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Elaborating on the Basic Principles of Individual Psychology

In **Chapter I: Psychological Hermaphroditism in Life and in the Neurosis** (1910), Adler joins many authorities of the day in stating that there are male traits in women and female traits in men. Even Freud “established that in no cases of neurosis were hermaphrodite traits absent.” Adler observes that the child plays a dual role, expressing both feminine and masculine tendencies. However, as children tend to adopt the value judgments of the adults in their environment, they soon view “inhibiting aggression as feminine and heightened aggression as masculine.” The masculine protest develops as over-compensation “because the 'female' tendency is regarded contemptuously as a childhood disorder.” Adler lists some characteristics that may contribute to reinforcing female traits and secondarily reinforce masculine protest. He concludes that the task of the educator and the psychotherapist is to uncover these dynamics and bring them to consciousness.

In **Chapter II: Defiance and Obedience** (1910), Adler addresses the connection between early childhood dynamics and later neurotic manifestations. While family life has the greatest influence, he says that two conditions may intensify defiance. The first applies to children “who, as a result of inferior organs, are weak, awkward, sickly, retarded in growth, ugly, or disfigured, and can easily have a stronger feeling of inferiority resulting from the contacts with the outside world.” The second condition comes from “the subjective uncertainty that a particular child has for his or her sexual role. This condition does not come by itself but is closely associated with the first.” Many of these children will become neurotic: either defiant, or “obedient only when it helps them to find love or the gratification of their ambitions.” The most important task of parents and educators, therefore, becomes “removing the possibility of the child developing a feeling of inferiority,” which leads to his “unconscious and mistaken attitudes.” A critical aspect of this education process is to emphasize the equality of women.

In **Chapter III: The Psychic Treatment of Trigeminal Neuralgia** (1910), Adler explores fundamental aspects of psychosomatics. “Among

the nervous symptoms that burden the life, relieve the individual from having to do anything and thereby greatly abrogate all social responsibilities, painful sensations play a significant role.” Examining the main neurotic traits in children and adults, he concludes that the neurotic exhibits “a significant number of interrelated character traits which are designed to systematically enhance or inhibit one another.” Except where pathological-anatomical issues are present, “The starting point of psychosomatic disorders is always a neurotic disturbance of the psychological equilibrium.” The key to diminishing symptoms and promoting a psychologically healthy life is “changing the life style, by strengthening the ability to cooperate.”

In **Chapter IV: Fabricated Dream: A Contribution to the Mechanism of Lying in Neurosis** (1910), Adler explains the nature of lying in patients. Because the neurotic “sees a struggle in every form of personal relationship,” it is no wonder that this struggle extends to the patient-therapist relationship, where aggression may be expressed in different forms of “insubordination, defiance, aloofness,” and lying. The struggle is essentially one of the contrast between “above and below,” wherein the patient tries to gain a superior position, using symptoms, to rid herself of the feeling of inferiority, “a goal which justifies every means.” Children may also lie “to make themselves bigger, or to avoid punishment or embarrassment.” Again, Adler illustrates his arguments with detailed case analyses. He ends the chapter with, “Loyalty and harmony can only be found deep down. There are no lies in the unconscious.”

Chapter V: Adler's Review of “On Conflicts in the Child's Psyche” by C.G. Jung (1910). At that time, Adler was still the editor of *The Journal for Psychoanalysis* where he published a number of reviews of different books and papers. Jung's paper discussed the conflicts in the mind of the child, using his own daughter as an example. In his review, Adler finds Jung's interpretations astute, as well as intelligently moderate. However, he describes Jung's views as “strictly bound to the main threads of Freud's libido teachings,” and offers his own Adlerian analysis, focusing on the purpose of behavior and the use of emotion: “With all sorts of subterfuges, the child tries to gain security through fear and knowledge.” He finishes with, “Analyses such as Jung's are the delectable gift of psychoanalysis. Their value lies not only in confirming questionable results, but also in opening new perspectives.”

