, unreliable, and probably useless for the purposes of mankind. Take the question of extra-sensory perception, for example. Science has not found a way to prove or disprove its existence because so far it cannot be made to work for everyone on any predictable basis. If a way is found to tap it as we do electricity, then it will become part of our common sense. Of course, we do not know

what electricity is, either, but we know how to use it.

We should bend every effort to strengthen our hold on common sense and to exalt it as the only reliable therapeutic agent to be used in all situations. We will always find a priesthood of witch doctors who want to keep things obscure so that they may use superstitions (the lack of common sense) to control the ignorant. The obscurantists will bitterly oppose all efforts to spread common sense among the masses of people. Even in the field of psychotherapy, fear and superstition have often dominated. For this very reason we should work harder to help everyone – including ourselves – to refine, perfect, disseminate, and popularize the trust in common sense as the most vital force for good in the life of every human being and community.

Our civilization, unfortunately, encourages conformity rather than independence and self-reliance. We are encouraged to follow leaders and not to have any faith in our own ability to act, create, invent, manage, and otherwise employ our own powers in the solution of problems which confront us. Independent judgment, wisdom, personal integrity, initiative, creativity, productivity – all the attributes most prized by mankind – cannot develop and flourish in anyone unless he has first developed a high degree of common sense. Activity that is not guided by a sense of community is either dangerous in its effect or criminal in its intent.

Our most important job is to substitute common sense in those expressions of our life where we have been badly taught by our past experiences. If we have been led to be imitative, chic-chic, phoney, competitive, boastful, superior, aloof, exclusive, reserved, snobbish, or otherwise removed or uncooperative and nonproductive, then we need to be “de-confused” about the value of such private logic and replace it with the sense of community. Common sense shows us that private logic cuts down our productivity and therefore diminishes our value to the community. Whatever holds us aloof from community participation leads us down a blind alley of useless striving. No one can be important to those around him if he is a burden rather than a help.

Therapy groups must become “islands” of common sense in a world swirling with the confusions of private logic. Each group member must work to increase the amount of social awareness (common sense) by making every effort to practice it in his daily life. In such an atmosphere, free of fear and pretension, behavior changes rapidly. It becomes impossible to hold ridiculous attitudes and prejudices in the face of the combined common sense of such a group. The fire goes out of old angers and hurts. Who needs them anyhow, once he has found more productive ways of relating to situations? Old, nonproductive methods harm ourselves even more than they damage those around us. In the de-confused atmosphere of the group, we become creators because the climate of the group, infused with common sense, will not support destructive or self-destructive trends.

Emerson supplied a beautiful expression of the theme of this essay in “Compensation”:

All infractions of love and equity in our social relations are speedily punished. They are punished by fear. Whilst I stand in simple relation to my fellow man, I have no displeasure in meeting him. We meet as water meets water, or as two currents of air mix, with perfect diffusion and interpenetrations of nature. But as soon as there is any departure from simplicity (common sense) and attempt at halfness, or good for me that is not good for him, my neighbor feels wronged; he shrinks from me as far as I have shrunk from him; his eyes no longer seek mine; there is war between us; there is hate in him and fear in me.

## 8 / *Cooperation: What Does It Mean?*

Cooperation is a situation which exists when each person works as a unit-organism on some function essential to an entire process. It may or may not be necessary to work in unison with others, depending on the target for which the cooperation has been established.

Cooperative effort may be of two varieties. The most frequent is the type that exists between butcher, baker, and candlestick maker. Each of them elaborates his own function to the best of his skill and imagination within the confines of his own trade. Though their hours of work are dissimilar, their skills different, and they may or may not feel personally friendly to each other, each one is wholly responsible for the excellence of his own product and fulfills himself in its production. He is a cooperator because he creates a useful product and he exchanges goods for goods.

The second form of cooperation is the type associated in our minds with the Volga Boatmen, who had to tug in unison in order to accomplish their task. Each must pull to the best of his ability and with exact timing with the others to be effective. Not many jobs require this precise type of cooperation.

What we must understand is that neither of these types of cooperation demands that the participants be “friendly” with each other on any personal basis. All that is necessary for the success of the cooperative venture is that each does his own job at the right time.

The essential point is that most people mistake *conformity* for cooperation, though conformity represents mutual enslavement and the *destruction* of cooperation. It actually prevents individual contribution and self-realization.

Also, “doing things together” may or may not be cooperation. “Helping others” is not necessarily cooperation. The baker must set his dough and bake his bread at night to have his contribution ready in the morning, whereas the candlestick maker may work more flexible hours as long as his product is available on demand. If the butcher and the candlestick maker insisted on helping the baker, the whole scheme of things would be upset and the bread would probably be inferior as a result.

EACH COOPERATOR MUST BE FREE TO SATISFY HIS OWN NEEDS FIRST. He will not be able to fulfill his function if he is hobbled by the need to please others first. In fact, we please other people best when we have done our own job to the height of our capacity, and we serve them and ourselves least when we merely “go along” on any other basis.

Mistaken concepts of cooperation are the source of much unhappiness. People may be tempted or persuaded to go along on ventures, thus failing to maintain their own

initiative. In such an event, they fail to fulfill their own function and add truly nothing to the situation. They deprive themselves without enriching others; and by “going along” against their inner will and judgment, they feel resentment against the others with whom they have cooperated in this mistaken way.

Thus, cooperation can never resemble mutual enslavement. Its end result should be individual self-realization, never any kind of crippling. We never experience cooperation unless each of us is working on his own.

## 9 / *Thoughts on Creativity*

If the world is full of mute, inglorious Miltons, as Thomas Gray insisted, it is because such people dare not speak what is on their mind lest it be regarded as less than perfect by those around them. This fear arises from a desire to make a favorable impression so they may be regarded as the Favorite Child. If we had no intention of bewitching and bemusing others, we would never hesitate to speak out and act on circumstances as we see them. But to avoid exposing our real, first-hand responses, we check our *initial impulse* and then compare it with the accepted view of things. If this contradicts our neighbor's views, we carefully hide it from him – and worst of all, from ourselves. In its place, we copy and imitate the popular view of things.

But such accepted views die at sunset while the world grasps each new day for the person who has somehow stumbled on a NEW solution for old problems. Then the name of that individual is written on the sun and everyone copies him until the world moves on once again to demand something new. Life demands new answers daily – popular songs of yesteryear do not continue to fill our needs. Life places a high premium on Original Creation and requires each of us to fashion his own world as he goes along. Nature has made each of us his own Creator.

Never – but never – seek the Right Way to do anything; find your own way. When confronted with a task or perplexing situation, don't turn anxiously in all directions seeking a clue as to how to approach the problem. Shut out the memories of all past solutions, outside advice, Thou-shalt-thou-shalt-not admonitions, and similar directives from Outside Authority. And when your attention resides with you alone and is not running here and there in search of what others think about you, then you will be free to turn the full interest of your entire nature to the confronting problem. At this point, when Outside Voices do not drown you out, you will find that the confronting situation actually begins to *talk* to you. Eventually, you actually assume a kind of dancing posture with it. In the absence of conscious or verbal thought of the usual kind, you begin to move in a way that causes the problem to become unstuck as you move toward it.

All this happens spontaneously, if you do not push or pull or struggle with your thoughts. Any effort to force only results in the disruption of the dance. When a key sticks in a lock, it is disastrous to try to force it. The best you can do is jiggle and bounce it around in the lock and let it free itself as it will.

In this spirit, the only approach to productivity is to play with the situation in the spirit of a picnic. Nothing new can ever happen if a person goes with a net in hand hoping to snare tame and fortune. Any desire to win personal recognition (tame) spurs the nervous system to tense activity and the fear of failure. And, to save us from possible failure in our efforts, the mind will give up playing freely with the situation



and retreat into memory in the hope of remembering some safe, time-tested way of doing the job.

All great inspirations come to us when, and only when, we are not trying to think of them. The Mind is very much like a millpond. When the wind is blowing the surface into waves, the fish remain safely under the turbulence. But in calm of evening, they jump for the flies they can see above them. The mind cannot see or feel anything when we are blowing up a storm of ambition to get results that will win us prizes. Only the relaxation and absorption similar to that of a child building sand castles frees the mind to follow its own course as the flowing of a river.

Any effort on our part to use our mind – to direct our mind – only prevents it from flowing freely to find its own solution. The spirit of play allows the mind to flow over and around the confronting problem until it finds its own path – with no more help from us than spilled water needs to find where it wants to run. But our ambition for personal success (recognition) will not allow us to let the spilled water find its own route; we insist on being busy-bodies and in trying to guide it to some “practical” (socially acceptable) channel that we hope will bring us a fortune in money or applause. Sadly, we may never learn exactly what potential has been provided us by nature!

An unfortunate defect in our educational system has led to this unfortunate habit of “Using the Mind to Train the Mind.” Most teachers oblige students to copy and memorize tested ways of doing things and give us to understand that these are the only “right ways” of doing things. They compel us to obey and bow outside authority figures as much as possible. We are told that we must condition ourselves to this total obedience before making any attempt to act independently or spontaneously according to our own assessments of situations. By the time we have conditioned all our views in this Correct Way, we have lost all independence of action and it is often too late to enjoy our own spontaneity in confronting problems.

The mind cannot be in two places at once, nor can it aim at two targets simultaneously. Once we have conditioned ourselves to look up obediently to Old Masters (Authority Figures), our minds cannot free themselves of their hypnosis and deal productively with the Confronting Problem. This hypnotic stare we fix on Authority Figures is commonly termed “reverence” or “respect,” but it causes death to all original activity. It is not humanly possible to have a “first-response” to a confronting problem while one's eye is riveted on what the experts have to say.

Conformity is the feeble-minded child of Reverence, just as Reverence is the idiot-offspring of Obedience. Some individuals vainly hope to arrive at spontaneous, original solutions to their problems by rebellion against conformity. But while obedience to authority means we are chained by our right leg, disobedience (rebellion) indicates chaining by the left. In neither case can we be spontaneous, nor can we claim to have

any mind of our own. In both instances we are firmly tied to authority figures and have lost all initiative to them. “Being Different” is nothing other than negative obedience – we feel obliged first to see what the Authority Figures recommend and then we obediently do the opposite.

All solutions involving positive or negative obedience fail – because they are aimed at this target of pleasing or displeasing Authority Figures. How, then, can we hope to find original answers to our problems? Our first job, obviously, is to make our mind a blank so we will not be trapped into remembering all the advice and counsel we have known in the field. When we have cleansed our minds of all this chatter, then we are free to look at and listen to the problem that stands astride our path. *Do nothing ... think nothing ... until it begins to reach out to you.* In time, it will begin a conversation with you in which it will suggest a variety of ways you might begin to “play” with it. Only then should you let the dance begin. Eventually the problem will solve itself, becoming “unstuck” in your hand.

Clearly, then, it is not possible for anyone to “learn” creative writing, painting, or dance as if they were tricks whose method were known by some outside authority. In our approach to life, we may choose one of two paths: (1) that of the Old Masters (parent surrogates), who tell us how to respond in ways that will be pleasing to their eyes and ears; or (2) we may look at the situations in which we find ourselves and regard them as the *only* and *final* authorities and teachers we shall ever know.

Once we have chosen the Here and Now as the source of all unfolding wisdom our inner freedom is assured and our movement becomes as spontaneous as our breathing. We move with the shifting problems as a good dancer moves with a partner; neither partner is aware of leading or being led by the other one. The dance just happens. There is no room or need for effort in spontaneity, nor is there any striving for “results” or anxiety lest the effort result in failure. The dance is its own reward and no real dancer dances to win any reward other than the spontaneous joy of the process itself.

That gift pompously described as “Creativity” is not something that we can strive for but is, rather, a by-product of living in this world without outside authority figures. The child, as well as immature adults, habitually turn to other people for their cues, thereby subordinating themselves to graven images of their own imaginations. But the mature individual puts no one's head higher than his own and is not tempted to turn to those around him for answers. He knows that obedience is for children – the adult must act spontaneously, intuitively, and without guile and let the chips fall as they will around him. When he functions in any capacity, he is truly “self-employed,” since he labors to please no one more exalted than himself. Thus, he is thoroughly pleased when he has danced with the problem and responded while it has led him through the mazes of the dance.

## ***10 / A Psychology and Psychotherapy for “The Living Now”***

Very few people today can remember the great uproar created early in this century by Freud's “discoveries” in psychoanalysis. Intellectuals gave up religion as the central force in daily life and turned to science for their salvation. Some interpretations of psychoanalysis led people to believe that Freud had discovered the seat of Original Sin in the Id and that promptly all people would be able to control the evils that beset them.

This enthusiasm peaked in around 1925. Broadway plays were constructed around analytic themes and every dinner party broke down into dream-analysis sessions and discussions of sexual problems and symbols. People were delighted to believe that each of us has an Id that holds the individual in magical sway and that each of us is the helpless victim of whatever happens to be buried in it. Psychoanalysis promised to be a method by which the Id could be purged of its destructive trends. Once this had been done, all sorts of creative acts and fame would be waiting for each of us who could afford the very costly and time-consuming process of analysis.

One nut of practicality had to be cracked, however, before this millenium could enfold us. Psychoanalysis had evolved as a prohibitively expensive tete-a-tete, wherein an analyst was closeted individually with each patient — and the treatment took hundreds of hours, spread over many years. If the world was to be saved by this approach, some way of saving time had to be uncovered. So far, nothing of the kind has happened in psychoanalysis. Some years ago, *Life* magazine reported that the total number of people analyzed would not fill a town larger than Scranton, Pennsylvania. The most serious impediment to better progress was the fact that Freud became psychology's sacred cow — almost all innovation was blocked by the mass hypnosis invoked by his name. Anyone who disagreed was denounced as a heretic.

World War II, however, finally announced that the emperor indeed had no clothes. Thousands of young men in serious need of psychological treatment suddenly flooded the induction centers of the Armed Services. The Army and Navy were wholly unprepared to treat the multitudes that were thrust upon them; tete-a-tete methods, of course, were out of the question. At that time, it was discovered that there existed neither a method nor a philosophy for dealing with masses of people needing treatment. The whole cult of psychoanalysis was exposed as useless in any practical scale of operation.

Once the general impracticality was exposed, disenchantment with other aspects of psychoanalysis quickly arose. People who had had years of analysis learned mainly to speak in analytic jargon, but the common ills of all other men seemed to persist in them. There turned out to be no evidence that science had found the seat of Original Sin, nor had it found a new route to salvation. The Holy Band of the Analyzed were in no single

way different from the Unanalyzed Brethren. The myth of Depth Analysis was quickly deflated as its followers became disappointed and drifted away.

Though we are not trying to argue whether Depth Analysis is either right or wrong, we must now face the fact that neither the analytic approach nor its modifications are capable of meeting the mounting tide of maladjustments, delinquencies, or neuroses that confront us now, and we must rest our lever on a new fulcrum to move the mass.

For more than thirty years I have disagreed with the analytic approach. I have long been convinced that the focus of all treatment must be in the “here and now,” and be targeted on the confronting situation rather than on the past. In brief essay, it isn't possible to give all the details of my theories and efforts, but I may be able to help lessen the dependence upon lingering hypnotic belief in past-oriented therapies. Such therapies resemble history, anthropology, geography, and geology in that they try to make a coherent picture of the past; they all point away from the here and now, toward a dead past. They can tell us very little about the living present.

In medicine, men used to content themselves with dissecting corpses and analyzing dead tissue. No real understanding of body processes was possible until living cells in live animals began to be used. Similarly, we shall have no effective and efficient psychology or psychotherapy until we focus our efforts on the living present. We shall continue to be ineffective and inefficient for as long as we point past this present toward a dead past.

Depth psychology, however, catalogued, classified, described, analyzed, partitioned, atomized, and labelled past behaviors into trends, mechanisms, instincts, and other categories in the hope that by collecting the disassembled parts of an alarm clock we might be able to tell the time. The analyzed person can enumerate all his quirks and name them as fast as his analyst can; but he still has virtually the same number of difficulties when he begins to function. The reason, then, that Depth Psychology did not work is that it is historical in structure and orientation, whereas any Operational Psychology must be anchored in the Here and Now. It must offer a way of acting, not a way of thinking. You can't shoot wild beasts by aiming a rifle backwards over your shoulder. The demons confront you – they don't pursue you. For this reason, we elect practical politicians to public office rather than turning government over to the history or anthropology departments of our universities. The Living Moment has the power to create new forms; the past has not.

Life itself knows nothing of past or future, because life takes place always in the eternal Now, exactly as if it were the edge of a knife eternally pressed against eternity. There is no such thing as time, because we are always in the Eternal Now. Any practical psychotherapy must be focused on the living present and must be based on spontaneity, not on reflective reasoning and rationalization. All analysis or “taking

thought” inevitably inhibits spontaneity. Life is present exactly where we are, not where we or someone else thinks we ought to be. We have nowhere to go and, like the man pursued to the edge of the cliff by a tiger, we find that the vine we climb down to escape him leads us only to a lion waiting to devour us. At that hopeless moment, as we dangle helplessly on the side of the cliff, we look for the first time straight ahead and see a magnificent ripe strawberry. Forgetting our desperate plight, we eat the strawberry and find it exquisitely sweet and tender.

