

Volume 2

Journal Articles: 1898-1909

A Study of Organ Inferiority: 1907

The Mind-Body Connection; Social Activism & Sexuality

Part I: Journal Articles (1898 - 1909)

Chapter I: Health Manual for the Tailoring Trade (1898). Adler describes the relationship between the economic conditions of workers in the tailoring trade and the resulting illnesses and medical issues common among those workers. Although this is not a psychologically focused paper, it is important in that it shows Adler's interest in the plight of the common man, and his early insights into environmental, economic, and social forces which influence health issues.

Chapter II: The Penetration of Social Forces into Medicine (1902). Adler traces the influence of social forces on medicine and healing that lead to public health, prevention, and the eventual confrontation of "social misery," as well as other issues that impact public health. He also comments on the government's role, its relationship with physicians, and on the role of physicians in the area of public health.

Chapter III: An Academic Specialty for Social Medicine (1902). Adler expresses the need for a state health care system, and asserts that the politically powerful do not truly have the health care interests of the common people as a priority. In a strong political statement, he calls for a "central organization" for health care, an academic specialty, and a seminar for social medicine to investigate health related and social needs.

Chapter IV: Town and Country (3 parts) (1903). In 1903, Adler wrote Part I of this article, challenging the common notion that country living is healthier than city living, due to the improvement of health conditions in the city, resulting from public health measures, social progress, and the growing political power of greater population centers. In Part II, he offers a description of village conditions: the positive consequences of sun and cleaner air, as well as a description of the negative health

influences of dirt and uncleanness. After commenting on the poverty and social conditions of villagers and country people, he concludes that villages and cities are interconnected; the health and sanitation conditions of one affect the other. Part III focuses on the interdependence of the country and the city, sanitation, the quality of food and water, and the spread of disease. Adler emphasizes the role of physicians and social medicine, and the need to expand an adequate health care system to those living in the country.

Chapter V: State Aid or Self Help (1903). In Part I, Adler describes the relationship between the medical profession, the state, the ruling elite, and the political forces that negatively affect the equitable distribution of health care in Austria. In Part II, he explains the decline of medicine and medical training in Austria as due to the political forces, the system that holds the medical profession in low regard and which only begrudgingly addresses social issues, while attending more to the needs of the ruling elite. He calls on the medical profession to shape its own future.

Chapter VI: The Physician as Educator (1904). Adler presents the problems inherent in educating children. He identifies the goals and traits of an educator and also the traits and educational power of a good physician. He refers to Freud's emphasis on children and the importance of the child's psyche. He comments on other aspects of the child's education as well, such as the importance of love and affection, the role of the parents and others in the child's life. He discusses punishment, spanking, and other forms of discipline, positive and negative, related to specific problem areas. He cites typical issues with children and important points the physician-educator should be aware of. (This article reveals Adler's early interest in child guidance and education).

Chapter VII: Hygiene and Sex (1904). Part I is a commentary on the work of Professor Max Gruber. Discussed here are the importance of sexual hygiene, prevention of venereal disease, related sexual behavior, and the issue of sexual gratification. In Part II, Adler emphasizes the role of attitude vs. glandular function and the importance of both to the physician. He disagrees with Gruber about the consequences of "immoderation" in sex. He comments on birth control, homosexuality, masturbation, and control of the sex drive.

Chapter VIII: The Problem of Sex in Upbringing (1905). Adler discusses childhood sexuality, the purpose of sexuality and

sensuousness, and cautions against too much early sensual gratification and stimulation. He explains pathological developments, sexual prematurity, seduction in childhood, and other influences related to the child's parents. He examines issues around shame and disgust, cultural adjustment and the submerging of sexuality. He comments on normally developing children, the inappropriateness of punishment to counter sexual abnormalities, and the need for a trained educator.

Chapter IX: Three Psycho-Analyses Concerning Inspired Numbers (1905). Adler analyzes, comments on, and confirms the validity of Freud's work about the deeper meaning of the choice of numbers in three specific cases: the first two cases are the self-analyses of two people; the third is one of Adler's cases.

Chapter X: Developmental Defects in Children (1907). Adler begins with a statement about the importance of children and attending to their needs for the future of society. He moves on to discuss various childhood physical abnormalities and conditions that cause suffering in children and affect their performance and functioning. He mentions "bad habits" that can develop (thumb-sucking, etc.). He expresses optimism that with modern science, early recognition and intervention, attitudes of prejudice and hopelessness will be overcome.

