

Alfred adler essay sample

[Psychology](#)



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INTRODUCTION

Alfred Adler is one of the greatest pioneer of psychology and a philosopher of his generation, although he is not an everyday famous name in psychology but he is the founding father of the Adlerian theory. Adler shaped his theory of the human nature on the basis that our personalities are formed by our particular social environment we live in and our interaction with unique people. Unlike Sigmund Freud, who is a very popular name in psychology believed that our efforts are manifested to satisfy our biological needs particularly sexual needs naming it Libido energy. Adler believed that people are largely responsible for who they are whereas Freud believed that the present behavior of people is completely related to past experiences and presented people somewhat of a victim of their past which Adler considered inaccurate.

Adler believed that psychologically healthy people have a complete idea of their actions and in return reactions. Alfred Adler came up with the idea of “Individual Psychology” which is the core matter of his theories. Adler saw People as being motivated mostly by social influences and by their striving for superiority or success Alfred Adler introduced the world with a new vocabulary “Inferiority Complex”, although his theories strike rather obvious but they are the basis of so many other ground breaking experiments in understanding the complex human mind. Alfred Adler himself said that he spent forty years composing his work in the simplest design for the world to understand.

LIFE OF ALFRED ADLER

Alfred Adler lived a rather complicated life consisting of illness, awareness of death at a very early age and sibling jealousies. All of this surfaced in his work in a very positive way. Adler was born on February 7th 1870 in Rudolfsheim, a village near Vienna. His mother Pauline was a hardworking homemaker who took care of seven children and his father Leopold was a middle class Jewish grain merchant. Adler suffered from rickets in his childhood; it is a vitamin D deficiency which causes softening of bones. At age five he almost died of pneumonia and his doctor lost hope that he would survive but luckily he did. Adler lost his young brother at a very tender age, his brother died in the bed next to his when young Alfred was only three. The idea of death was so horrific to him that he decided to become a doctor in pursuit to conquer death.

Alfred Adler shared a sibling rivalry with his older brother who was sturdy, healthy and vigorous whereas young Adler was not able to take part in any of the physical activities due to his condition. He recalled that he would sit outside with his legs and arms wrapped in band aids and would watch the kids in the neighborhood play. Adler was pampered by his mother due to his sickness but this drastically changed at the arrival of his younger brother. Adler fulfilled his childhood ambition and enrolled in university of Vienna to study medicine but was just a mediocre student. In the beginning he was interested in incurable diseases but felt very agitated at being completely powerless in preventing death. He became discouraged and chose to specialize in neurology and psychiatry.

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

The one dynamic force behind people's behavior
Is the striving for success or superiority.

Alfred Adler

Alfred Adler believed that our entire life is spent overcoming inferiorities, he
further

Simplified the basic motivation and drive to achieve anything in life was to
rise out of inferiority. It is our need to move towards superiority thus the
entire life of the human being can be depicted as a struggle to achieve
greatness or in Adler's word " Superiority" Adler explained that we are born
in inferiority, when a child is born he/she is feeble and needs immense
protection and care. The child cannot feed itself nor do anything. Gradually
the child rises out of inferiority and can soon take care and look after itself.
Our life is surrounded by imaginary inferiorities, we are born with certain
drawbacks either it be biological, financial, emotional or psychological.

To climb out of these inferiorities becomes the purpose of our lives. For this
we develop fictitious objectives in life as Adler puts it " Final Goal". Adler said
that these fictional goals although have no objective existence but they
define the personality of an individual a good example of this would be of
Adler himself. He was afraid of death all his life this pushed him into the
medical profession because he had a Final Goal to vanquish death. Each and
every person has the ability to construct a fictional goal and that goal is the
product of their creativity and this shapes there personality. Usually at the
age of four or five a child has developed enough creativity to set a goal
which portrays his/her personality.

Alfred Adler associated psychology and biology together and gave us a bigger more vivid picture naming it “ Physical Inferiority”. He explains the human psychology with the idea of compensation in biological principles. It is a biological fact that if one organ of the body ceases to function properly the other organs compensate by working abnormally. For example if one kidney of the body fails to function properly the other kidney satisfies the bodily functions by working exceptionally. Similarly we psychologically try to compensate for our inferiorities. One of the grandeur examples is of Terry Fox, he lost his leg to cancer and then ran thousands of miles making a record and raising money for cancer research putting his life at extreme risk.

History is filled with similar examples, Beethoven who lost his hearing and then created remarkable music that to this day is considered genius. Adler himself suffered from sever rickets at an early age this led him to boost himself into physical games and strenuous activities in college. Adler said that we are in complete control of our fate and the individual creates their own style of life. Our childhood experiences and heredity do not shape us because the experiences are not as powerful as the conscious attitude towards them. How we take in the experiences and mold our personalities accordingly depends entirely on us. This becomes our “ Life Style” another term coined by Alfred Adler. These inferiorities provide motivation to achieve goals in life and acts as a catalyst in one’s life.