Unfortunately, our studies in Depth Psychology have not prepared us to notice or to savor the wild strawberry of the Eternal Now – that lies directly in front of us, where we are at the moment. The whole jargon of psychology has been aimed at achieving a “feeling of security,” but by striving in this way we only sharpen and underscore our feelings of insecurity, so we feel worse. We are led out of ourselves, as if we were following a carrot on a stick. The new psychology must no longer alienate us from ourselves but, rather, must help us focus on the Eternal Now, so that we do not habitually grasp at ideal situations beyond our reach.

Life is always a step ahead of our awareness of it, so “taking thought” can never catch up with the Living Moment. Thus, traditional therapy always fails, since conscious thinking gets us nowhere. Psychotherapy, then, must be reminded that life itself happens at a spontaneous level; the actual process of living goes on outside our conscious control, no matter how much we may attempt to manipulate or control our actions. The Living-Present-Moment continues at the non-verbal level of events spontaneously, divorced from our intellectual processes. Any effort to think and to act simultaneously only results in the disruption of the entire organism, because spontaneity is thereby cancelled.

Depth Psychology was an attempt to trap, cage, and domesticate the wild bird we call the Living Now by the clumsy trick of “taking conscious thought” as to what mechanisms, motives, or drives we should use. By doing so we put ourselves in the position of trying to catch the spark after it has left the anvil, or of trying to jump over our own shadow. Intellectual tricks, alas, can avail us nothing.

Clearly, the whole self-conscious approach to action is like spitting into the wind. Any therapy hoping to liberate us can never be a weapon for subduing the Id. Rather, we have to alter the whole climate of our being. We have to give up our attitude of strained grasping for security before we can ignore the tiger-above-lion-below quandry and achieve oneness with what lies immediately before us. All grasping at, as well as fleeing from, outside authority can only blind us to our own inherent power, that which lies at the core of each of us.

This power is inherent in each of us as a gift of evolution. We do not have to study to cultivate it, since it is as natural as the upright gait, asserting itself instinctively the

moment we let go of all efforts to learn and depend on outside authority figures.

The first imprinting on our nervous system in infancy and childhood is the habit of leaning on parent and outside authority figures. From the earliest days of our lives, we learn to exploit these to our advantage; seldom, if ever, are we trained to use our own self-power or self-reliance.

My wife and I wrote a book, *Parents On the Run*, which we hoped would enable people to create a climate in the home that would disrupt (at the non-verbal level) this habit of leaning and depending on other-power, thereby releasing the self-power of children. We concluded that the new psychology and therapy must be designed to change the *non-verbal climate* around the individual and directly disrupt the original imprinting of mistake habits on his nervous system.

Adler taught us to trust only movement – watch what a person is doing to discover what he or she truly wants or believes. Our activity, in the Living Moment, is controlled, not from the level of our conscious thought, but from conditioned responses laid down by past imprintings on our nervous systems. These are known as “habits” and a habit never rests, operating like a brainless robot, with no regard for any consequences of good or evil.

Whether we like it or not or whether we have been analyzed or not, the only way to eliminate an old habit is simply to *stop* it by setting up a new climate of conditioning in which the old habit cannot grow but will give encouragement to forms of new self-expression in new areas. Conscious thought cannot be present on the knife-edge we call “The Living Now” to guide and modify our actions according to the principles of *should*, *ought*, or *must* set forth by outside authority or our own intellectual and idealized notion of what is good or bad. When an however, set cunning traps that will entice new growth and imprint it on our nervous systems, much as an engineer can raise a dam high enough in a river to force it to find a new path in which to flow.

The best New Psychology, then, will bear scant resemblance to the old psychoanalytic approach of depth-analysis. It will be focused on ways to restructure previously conditioned responses to fit the demands of confronting situations. Its dynamics will resemble those of Alcoholics Anonymous, for example, rather than the analytic approach now employed in mental hygiene clinics. The philosophy and literature in the field will sound more like that of religion, philosophy, and the social sciences than its current pseudo-scientific form. And, most important of all, it will be free of the handicap that now strangles therapeutic methods – the hopelessly slow method of one-at-a-time therapy. The individual brainwashing that now prevails in tete-a-tete sessions will be abandoned as the function of re-education is absorbed into the work of ministers and teachers as part of their daily work.

## ***11 / Oblique Hostility***

The history of the human race is the story of endless fighting, since hostility is one of the most basic of all human emotions. According to the Bible, God made man and the earth and pronounced them “good” – but, within a few chapters, fighting has broken out after man disobeyed God's command. In retaliation, man is thrown out of Eden and, on the next page, Cain kills Abel. All this pointless fighting has never stopped since!

The most remarkable thing about conflict is that no one of us has ever been found who sincerely feels that he or she is the aggressor. Regardless of any violence we have committed, we invariably have an alibi that proves (to us, at least) that we are blameless. Like the child caught stealing jam, we maintain that it was our hand, rather than ourselves, that stole it. Though others may find it obvious that we are responsible for starting the fight, we are always aware that there was some extenuating circumstance that “drove us” to our course of action. Invariably, the other fellow's actions caused us to come out fighting.

To what do we owe this remarkable ability to be right all the time? How does it happen that each of us is a Man of Good Will while the other fellow is always the Devil? Adler offered an excellent hypothesis which suggests that everyone constructs for himself an Ideal Image – a Superior Ideal. For every person this embodies all that he considers valuable. If and when he falls short of this ideal picture, he attributes the “imperfection” to forces outside himself. We all believe that we are identical to our Ideal Images.

The difference, however, between ourselves as others experience us in action and our ideal picture of ourselves is as great as that which exists between the studio photograph that sits on our piano and a candid snapshot of ourselves. In the first, the lines and crow's feet have been erased. Guests wonder about the identity of that handsome person, who we like to believe is our image, but our friends recognize us better from the candid snapshot which we try to hide.

Similarly, it is our Superior Ideal which blinds us to our true dimensions, in which we try to seem godlike in every aspect. This image alone prevents us from seeing also the hostility which is a part of each of us. We thus become oblivious to the obvious – the hostility we feel and express toward others.

The open hostility (which we call righteous or justified hostility) need not be considered at this time. Far more dangerous to ourselves is that unrecognized, hidden, oblique kind of hostility that we express without being consciously aware that we are attacking others. Its manifestations are almost countless – but about the only warning we have of its existence is that we may feel tense when confronted in some situations. More often we have no awareness at all, unless it is called to our attention. Then we

disclaim it!

This hidden, oblique hostility is implicit in all neurosis and other character disorders. It is so much a part of them that we overlook it by considering it “about normal.” It is dismissed as being “human nature” to behave in such ways. Just because it is so obvious and widespread, we are oblivious to its significance. Nevertheless, there is abundant testimony to its presence. It is at the root of mass hysteria, racial bigotry, lynchings, and similar outbursts of destructive hatred. When fire breaks out in a theater, more people are trampled underfoot than are burned. If we were as good as our ideal image would lead us to believe, this kind of “panic” would not destroy thousands of lives in emergencies. But hostility can be likened to an iceberg that floats with nine parts submerged and only one part above the surface of the water. The submerged part, of course, is the most dangerous to the mariner. Just as surely, we cannot afford to be unaware of our own hidden hostilities lest we be destroyed by them.

Let us review only a few of the kinds of behavior that are commonly found in character disorders as well as in what is generally known as “normal behavior.” We find: blues and depression, forgetfulness, tardiness, nervousness, irritability, passivity and laziness, boredom, hypersensitive feelings, accident proneness, guilt feelings, sleeplessness, rigid ethical standards, overpoliteness, fatigue, jealousy and envy, nagging, belittling of others, neglect, anxiety states, paranoid ideas, and countless others. And to these we must add such activities as discarding chewing gum or cigarettes on rugs in theater lobbies, leaving glass bottles on public beaches, defacing walls, destroying shrubs in parks, and similar hostile acts.

Such behavior always masks a fighting attitude – an attitude of hostility and non-participation; there is always a revenge motif at the root of each of them. They are oblique, hidden ways of showing the anger we feel toward others. In our society there is a strong tabu against showing hostility openly. We learn as children that we must not show it toward parents, elders, and those in authority. We are exhorted not to show anger against siblings or the neighbors' children. In fact, there are almost no situations in which it is appropriate for us to display our hostility when it exists. We must always maintain the *semblance of good will* and appear to be on the side of the angels at all times. We learn early that we can gain more by hiding hostility than by showing it openly. As a result, we learn to hide such feelings from others, and mostly from ourselves. This probably accounts for the fact that mankind has always liked to believe that there is a “good self and a “bad self in each of us and there is a Devil that forces us to do hostile things against our will. This dichotomy is not as mysterious as it seems: our Ideal Image (goal of superiority) disclaims the part of us that is not flattering to itself.

No one should conclude that fighting in itself is a bad thing. Adler pointed out that all life is a struggle for survival. As long as man lives, he must fight to overcome the



limitations of his puny body in a world that is in no way friendly to him. Of supreme importance, however, are the goals for which he fights. Adler insisted that there is fighting on the useful side of life as well as on the useless side. The first kind has accounted for all the progress of the human race, while the second kind produces most of the human misery we have ever endured. Pasteur mastered the first kind of fighting against inertial ignorance, superstition, and entrenched privilege, as well as bacteria, before accomplishing his invaluable research. This selfless kind of fighting against disease, war, famine, and outworn custom is far from ended. But fighting on the useless side of life is always done to achieve special privilege at the expense of others. It is the basis of all exploitation and master-slave relationships. It impoverishes rather than enriches all situations that it touches, whether it be the tyranny of a spoiled child or the oppression of worldwide tyranny.

Individuals who fight on the useful side of life, however, have one thing in common: they demonstrate a high degree of activity as well as a feeling of “live and let live” toward others – what Adler referred to as “social feeling.” Each such individual allows others to have equal value in his eyes.

On the useless side, two types are found. One has a high degree of activity coupled with a high degree of hostility toward others. These are delinquents: what they want, they take, regardless of whom they damage. They are not concerned with giving anything of value in return for what they get from society. The second type has a low degree of activity and a high degree of hostility. Lacking the energy to attack openly, they sabotage and express their hostility obliquely, thus embarking on the path of hostility.

Few wish to follow this path openly because it subjects them to direct retaliation. Instead, we go to great lengths to maintain the semblance of good will toward the demands of the community. But behind this pretense we are silently insisting “NO!” Adler called this deceptive behavior the “Yes-But” approach to life, in which our words are pious but our activities contradict them. Deception is always dangerous, but self-deception is the most damaging. Our hidden hostilities, which we refuse to recognize, lie uncharted like land mines waiting to explode when we stumble on them. We cannot correct the suffering we experience in a neurosis because we lack awareness of our submerged hostility. Not only do we live lies, we are expected to do so! Take, for example, the tennis champion who loses to the contender. At the net, he smilingly congratulates the newborn champ to show “good sportsmanship” – but hidden lies the humiliation, disappointment, anger, and fear of the future.

But why do some find themselves more on the useful side while others more on the useless side of life? Adler made it abundantly clear that our position is determined for each of us during our earliest childhood. The basic pattern of our dislikes (hostilities) is set according to the early view we take of ourselves in relation to the world

surrounding us. If we felt neither “much put back” nor “much put ahead” in our infancy, shortly after, we developed no serious tensions which would encourage the formation of submerged hostility. But, insofar as we did not “feel equal” to our environment, we etched a pattern of hostility against those elements that seemed to threaten us. Individual Psychology has made an extensive examination of those situations of early childhood which usually lead a child to feel unequal to the world around him.

Those early situations in which one felt *unequal* persist in the psyche throughout life and lead us to faulty adjustments, unless we first understand our mistakenly hostile views and correct them. For example, if a child has felt that his mother prefers a brother or sister to him, he may find it difficult to establish faith in women in his adult years. He may avoid marriage or, if he does marry, he may tend to be extremely jealous so that no amount of devotion from his wife can reassure him.

To better understand this phenomenon, we must make some observations about the psyche and how it functions for each individual. Adler described the psyche as if it were an organ of the body itself. He considered it an organ of *adaptation*, supplied us by evolution for the purpose of bringing the total organism into effective contact with the outside world so that it may survive. As such, this organ can modify both inner and outer circumstances by making connections that meet our needs for survival. Self-preservation is the first law of nature and the whole psyche is dedicated to this goal. The human animal, however, is not able to survive without help from fellow humans. So for us there is a second law of nature fully as important as the first: for our own survival, we must join our efforts with those around us – to save ourselves, we must cooperate to make life secure for others.

But there are a number of situations in early life that may lead a child into non-participation, negation, and sabotage so that he does not train himself to join in productive effort with others. One is pampering. A child who has been pampered easily comes to believe that his wishes should become laws binding on the community; he does not expect to make any effort for himself, since he expects to exploit the strength of others. Thus, he wants only to rule and control. It is not surprising then that such a child will be deeply hostile to others, whom he regards mainly as his servants.

A second source of early misunderstanding that leads to hostility stems from neglect. The child who is not really wanted soon becomes aware that he is rejected. The chances are very strong that he will react with equivalent hostility and negativism. As a result, he may not find the path to participation as an equal member of the community.

A third source of hostility may arise from a protracted early illness. Children thus afflicted may get the idea that they are especially valued because of the extensive care they received. They may seek in later life to avoid the need to be helpful while they hide behind the hostile demand for exemption.

Though these circumstances differ widely, they all lead to the same result – the individual's desire to achieve the status of “favored child” in society. The very first day of school may betray the hidden hostility implicit in such an ambition. When the child arrives and finds no seat reserved for the “favorite,” he may react unpleasantly and insist on returning home. If prevented from leaving, he may choose to escape through fantasies, in which the pampering situation is created to suit his need.

Adler placed much emphasis on the early education of a child and demonstrated that successful interpersonal relationships depend on fair play. We must expect to share the disadvantages of community and not expect only the advantages. We must be as eager to give as we are to get. Only if relationships are kept on a 50-50 basis can we avoid the evils that accompany exploitation. In short, the pampering parent who gives more than he should is as much mistaken as the pampered child who insists on getting more than he is willing to give. Any departure from equality of both privilege and responsibility creates a master-slave relationship with all the hostility that such mutual exploitation implies. The welfare of individuals and the growth of their capacities is properly accomplished only if we relate ourselves to each other on a basis of equal human value.

A most potent force for creating hostility in children is the misuse of authority by adults. When there is a dominating individual in a family, he tends to place his commands above the desire and judgment of others dependent on him. Those who are in a weaker position are obliged to follow his will – or at least they must appear to do so. Such systematic and habitual thwarting as is then experienced usually leaves the deepest hostility to any and all authority or authority symbols. The person who has braced his feet in childhood against compulsion is seldom able later in life to forget the rage and humiliation suffered; he is ever on the alert for chances to rule, lest he be ruled.

There are two kinds of arbitrary authority. Everyone recognizes open domination. But only a few recognize the danger of “soft” authority – the one who yields it is often unaware that he is exerting this arbitrary authority on his victim. The damage comes to light only when the injured one shows a dangerous inability to decide and act for himself in life. This is the kind of authority exercised by a parent whom a child loves so much that he would not even think of acting against the implied wishes of the parent.

Harsh authority breeds resistance, but soft authority saps initiative and judgment, for there is little chance for the child to develop abilities in initiative. He generally does not realize the lack of them until it is late for them to be developed easily.

Arbitrary authority of either kind develops either positive or negative dependence. Negative dependence is often mistaken for independence (having one's own mind). A person can be said to be independent only if he is able to size up a situation and decide on a course of constructive action for himself in solving it. Negative dependence, or

contrariness, does not bother to consider the ends of the situation at all. Negative people size up all persons in authority and then plan strategies to defeat the expectations of those authorities. Such plans are not constructive – they are aimed at the destruction or evasion of authority.

A very clear illustration of this can be seen in the average eating problem. A child who is difficult about eating is negatively dependent on his parents. He is not so much concerned with the question 'Am I hungry or not;' he is much more interested in defying parental power. Having learned from experience that his parents will try to force him to eat, he has only to sabotage such efforts on their part. The same is true for nail-biting, bed-wetting, and other tricks of passive resistance. Only deeply entrenched hostility can account for positive and negative leaning on others.

The great tragedy of all this lies in the fact that children thus damaged divert their psychic energies from the development of their own innate powers and use them only to oppose. They are incapable of good teamwork because they are always certain that someone is trying to “boss” them. They truly lack a mind of their own because their thoughts are spent watching the motives of others. Without true independence, they limp and elbow their way through life.

Arbitrary authority produces two kinds of children: those who fight openly and the “pseudo-good child.” The latter is an overtly obedient child (usually when he is watched and often when he is not supervised). But he is like a zombie in that he is lost if he is not acting under direction. He dares not try to organize his own time or effort lest he make a mistake. And because he has no mind of his own while he is charged with hidden resentment, he is easily led astray by active delinquents – he is easily “enticed” into thefts and other offenses.

Arbitrary authority (or over-control) almost always, then, results in dependency in children – either the dependency of the delinquent or that of the child who leans on others. The hostility implicit in either negative or positive dependence is self-evident, since any kind of leaning is a burden on the productivity and freedom of those leaned upon.

