

Interpsychic Theories

Chapter 4

Why Interpsychic?

■ Freud, Jung

- Stress the importance of unconscious forces, psyche
- Sexual forces, biological forces
- **Intrapsychic forces**

■ Adler, Sullivan

- Human behavior/dysfunction more the result of social and cultural factors
- **Interpsychic forces**

Individual Psychology



Alfred Adler

- 1870-1937
- Born in Vienna
- Second of six children
- Initially doted on by mother
- Father had lofty expectations
 - Only an “average” student

Individual Psychology (cont.)

Alfred Adler

- Childhood disease—rickets (made him clumsy and awkward)
- When younger brother born, mother shifted her affections
- Watched brother die in next bed
- Brushes with death (run over twice, pneumonia)
- Briefly associated with Vienna Psychoanalytic society
 - Never psychoanalyzed
 - Dissented with Freud from the beginning

Social Interest

- All organisms strive to maintain life and seek nourishment, and reproduce
 - But, humans have tamed these interests to conform within and to serve society
- **Social interest** refers to adapting one's self to social conditions
 - Social conformity
 - Not automatic: must be cultivated

Finalism

- All actions are governed by goals
 - Freud was interested in seeking causality in past experiences
 - Adler focused on the *future orientation* of goals
- We do not think, feel, or act without the perception of a goal
- Like Jung, emphasis on purposeful living
- **Finalism** refers to the way in which individuals pursue their future goals

Fictional Finalisms

- Fiction: Latin *fictio* (fashion, construct, invent)
- **Fictional finalism** refers to our tendency to “fill in the blank”
- We cannot “know” *Truth*
- Instead, we construct an approximation of truth
 - We assume that people are good, it’s best to tell the truth
 - Religion and God
- Finalisms can be healthy or unhealthy
 - No absolute good/bad or right/wrong
 - Instead, how *useful* is the fiction

Striving for Superiority

- The ultimate fictional finalism that we all maintain
- Part of our struggle to survive
 - Major motivation for aggression
- Superiority does not refer to surpassing others
 - Competent, effective
 - Perfect: Latin perfectus (completed, made whole)
- Encompasses both healthy and unhealthy strivings
 - Dog eat dog (competitive)
 - Collaborative

Inferiority Feelings

- We seek superiority in order to manage out feelings of inferiority
- We feel inferior from birth
 - Helpless infants, totally dependent on adults
 - Originally considered “organ” inferiority—clinical observations as a physician
- **Masculine protest** refers to our efforts to compensate for inferiority
 - Originally, inferiority associated with femininity
 - Later changes opinion, proponent of women’s liberation

Style of Life

- **Style of Life:** Characteristic way in which the individual develops superiority
 - Inner goal orientation/fictional finalisms
 - Environmental forces (assisting/impeding)
 - Mistaken/useful types
 - **Ruling type**—aggressive, dominating people; little social/cultural interests (-)
 - **Getting type**—dependent people who take rather than give (-)
 - **Avoiding type**—people who escape rather than engaging (-)
 - **Socially Useful type**—social interest and activity (+)

Birth Order

- Important factor influencing style of life
- **Family Constellation** refers to one's position in the family
 - Birth order/number of siblings
 - Presence or absence of parents
- Oldest children often more intelligent, achievement oriented, conforming
 - Adler referred to Freud as an eldest son

Birth Order (cont.)

- Oldest children fear being “dethroned” by younger siblings
- Second/Middle children feel need to race to “dethrone” eldest
 - Competitive and ambitious, may surpass first born
 - Not concerned with power
 - Adler was a second born...
- Lastborn children more sociable, dependent
 - May strive to surpass older siblings
 - If “babied” may remain helpless and dependent

Birth Order (cont.)

- Only children tend to be more like older children
 - Enjoy being the center of attention
 - Spend more time in company of adults
 - Mature sooner, more responsible
- Only children more likely to get pampered
- Middle children show combination of older and younger
 - If children spaced years apart, may be more like only children

Creative Self

- One's pursuits become creative organization for one's life
 - Creative self organizes life experiences, interprets these experiences, and renders them meaningful
 - Individuals actively and purposely shape their responses to the environment
 - Result of heredity + environment
- Adler minimized role of unconscious
 - In contrast to Freud
 - De-emphasized determinism (optimistic)
 - Creative self represented extent of human potential

Adlerian Psychotherapy

- Neurosis springs from inappropriate life-styles, inappropriate goals, or fictional finalism
 - “Mistaken style of life,” “life lie”
 - Acting “as if,” but actively creating their destinies
- **Overcompensation** an exaggerated attempt to cover a weakness
 - Associated with denial
 - Inability to accept reality of the situation
 - Monty Python: “It’s just a flesh wound”

Adlerian Psychotherapy

- **Inferiority Complex**
 - Individuals who feel highly inadequate
- **Superiority Complex**
 - An exaggerated sense of self importance
- **Safeguarding Tendencies**
 - Maladaptive strategies to ward off fear of inferiority
 - We all use safeguarding techniques, neurotics are just one-trick ponies
- **Restore patient's sense of reality**
 - Confront "life lies," overcompensation

More of the Interpersonal

Harry Stack Sullivan

- **Personality**: characteristic ways in which an individual deals with other people
- **Stages of development**: socially, not biologically, determined
- **Participant observation**: real-world observations of problem behaviors/situations in order to develop appropriate interventions
- **Interview**: interpersonal *process* between client and therapist

Yet again more...

- **Family therapy**: psychological problems developed and maintained in the social context of the family
 - Focus on the *process* of family communication and interaction more than the surface content