FICTIONALISM

Our main goal of life is to achieve superiority which we develop very early in life, these fictions having no actual existence and credibility but they

surprisingly influence our entire life. A good example would be “men are superior to women”, now although this statement is completely fictitious but the majority of men and women live with this notion. Another belief would be the belief of God, belief that there is a supreme energy that rewards and punishes good and evil acts. Another striking example would be “Karma” that what goes around comes around. All of these fictions have an effect and guide our life; they bestow a meaning to an individual’s life and create the person’s lifestyle.

STYLE OF LIFE

Style of life is the essence of the person’s life consisting of that individual’s goal, feelings, attitude towards others and self-concept. Our entire life revolves around the struggle to achieve superiority and that struggle is named “Life Style” by Adler.

SOCIAL INTEREST

CONTRIBUTION TO PSYCHOLOGY

Alfred Adler contributed largely to the field of child psychology and gave us a clearer picture of human behavior. Some of Adler’s sublime contributions were the exercise of early recollections. Adler believed that our personality develops during the first four or five years of our life and we adopt a certain life style. By recalling our earliest memories we reveal the fundamental passion of our life. It doesn’t matter if the memories are real or imaginary they still reveal ample amount of our sole purpose of our life, because the fact that you can recall those means that they are present in your memory.

for a reason. Adler interviewed almost one hundred physicians and asked them to describe their earliest memories. Great numbers of memories were related to illness or death in some way or another, which led them to a career in medicine.

Alfred Adler recalled a certain childhood memory. At the age of five, young Adler was always afraid to cross a cemetery which came between the path to school. He would always be terrified but the other kids would walk without even noticing it. One day he decided to take control of his fear and walked in front of the cemetery again and again back and forth until he was no longer afraid. Thirty years later when Adler met a former schoolmate he inquired about the old cemetery, his school mate expressed tremendous surprise. The interesting thing was that although Adler's recollection was very vivid, in reality there never was a cemetery on his way to school. This left Adler extremely shocked to but his memory, although faulty, indicated his fear.

FAMILY CONSTELLATION

Another one of Adler's ground breaking contribution was the family constellation or the birth order. Adler was very much convinced that the order of birth had a significant effect on the child and plays a major role in molding the child's personality. He described the four situation and what effect would it reap. He categorized them into, the first born, the second born, youngest born and the only child. The first born children are given a lot of attention; they receive consistent love, affection and care. The child feels secure but this drastically changes at the arrival of the second born. Now the attention has been divided which comes as a shock to the first born because

the child isn't used to it and feels dethroned thus the first born would try to capture attention of their parents.

They would begin to display stubborn and destructive behavior causing a commotion which would cause the parents to react which would lead to some sort of punishment. Hence the first born would begin to mildly hate the presence of the second born considering him/her the root of trouble.

Firstborn children are likely to have intensified feelings of power, superiority, high anxiety, and overprotective tendencies this is because as the children age, the first-born often plays the role of teacher, tutor, leader, and disciplinarian, expected by parents to help care for younger siblings. These experiences often enable the first-born to mature intellectually to a higher degree than the younger children. This is why majority of presidents, Coe's and astronauts are seen from this order because they instantly adapt a competitive nature.

Second born often have a very sophisticated behavior. They were always used to the divided attention so for them it won't even make a difference if another child would become the part of the family. The second born always reflects at the behavior of first born and would compete with the older sibling. The intensity of the competition is indirectly proportional to the age gap. Greater the age gap, lesser the competition and vice versa. To some extent, the personalities of second born children are shaped by their perception of the older child's attitude toward them. If this attitude is one of extreme hostility and vengeance, the second child may become highly competitive or overly discouraged.

Last born, Adler believed would be highly pampered and there is a high risk of them becoming the problem child of the family. They would have strong inferiority complexes and feel deprived from independence but on the bright side they are often highly motivated. Adler predicted that the last born would take up a passion or a profession which tends to be very different than anything in the family such as a musician in the family of physicists.

The last situation is of the only child. They stay the center of attention throughout, they are never dethroned and most of their time is spent with adults which manifests early maturity in their attitude and behavior. Only children will feel highly disappointed once they step out of their territory because outside they have to strive for recognition unlike their home.

Alfred Adler was quite a successful physician in his time and although it is not an everyday name in psychology his theories were enlightening and to this day are used for therapy and explaining complicated human behavior. The reason that Alfred Adler is not much of a striking name in psychology in spite of his ground breaking theories was because he never wrote much and most of his ideas were taken by other researchers and he was never given credited for them. Unlike Freud who is a popular controversial name in psychology, Freud was an astounding writer both in volume and splendor.

Alfred Adler was considered a respectable figure in the medical community and in the beginning Freud thought highly of Adler. Adler was invited to Freud's psychoanalytic society in 1902 and in 1910 Adler became the society's president but at the same time he was very skeptical about the Freudian concept and was a vocal critic too. Adler left the idea of

psychoanalysis and developed his own theory of personality which later came to be known as individual psychology.

Adler's astounding theories are used to explain certain behavior in human beings; his famous Adlerian therapy is used to help people overcome psychological disorders. Innumerable studies have been done proving the idea of inferiority complex and how it manifests in an individual's life. Adler's theories of inferiority, superiority and social feelings help explain health related behavior such as eating disorders and heavy drinking.