One of the most prevalent sources of hostility in our civilization arises from the spirit of competition. Competition as a way of life probably came about since the human race developed through long periods of chronic scarcities. There were never enough of the basic necessities of life to provide for all. People competed and those who were not strong or clever died off. In other civilizations, where food has always been abundant and the climate mild, more cooperative cultures exist in which men are not so fiercely pitted against each other as has been the case with us. But as a civilization, we remain sharply competitive. We have still to recognize that with modern technological advances we no longer *need the* intense spirit of competition which brings such

hostility toward each other. Actually, few can really be first in anything and no one can exceed at everything. But since the spirit of competition is so strong, we strive to create the illusion of being first – this we call *prestige*. We work and struggle for it because we can use it to frighten others and keep them beneath us. Thus, we are not entirely displeased at the misfortunes of our friends. We enjoy the petty satisfaction of surpassing others. Thus, “loving families” are often riddled with hostilities and marital partners often inflict endless psychic cruelties on each other. We carry psychological bombs to cripple others so they can't compete, or we backbite and carry on character assassination for competitive gains.

Probably it is not possible to give up entirely fighting against others, for they also are trained to attack us. But most of the fighting we do is wholly unnecessary now in terms of survival. It is mostly aimed at increasing feelings of prestige, which can never be satisfied. The vague desire “to be better than” makes us increasingly hostile and we spread this hostility diffusely in all confronting situations. If someone slights us, we become angry and depressed, though we may become just as angry if a door sticks or a shoestring breaks.

Competition leads us to note and emphasize the difference between ourselves and others – to judge whether we are “better” or “worse.” These are called *invidious comparisons* because they leave us with a residue of emotion which Adler called “the feeling of social distance.” The person experiencing this feels either put back or “ahead of,” but he feels removed in either case. His efforts to participate with others are seriously diminished; we cannot participate with those from whom we feel removed. We can do our best only if we feel equal to each other or to the situation. Insofar as we feel remote, we block ourselves from giving what is needed by the confronting situation. This is what is known as failure.

Adler described a “Superiority-Inferiority Complex,” which is a psychological term for our competitive attitude. Were we not afflicted by the competitive spirit, we could not experience *feelings* of superiority or inferiority. It is necessary to compare ourselves against another before we can feel removed (i.e., superior or inferior). If we possess this competitive attitude in life, we tend to see people according to the scheme shown in Figure 1. We are at position “O.” As we look at others, we arbitrarily decide that some of them exist in a “superior” position to us.\* Others appear to occupy only the “inferior” niche. Without realizing what we are doing, we may discover that we have placed *no one* in a position of equality with us! This explains why loneliness is one of the most pronounced symptoms in all emotional disturbances; it is almost never absent.

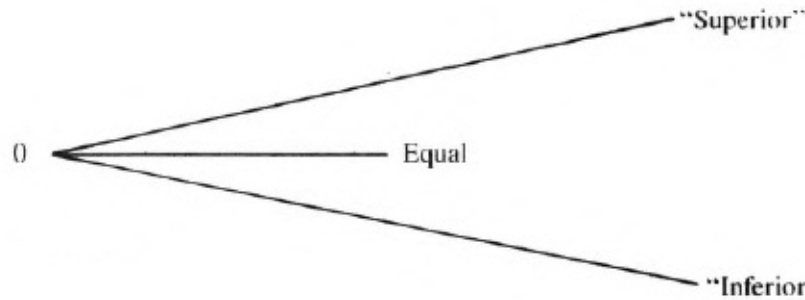


FIGURE I

There has been much argument to show that men are never born equal. Often, such logic is put forth by those who feel superior or inferior in order that they may justify the exploitation by which they hope to benefit. Others hold to such arguments to justify their unwillingness to contribute — they would like to prove they have nothing to give and thus should be excused from trying. Competitive individuals certainly do not want to feel equal. But, in reality, all men are equal in that we all share the same basic needs: we require sustenance, love, and human companionship. No one human being is free of these needs. The character of each differs from that of others only in that he feels that his basic needs can be satisfied better through his own methods than if he used the methods of Others. In short, superficial differences appear in the character traits of different people because these traits are only means to an end, or ways to contact and modify the external world for survival. And though our methods (i.e., our characters) may differ, our goal is always the same — SURVIVAL. Differences of wealth, learning, status, etc., may exist, but nevertheless, *the feeling* of being equal can exist between any who are willing to surrender the competitive attitude in their interpersonal relationships. In short, we must give up the desire to be the favorite child!

Most neurotic behavior is the reflection of a strong competitive attitude behind which is the desire to rule and control others — the striving to be in the dominant position. The use of anxiety is an excellent example of this hidden tyranny. A wife expects her husband home at 6 o'clock, but he does not arrive until six-thirty. He finds her pacing the floor in panic. During the half hour, she has pictured him hit by an automobile, in a morgue, and dozens of other tragic possibilities. To quiet her, he promises never to be late again or to phone her if he must be delayed. On the surface it would seem that we see a loving wife who is only interested in the welfare of her husband, but in reality she is enforcing rigid control over his movements. An open command for him to be home or report at six would bring out his open opposition, while anxiety attacks deliver his submission without a struggle. The wife's hostile striving for power is disguised as "deep love," but anxiety is usually a covert fighting attitude that arises if a person believes he may not be able to have his own way.

Hidden hostility almost never goes unexpressed. We may have repressed all

awareness of being hostile to a person or situation but our attitude will emerge somehow, even if only by a slip of the tongue. In situations or with persons whom we dare not answer with an open attack or rejection, we may speak through physical symptoms; we can broadcast our silent “No” with our organ or through physical functions.

As we noted earlier, the Ego is an organ of contact that reaches out to connect with others and with the outside world. It directs and coordinates the functions of the body to bring the individual into a position of security. Within the body there exist three levels of functioning that support and implement the purposes of the psyche. These are the mental, the biological, and the chemical processes. The diagram in Figure 2 illustrates the relationships between these processes and between two Egos:

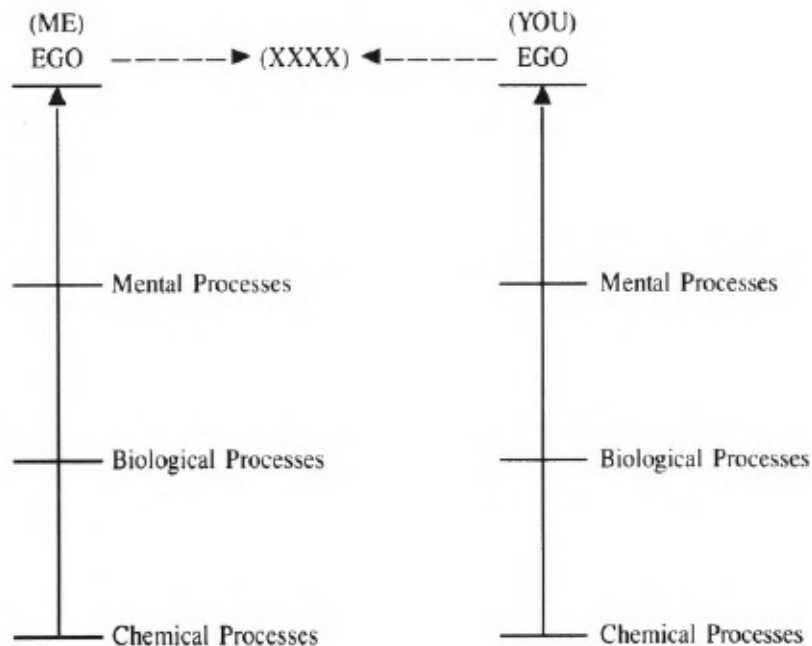


FIGURE 2

When an individual faces “clear sailing” (or believes he does), these processes function freely and automatically; we have no awareness of them. But a very different scenario happens if the Ego senses danger or conflict ahead. This is especially true if the hostility felt is of the submerged type (that which is unacceptable to the Ideal Image we have of ourselves).

When competition (hostility) creates a feeling of distance between individuals (represented in the diagram by XXXX), the function of the Ego is thwarted; the individual is thrown back on himself. The prospect of defeat throws his mind and body into tension which manifests itself at all levels, producing such disturbances in function as forgetfulness, boredom, obsessive ideas, confusion, worry and anxiety, depression

and blues, vomiting, blushing, sleeplessness, bed-wetting, headaches, sexual frigidity and impotence, heart palpitations, and many others.

We find it easy to apologize for the hostility that is hidden under such expressions. We hastily excuse ourselves if we yawn at his party, and where is the wife who is not “hurt” if her husband “forgets” her birthday? But it is less commonly understood that depressions, blues, and sadness are in fact accusations and hostile attacks. At the biological level, we hide very subtle attacks on others. Victims of insomnia are somewhat aware of their hostility, though they ascribe the general bad humor to their “sleeplessness” instead of realizing that they lose sleep because they are hostile toward tomorrow! By the same token, a marriage partner may lament frigidity or impotence while protesting love for his or her partner; but the hostility so expressed in the symptom triggers the sexual attack.

One of the most common expressions of a hostile, fighting attitude is called “hypersensitivity.” Where it occurs, the intention of being the favorite child is very near the surface. If a hypersensitive person is even slightly put back from this favored status, he tends to become irritated and to withdraw from participation. He punishes offenders with sad looks and similar passive attacks or sabotage until that “offending” individual is brought under control. The hostile, ruling attitude of hypersensitive individuals is almost transparent to everyone but themselves. They are usually at a distance from useful participation – except when they win favor by their efforts. They depend on the “feeling of rejection” for their orientation in life. Some psychologies make much capital out of this feeling of rejection, especially in cases of what is called the “rejected child.” Many therapists recommend that such rejected individuals be “given love” to compensate for their feelings of deprivation. Unfortunately, the cure is never so simple. As with the jealous spouse, no amount of devotion ever relieves the jealousy.

The point that is overlooked is that the person who is *feeling* rejected has centered his attention mainly on his own feelings. He is oblivious of the fact that he himself is actively rejecting or fighting others. The problems that are created arise mostly from his active rejection – his active sabotage of himself and those around him. Merely to give him love only serves to prove to him that he had just cause to feel rejected and to act against others as he did. Thus, he becomes entrenched in his desire to rule and demand. He becomes the master and we become the slaves who must exert our all to supply him with favorable situations.

The only remedy for such behavior lies in centering the individual's attention on his own rejection of others. Until he is made willing to grant favor, he must not expect to demand it. He must become aware that he is guilty of doing exactly what he is accusing others of doing — giving nothing. His own hostility must not go unchallenged and he must face the fact that he is rejecting 50-50 relationships and demanding the status of the favored child.



One of the most usual ways we have of blocking ourselves (creating social distance) arises from our dependence on the opinion of others, which lies directly behind the ubiquitous fear of failure. We fear to fail because we are terrified of what others will think of us. Unfortunately, what we call our “conscience” is mostly made up of these fears of what others would think of us if they ever found out what we really are.

Here again, the attention of the individual is only on his fear. But the significant problem is his stubborn, hostile refusal to move or to act constructively. The refusal to contribute in situations which demand participation is the critical issue. A simple illustration of this type of blocking is found in stage fright. Figure 3 may be helpful in analyzing it:

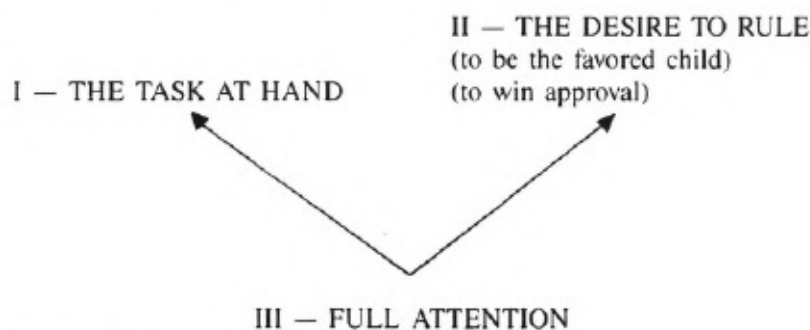


FIGURE 3

No man can serve two masters with full devotion, just as the human psyche cannot be occupied with more than one problem at a time. In life, getting the job done is what's important, for what we *do* is what others experience of us and what defines our value to the community. Ultimately, we should be fundamentally concerned with doing the job in all situations. But, with most of us, the urge to be the favored child is subjectively more important than making this contribution. For example, if we arise to make a speech we try to pursue two objectives simultaneously: (1) to make the speech and (2) to win approval. Each of us pursues the one that is his or her higher priority. If winning approval is overvalued by us, our attention will be badly split when it comes time to speak. Most of our attention will be diverted to the fear of Mure (on praise/blame); in this case, trouble lies ahead.

We can represent the above situation with a kind of mathematical formula. Let 100% represent one's full capacity for paying attention when he is not distracted by anything. From this, we must subtract the amount of attention he gives to his need for approval. What remains is the effective mental energy he has for doing his job. According to the diagram, III minus II equals I. With severe stage fright, the individual is so occupied with his craving for approval that he is left with insufficient attention for remembering his speech. The active hostility hidden in this fear of the opinions of others is generally overlooked. The desire for favored child status must, of necessity, generate hostility,

since others will often thwart this desire. We are hostile to the audience when we arise to make the speech, since we are terrified of their disapproval. We are actually uninterested in delivering our speech to them – we are more intent on winning their approval. This “getting” attitude is by its very nature hostile and exploitative.

We find, then, that it is *not* the fear of other's opinions that causes the trouble – we suffer from our hostile decision not to contribute in situations where we're uncertain of approval. In all such situations, we move painfully and with our brakes set. Our active attitude of rejection is what appears to be the “mental block.”

Another aspect of this undue concern about the opinions of others must be considered. Individuals who are so occupied simply do not know how to mind their own business. They are always listening and snooping into the reactions of others. But, far worse than this, they actively engage in efforts at controlling the opinions of others. They try to make a good impression instead of just quietly doing the best job they know how. But trying to make impressions is a hostile activity, the purpose of which is the subordination and control of others. It is an unfriendly desire to get the upper hand and put others in a weaker position than our own; we want to shine in their eyes and have them look up to us. The favored child wants to *force* us to think only good things of him. We must always agree with his exalted opinion of himself or be willing to have a fight on our hands.

Those of us who fear disapproval (in fact, all of us!) should learn to close our ears to praise. If we train ourselves not to be puffed up by it, we shall never be cast down by blame. Let us, rather, be content always to do our best in all situations and then allow others to like or reject our contribution as they choose. Then we need not be hostile, blocked, nor needful of controlling the opinions of others.

A very common trick for keeping our distance from others is to regard them as hostile to us and to others. A very shy man, for example, went with a companion to a party. They sat in a far corner and made no attempt to mix with the guests who were enjoying themselves mingling in the middle of the room. After a while, the man turned to his companion with absolute seriousness and complained, “What an unfriendly bunch!” This is the perfect example of the hostility hidden under shyness (which is a symptom of the desire to be a favored child). When others did not seek him out, he accused *them* of the hostility that he was feeling *as if* it were they who were the hostile individuals. Had he not been hostile, he would not have hidden in the corner and expected them to seek his company. But he had no awareness of his hostility because he had projected it onto them. In reality, he was looking at himself in a mirror.

The common habit of attributing our own hostility to others can become so pronounced that others are viewed as being extremely dangerous to us. This projection has two stages. In the first, we ascribe such hostility only to “strangers.” As a result, we

do not make new friends. Later, as we become more hostile, we ascribe hostility even to friends so that we entirely remove ourselves from making any helpful efforts in society. By this time, we have become incapable of seeing any faults or aggressions on our part and we feel free to attack others obliquely or openly – but always with bitterness.

Many individuals have Ideal Images of themselves as such nice people that they dare not express any degree of open anger. To do so would be too contradictory to their Ideal Image and they could not endure the contradiction. When such individuals are faced with a situation that angers them, they suddenly feel weak (instead of showing anger). That there may be a biological basis for such behavior is indicated, for example, by the fact that the opossum pretends death if he is overpowered. The effectiveness of this method stems from the fact that few will attack a fallen enemy. The “weak” person is picked up and carried by others. Thus, “feelings of weakness” are a form of passive, oblique hostility aimed at getting our own way – we become the favored child by a detour or a trick.

All neurotic behavior is a form of masked aggression in which the person insists that he is blameless. Both the one suffering from neurosis and those around him are victims of his unrecognized hostility. The individual behaves as if he were without authority for his own actions (i.e., without blame). He must maintain the illusion that he is a martyr without power to alter the course of events in which he is involved. He plays the role of innocent victim because he has submerged from his awareness all of his own aggression. He believes it is an unseen force that drives him into disaster, not his hidden hostility.

Alcoholism is a disturbance that gives us a very clear picture of how this works. It is considered to be an escape, which implies that the alcoholic is hostile toward something, otherwise he would need no escape. Adler pointed out that we have only three problems in life, WORK, SEX, AND FRIENDSHIP, which all take place under the Main Tent of community life. The alcoholic is always in serious conflict with one if not all three of these problems. The chart in Figure 4 may help us to understand the dynamics involved.

