

Alfred Adler

Alfred Adler's theory turned the attention to immediate social imperatives of family and society (social variables) and their effects on unconscious factors. Adler was the originator of the concept of the inferiority complex - that is, the individual's sense of incompleteness, sense of imperfection, physical inferiorities, as well as social disabilities. According to Adler, it is striving toward superiority that drives the personality. This striving enhances the personality when it is socially oriented, that is, when the striving leads to endeavors that benefit all people; when the striving is selfish and not socially oriented, it becomes the root of personality disturbances.

The notions of creative self and the style of life were also important to Adler's theory. The creative self is that force by which each individual shapes his uniqueness and makes his own personality. Style of life represents the manifestation of the creative self and describes a person's unique way of achieving superiority. The family environment is crucial in modeling the person's style of life. Another important concept in Adler's theory of personality is fictional finalism. This is the notion that an individual is motivated more by his expectations of the future than by past experiences. According to Adler, human goals are based on a subjective or fictional estimate of life's values rather than objective data from the past.

Whereas Freud's major assumption is that behavior is motivated by inborn instincts and Jung's principal axiom is that a person's conduct is governed by inborn archetypes, Adler assumed that people are primarily motivated by striving for superiority.