Interpsychic Theories

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Big Ideas

Individual Psychology

    Alfred Adler

Social Interest

Finalism

Fictional Finalisms

Striving for Superiority

Inferiority Feelings

Style of Life

Birth Order
- Oldest children fear being "dethroned" by younger siblings
- Second/Middle children feel need to race to "dethrone" eldest
- Lastborn children more sociable, dependent

Creative Self

Adlerian Psychotherapy
- Neurosis springs from inappropriate life-styles, inappropriate goals, or fictional finalism
- Overcompensation
- Inferiority Complex
- Superiority Complex
- Safeguarding Tendencies

    Harry Stack Sullivan

Family therapy

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

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Individual Psychology (cont'd)

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

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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

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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, fell, 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

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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

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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

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Inferiority Feelings

- We seek superiority to manage our 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

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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 (+)

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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

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Birth Order (cont'd)

- 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
  - Adler was a second born…
- Lastborn children more sociable, dependent
  - May strive to surpass older siblings
  - If "babied" may remain helpless and dependent

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Birth Order (cont'd)

- 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

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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

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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"

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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

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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

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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

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