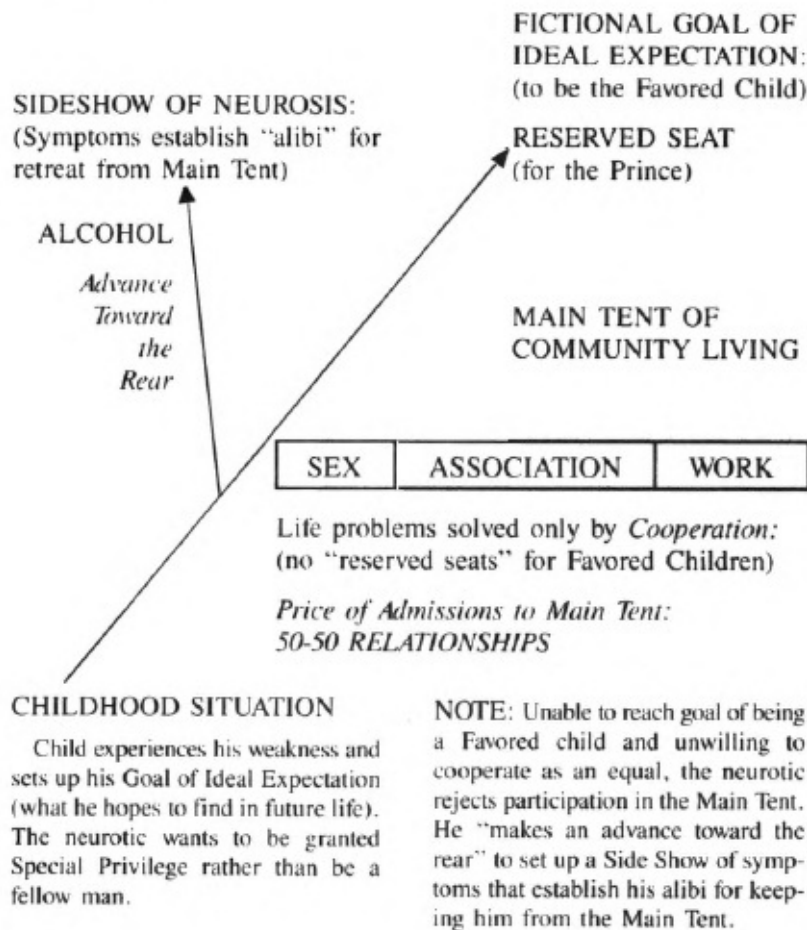


FIGURE 4

The feeling of being rejected is almost always a main complaint of the alcoholic. And by this token (as we noticed earlier) he is actively rejecting the need to contribute in the Main Tent of life. He wants to be the favored child and cannot find the amount of approval he seeks from others there. He gets progressively angry at life under the Main Tent because it is so unlike his ideal expectations of life. As his hostility and frustration grow, he tends to make what Adler called an "advance toward the rear-Here he sets up a sideshow, which is safely distant from the activity in the Main Tent. The sideshow for him is alcohol, but for the non-alcoholic neurotic, it becomes some other kind of compulsive preoccupation. In every neurosis, however, the sideshow is present. It is designed to the exact size and intensity necessary to make it seem impossible for the "victim" to return to his function under the Main Tent.

The alcoholic believes that he is pulled by unseen forces into the sideshow of alcoholism. The reality is that his hostility toward those under that Main Tent is so great that he must blot out his anger by the unconsciousness produced by drink. It is the horrors of sobriety (the need to contribute and be useful) that he must avoid by getting drunk. The craving for special privilege is hidden in his ideal expectations. This ideal

goal was dreamed up as a compensation for the frustrations of his childhood situation. Because these demands cannot be satisfied in real life, he can find their approximation only in the sideshow. He arranges a pseudo-fight, which he uses as a reason for not approaching the real problems that exist under the Main Tent. The pseudo-fight is arranged by him so that it cannot be won; he sets up the “need” to drink and then sets against it the “need” to stop drinking! He is thus able to avoid the social arenas of life where he feels sure he can never be appreciated as he wishes, and he retains his basic hostility. In the role of a man who is without blame, he is clearly a martyr, the helpless victim of alcohol. The deep hostility implicit in his goal of being the favored child is hidden, and he feels entirely blameless. And because he is self-deceived, he cannot correct the error that is bringing him to blameless self-destruction.

Since it is so important for each of us to maintain his or her Ideal Image unsullied by any recognition of our own hostility, it is not surprising that we have conspired with our language to help with such deception. Words can be very clever tools for hiding meanings and purposes – as has been shown by General Semantics. Language is invaluable in helping us conceal hostile motives, especially when we butter someone up before asking for a loan, especially if we do not intend to repay. Words are equally useful for glorifying situations before we present them to ourselves. Only by doing so can we keep our halos on straight while we attack other people.

Adler realized the danger of this linguistic deception. To protect us from both self-deception and deception by others, he insisted that we *trust only movement*. On this point he was uncompromising; he contended that what we *do* is what affects others – not what we say. If our acts are hostile, then we cannot sincerely be opposed to their effect. What we do is what we really mean. But we use language to hide this fact and make it appear we are above reproach.

Put your fingers in your ears and observe whether a person moves toward or away from another person or situation. In short, there are but two movements possible for a human being to make. He either accepts or rejects; he says “yes” or “no.” Our emotions and our emotion-words are only the steam we generate to drive us in the direction we are going.

Fortunately for the human race, the nervous system is not able to debate the fine nuances of language with its subtle shades of verbalisms. It knows only two words and is equipped by evolution to respond only to two commands: “advance” and “retreat.” It is impossible to obey both at the same time. Adler describes neurosis as a “Yes . . . But” attitude, meaning that in neurosis we agree verbally to move forward, but because we are inwardly rejecting the forward move, we transmit a silent “no” to the nervous system. On the level of movement, then, we pronounce a “No.”

In our language we have almost countless words and expressions that, when they are

abstracted, simply mean either “yes” or “no.” One could compile dictionaries of linguistic subterfuges that are habitually used to hide the truth of our yes/no neuro-muscular answers. But everyone who wishes to help develop himself or others must compile his own list of tainted words. We shall indicate a few here that are abstracted by the nervous system and translated into movement toward or movement away from.

*FORWARD-MOVING WORDS:* Love, admire, like, friendly, hope, happy, pleased, glad, smiling, enthusiastic, interested, curious, confident, attentive, accepting, etc.

*MOVING-AWAY-FROM WORDS:* Sad, dejected, disappointed, glum, angry, lazy, hostile, frustrated, depressed, blue, nervous, fearful, timid, hateful, spiteful; apathetic, anxious, resistant, numb, jealous, envious, etc.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REDUCING ALL LANGUAGE TO “YES-NO” WORDS CANNOT BE OVERESTIMATED. It saves us from getting lost in verbal jungles. One of the best examples of how easily we can get bewildered is to be found in the confusion that surrounds the word “anxiety.” It is considered by many almost to be a thing in itself complete with a life of its own, quite distinct from most other emotions. At times, it has been thought of as “free-floating,” as if it were a ghost without a house to haunt. Such concepts, sadly, only serve to obscure thinking and therapy.

There is no difference at the level of the nervous system between anxiety and hostility, for they are but two words for the same rejecting movement; both are ways of saying “no.” A person who dares not express his hostility openly merely submerges it and expresses it as “anxiety.” But he is just as non-cooperative whether he expresses it at one or the other level. If, then, we call “free-floating anxiety” the same thing as a generally hostile attitude toward cooperative functioning, we can easily see how it serves to win a position of special privilege for an individual experiencing it. Our observations of such individuals teach us not to expect participation and contribution from them, so we treat them as favorite children. Not surprisingly, the only times such individuals are relatively free of their “anxieties” is when they are in a situation which pampers them, when nothing is expected and all is given them freely — as they wish.

Thus we see that anxiety is repressed anger over the prospect of meeting situations that might result in aggressions being frustrated. The individual, in fact, tends to get angry in advance! We find anxiety in those who think of themselves as “weak;” concomitantly, they show a strong tendency to disparage others, since they neither trust themselves nor others.

Like anxiety, guilt feelings are often placed in a special category with heightened significance. But again, we are merely dealing with a rejecting attitude which a person can use as an excuse for non-participation. Adler's delightful response to all the bother about “guilt feelings” was “Either do wrong or feel sorry, but don't do both because it is too much work.” Thus he brought to light the hostile, rejecting core of guilt feelings

and stripped from them their pretense of apology.

Let us examine other instances in which language can be used to hide hostility. A would-be martyr once remarked, "If someone does me wrong, I always forgive — but I never forget!" How easily we can fool ourselves by such phrases into believing that we are without hostility. This same person, as we might expect, removes himself as much as possible from all human association.

Watch only movement when someone says he wants to help mankind, but that he must wait to overcome his nervousness with strangers. Nervousness is but another term for hostility and we should not be fooled because it sounds better to label someone a "nervous type" than it does to call him a hostile, irritable person. At the level of the nervous system, the difference between the two is exactly that between Tweedledee and Tweedledum.

Then there is that high-sounding phrase, "sense of duty," which is surcharged with latent animosity and usually breaks out into recriminations sooner or later. Even superficially, we can see that the person is doing something that he would not do unless he were being forced. The person who is doing his "duty" is not doing it for the joy of self-expression or the desire to enrich another. He is demanding recognition and approval. In short, he demands subordination from those he serves and, should this be denied him, hostile accusations of ingratitude are hotly thrown and the fight erupts into the open.

"Clumsiness" is another word that does not sound particularly hostile, but in reality hides a lot of anger. The clumsy person is very self-conscious; he believes that others have nothing to do but watch him while he bungles things. This betrays his hostile, accusing attitude. He moves with his brakes half-set so that his tense muscles refuse to respond automatically when he should be moving toward others. Adler remarked, "If we had to have a rule for swallowing, we would choke to death." Movements must be automatic; but the clumsy person is intent on trying to make a good impression. In this hostile frame of mind, he tries to control his muscles and thus destroys his automatic coordination. His hostility is expressed at the biological level in tense muscles, but his mind is free of any awareness of his submerged anger at others — the ones who might find fault with him.

As another illustration, we may take the word "respect." A parent may say that he wants his child to respect him, but he would never think of saying that he wants that child to fear him. It would not suit his parent's Ideal Image to realize that he wants to rule, dominate, and control the child. Examination discloses mutual hatred existing between those who complain of a "lack of respect" between one another. We may like to believe that there are important intellectual differences between such words as respect, fear, hate, disobedience, and distrust, but to the nervous system they all mean

“NO.” When these attitudes are in the picture, we remain blocked in our relationships with one another.

*Stupidity* is often a clever mask for hidden hostility. There are many children who appear to be unable to do certain school subjects, whereas they may be able enough in others. Reading, for example, is one of the frequent sources of school failures. It is unfortunate that people commonly believe this difficulty arises from some mental incapacity in the child. As a result, remedial techniques are usually attacks aimed at the mental processes of the child, and any progress is usually glacial in its speed and the “stupidity” seems inpregnable.

What has really happened in such cases is that we are dealing with a *rejecting* child, not a stupid one. Because of early defeats and irritations, he has become openly or secretly hostile to reading as well as to those who wish to teach him. Stupidity is a cloak for his refusal to participate further toward the goal of reading. Conveniently, he also defeats those who try to force him to move in the direction he has come to hate. It is his submerged hostility rather than any lack of capacity that stops him from learning to read. Only as his hostility is overcome does he finally move forward.

The relationship between sadness, blues, depression, and glumness is often disregarded; they are, in fact, all expressions of hostility. A person may feel “blue” with a clear conscience, but he would resist admitting that these blues are suppressed rage that have followed an uncomplimentary remark made about him. He would not like to admit that he was petty enough to be angered by a passing breath of air.

Likewise, every timid person wants to believe that, inside, he is the very soul of friendliness toward others. He maintains that it is they who ignore him, while his hostile unwillingness to meet others halfway is hidden from his eyes; he wants always to be the guest but never the host in a relationship. His fears are more absorbing to him than the people around him who might profit from his attention and contribution. We like to imagine that fears are respectable though unfortunate emotions which hold us powerless in their grasp. But what we fear, we hate and what we hate, we fear; there is no difference. The negation of contribution is the common denominator in both.

To overcome a fear, we must give up our refusal to move toward the person or thing we are rejecting. If a person, for example, fears public speaking, there is no magic that will cure him. He must simply surrender his stubborn refusal to speak when he is asked. Once he is willing to move in that direction, he quickly learns the knack. And only then do the final traces of resistance (fear) begin to disappear. Hostile dependence on the opinion of others produces many a mute, inglorious Milton.

The important factor about any fear that is used as an alibi, then, is that it masks a negative decision on the part of an individual; he decides not to move in the direction of the thing toward which he is hostile. If we are fearful, we are not, then, the victims of



some imponderable compulsion which takes hold of our destiny without our consent. To face the fact that we are making a definite decision not to participate would place the whole matter under our personal responsibility – just where we do not want it. If we wish to escape the burden of irrational fears, we must give up believing in their mystical nature and accept the unavoidable fact that we have made this decision which is hostile toward the object of our fear; we refuse to learn and to participate in that area. FEAR AND HOSTILITY ARE ONE AND THE SAME THING.

If, as we have said, the Ideal Image leads us to resist recognition of our hidden hostility, how then can we become aware of it? There will be little incentive as long as things are going well for us; it is the other fellow who is the most disturbed by us under such circumstances. But the time may come when we, too, begin to feel the pinch. And, in spite of the rationalizations we make for our behavior, we may not be able to escape the realization that we may be somewhat at fault ourselves. In such a case, we may undertake to uncover our own hostility.

At such a time, the help of a good friend or therapist may assist us in discovering our unfriendliness toward others. But if neither is available, we may also learn to “read our tensions.” As we have noticed, our hidden hostility always betrays its presence in some disturbance of mental, biological, or chemical functioning. Investigation of such disturbances will lead us to our hidden hostilities if we are willing to follow their trail. If we have been accustomed to develop a headache when we have a conference with the boss, for instance, and have blamed it on the stuffiness or the air in his office, we might begin to examine our attitudes toward him. The chances are that we will find that we are deeply angry because we are not his favored child around the office. In short, we must accept the fact that every tension has its “good” reason for being, as well as its *real* reason. The first one we invent in order to prevent any damage to our Ideal Image; the second is the true source of our distress which we wish to hide from our awareness.

There are three main steps to be followed in overcoming our blind spots. They are as follows:

1. The first is to chart in our own minds the various tensions and disturbances of function as we experience them and not the “good reason” we have invented for each of them. Then we must begin to look for the “real reason” behind each tension. Find out what type of participation is limited or excluded by each tension and who is hindered or damaged by our refusal. Note that we must accept this hostility as *belonging to ourselves*.

2. The next step is for us to contrast this hostility picture with the Ideal Image we have of ourselves, much as we would compare a candid snapshot with a studio portrait. Begin to eliminate the Ideal Image, bit by bit, by fusing the two images together. We must get accustomed to the idea that we are not always persons of good will. Step by

step, we must begin to see ourselves as others see us.

3. The final step is our full acceptance of the hostility we feel for those around us as our creation and not some force which impinges from without us.

These steps alone will not place us at the helm, in full command of our psychic forces. Now, however, when we are hostile, we will express this feeling with full awareness of what we are doing to ourselves and others. We will no longer be able to pretend that we are without blame for our actions. Since we can never escape responsibility for what we do, regardless of how good an alibi we may contrive, we can deal in calculated risks rather than take chances of tripping over our hidden hates.

Only with our hidden hates kept under the spotlight of full awareness can we hope to be safe from the hidden and oblique *projections* of such hatred. As long as we are conscious of our hidden demand to be a favored child, we can control its manifestations when otherwise it would be “anti-survival” to express them unmodified by insight. For example, it is easier and safer in the end to quit a job we hate rather than to develop an ulcer which might become perforated and kill us. And if we *must* visit our in laws, we might as well do it hating them consciously while we develop the headache which gives us an excuse to leave a half hour early. Since it so easy for others to see our hostilities, why should we be the last or the only ones to be aware of them? Difficult as it may be to adjust to a situation if we are filled with conscious resentment, it is still tar more painful to do so if we maintain the hatred at a submerged level. The conscious awareness of our own hatefulness will temper our attacks on others.

This viewpoint regarding hidden hostilities and the three steps toward clarification can easily be used as a basis for group therapy. A group is a dynamic and effective instrument, often much more compelling than individual consultation. Adler pointed out that all human faculties have evolved because we live in groups: “All human problems are social problems in a social setting, and there are no other problems,” he stated. What better place, then, to understand human relationships than in a group experience?

To prepare the group for such discussions, introduce the members to the concepts set forth above. They will quickly grasp the concept of Ideal Image and easily learn to spot the fictitious superiority put forth by others, even though each may remain temporarily oblivious of his or her own. The same is true of hidden and oblique manifestations of hostility. It does not take long before they can perceive the dichotomy between the Ideal Image and the real behavior of others.

With equal ease, they soon learn the knack of turning equivocal language into “yes-no” words. They learn to trust only movement.

The group as a whole, then, becomes a mirror in which each may see himself as others see him. He can observe how he fights and twists to steal the position of a

favored child at the expense of others. This exploitative attitude can be compared with an ideal attitude of fair play. Everyone can see how far removed the striving of himself and others in the group is from playing fairly. Thus, the hostility-quotient of each is disclosed.

Using this approach, the group itself functions as the therapist. Such a procedure is a distinct advantage for training in interpersonal relationships, while it helps destroy tendencies to make transferences to a “father-figure” on whom one may continue to lean to avoid becoming self-reliant. We should clearly understand the difference between this kind of group therapy and the kind where a “therapist” treats patients in a group. In the latter case, he is the dominant figure on whom the others can lean. They repress themselves to a sub-dominant position of childlike dependency. As his “inferiors,” they dare not express openly their hostility toward the therapist. He may attack them but they may not retaliate. Thus the “feeling of weakness” (the hostility) may not come to light.