In **Chapter VI: The Role of Sexuality in Neurosis** (1911), Adler examines the relationship between neurosis and sexuality. He begins by saying that because sexuality is an important part of everyone's life, it is therefore a part of neurosis, too. "How does sexuality become part of a neurosis and what role does it play? It is kindled early and stimulated by an existing inferiority and a strong masculine protest. It occurs and is felt either as enormously powerful to allow the patient to protect himself in time, or is depreciated and eliminated as a factor if this serves the patient." Included in a lengthy, detailed case analysis are two of the patient's dreams, about which Adler comments, "The true attitude of an individual toward life can be established on the basis of the earliest remembered dreams and experiences, which proves they were structured in accordance with a planned procedure." He concludes by stating that the patient's "uncertainty, the lack of preparation for his male role with all its related manifestations, became the axis of his inner life."

Chapter VII: "Repression" and "Masculine Protest": Their Roles and Meaning for the Neurotic Dynamic (1911) continues the discussion begun in Chapter VI. While Adler rejects some psychoanalytic explanations provided by the Freudians, he accepts Freud's concept of repression, commenting that it takes place under the pressures of the "ego drives." Then he elaborates on his ideas concerning the influence of humiliation in the development of neurosis. "Based on my experience, the neurotically disposed person, who actually suffers constantly, responds with an acute and chronic attack to every prospect or every feeling of humiliation. That attack provides us with the point in time from which we date the start of the neurosis." In order to be successful, treatment must deal with the two major sources of the neurosis: "the feeling of inferiority and the masculine protest."

In **Chapter VIII: On Understanding Resistance During Treatment** (1911), Adler places resistance in the context of the most common manifestations of neurosis: obstinacy, hostility, a combative attitude, and dominance. "A patient's contrary attitude toward others can really only be understood in light of her wrongful tendency toward isolation, a powerless, discouraging compulsion to dominate, and vanity. Such behavior, of course, is expressed toward the physician who can then develop the patient's ability to cooperate by disarming her of her weapons of attack and, by enlightening her regarding her utterances, bring her closer to understanding her condition." While presenting a case, he points out, "The depreciation of one's partner is a regular

manifestation among neurotics.” Furthermore, he warns us, “. . . that the person who has long and seriously been neglected will nurture hatred and animosity against those who attempt to dislodge her from her condition and will oppose them like an enemy.” In other words, therapists should be prepared to face strong resistance from clients.

In **Chapter IX: Syphilophobia** (1911), Adler focuses on neuroses where the dominating trait is the fear of syphilis. Today, people might question this connection between neurosis and syphilis, but in Adler's time syphilis was a major health problem, somewhat similar to AIDS today. He states, “. . . phobic and hypochondriac symptoms are particularly suitable to protect those afflicted with defeats in life.” In these individuals, “. . . fear is replaced by safeguarding.” Thus, part of the neurotic's condition involves arranging “the constant or occasional rejection of protective measures. The patient plays with danger and pursues punishment only to envelop himself more securely in his safety net in order to confront more drastically other dangers from the outside world as well as his own inferiority.” Adler uses examples from literature and a number of paintings, as well as cases, to illustrate the connection between the fear of syphilis and the fear of women. He concludes, “Where a patient manifests syphilophobia it is certain that hidden there is the fear of the woman, respectively of the man, and in most cases a fear of both.”

In **Chapter X: A Declaration**, published in *The Journal of Psychoanalysis* in 1911, Adler tells the readers that its publisher, Professor Freud, thinks that the scientific opinions between him and Adler are such that the joint publication of the journal is impossible. Therefore, Adler has voluntarily decided to resign from the editorship. This is an historical landmark in the development of IP, marking Adler's official break with Freud.