Chapter XI: The Aggression Drive in Life and in the Neurosis (1908). Still in the camp of drive theory, Adler presents a theory of drives and their interactions. He emphasizes the aggression drive over the sexual and other drives as the primary determiner, organizer and director of the other drives in forming the person's attitude to the world. He discusses the "innate feeling of community," "social feeling," as restraint to the drives, their most important "regulatory mechanism."

Chapter XII: Inheritance of Diseases (1908). Adler describes the inheritance of disease, what was believed in his day, and what questions remained. He addresses health, environmental, social, and psychological forces that may influence genetic transmission and development.

Chapter XIII: The Child's Need for Affection (1908). Adler focuses on the child's need for affection and the importance of a certain amount of gratification of that need. He explains how the need for affection extends to those outside the immediate family, its critical role in the development of social feeling, and how "cultural exposure" is important

in directing the need. Lack of cultural exposure, for example, has a negative effect, leading to the seeking of too much immediate gratification, self-centeredness, and other difficulties. He addresses the consequences of denying the child's need for affection and its gratification: the assumption of an aggressive posture to the world and the impairment in the development of social feeling.

Chapter XIV: The Theory of Organ Inferiority and Its Philosophical and Psychological Meaning (1908). Here, Adler explains his theory of organ inferiority, psychological compensation, and overcompensation. He begins with an explanation of the meaning of the word "inferiority" and how it is used in relation to the body's organs. He goes on to explore the compensatory relationships between the body's organs and its systems, heredity, the striving for compensation, and various kinds of organ anomalies. He connects environmental pressures, organ inferiority, thought, psychology, and the development of philosophy as interrelated processes. He illustrates cases of organ inferiority and psychological compensation.

Chapter XV: A Prostitute's Two Dreams (1908). Adler interprets two dreams of a prostitute using Freud's principles of dream interpretation: wish fulfillment and repression. He also discusses some impressions of the psychology of prostitutes.

In **Chapter XVI: On the Neurotic Disposition (1909)**, Adler elaborates on what he sees as the roots of the neurotic disposition, including hypersensitivity, organ inferiority, the aggression drive, influences of gender roles or uncertainty about gender role. He mentions various personality characteristics resulting from these influences. He then discusses hypersensitivity, the aggression drive, and inferiority feelings in more depth, as well as the impairment of self-confidence and independence, the inner world (thinking and feeling) of the child, and the expectations and fears of the child. He describes the beginning of "protective measures" the child creates around his hypersensitivity, his philosophy of life, and his "fixed final goal." The child develops suspicion and mistrust, an "unreconcilability with people" which collides with the progress of social feeling. After explaining the significance of birth order and sexual influences, Adler then cites the case of a seven-year-old girl. He concludes with a description of "a pattern of neurosis," its symptoms, and related comments.

Chapter XVII: Myelodysplasia (Organ Inferiority) (1909). (Myelodysplasia is the defective development of the spinal cord.) In this highly technical, medically oriented article, Adler argues that all neurosis can be traced to some degree of organ inferiority and psychological compensation.

Part II: A Study of Organ Inferiority and Its Psychical Compensation (1907). On November 6, 1905 Adler gave a talk to Freud's Psychoanalytic Circle, titled "On the Organic Bases of Neuroses." This was apparently a continuation of his earlier reported research into the "Physiology and Pathology of the Erotogenic Zones." His lecture previewed ideas that would later be developed in *A Study of Organ Inferiority*. The book clearly illustrates the nature of overcompensation and was appreciated by his Viennese medical colleagues and members of the Wednesday Psychological Society, who considered it a major contribution toward understanding the biological forces affecting neurotic development. With a keen physician's insight, Adler takes us on a tour of the human body, offering the equivalent of a short course in physiology. He makes us aware of the interconnectedness of the body's organs and the internal and external conditions that may lead to disease. Consequently, there is an abundance of medical terms throughout the chapters. As a convenience to the reader, a glossary has been added. Later in his writings, Adler shifted away from the idea of an organic root of neurosis, but in 1907 he explored his early insights and speculations about the interplay of organs, the environment, and the mind.