But where the group as a whole is the therapist, no father figure need exist. Indeed, no one may be allowed to hold such a position with impunity in the group. The chairman may not be placed above the common level and he must not be immune to criticism if caught in expressions of his own hidden hostility. Each session conducted thus becomes a treatment for all present — including the “leader.” The tendencies of each to seek the status of favored child are exposed. There is not much chance for holier-than-thou attitudes to flourish because everyone is made aware that such a posture is part of the basic hostility of the individual. This is a fortunate occurrence, for it prevents the development of “halo” pressure,” or self-righteousness that some people adopt merely from “learning” psychology. And it prevents the substitution of the analysis of the original neurosis (hostility). Too often, analysis becomes only another form of fictitious superiority which leaves the individual no more aware of his submerged hostility than before. The job is properly done only when we know ourselves for what we truly are.

In this approach to group therapy, the whole group works on the problem of spotting oblique hostilities. There is small chance that any may depart unnoticed. The function of the leader is only to introduce the original concepts and to guide the participants long enough for them to find the knack of spotting oblique hostilities. From that point onward, all are on their own responsibility and subject to the pressures of interaction that arise in all interpersonal contacts.

Where there are no masters and no slaves, all must share equality, which is merely the *need to be productive*. A proper group experience allows no one to abase or to exalt himself. The need to share and share alike is the therapeutic agent in the group.

## ***12 / Industrial Relations in the Light of Individual Psychology***

Business and industry would gladly pay millions if a variety of pills could be invented that would cure such ills as absenteeism, accident-proneness, malingering, carelessness, indifference, high employee turnover, excessive spoilage, and similar costly manifestations of inadequate human behavior. Enterprises have spent fortunes to date in efforts to study and solve these problems. Each has been considered as a thing in itself that could be treated independently. Not long ago, a conference on absenteeism was called by a certain executive, and an amazing number of our largest companies sent their industrial relations representatives to see if he had a cure for the malady. Nothing could reveal more dramatically the low level of understanding in this field: as if anyone could produce a cure for absenteeism in and of itself! We may quickly observe how much light Adler's insights into human problems in work situations can throw onto these matters.

An organization, just like an individual, should be regarded from the holistic viewpoint. We must be able to see that both the good and the bad manifestations are part of a unified pattern. But currently, management does not view results in this way. Management takes full credit for good production records and disclaims responsibility for disruptive factors and results, which are attributed to “gremlins” that somehow haunt the shop to retard good work. Management does not see that these disjunctive outcomes are simply the less fortunate outgrowths of what we, as Individual Psychologists, would call the *lifestyle* of the organization. We might say further that the policies adopted by top management are the lifestyle from which both good and bad results may be expected. As psychologists, we are familiar with the so-called “good child” who does everything his mother wants during the day to her great pride and satisfaction, but whose perfection is marred by the unpleasant habit of wetting the bed at night as his revenge against domination.

If management regarded an organization from the holistic viewpoint, it would waste no time and money trying to treat symptoms separately. I remember working for the government during World War II. Absenteeism was a serious problem in those days, so someone interested in turning a fast dollar for himself and happily knowing nothing about lifestyle or such things, sold the government a variety of posters designed to cut down absenteeism. These were posted over the exits; one depicted a menacing, grinning Japanese army officer who was rubbing his hands together in great glee and imploring the employees to “Please Take Day Off.” Those who were planning to skip work the next day grinned back at him as they left the job and there was no notable decline in absenteeism.

Absenteeism is an act of revenge, like bedwetting. The individual staying home feels put back in some way and does not feel that he is any real part of the team or unit in which he works. No emotional tie holds him to his co-workers and he feels free to leave them with the burden. No picture or slogan alters this hostile attitude when he has a chance to embarrass his supervisor by taking time off willfully. Nothing but better human relations in his work group will hold him on the job.

The philosophy of top management in handling employees has not changed, in many instances, since the Pharaohs built the pyramids in Egypt. The whip of leather has been given up for a variety of other pressure tactics. *Fear* of some sort is used to keep things moving and this fear is found all the way from top to bottom in every industry. But where fear is used as the main method of control, we find human beings moving away from such pressures as much as possible. When too frequently confronted by force, individuals retaliate with forgetfulness, careless accidents, absenteeism, malingering, and often outright sabotage. They set up in themselves forces which are equal and opposite to pressures brought against them.

An excellent illustration of the prevalence and effect of fear is provided by a medical study reported in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Let me quote only a small part of this valuable analysis, entitled "Exhaustion in the Young Business Executive:"

... These executives had many disorders interfering with their efficiency. Apparently, they started out on their jobs with all the zeal and enthusiasm and ambition to reach a goal which would give them prestige, affluence and security. Most of them were college trained and many had graduate training preparing them for their life work. Why did men with such drives manifest disabilities at an age at which they should have been most productive? Why did these men live under tension which not only affected them but projected their emotions on employees under their supervision? Why were some departments in industry more productive than others engaged in similar lines of work? ... Psychological studies have revealed that executives with somatic symptoms are as a rule dependent men whose insecurities and feelings of inferiority are great. Their drives to succeed are a reaction to their intense fears of being inadequate, which are expressed as ambition, producing somatic symptoms in the gastrointestinal, cardiovascular, respiratory and neuromuscular systems. The executives' interpersonal relationships appear *adequate on the surface* as far as their business associates are concerned. However, their reaction to their families is frequently hostile, so that their wives and children as a rule are injured. Frenzy and repressed aggressions, frequently on an unconscious basis, are present in most such persons, though they manifest strong defenses against expressing their psychological weaknesses. Their capacity for getting pleasure out of life is limited ...

... Another significant characteristic of executives' thinking is *fear of failure*. Even though the executive can look back with some pride on his accomplishments, there is always apprehension or fear that all will not be the same tomorrow. The fear is not so much loss of material things as *loss of pride!* ...

From this quotation it is clear that the average business or industrial situation is still a jungle filled with dangers that may attack at any moment. Regardless of what work level one is on, the situation is not different. The tragedy of regarding one's job in this way is immediately apparent when we remember that one third of each day we live is given over to earning a living. The factor disregarded by industry is that an organization is fundamentally a *social institution* and must provide, above all else, *the feeling of personal validity* for those who spend the most productive part of their waking hours in it. People cannot endure to live that amount of time in constant fear or with the feeling of being insignificant. If we want them to fulfill the work-schedule, we must see to it that the human conditions are such that they can fulfill themselves while working. They must get the feeling that they are valid and important to themselves and to others. If conditions in the work unit do not permit this feeling, then we must expect that employees will revenge themselves by staying away or by some form of sabotage.

Management has been taught by economists that human beings undergo a magical transformation the moment they punch the time clock. It is alleged that they cease being people and become what is called "economic men" whose principal motivation is to get a fatter pay envelope. As Individual Psychologists, we must insist that people remain human beings under all circumstances and pursue the same human goals of significance on the job as they do elsewhere. Management must give up the myth of the economic man and deal with the realities of human strivings for the feeling of validity. Human behavior is a continuum of strivings toward this goal.

Business or industry survives or fails (as is also true of each individual) according to its productivity. Production Supervisors live in terror that the production record of their departments may fall a bit. Here is the *fear of failure*. Their fear of punishment, in such cases, goads them to nag their men to faster action. Such nagging only sets up a force inside them that is equal and opposite to the force of the one who nags them. This is why we get sabotage instead of productivity from them. Fear breeds fear in most people, and fear produces stasis or contraction.

How would an Individual Psychologist approach the problem? First of all, he would realize that high production is the reward of good human relationships. High production is a good system. And good relationships exist only when men are not afraid of or in competition with each other.

A production unit is formed only when it is impossible for *one man* to do the work alone. Because the job is too big for one man, a group is formed to work together and a

supervisor is put in charge of the workers. Usually, this supervisor mistakenly imagines that his job is to “get the work out.” In short, he has his eyes trained on production, which as we have said is only a by-product or symptom of good human relationships. Unfortunately, the supervisor in his anxiety to impress top management and his preoccupation with production, neglects the most productive factor of all – the human factor. In effect, he does not realize that the main job of every supervisor is to weld his group of assorted men into a team. Men who are not tied into a team by invisible bonds of human sympathy very quickly fell into personal competitions which disrupt teamwork and therefore limit the production. Cliques and individuals struggle against each other for personal prestige instead of working for a common goal of group productivity. The members of the group feel fearful and defensive toward each other and against the supervisor, so they have no feeling of security. The frictions and feelings of insignificance produced stimulate them to various kinds of revenge such as absenteeism and similar blights on relationships.

Now we can see more clearly the contribution Individual Psychology can make to our understanding of the problems of business and industry. The difficulties we meet in those areas are not fundamentally different from those we see in schools, the home, church, government, or any other place where people must work together to accomplish some task of common survival. As Adler taught us, 'All human problems are social problems in a social setting and there are no other problems.' In the Old Testament is the story of the building of the Tower of Babel. It began well enough and progressed as long as all the people spoke the same language. They could work together as a team and get results. But, in time, everyone began to speak a private language (the language of *Big Me and Little You*) so that teamwork or common understanding became impossible.

Business and industry must reconsider their whole approach to the problems of management and work to achieve a common language which expresses the equality of human value. When this common language (which has no room for Big Me and Little You) is finally devised, men will delight in being members of the team and will not need to revenge themselves or sabotage each other. But until that happens, absenteeism, spoilage, and all the other ills will remain as barometers which indicate the intensity of the storm raging among the individuals in the industry that is malfunctioning.

## 13 / The “Negative Approach” to Training Salesmen

Sales managers often speak of the standard formula that ten percent of their salesmen make ninety percent of the sales while ninety percent sell only ten percent. This paradox, endlessly mysterious, has always presented sales managers with their greatest dilemma: how to break the jinx that seems to block the marginal producers from living up to their true potential. Every clever training device has been tested and untold sums have been poured into sessions aimed at improving the productivity of these men. Nonetheless, the ten-to-ninety ratio stubbornly persists.

All past cures have had one thing in common — they have been forms of “positive thinking” or “positive” indoctrination aimed at supplying salesmen with the strength and determination to motivate themselves. Countless ingenious pamphlets, sale-letters, films, audio and video tapes, cartoons, slogans, pep-sessions, sales competitions, as well as the naked threat of firing have been employed. Lexicons of “magic words,” designed to have the power to crack customers' sales resistance, have been placed into salesmen's mouths. Sadly, though, all such costly training seems to roll right off the back of the marginal producer. The more he apparently needs such training, the less of it seemingly permeates him. No amount of Positive Thinking will penetrate the bedrock of resistance found in those who need it most.

Now these resistant marginal producers are not stupid men; they offer broad evidence of their ability to learn in other areas. Why do they always seem to black out in the very area which is most critical to their function? This question has occupied my attention for many years. During that time, it became apparent that such men suffer from a kind of emotional block, or shock, that hold their talents in deep freeze. It occurred to me that their productivity could be released if a way could be found to relieve their fear; but the method of dissolving such blocks did not appear until a few years ago. I found that the positive approach had to be discarded; it served only to increase the resistance of these men. In its place, a way of freeing these men from *the fear* that binds them had to be found. Only after the fear is dissolved will any kind of positive or direct instruction be of use to them. Force, I have found, only meets with equal-and-opposite counterforce, so a form of ju-jitsu had to be devised, with a seemingly effortless way of undoing resistance. In the absence of this, resistant salesmen only become more defensive; they feel humiliated because they are treated, in the high-pressure approach, as if they could *consciously* control what they were doing and just pull themselves up by their bootstraps. Any pep-talks or sales competition aimed at goading them into greater activity invariably lowers vitality and causes them to avoid what shames them most — the goal of high productivity. With embarrassment intact, these men fall apart as soon as they are left on their own initiative.



Certainly, every salesman knows it is to his direct advantage to sell all he can, use every bit of sales training he can get, and thus increase his income. What, then, prevents the marginal group from absorbing materials that would strengthen their abilities? Why do they drag their feet, loaf around the office, duck into movies, and avoid contact with potential customers? Are they afflicted with some activist impulse toward self-destruction? These are vital questions that for a long time had no answers. But the riddle might be explained by looking at some basic theories of education.

The traditional methods of training involve an overall concept of “Big Jugs” pouring into “Little Mugs.” It so happens, though, that the Little Mugs are quite full at the moment when the Big Jug decides to pour into them. The Little Mugs invariably run over; they seem incapable of profiting by instruction under the techniques of positive indoctrination; they are filled to the brim with some critical emotional problem. I see the need for devising some wholly new “negative approach” to dislodge the accumulation of old mistaken certainties which fill the Little Mugs and make them resistant to the expensive positive training which is brewed for them. We must understand the fundamental fact that all education is, ultimately, self-education and that no man can educate anyone but himself. In other words, a salesman will gladly retrain himself along more productive lines as soon as he has been relieved of the basic habit of resistance, which continually pulls him in a mistaken direction. Only then will he learn to enjoy making contact with potential customers instead of fleeing from the risk of exposure as often as he dares without getting fired.

Upon looking further, I observed that men who habitually flee potential customers have an unreasoning, irrational dread of being turned down by the prospective buyer. Instinctively, like wounded animals, they retreat at the thought of being hurt. They believe that any refusal to buy their product or service diminished their own personal worth and that they have in fact, been de-valued as human beings. Their fear of getting a “no” has led them, over the years, to devise a whole set of evasive strategies for avoiding exposure to potential rejection.

Though they are constantly pained by this inner conflict, most of these men manage to hide it from their conscious attention, for no one likes, or can endure for long, any contemplation of his own feelings of humiliation. But though the knowledge is seemingly hidden, it is really like a submerged iceberg which endangers their navigation. A good salesman seeks and enjoys exposure, just as a good hunting dog loves the chase and regards it as an exciting game. But the ninety-percenter experiences mostly dread or, at best, chronic discomfort, which he can temporarily relieve by hiding out on the job.

No wonder, then, that these unfortunate individuals spend their working hours burdened by varying degrees of depression about their lot; alcohol is often used to dull the pain. The only solution lies in desensitizing such persons before we can expect them

to function in the spontaneous manner which characterizes any good worker. It must be demonstrated to them that selling can become an interesting, challenging game to them, as it is for their more fortunate brothers in the business. No one can go happily through his daily work with his brakes half set, loaded with negative feelings just when it is time to put his best foot forward with a client. We have no choice but to empty the salesman so that he can refill himself with a more satisfying substance – the wine of high adventure in pursuit of new business. Until he releases his set brakes, he remains psychologically incapable of *spending* himself on his job and will continue to “protect” himself by withholding his efforts as has been his habit in the past. He will remain trapped in an inner struggle against his own internal will, a contest which he is always doomed to lose.

Obviously, then, the “positive approach” of indoctrination will never work if it is pitted against the inner will of an individual to protect himself from humiliation. The positive approach fails because the hypersensitive individual is not really looking for a way to approach his problem; he is seeking, rather, a hole in the fence through which he can escape before someone hurts his feelings.

The only solution, since the positive approach is useless in such cases, is to *de-sensitize* the hypersensitive individual to hearing someone say “no” to him. He must resolve the bind in which he finds himself and circumvent the habitual defenses which for years have held him in thrall. In my experiences, group discussions are the most effective method for achieving this result. The object of such discussions should be to reveal and unmask all the mistaken Ideal Expectations held by the individual so he can understand them and free himself of their hypnotic power. In short, if a man has an irrational fear of hearing “NO” from a client, he must search for the root of this fear in his Ideal Expectations. Formerly, he has expected that every day will be Christmas and whatever he desires in life should come whenever he asks for it. He simply wants to win all the time and any denial of victory pushes him into a mild depression or worse.

In group discussions, the various participants soon develop an excited interest in seeking out and exposing the dangerous Ideal Expectation in themselves and others and in noticing how their hypersensitivity stems directly from their mistaken expectations of life. They recognize that it is simply not possible to feel let down – if they haven't been leaning on someone in the first place. Their compulsion to win all the time diminishes and, as it lessens, they find their hurt feelings diminishing at the same pace. To their surprise, they begin to look forward to their daily work while regarding it as an enjoyable process in which they spend their efforts. Automatically, they become desensitized to the fear of failure and the emotional energies tied up in avoidance are set free and begin to flow in a spontaneous search of skills for making better sales. Work is transformed from a punishment to a game.

Unlike the old method, this “negative” approach does not make the salesman feel

inadequate by holding up before his eyes a lot of accusing *shoulds*, *oughts*, and *musts* which further deepen his poor opinion of himself. We tear down the old structure of Mistaken Certainties and all the bad habits that arise out of them. When salesmen have freed themselves of their hypersensitivity, then they may, at last, use their own initiative to revive hitherto frozen abilities – the genius which they did not previously dare to trust. The resulting self-confidence prevents them from needing to hide out in the shadows merely to protect their tender feelings from the imaginary insult of someone saying “NO.”

## ***14 / The Common Sense of Sex Education***

In the past, sex education for children has been concerned mainly with imparting biological facts to physically immature individuals. There have been controversies over whether this is helpful or dangerous to children. Proponents have insisted that if children are taught about sex at an early age, the sexual difficulties of mature life will be avoided. Others have felt that such teaching stirs only a morbid curiosity about sex. This biological approach touches upon much broader implication, however.