In **Chapter XI: Organ Dialect** (1912), we find major elements of IP: the criticism of Freud's libido theory; “as if”, or final fictions (with a reference to Vaihinger); organ dialect; guiding ideals; organ-inferiority; and the importance of non-verbal expressions. In organ dialect, the psychological states may be revealed as physical symptoms, and/or physical states (illness, organ inferiority) may be revealed as psychological symptoms. Both ways are possible. When trying to interpret these complicated states, the therapist needs to know what the person's guiding idea is. Adler discusses Ludwig Klages's theory of

expressive movement, and concludes by agreeing with him that “the ways of expressing oneself, acting, emoting, one's physiognomy and all other psychological phenomenon, including those of the sick, are analogous to the subconsciously established and active life plan.”

In **Chapter XII: Psychological Hermaphroditism and the Masculine Protest** (1912), Adler expands on his previous explanations of hermaphroditism and the masculine protest. He begins with a critique of some existing theory and approaches to therapy, including the idea that the neurotic is “guilty of conscious exaggeration, and could be cured if she were more determined to overcome the symptoms of her illness.” After a brief outline of the history of psychoanalysis, Adler continues to refine key concepts of IP, beginning with organ inferiority and the feelings of inferiority. After reflecting on the logic of the mind, he concludes that “the apparent double life of the neurotic is firmly embedded in a feminine and masculine part of the psyche, both of which strive for one uniform personality, but seem to fail purposely in their attempt at a synthesis in order to rescue the personality before colliding with reality.”

In **Chapter XIII: On the Theory of Hallucination** (1912), Adler focuses on the psychological dynamics and functions of hallucinations. He begins by presenting a short criticism of a physicalistic and materialist theory of the mind. Psychology cannot be based on the physical transmittance of chemical chain-reactions in the nervous system; the mind is an organ that relates the person to the world and guides the will in a direction characteristic of the individual. In IP, the primary question regarding any psychological phenomenon is: “What are the consequences?” He proceeds to explain hallucinations in the light of some case studies, demonstrating that hallucinations are a means of psychological and social adaptation that lead a person astray. A hallucinating person builds for himself “a second world in which the hallucination has validity because logic no longer matters so much.”

Chapter XIV: On Educating Parents (1912) opens with Adler's rhetorical question: “Does anyone still think that words alone have power?” Unfortunately, contrary to all evidence, many adults still rely on talking rather than educating. The distinction is crucial, and fundamental to IP. Children often resist the word as well as the authority of adults. Raising psychologically healthy children is far from easy; indeed, it is not “a science, but an art.” This art demands above all that parents help

nurture a child's social feeling, the primary requirement for her to deal successfully with the inevitable challenges and conflicts with her environment. The first step is to recognize and build on a child's strengths. Relying on arbitrary discipline and exercise of authority does no good; “the human psyche does not endure constant submission.” A child must be won over emotionally to cooperate. The smaller and weaker a child is made to feel, the more she will want to gain recognition by defying her caregiver, and attaining various useless measures of security. Adler offers ideas for helping educators, noting that those with persistent problems are often similar to neurotic individuals. Finally, children who have been improperly educated, especially with regard to the other sex, easily “fall prey to neurosis.” As adults, “The primary characteristic of such people is the struggle against the other sex.” We must teach children equality between the sexes.

Chapter XV: The Organic Substrata of Psychoneuroses (1912) is a lecture on the development of the neurotic character, written after the first edition of *The Neurotic Character* (CCWAA, Vol. 1) was published. In this paper, Adler defines the neurosis as an unconsciously set goal that springs from a tendency for compensation or security: “. . . it is generally the nature of the neurotic to attempt to impose on his surroundings a personal superiority in some, often peculiar, form.” He refers to the ideas of Vaishinger (final fictions), Henri Bergson (élan vital), and Ludwig Klages (expressive movements as a means of personality diagnosis). In contrast to Freud's libido concept, Adler emphasizes that at the core of the neurosis is the unconsciously created life style, or guiding idea, not any sexual fixations. In spite of its title, the paper argues for the psychological origin of the neurotic character.