Adler pointed out that sex is as much a social matter as a private occupation. Being a male or being a female means vastly more in terms of our culture than our past emphasis upon biological facts would indicate. The individual lives in a social context and the biological function of sex is but a part of his or her total life. But social living is strongly influenced by the sexuality of human beings. The two sexes exaggerate their biological differences with differences in attitudes and customs. Most of the sexual difficulties we wish to avoid arise more from the attitudes and customs surrounding sexuality and sex — differences than from actual physical differences themselves. In short, sex education for the child ought to be directed more toward the understanding of our cultural conditioning than it is at present, so that we may see the facts in their social connectedness.

According to some, female envy of the male penis leads to many of the psychic difficulties suffered by women and girls. This concept, with which we do not agree, was the result of an effort to understand sex apart from social customs developed around its biological functioning. Our social life and folkways are transmitted from a patriarchal past when the male was given a supremely dominant role and owned the females. All prestige and worldly advantages were given to the male, the female retaining as her right those non-predatory functions and behaviors unacceptable or useless to the predatory male. Even today, the word “masculine” denotes all that is dominant, while “feminine” signifies the passive and submissive human characteristics.

With such values intact, who would not rather be a male than a female? The female role in modern culture is still undervalued and looked down upon because it offers fewer material advantages. As long as greater privileges are given the male because of biologically accidental maleness, females will be envious. No one cares to accept a position of permanent inferiority throughout life – and compensation will never be possible as long as the female is considered less valuable than the male.

The first sex education any girl or boy gets is the understanding that there are differences of privilege in favor of the male. Children discover this long before they are aware of actual biological differences. We do not verbally inform them of the fact, but they see that the father has greater freedom and more self-determination than the

mother. Social pressure is applied early to persuade girls to be passive and even greater pressure is put on boys to be aggressive. A boy with a dirty face is taken for granted, but a girl who becomes dirty is shamed into overvaluing cleanliness. By such strategies, we subdue in girls activity which is natural to both genders. A girl who is obliged to remain clean at all times must avoid activities reserved for boys and cultivate only the passive, unthreatening traits which are considered unworthy of men. These not-too-subtle pressures exerted on children from the first days of life soon result in what is called “masculine” and “feminine” behavior. The female is actively restrained by the customs of our patriarchal civilization and discouraged from participating as an equal with the male. While this custom remains unchanged, there will be competition and enmity between the sexes.

Thus, it is social customs rather than biological sex functions which determine the manner and time in which sex will be experienced and expressed by any individual. Parents and teachers must decide whether they want to continue fostering this customary inequality between the sexes. If they believe that the future of the race is best served by artificially limiting the power of the female, then we shall probably continue trying to make boys more manly (masculine) and girls less manly (feminine). “Masculine” and “feminine” are artifacts of our culture and must no longer be confused with male and female. On the other hand, if we believe that the future of mankind is better served by a greater equality and identity of interest between the sexes, we must discard the fictions of masculinity and femininity and the bitter competitions they engender.

Sex education for the young ought to be a conscious evaluation of these factors as they apply to the daily lives of our children. The life-attitudes are being solidified during childhood and it is for us to determine the direction of the trends to be expressed in later life. When we call a boy a sissy, we do more than shame him; we defame and dishonor all human females in the same breath. The damage done the boy is small in comparison to the harm inflicted on females by using their sex as a standard of worthlessness held before the boy. The rank cynicism with which our culture still regards women and girls is symptomized by the word “sissy.”

The little business of imparting biological facts of sex is considerable in its effect on individual children in comparison to the dynamic effect of what it means in terms of personal advantage to be a boy or a girl in our culture. It might be far more useful for us to teach boys and girls that they ought to regard each other with some degree of equality. We should worry less about what is commonly called “sex instruction.” An arrogant male child who is trained to conquer others in his environment will, as a man, probably try to conquer women sexually. And the woman who is envious of the arrogant male will try to make him “fall” for her in an effort to dominate him. In both cases, sex is used as weapon instead of a common bond. Sex difficulties do not arise from ignorance of biology nearly so often as they stem from the mutual antagonism and tear

engendered by overvaluing the male role and undervaluing the female role in our culture. No real fellowship is possible between males and females in our civilization because of this mistake.

Women themselves contribute much toward keeping up this mistaken traditional attitude. Their resentment against being undervalued is so strong that they do not enjoy the society of each other. Witness the old term “hen party” and the scornful tone of the average woman toward such gatherings. This attitude only contributes to the general scorn heaped upon the female. It is unfortunate that women too often assist in their own degradation by failing to understand the implication of such thinking.

Men and women indeed marry in spite of the cultural antagonism that exists between them. But marriage brings less happiness than it might to most people. The responsibility for this is frequently ascribed to sexual incompatibility and female frigidity or masculine impotence, but such words explain nothing. Marriage is a job for two equal partners and cannot succeed when rivalry exists. And in spite of this, we continue to train our children so that the rivalry will be present! The fear of being conquered and continually depreciated keeps many men and women from marriage. Or if they marry, fighting, nagging, whining, sexual alienation, and a host of other ills contaminate the relationship. Training in fellowship and a feeling of equality between the sexes is the only kind of sex education which will not fail its mark. We must remove or minimize the effect of our inherited patriarchal custom on our children. The boy who looks down on girls will grow up to be a dissatisfied marriage partner. Our program of sex education ought to be the correction of such mistaken attitudes before puberty. Doing so involves a fundamental alteration in our cultural viewpoint.

Sexual functions have no autonomous lives of their own; they are used in human relationships exactly as prevailing attitudes toward the opposite sex determine. Imparting biological facts will neither help nor harm, for the knowledge will be used according to the character of the individual who receives the instruction. Adequate functioning demands cooperation and cooperation can exist only when there is a feeling of equality present. Our sex education, then, is more rightly accomplished when we remove those attitudes of superiority and inferiority which are obstacles to cooperation among children. To the degree we can remove the injurious fictions which proclaim a difference between the masculine and feminine characters, we promote a feeling of mutual regard between the sexes. And identity of interest will guarantee proper use of the sexual function, and the biology of sex can be superimposed without fear to anyone.

## 15 / *They Like to Stammer*

The reason stammering is so very hard to cure is a very simple one — the stammerer likes his disease and hopes to die with it! This seems impossible to believe when one sees the painful efforts and contortions of a stammerer. It would seem that almost anything would be preferable to them. But nevertheless, and as bad as it may seem, the alternative to this condition seems worse to the sufferer.

Suppose a magic cure were found: the poor fellow would feel crushed. It would be like removing the trellis from a grapevine. The stammerer has not trained himself to stand alone when faced by others.

Stammering is the greatest fraud of all “dis-eases.” For centuries it has fooled both the stammerer and the public. Its cure is so obvious that no one finds it. And the victim dares not find it. Those who do not stammer are so hypnotized by the act itself that they fail to see its “hidden” meaning. No one would stammer if *he or she were not afraid of people!*

Demosthenes probably got the public off the track in the cure of the disease by putting pebbles under his tongue and declaiming to the waves. Almost every “cure” has been aimed, somehow, at the organs of speech themselves. Flourishing businesses grow and wane based on exercises in articulation. But the stammerer, like the brook, goes on forever in spite of them. Stammering is a symptom of an *attitude toward life*; the answer does not lie within the mouth, throat, or even the nervous system. All of these only consent to be *used by the stammerer* to help him accomplish his inner purpose – to keep away from people as much as possible (to exploit).

Treating a symptom is like trying to erase a shadow from the wall – nothing happens when you do so. The stammerer likes “nice, kind people” and he likes a close, cozy situation. Once he has established his relationship with his teacher, he rewards by better speech while in school. The lessons aimed at training organs helps keep his attention just where he wants it – where it has always been – on him.

If one hand struggles against the other, which hand will win? It is the individual himself who *creates* the stammer for it “helps” him in society. How, then, can drill in articulation overcome that which he does not want to give up at all?

For those who are convinced that stammering is organic (because they do not know stammerers well enough), let us cite some surprising facts. Get a stammerer to tell a story about another stammerer. When he comes to the place where he ought to stammer in the story, we are amazed to find that he is unable to do so. Give him a part in a play and he will speak his lines without a hitch! He can sing and you would never suspect his problem. With some people, he speaks with hardly a catch, while with others he is

reduced to near speechlessness. If the fault lay in the tongue and were indeed a mechanical defect requiring mechanical remedies, then speech could not be dependent on any social situation or be influenced by the changing social breeze.

Just before Christmas one year, I entered a liquor store to make a holiday purchase. The floor was covered by boxes of new stock and every clerk was busy arranging it on the shelves. Only the owner of the shop was free and he was giving commands in a steady stream to the sweating crew. I was the only customer in the shop. When the owner got a chance, he came to wait on me. To my amazement, he stammered badly when he spoke! At first, I could not believe my ears, so I pretended deep indecision about my purchase. As he stood waiting for me to make up my mind, he would call out commands to his employees with faultless diction. But whenever I engaged him in conversation, he stammered badly. I kept up this game for easily ten minutes and he never missed a cue.

There has never been, for me, a better illustration of the fact that the social situation calls the tune in stammering. It is very simple to understand why. This man was king in relation to his employees. If he didn't like them, he could fire them; he was the boss in that relationship, and they could deny him nothing. He could afford to be dictatorial, as he indeed was in his approach to them. With me, however, it was a different story. The money was still in my pocket so that made me the boss and him the servant. He was afraid of me, for I might refuse to buy his merchandise. Though with his helpers he felt on a higher plane, with me he felt in a weaker position, so he stammered.

This pattern never fails. When a stammerer is in a play, he does not feel like himself. If he doesn't like the character portrayed, he is not to blame so he has no need to stammer. The same is true in singing. As singer or actor, the stammerer puts a safe distance between himself and any personal responsibility for what is expressed: his inner value as a human being is not being tested and the person himself is not on trial. With people whom he does not fear, his stammering is kept to a minimum. But it is at its worst when he faces someone whom he feels may be critical. He is always afraid of social contact, for he has no confidence that he will be able to maintain his sense of personal worth with strangers.

In his scheme of things, the stammerer categorizes people in two and only two ways: there are the few friends whom he has tested long enough to be sure they won't bite. Everyone else is categorized as "stranger" and most probably hostile. The reason for this hostile attitude lies in the fact that stammering always begins early in life. It arises when a child who has had kindly treatment from a parent suddenly meets a critical environment for which he is not prepared. He tries to put a distance between himself and the authoritative source of his discomfort. Since he cannot flee, he stammers. Doing so forces his environment to become more patient with him and not to expect too much. He learns to avoid people whose kindness has not been tested and he assumes that all



strangers are hostile until proven otherwise. It is quite impossible for the stammerer to believe that strangers are quite busy being interested in themselves and are thus too busy even to think of him, let alone muster the energy to feel hostile.

Here is a typical sequence of events: the child has an early encounter with authority and criticism and gets a bad reaction. His contusion causes hesitation in his speech. He finds that less is expected when he stutters, for attention is focused on his disability and taken off him. He wishes to avoid social contact with anyone except those who are proven kindly. Stammering helps keep others at a distance — where he wants them to remain anyhow. By stammering, he is able to keep his human contact on a reduced scale and is excused from performing in the broader-based human arena.

Because social exclusion begins so early in life, the victim is not aware of the need to train himself in social techniques. He honestly does not know how to approach other people, what to expect of them, what they have a right to expect of him, or what to talk about. This is why it would be such a shock to the stammerer if suddenly he were cured by magic. He would have no excuse in that event for avoiding people. But he would relate himself to the outside world exactly as if he were still a stammerer!

This last statement is fundamentally important to our whole discussion. No one would ever stammer if he were adequately trained in social techniques. Such training must necessarily be *self-training*. The stammerer, however, imagines that his affliction prevents him from being more friendly. In short, he uses his disability as a valid excuse for his retreat from people. And as long as he avoids others, he gets no chance to learn to know them. Since his social techniques never improve, his speech defect remains intact.

The stammerer, in effect, accuses others (except his few, rare friends) of being hostile. He is unable to see that his retreat from human contact is both hostile and unjust to others. They are condemned by him before they even have a chance to prove themselves and he has run away. This type of hostility was evident in the salesman in the liquor store. He was irritable to his clerks and evasive in his approach to me. It would have been more satisfactory to all parties in the situation if he had considered us all as equals in this world.

Almost without exception, the stammerer is family-bound. He operates within such a small area of social activity that he is more than apt to be overly demanding. He is “easily hurt,” so that his companions must train themselves to be most cautious of what they do and say. He grows accustomed to the exaggerated concerns of others which, in turn, makes the indifferent outside world seem generally hostile by comparison. An old attempt to cure stammering was to cut the “string” under the tongue. What really needs to be cut is the apron string of hypersensitivity that keeps him family-bound; he is simply tied on too short a social leash.

Stammering, then, is a fraud perpetuated by the victim on both himself and those around him. His speech is designed to wring people's hearts so they will grant him special privileges. The stammerer can cure himself only if he is willing to be more accepting of the outside world and think less often of himself. Instead of insisting that he has a right to avoid social contact because he stammers, he must convince himself that there are no excuses. Any stammerer who says, "In spite of my fear of people I shall mingle with them as an equal," will not need to stammer.

The whole manner of living adopted by the stammerer may be understood through the following analogy. This man acts like the perpetual guest in life, an individual whose role in any social scene is relatively passive. Aside from the display of general good manners, little is expected of him. He may flatter his host merely by appearing happy at a party. The host, however, must be forever concerned about his guests and contribute to their needs. He has little time to think of himself, for his is an *active* role. His responsibility begins when he invites his guests and does not end until all have left his home.

If a stammerer wishes to stop his stammering, he may retrain himself very simply. He need think no longer of his tongue, his vowels, his palate, or his nervous system. He needs only to train himself to play the host in the world and treat all men as equals. If he obliges himself to be hospitable to strangers, he will soon have additional friends. And when he has been the host to everyone and made them his personal friends, he won't be able to find any company "hostile" enough to make him want to stammer. The stammerer has the same problem that all of us have: he must learn to live with everyone else and feel at home in the world. The only peculiarity in his case is that he got a later start in being friendly and thus needs more practice.

All skill is the result of experience. Likewise, social skills are never inborn – they must be learned. Getting along with people is a learnable social skill – even by those who stammer.

## 16 / *The Myth of “The Unconscious”*

The concept of “the Unconscious” should be eliminated from all psychological considerations. Whatever value it may have had in the infancy of psychotherapy cannot compensate for the harm done by the misunderstandings that have arisen about it. All phenomena of psychic life can be explained without this misleading conception.

Man has always sought some kind of personal devil to blame when things went badly or when he did not understand a situation, especially if the mistake was of human origin. But the belief in Satan began to fade when rational, scientific thinking began to develop. When the concept of the Unconscious appeared, however, it was eagerly seized upon. People had vanquished the Prince of Darkness, but the Land of Darkness with similar powers took his place. By some, this new force was credited as being more sinister than the old demonology. Both the old and the new had one thing in common: man was not responsible for his evil deeds; his Unconscious was the *poltergeist*.

Romantic fiction, detective stories, radio, and movies moved into this shady arena with glee. The whole process of rational thought has accordingly been reduced to a shambles in this area. But if sanity is to be restored to theories about mental functioning, we must rid ourselves of the Myth of the Unconscious.

Even the term itself may lead us into serious error; people believe that if there is a word for something, it surely must exist. Many now think of the Unconscious as a Thing-in-Itself, with a kind of autonomous life of its own. Countless people think of it as a pit in which things can be “deeply buried” only to arise to plague them at unpredictable times. Many think of it as a diseased area that must be taken out by long analysis if the individual is to escape Purgatory on earth. The majority, in fact, have come to think of it as a reality rather than a scientific fiction or postulate.

A scientific fiction or hypothesis is a useful tool created for investigating known phenomena. Physicists, for example, have two conflicting fictions regarding the nature of light: (1) that light travels in waves and (2) that light is emitted in particles or quanta. Both are useful mental fictions in physics; they are ways of thinking about light “as if it behaved in such ways.

The Unconscious was originally an As If, or hypothesis, and man was regarded as behaving As If he possessed an Unconscious that worked in opposition to his conscious thought. People soon forgot that the Unconscious was a scientific fiction and began to think of it as a thing in itself, an entity as real as the continent of Africa and fully as mysterious.

One cannot turn to a serious discussion of this matter without describing some of the

misapprehensions that surround the Unconscious. They seem to fall largely into two categories. In the first, the Unconscious is endowed with omniscience; in the second, it is the modern Beelzebub. Those of a more credulous turn of mind favor the first view, whereas those of a more punitive persuasion prefer the latter.

In the first category, the Unconscious sees all and knows all. Everything is remembered and never forgotten. The more extreme proponents of this view believe that this memory goes back past the 'birth trauma' into intrauterine life. Some even claim 'racial memory.' All manner of fantastic powers are ascribed to the Unconscious, such as the ability to know foreign languages not previously heard by the individual, clairvoyance, telepathy, and countless something-for-nothing attributes.

Mankind has always sought and dreamed of something for nothing and the belief in magic, perpetual motion, bargains, etc., haunts our thoughts by day and our dreams by night. Our chronic wishfubiness easily leads us to think of the Unconscious as a fountain of endless goodies. Some think that if they could unleash the magic power of the Unconscious, they would have the equivalent of atomic energy and could work miracles with the wisdom supposedly hidden in it.

In the second scheme, the Unconscious is the Fallen Angel, or a kind of Boris Karloff on the rampage. The "force" is always pictured as the enemy of its possessor. It has a will of its own and fights actively against the good intentions a person may have in mind. He, poor fellow, is but the battleground on which the struggle is waged between his "good" conscious and his "bad" unconscious. "Neurosis" is the ill-begotten child of this conflict and he, unfortunately, is saddled with the care of this unwanted offspring.

*The above is patently the old doctrine of Original Sin in pseudo-scientific dress.* "Deep analysis" is substituted for incantations to exorcise this devil. It is often believed that nothing less than "deep treatment" can possibly save a person from his Unconscious. Those who hold this view see the individual as a house divided which must fall unless "saved" by analytic therapy.

Fortunately, Adler set himself against a division of the psyche into separate parts. He was especially opposed to the idea that the individual is a helpless victim of fight between his good nature and the so-called Unconscious. Adler explained the apparent conflict by saying "A person knows much more than he understands." The mental-emotional life of an individual is a unified striving of the psyche to bring the total organism into a position of security in his environment. All the movements and functions of the individual are toward the goal of security and survival. He knows what he is doing even though he may not understand the meaning of all his movements. He should both know and understand the coherence of these movements, and how he has created them to advance him toward survival.

Freud insisted that certain painful memories (trauma) were forgotten or pushed out of

consciousness into the Unconscious. Here they were held, seemingly against their will, no longer accessible to the conscious mind. Only by a mystical process could they be brought up from the depths of unconsciousness to the conscious level. Adler maintained that the difficulties experienced by an individual did not come from forgotten memories but rather from his *lack of understanding of himself in relation to those around him*. His security-idea calls for kinds of relationships not compatible with social living. He expects the wrong things of life. His mistaken and unreal expectations, rather than forgotten memories, lead him into conflict.

To understand all this better, we must know Adler's explanation of the function called "memory." He maintained that memory is a bridge between the past and the present. When a person is confronted by a situation, he must call up from the past experiences of his life those memories that best prepare him for an attack on the confronting problem. Memory is inseparable from emotion and emotion is only the "steam" we need to push us away from a confronting situation. WE SELECT OUR MEMORIES ACCORDING TO OUR PURPOSE; they have no will of their own to impinge or elude us.

Philippe Mairé, in his *ABC of Individual Psychology*, describes memory as a single tablet upon which the first impressions are scrawled all over in a large and simple style so that the succeeding ones have to be written around them, until the tablet is over-written again and again with smaller and smaller characters. Whatever happens to the individual, he reacts to it according to his previous experience of the most successful way of meeting that kind of situation. He does not remember most of the memories that guide him, but they exert their united pressure by the emotional tone of aversion or inclination to certain actions. Should he encounter an entirely new situation, he will either have no idea how to deal with it or he will relate it to the most similar experience, which in fact may be quite unlike it.

The function of memory can be understood further through several analogies. Computer theory seems to support Adler's theory of memory; any memory circuit functions on an on/off principle; a circuit which is "on" necessarily excludes all memories that are antagonistic – they must remain "off." Thus, all memories cannot operate simultaneously. Only those are brought into action that serve the present purpose of achieving security in the instantaneous situation.

Let us also compare memory to the field of vision of the human eye. An image is thrown on the retina, but we can see clearly only that which is in the center of the visual field. We are, however, aware of objects on the periphery. If they move, we are conscious of them even though we may not be able to see them clearly. A movement on the periphery of vision may claim our attention and lead us to shift our eye so that it becomes the center of our attention.

The field of memory can be likened to the field of vision. Past experience is

recorded as on a flat tablet {*not* in layers). When we are confronted by a situation, in order to achieve a feeling of security, we shift our eye over the tablet to the nearest similar situation from the past and bring into focus the memory – emotions that will help us in preparing our approach to the present situation. Those memories that are not in the center of our attention are not forgotten or repressed; neither are they buried. The individual is focused on those memories which he feels he must employ in the situation lest he be defeated. Any other memories would be anti-survival in terms of the goal he is trying to achieve.

Let us see how this operates in a specific situation. A man wakes up to the fact that he is feeling depressed. A few days before, he was proud of the success he was having on his job and with his outside relationships. Now nothing seems worthwhile. He sees no advancement or recognition in his work and nothing pleases him. The earthly lot of everyone else seems more glamorous. He is haunted by memories of past failures, discriminations, and disadvantages. He cannot summon memories of happy vacations, job advancements, love affairs, and other events that seemed wonderful when they happened. When asked for random memories from his childhood, he brings out “forgotten” instances where siblings or contemporaries were favored above him. All his memories seem to prove that he is being held back in life. He is feeling very sorry for himself as well as angry at others around him.

When asked in what situation his memories had changed from success to failure, he dates the change as following his visit to a friend several days ago. The friend had displayed some expensive purchase and boasted about imminent job advancement. Comparing his own current situation with that of his friend has made our subject angry (jealous) because he does not consider his friend any more worthy than himself. Feeling that his friend is more loved made him feel lowered by comparison. Self pity (loving oneself) has been the first compensatory activity. The hostility he has engendered toward his job and other factors gives him the “steam” to fight for the preference and favor that he envies in his friend. “Survival” to him means being the *most favored* and anything less represents a threat to his security.

Another excellent illustration of how memory works is seen in the condition called stage fright. The individual has prepared his speech and knows it perfectly. He recites it before members of his family without hesitation. But when he faces a strange audience, not a word comes through. His knees shake and his tongue sticks to the roof of his mouth. In spite of appearances, he has not repressed his memory of the speech. Only his situation has changed; he feels the strange audience may not love him and he feels threatened by possible criticism. His attention is focused on his security and he dares not expose himself; he flees without firing a shot.

The focus of our attention (which corresponds to the focus of vision) is always on our security. But this term is always relative and “security” is not identical for each

individual. We regard as “secure” all those experiences in which we have had past success. We tend to avoid situations for which we have had no training; what we have trained ourselves to do with success does not appear as a threat.

As another analogy of how memory works, we may compare it with the telephone company of a city. Any telephone is potentially connected with every other telephone in the whole world. But in spite of this, you call only those numbers that serve a current need. The others are not “repressed;” we do not phone the hardware store if we want to buy sugar; your call is appropriate to your need.

Let us see if these analogies hold up as we examine a real-life situation. A young woman was facing the prospect of marriage to a man whom she liked, but at the same time she was aware of a strong resistance to taking the final step. In Adler's words, she “knew more than she understood.” As the time for marriage approached, she became irritated, critical, and often depressed, but she could not understand her behavior or reactions.

After stating her problem, she launched immediately into a discussion of her relations with her father when she was a child and of her parents' marriage. In short, her confronting situation was marriage and she was telephoning all those old memories to ask them whether she would be “secure” if she were to marry. Their answer was “NO!”

She was the oldest of three children and her father's favorite in the earliest years of her life; he took her on trips with him and she felt secure in his favor. The father was a pedant and had a very critical attitude toward his wife; there were constant arguments over money. His pedantry, in time, led him to find fault with his daughter, too, in an effort to bring her up to his standards. She, in turn, began to see his shortcomings and developed a negative attitude toward him. Open resistance broke out and developed into a bitter battle. All three daughters finally rejected the domineering father and severed all contact with him.

Throughout college, as well as during adolescence, this girl avoided men. She did not dare to have a date until she was twenty-two years old. The man she was currently interested in was impotent; she avoided men who seemed completely healthy. In short, her early experience with her father left her with more and stronger negative experiences about “males” than pleasant ones. She felt that marriage might plunge her into her mother's earlier plight and that she too would be “helpless” before male aggression, as she had been herself as a child.

Her conclusion about men and marriage was a simple one: “Men bully women in marriage – avoid marriage!” This was easy to do when she was younger. As she grew older, she realized that the position of an unmarried woman in our society is not so fortunate either. Though her life-training was against marriage (as anti-survival), common sense told her that she must move in the direction of marriage, if possible. By

selecting a “lame duck,” she felt less threatened than if she were considering a stronger man.

But, as in the case of stage fright, when the time approached to face the critical moment, her ideal of security asserted itself and she began putting in telephone calls to all the memories of negative experiences in her youth. And since dreams are but part of the function of memory and also serve the goal of survival, she created dreams to justify herself in holding this man at a safe distance. Her dreams, too, agreed with her purpose.

This woman was not the victim of the Unconscious. She was quite aware of the individual factors noted above. “She knew more than she understood.” Why do we need Oedipus or Electra to explain her? Why not, as Adler suggests, rely on common sense?

Her mistake was that she equated all males with her father and did not allow for individual differences. Hers was a generalization about all men based on primary experience with only one. The same was true of her view of marriage. She had accepted this false generalization so early in life as a truth that she never questioned its validity; she behaved “as if it were an axiom. It was an obvious mistake in reasoning and for that very reason escaped detection, for we are all often oblivious to the obvious. We are like grandma looking for the spectacles that are perched on her forehead. Those “pressures” which we have had from the beginning are so much a part of our experience that they attract none of our direct attention; they are only on the periphery of our awareness. It requires an “outsider” to call them to our attention so that we may shift our viewpoint regarding them.

When she was a child and unable to support herself, there was nothing she could do to escape her father's aggressions. But she is no longer a child and is now as able as a man to resist any unfair aggression from a mate. In the business world she manages very well to cooperate with her employers and does not fear exploitation by them. The only thing she did not understand is that marriage is not essentially different from the kind of cooperation she has already learned to give male friends and employers.

What then must she do to resolve her situation? She must know and understand that she is an adult. As such she can cooperate with a mate just as well as with her employers. On the job, she does not “telephone” her fighting memories of her father. On the contrary, since memory is a bridge from the past to the present, she calls up memories of successful cooperation in which she has been a help and valuable in her work situation.

Adler maintained that it was most unfortunate that Freud introduced the idea that there is any kind of split in consciousness, that there could be such a thing as the Unconscious which could operate independently and often in opposition to the security of the individual. Such a thing could result only in chaos and the individual would be nothing more than the slave of a stronger and more mysterious power. Adler maintained



that the functions of the psyche are integrated and cooperating functions just as the various organs and processes of the body serve each other. In fact, he insisted that the psyche-soma is an indivisible unity that always functions and aims *towards survival*

Adler insisted not only that behavior is a matter of training, but that all training is self-training in the final analysis. The child adopts an attitude toward his initial experiences and decides through trial and error what kind of things he will seek and what he will avoid. Adler calls this a “tested scheme of apperception” and the child depends on it to bring him into a secure position in relation to the outside world. This becomes his life style and he fits the confronting situation into this value system and deals with it according to the sensitive points established in his prototype.

Many psychologists are afraid to abandon the concept of the Unconscious as a thing-in-itself even though they may be uncertain of it as a separate, hostile entity. Many contend that Adler's treatment of difficulties is “too superficial” and does not go “deep enough.” They are so enslaved by their image of memory as a series of levels that they cannot think of it as a flat surface similar to the telephone system of a city or not unlike an electronic brain. Many are afraid to abandon the Unconscious, just in case it does exist. They are much like the ancient Greeks who had one shrine to the Unknown God, in the event that one might exist who needed to be propitiated.

What is it, then, that consumes hundreds of hours in so-called deep analytic therapy? Adler showed that all memory is tendentious. The person who is saying “NO” to a confronting situation can spend countless hours recalling negative experiences to justify his “NO.” His negative memories flock like blackbirds. But all these memories tell us the same story: “NO.”

The young woman we discussed above had in fact met many healthy men who did not try to dominate her and to whom she was attracted to a degree. Had she considered marriage as being compatible with her ideal of security, she would gladly have encouraged their advances. But any movement by them to come closer threatened her security and brought out all her negative memories in her defense. She felt relatively safe with handicapped men and with men from minority groups, for she had no serious intentions toward them.

Even if we regard the Unconscious merely as a convenient linguistic fiction that helps us discuss mental processes, it is still a potential source of error. There are but two kinds of memories, those that say “YES” and those that say “NO.” It is a mistake to say that there are conscious memories. ALL MEMORIES HAVE ONE COMMON PURPOSE: THEY SUPPORT US IN OUR MOVEMENT TOWARD OUR GOAL OF SECURITY. The positive memories lead us forward and the negative ones jet-propel us away from that which we classify as anti-survival.

Medical men used to think of mind and body as separate entities. This handicapped

them in the treatment of many diseases for a long time until they learned that mind/body is an inseparable entity. By the same token, advances in psychotherapy are being held up by the idea that there is a division in consciousness which operates in contrary ways, outside the control of the individual. As long as the myth about the Unconscious persists, man will not be able to find the meaning of his movements toward security. Neuroses will still appear to be baffling entities defying understanding instead of just ways for striving for a position of security when a person is facing a situation he has not been prepared to solve in an effective manner. The “conflict” witnessed in neuroses does not lie between the Conscious and the Unconscious. It is the disparity between the present life-training of the individual and the demands of a confronting situation which asks more of the individual than he is prepared and willing to give. He dares not risk defeat; hence, he establishes an elaborate detour that will provide an escape from humiliation, or so he hopes. He reactivates kinds of behavior that he has used at earlier periods of his life, behavior that won him an easier position in his family situation. Society exempts those who are ill from meeting full responsibility; he, therefore, finds it expedient to “remember” his previous devices for achieving exemption. The fact that he does not seem to understand his behavior is due to our old habit of seeking demons as explanations rather than finding rational explanations.

In summary, we may show another example of how memory is always tied to the security goal. A young aspiring author submitted his first book for publication. To his amazement, it sold widely and won him great acclaim. Reviews were excellent and he suddenly became a public figure. His publisher immediately offered him a contract for his next book and an advance of funds upon which to live while he was writing. Months passed, but he could not produce a line; he could not bring himself to begin work on the second book. He became deeply disturbed and his mind was filled with foreboding about his responsibilities. Though the critics had been most kind to his book, his mind was filled with memories of savage reviews given some other authors, especially those who had done second books. His physical functions also suffered so that he was distressed in numerous painful ways.

This unfortunate man was trapped. The acclaim awarded his first book was so tremendous that he could not be sure of achieving the same on the second. Maintenance of his security and personal prestige seemed to depend on not writing a second book that might compare unfavorably. Confronted with this possibility of defeat, he was unwilling to go forward and sought a detour or escape. To justify his inactivity and unproductiveness, he called up all the negative memories at his command, especially those of his stern father who insisted that he win every tennis competition he played in public. He emphasized to himself only the danger of failing.

As the time approached for him to deliver his manuscript, his panic became a desperation that he could not endure. Finally, he had to decide either to risk failure and

loss of prestige or to give up writing and content himself with some other kind of work. He finally realized that risk is necessary for any gain in life and he finally got the courage to finish the book regardless of whether or not it was appreciated by the critics. Once this decision was made, his memories of defeats diminished and more hopeful memories took their place. The manuscript was finished without undue strain.

## ***17 / Guilt Feelings: Masters of Our Fate or Our Servants?***

Adler summed up his attitude toward guilt feelings in one succinct sentence: “Either do wrong – or feel guilty, but don't do both for it is too much work!”

If we consider the great importance attached to guilt feelings by some schools of psychology, the above statement is almost an act of impiety. Guilt feelings, for some psychologists, occupy a place similar to that taken by Beelzebub in the Holy Writ; they are the Prince of Darkness at the root of all Evil. Superficially, it is difficult to see how they can be so easily dismissed by Adler when they loom so large in the cosmology of other psychologists. It would be impossible to understand without considering the role assigned by Adler to emotions in general.

Emotions, contends Adler, are the nervous energy that sparks us. They bear the same relation to our movement that steam has to an engine. Emotions do not cause us to do things, in spite of the fact that many people believe so. Adler pointed out that we are ruled by our purposes (whether they be recognized or unrecognized by us). The emotion aids our real purpose — it cannot dictate. Emotion does not have an autonomous life of its own with its own goals; it is our own creation and must follow our ultimate purpose.

A good example of this point may be found in the army. Each man going into battle feels afraid inside — but he controls his behavior just the same. His interest in the welfare of his country, or his unwillingness to be a slacker, is such that he moves toward battle in spite of his emotions of fear. When the purpose to move forward is dominant, resistance is overcome sufficiently to make performance possible.

Another example can be found in learning to dive. At first we stand on the end of the diving board, hesitating in fear. The moment finally comes when we must dive — in spite of our fear, since our purpose is now fortified by a stronger emotion than fear. And only after we have learned to perform easily are we free of all fear in diving. Yet it returns again if we move to a higher board and remains until we have again strengthened our purpose with the stronger emotion and have learned to dive from the new height.

“Feelings are not reasons,” says Adler. Thus he did not deify guilt feelings as being any more unique than other emotions. Like all others, they impel but do not compel!

Movement (performance) is all that counts in life; we are not enriched by good intentions. There are only two directions of movement possible in life: movement-toward or movement-away-from confronting situations. And by the same token, there are but two kinds of emotion to “spark” such movement: emotion that helps us forward, or emotion that helps us to avoid. Guilt feelings are the “steam” we use to place a distance between ourselves and distasteful confronting situations.

The word “use” is a most important word in Adlerian psychology. Adler was not so much interested in what abilities or handicaps a person had as in what use was being made of such possessions. All movement and emotions of an individual may be considered to be valuable for that individual. Adler's concern was to discover what use the individual was making of a movement or an emotion.

To understand guilt feelings, then, we must see in what ways such emotions could possibly be useful to an individual and in what situations they can be used by him for his personal gain. Only then can we understand why he creates “feelings of guilt” rather than feelings which would seem to us to be more appropriate and constructive. It is not possible to catalogue all the uses to which guilt feelings can be put, but we may be able to consider the most frequent occasions in which they are employed.