Chapter XVI: Individual Psychological Treatment of Neuroses (1913) contains the following sections: “A) Inferiority Feelings and Compensation, B) The 'Arrangement' of the Neurosis, and C) The Psychic Treatment of Neurosis.” Whereas the first two sections explore ground previously covered in these volumes, the third section offers many practical, strategic “hints on how the physician can prevent being treated by the patient.” Highlights of these recommendations include 1) No absolute promises should be made that the patient will be cured, only that a cure is possible. 2) We must act on the assumption that “the superiority-lusting patient will exploit every commitment of the physician as a means to gain the upper hand.” 3) “Never allow the patient to attribute to the physician a superior, authoritarian role of

teacher, father, savior, etc. Such attempts represent a patient's first steps of placing a superior at his service, demeaning him, and then compromising him through defeats engendered by him.” 4) Even greater caution should be exercised against having any expectations of a patient. Meanwhile, in order for treatment to move forward, we must establish a relationship of equality, so that “the process of uncovering the neurotic life plan takes place in a friendly atmosphere.” The patient takes the initiative, while we “search for and uncover in all of his forms of expression and thought processes the operating neurotic line.” At the same time, we try to teach him “to work toward the same end.”

Chapter XVII: On the Function of Compulsion Conception as a way of Intensifying the Sense of Personality (1913) consists of two parts. In Part One, Adler gives a short summary of his theory of obsessive-compulsive neurosis; in Part Two, he presents a case study. The obsessive-compulsive neurosis is an attempt to control a person's life in a manner that guarantees superiority by non-cooperative means. It provides the person with a feeling of quasi-godlikeness. In Part Two, Adler discusses the case of a 35-year-old woman who suffered from loss of energy and compulsive brooding. He describes his discussions with her and some of his conclusions: “Shutting out all external demands is made possible by the gain of power derived from having ascribed legitimacy to the illness.”

Chapter XVIII: Additional Guiding Principles for the Practice of Individual Psychology (1913) is a kind of manifesto. Adler begins with twelve theses. After presenting four central requirements for the practice of IP, he draws some conclusions. Finally, he shares a case study to illustrate his theories. The first of the twelve theoretical theses states, “Every neurosis can be interpreted as caused by a culturally failed attempt to free oneself from the feeling of inferiority so as to gain a feeling of superiority.” In stating the requirements for the successful practice of IP, he emphasizes that the therapist needs to “be endowed with a significant gift of empathy.”

In **Chapter XIX: Individual Psychological Findings from Research in Sleep Disturbance** (1913), Adler first explores a case study of a client with sleep disturbances, then relates experiences from his own childhood, thus making himself the object of another case study. On the topic of sleep disturbances in general, he comments, “The guiding personality ideas reaching toward their goal do not rest even when

asleep.” His childhood experiences give us insight into the formation of IP. Several incidents involving death led to his decision to become a physician; early sickness and difficulty “moving about” led to his emphasis on psychological movement; a strong, important early recollection proved to be fictional. He presents this personal information in order to make a point about ambition and goals, which relates to his analysis of sleep disturbances: “. . . ambition is only a means and not an end so that at times it can be used or put aside depending on whether the impending goal can more easily be attained with one character trait or another.” He used his ambition to make a contribution to the welfare of others; ambition resulting in sleeplessness benefits no one.

Chapter XX: The Neurotic Character (1913) re-visits the topic of Adler's book first published in 1912, then revised and re-published in 1919, 1922, and 1927. Here he expands on the philosophical foundations of his theory of neurosis. Similar to art, psychology “demands an equally strong intuitive comprehension of the material, a comprehension and feeling that extends beyond the limits of induction and deduction.” The fictional goal is all-powerful: “The individual's goal that was creatively set and the path she sought to reach it, is reflected in all of her actions, in the way she perceives life, the present as well as the future, and in how she embraces the teachings of the past.” But recognizing and understanding the common thread in all of an individual's expressive movements is not easy; it requires intuitively capturing something fluid: “. . . only an artist is equal to the task, especially a poet or musician. This is no different from approaching an art form, when we relive the gist of a drama, or when from single notes of a melody we get a sense of the seamless whole.” In order to understand the neurotic's “secret goal,” we must examine the child's psyche. The greater her feeling of inferiority, the higher her compensatory “secret goal,” so that even in old age, the individual will pursue “power, respect, attractiveness, and riches,” measuring herself against others and placing them in her service. Thus, Adler's concept of psychology begins with healthy pedagogy, where teaching the equality of the sexes becomes crucial, “. . . despite a prevailing condition that demonstrates the opposite.”