“Please don't hit me, dad,” is the most general use for guilt feelings. They are a plea for exemption from punishment – if we get caught. Each of us has a “conscience,” which is made up of all the commands and prohibitions which were shouted at us before the age of eighteen by those in authority. We found that punishment was associated with a refusal or failure to comply with such imperatives. Such commands, however, often ran contrary to our purposes. In such cases, we frequently did as we pleased, but we attached guilt feelings much as we could a life belt at sea. If we got caught, we could plead our alleged good intentions and hope that the punishment would be lightened.

Most of us learned as children that we must say “I'm sorry” if we committed an act of aggression or omission toward others. If we showed the proper attitude of guilt or repentance, our parents' stony hearts softened so that we created an easier situation for ourselves; we were not held responsible for our acts. We found that guilt feelings paid good dividends if we were weighed and found wanting by those in authority. And what we have once found useful, we do not discard lightly while it serves our purpose.

The apology is a form of guilt feeling, or at least an admission of guilt for an unfulfilled responsibility. These are seldom sincerely expressed or even felt at any depth. For the most part, they are thin disguises for ill will directed against another. We may, for example, apologize for coming late to an appointment when we had no real reason for being late in the first place. We “feel guilty” in preference to being on time. It is a trick for having our own way at the expense of others while maintaining their tolerance for being exploited.

All other uses of guilt feelings are, in a sense, variations on the above theme. But for the purpose of greater clarity, we shall examine several in more detail.

The “conflict between God and Satan” is probably the second most common use of guilt feelings. In this dramatic presentation, the “good side” of an individual appears to be locked in a deadly struggle with his “bad side,” while the person himself (poor

soul!) lies helpless on the ground as Good and Evil battle over his prostrate form. This is what is termed “being conflicted” by some psychologists, and this conflict is often regarded as quite real. The “conflicted” person is considered quite innocent of instigating the fight between these primordial forces.

Adler maintained that such conflicts are arranged by the individual as a kind of “useless busywork” so that he may disregard a much more relevant responsibility that he intends to escape. As long as he can keep his apparent conflict alive, he is able to hide from himself and from others his failure to tackle the more important problem of his life. Guilt feelings are most useful in maintaining such conflicts. The dynamics of such pseudo-fighting can be understood in the following illustration.

A young man of twenty-seven complained of a severe conflict between his sexual urges and his high religious ideals. Soon after he got out of college (when it was time to choose an occupation and go to work) he had a “nervous breakdown.” Presumably because of this conflict, he had never fully recovered. He was unable to resist his sexual promptings (which were pictured as irresistible) no matter how violently he fought against them. But neither would he condone the infrequent violations of his rigid “moral code.” Nothing less than complete continence would satisfy him. He thought of nothing but sex and sin so that he could not keep his mind on his job or anything else in the outside world. He refused to give up his standard of absolute continence even though he had no hope of achieving it in this world. Ergo, there was apparently nothing left for him but to keep on trying to stifle sexual impulses which continued to arise and defeat him.

Adler called such compulsions “Side Show activities” which are arranged to excuse us from performing under the “Main Tent of community life.” This young man wanted to look only at his side show. We shall understand his reason if we look at the situation he was trying to avoid under the Main Tent. He had a very comfortable home with his parents, who were moderately wealthy. Such money as he earned on his job was his to spend entirely on his own amusement. Even so, he spent more than he earned and was constantly in debt, for he could not deny himself small luxuries that appealed to him. He did not like his job but was not interested in preparing himself for any kind of work that promised an independent future. As long as he could maintain his “nervous breakdown,” he could continue to enjoy financial irresponsibility and still live on the fat of the land.

If this boy were obliged to be self-sufficient and live on what he earned, he would have to accept a standard of living considerably below what he now enjoys. This he will not contemplate. He is jealous of his siblings and the success of former classmates who have trained themselves to contribute more to life than he does. Morality to him means only sexual abstinence; he feels no guilt at all about the poor job performance he gives his employer in return for the salary he spends going to bars and places where he

encounters the “temptations” he pretends to abhor. He feels no guilt at all about owing money for luxuries he did not need. By keeping up the pseudo-conflict between sex and “morality,” he feels quite moral – just because he feels so guilty when he is “immoral.” He considers his self-inflicted “high standards” and his efforts to reach them sufficient contribution to society and he can hide his eyes from the sight of his exploitation of those who benefit him. In truth, he is all but useless to himself and others.

From this we can see that guilt feelings (used to keep a conflict going) are a trick of *standing still* before important life problems which we do not intend to solve in any useful manner. If the boy gave up his guilt feelings, he would have to pay his bills, do an honest day's work for his employer, and generally be a more useful fellow man. Who can say, then, that guilt feelings do not pay him good dividends?

Another frequent use of guilt feelings is to hide a strong, aggressive, competitive urge in a seemingly passive and compliant person. A woman of above average appearance and intelligence, for example, harbored for many years a deep sense of shame about the appearance of her nose. (It was not remarkable in any way.) Because of this, she avoided social gatherings and did not enjoy meeting people. In her opinion, it had spoiled her chances in life. She chose to imagine people rejected her because of her nose. Not once had she confessed this guilty secret – that shame about her nose stood in the way of her progress. She had reduced social contact for herself and her family to a minimum “because of her nose.”

Examination disclosed an ambitious nature that could not rest if she were in the presence of anyone who had something more or better than she could claim. One neighbor had a better looking husband, one more money, one had a better house, and so on. She was jealous of each and would have felt equal to going out socially only if she had the best that each had – but all combined in her own person! Faced by anyone, anywhere, who had an advantage, she “felt guilty” about her nose and retreated from the social contact. Her guilt feelings were useful in hiding from herself her own hostile, competitive attitude toward others. These feelings gave her an acceptable excuse to retire from situations which were fraught with painful jealousy. And “feeling guilty” was more acceptable to her ego-ideal than a recognition of her hostile, ambitious nature. When she understood the real meaning and use she had made of her guilt feelings, she gave them up and became more cooperative with those around her.

Deep protestations of guilt can often be used to serve very trivial purposes at times. They can be used to make the individual the center of attention in his environment. When there is a particularly terrible murder in the newspapers, police departments are bothered by individuals who “confess” the crime – even though they had nothing to do with it at all. Protestations of guilt are frequently used by some to make themselves the center of attention in religious revivals; the individual often proclaims himself the “greatest sinner of them all.” In such cases, if the person were actually treated as a

guilty person, he would quickly relinquish the glory of his position.

Guilt feelings are often used by an individual as a mild deterrent to his own unsocial impulses. We have numerous temptations to do things that would lead us into wasting time, money, or interest. These best all of us much of the time. Frequently we give into such temptation but arrange a certain amount of guilt feeling so that we do not enjoy such “irresponsibility” too much; we do not want to follow that path as a way of life. These are the little escapes we all enjoy from the main path of responsibility when we do not intend to shun it as a major strategy. Such escapes with corresponding guilt can be arranged in the area of work, sex, or association. We may feel, for example, that we should not take a day off work to go to the beach. We do go, however, and enjoy the experience, but not fully. We mobilize guilt feelings throughout the day, so we avoid meeting anyone who knows our employer, and we are careful not to take back to work a tell-tale sunburn that would proclaim the fact we had not been as ill as reported. By reducing the pleasure of the experience, we are less apt to play truant habitually.

Self-condemnation can also be used to emphasize the excellence of one's own achievements. Many individuals who have just completed a fine piece of work will quickly find fault with some trifling detail. In this way, guilt feelings become a hidden way of boasting. A woman, noted for the cakes she bakes, never fails to apologize for her carelessness with the one being served. “If only I had sense enough to take it out of the oven a little sooner. ...” The comment is always accompanied by an air of contrite self-abasement.

Some readers may object that the emotion attached to some of the above instances is not the same as true guilt feelings. Who can say what a real guilt feeling might be? The real issue is that the individual creates these feelings for a purpose serving his own psychic economy. If the danger to his position is very great, he responds with much emotion of guilt. If his prestige is only lightly threatened, he employs lip-service guilt feelings.

It is quite unnecessary to differentiate between guilt feelings and anxiety feelings, inferiority feelings, feelings of hostility, or from any other disjunctive effect. General semantics help us greatly in understanding why this is so. The semanticists remind us that “the word is not the thing.” In order that human beings may discuss “reality phenomena,” we have had to invent verbal symbols. Sometimes we come to believe that the symbol and the thing are identical. Semanticists plead with us to go behind the verbal symbol and look at the non-verbal movement of “event” – the process itself. They ask us to adapt our language to the behavior of the nervous system.

But what is the behavior of the nervous system in contrast to the markings of language? In language it is easy to invent terms such as “guilt feelings,” “anxiety feelings,” “inferiority feelings,” “hostile feelings.” And, because the language terms are



different, we may believe that there is a difference in response *at the level of the nervous system*. It would be easy for us to believe that guilt feelings are something quite different from hostility feelings. At the language level, we can make our terms behave “as if they had an independent life of their own and could drive or bend us to their will.

Adler cut through this semantic nonsense with his statement, “Trust only movement; what a person does is what he means.” In short, he enjoins us to read only the language of the nervous system – the movement that is produced.

The nervous system is not a philologist and cannot distinguish nuances in language terms. The body can respond to only two commands: it can advance or it can retreat. (In this regard, we have nothing over the lowly amoeba which cannot even talk.) Any language terms, then, must be converted, at the level of the nervous system, into either “yes” or “no” before movement can be made; we must join or disjoin the environment.

At the level of the nervous system, then, guilt, anxiety, hate, fear, timidity, inferiority, superiority, hostility, snobbishness, nervousness, irritability, pessimism, anger, jealousy, envy, contentiousness, and countless similar concepts are reduced to “*disjunctive movement*.” These are all “NO” words of which one is no more pious than another. There exists only a difference in degree of the rejection that is implicit, or the swiftness of the rejection.

By the same token, our language has many terms such as “love,” “like,” “admire,” “appreciate,” “enjoy,” “pleasant,” “encourage,” and so on, that reduce themselves at the level of the nervous system to forward movement.

In light of the above information, it would not be possible to regard guilt feelings as uniquely dangerous devils that lurk in the hypothetical unconscious waiting to fight the God-in-man while the man bleeds in impotence as the fight is waged. On the contrary, guilt feelings are only one of the many ways in which man can say “NO” when he wants to avoid participation in the common life around him. Man is never the victim; he is the creator – even of his guilt feelings. And what we create, we create for a personal profit.

At this point, it would be helpful to mention Adler's therapy for guilt feelings. He approached them in the same way he handled any other protestations of superiority/inferiority. His prime injunction to the therapist was, “Talk about something else.” First, he stopped self-condemnation with his famous dictum, “Either do wrong – or feel guilty, but don't do both for it is too much work.” Then he began to talk about something else. He directed the attention of the individual toward his total relationships with the world and other people.

The individual who is suffering from guilt feelings is intent on proving to himself and

others that he *cannot* participate in the common life of mankind as an equal member and (for our information) *we must not expect him to do so!* If we become impressed by his guilt feelings and try to assuage them at this point, he will catch us in his watertight logic, along with himself. In that position, we can be of no help to him.

Adler's aim was to disclose to the individual that his “I cannot cooperate” is a device to hide a deep but silent “I *will not* cooperate” with others on an equal footing. He maintained that the only way to influence a person is to increase his social awareness by disclosing his “I will not,” in the hope that the individual will be willing to become a better fellow man. Adler called the process “spitting in the soup” or “smirching a clean escutcheon.”

The young man with the morality-versus-sex conflict mentioned earlier is a good illustration of this point. While he observed life through a keyhole, he could see morality only as a sexual affair. He felt quite moral while cheating his father, his creditors, and his employer. His total behavior had to be projected before his eyes in order to smirch the self-righteousness hidden behind his striving for complete sexual abstinence.

We may well ask whether there is any place in normal life for guilt feelings, since all of us experience them so frequently. Like all feelings of inferiority, the answer lies in what use we make of them. How much shall we tip the waiter? Shall we give him what we think he expects and feel angry because it is too much? Or shall we give him ten percent of the bill and not care whether he is angry or happy about it, or shall we complain about his services at the end of the evening and give him nothing at all – and feel guilty afterward? Each will answer such problems for himself according to his own inner purpose.

An inferiority or infirmity that cannot be compensated must be endured. We should not use it as a basis for demanding special privilege or exemptions from society; it need not be a basis for feelings of guilt. But if a feeling of guilt exists, we should do something useful as a compensation. As Adler said, there is no value in doing wrong and feeling guilty at the same time.

Guilt feelings, then, are creations that serve the personal goal of their creator. They are not things that can be removed as if they were a bullet lodged in the head! The question should not be asked as to their “cause” — we must discover what use an individual is making of them. Guilt feelings, like other emotions, pay dividends to their creator, even though he may not be consciously aware of their value to him. We cannot hope to see them disappear as long as the individual needs to generate such “steam” for the accomplishment of his purpose. We should, rather, be interested in discovering the morbid gains achieved by such feelings and the direction in which the person is moving in life.

All movements and feelings are directed toward achieving security for the individual. We cannot quarrel with the means he develops to arrive at his goal of security; all we can do is to improve his conception of what a legitimate or adequate security goal should be. Exaggerated guilt feelings are not necessary for achieving socially acceptable goals in life. If, then, a person is protesting guilt or feeling guilt in a way that burdens him or those around him, the difficulty lies in the kind of security he is trying to build rather than in the feeling he experiences.

Guilt feelings, therefore, are of no more significance than any other socially disjunctive feelings; all of them place one at a distance from social participation. At the non-verbal level of the nervous system, they all mean “no useful participation.” Adler demonstrated that human beings can only solve life's problems when they participate freely with their fellow men. Whatever leads one away from equal participation threatens the security of the individual and his group.

Relief from guilt feelings, then, depends on talking about something else. We disregard them and discuss the relationships the person is making with his society. If we can interest him in being an equal and useful member of his group, all of his disjunctive feelings will diminish to a point where they will not interfere with his contribution to those around him.

## ***18 / Is It Need Or Greed That Drives You?***

Did we really need that extra drink or bite of food, the more expensive suit, or the town house and country house in addition to the villa in Europe? Who is able to determine what he truly “needs” for his physical well being? Who can notice when he has crossed the thin line between need and greed while acquiring physical possessions and services? People define their “needs” in terms of specific quantities and, on the physical level, need and greed become indistinguishable.

At the psychological level, however, no such confusion exists: psychological need and greed are worlds apart, because at this level, we are dealing with feelings and attitudes, not with concrete realities. At the psychological level, we experience the *feeling* of poverty or *the feeling* of fullness. The first cannot be satisfied by any degree of achievement or any number of possessions or, in fact, by any form of acquisition. The feeling of fullness, however, allows us to feel adequate (full) at all times, so that we no longer need to achieve, possess, get, or conquer anything in order to compensate for a feeling of emptiness.

The bottomless, insatiable feeling that comes with psychological poverty derives from the fact that it is built on the habit of Envy, which itself evolves from the habit of making comparisons and the ambition for personal recognition and preferment. You desire to be the preferred individual so that you can look down on others. This feeling of lack is not related to any kind of real need and thus cannot be compensated by any achievements in the physical world.

The feeling of fullness, on the other hand, is that feeling we notice when we have achieved our own center of gravity and do not lean, depend, or expect support from the world around us. When we have finally learned that we cannot seek fulfillment outside ourselves and have stopped looking toward others to find vicarious happiness, then we come to rest within ourselves and have no sense of being impoverished or deprived.

NO ONE MAY EVER FIND HAPPINESS THROUGH ANOTHER PERSON. The person who attempts to do so will feel let down and defrauded at all times.

Feeling deprived is a habit the mind can be rid of only if we understand that bad habits maintain themselves by self-stimulation. If I drink, it is because I have formed the habit of drinking and one drink only paves the way for the next one, since HABIT NEVER RESTS. A habit is like an earth satellite set in orbit by hurling it into space beyond the pull of gravity. Once it is in orbit, it will continue to circle the earth until it is pulled down by some force. Likewise, the habit of making envious comparisons begins in childhood. Once it has been established, we are stuck with the feeling of deprivation and remain cursed with this insatiable feeling until we identify it as a bad mental habit and purge it as we would any other bad habit, by full and total awareness

that is nothing more than faulty conditioning and as such can be re-conditioned by conscious awareness. Anyone has the power to stop making envious comparisons between himself and those around him; when he simply stops making any comparisons at all, he will be relieved of the feeling of being deprived.



# THE SIN OF OBEDIENCE

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**THIS CAN BE A TERRIFYING BOOK. OR IT CAN BE A LIBERATING BOOK.**

These essays continue in the common sense approach to psychological health that has made the Beechers' "Beyond Success and Failure" a perennial best seller. However, their approach challenges most of the prejudices that ensnare western civilization.

**SAMPLINGS:**

*"The most common mistake found in human behavior is obedience...as a goal in itself it has dangerous consequences and we must strive to uproot it wherever we find it.*

*"The methods and theories of psychotherapy in use today are almost innumerable. Some are so obscure and removed from common sense that they defy comprehension—even by their disciples.*

*"Never—but never—seek the Right Way to do anything. Find your own way.*

*"Guilt feelings...pay dividends to their creator, even though he may not be consciously aware of their value to him"*

In this slim volume, the authors ruthlessly expose many of society's "mistaken certainties" while at the same time giving the reader the tools to recognize and overcome these self-defeating fallacies.