Chapter XXI: Individual-Psychological Remarks on Alfred Berger's *Hofrat Eysenhardt* (1913) is an Individual Psychological analysis of the historical novel by Alfred Berger (1853-1912). Based on a real person in the Hapsburg Empire, his novel tells the story of a famous lawyer and attorney general. “His intellectual gifts and his prodigious memory

astonished everybody.” However, he was disappointed in his expectations. Adler explains why this novel is worthy of analysis: “It is true to life not merely because it is based upon an historical personage, but also because of the creative imagination of an artist-psychologist who has more than once given proof of his intuitive knowledge of the human soul. For everyone sees only what he can understand.” Commenting on Eysenhardt's transformation, Adler says, “This transformation shows us to what an extent the development of a character under the stress and tear of the world is dependent on the person's own opinion of himself. It is, in other words, changeable, and can like every other scheme be exchanged for another.” In the end, “Eysenhardt protects himself by developing warning hallucinations and terrifying images. He has his hallucinations just as others have a feeling for society or a religion, in order to protect himself by means of an aggressiveness which defeat has called forth.”

In **Chapter XXII: On the Role of the Unconscious in Neurosis** (1913), Adler explores the theory and uses of the idea of the “unconscious.” He believes that the “unconscious” refers to the fact that the personality ideal, or life style, of a client is not conscious. The psychological (and biological) function of the unconscious is that it facilitates acting in accordance with a uniformly directed life plan. This unconscious life style and goal do not need to be made conscious in order for an individual to pursue them. In fact, consciousness of these dynamics would probably inhibit the pursuit of that life plan.

Chapter XXIII: Response (to A. Maeder) (1913) is a polemical discussion of Adler's dream theory. There was a conflict between Adler and Maeder concerning priorities. Alphonse Maeder, a member of the Jung group, had published on dream theory, arguing for a teleological interpretation of dreams. In his publications, Maeder made no mention of Adler. Here, Adler seeks to demonstrate and “go on record” that Maeder, in fact, copied Adler's central ideas on dream theory. He explains how dreams evolve from the guiding idea, or the life style, of the individual. Dreams function as compensation for inferiority feelings, provide an attempt at solution of the individual's problems, and forewarn us when we are about to try something that we really should avoid: “The dream is a sketchy reflection of psychological attitudes and it always presents only attempts at thinking ahead.”

In **Chapter XXIV: Dreams and Dream Interpretation** (1913), Adler begins with historical references that go back to antiquity, a common method of argumentation in Adler's day, because knowledge of the classical world was widespread among all people with some education. Then he presents two questions: Is it really not possible for the human mind to look into the future, within certain constraints, when the individual herself has a hand in shaping that future? Does conjecturing, which is also called "intuition," not play a far greater role in our lives than uninformed critics assume? His answer to both questions is: Yes. While not directly about dreams itself, this line of thought prepares us for the next step: Expectations, desires, and fears reveal themselves in dreams. Like character, dreams are arranged in accordance with the ultimate purpose of the dreamer: "Dream interpretation has the purpose of describing to the patient how in dreaming she prepares and trains herself, and how it also often reveals her to be the arranger of her sufferings. It also is meant to demonstrate how she tries to approach problems she faces from a perspective that would promote her predetermined, fictitious, goal-oriented striving." In Adler's approach, all expressive movement, both waking and sleeping, relates to the fictional goal, which unifies the individual's personality. Helping a client move in a different direction requires helping her change her compensatory, self-oriented goal to a socially beneficial one.