

THE THREE REGISTERS: AN INSTRUMENTAL METAPHOR IN ADLERIAN COUNSELLING THERAPY, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Christopher Shelley

This paper was written with two aims in mind. Firstly, as a self-reflexive response to the status of Adlerian psychology as a depth psychology following the 25th Congress of the *International Association for Individual Psychology* held in July 2011 at the *University of Vienna*. This event marked the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Adlerian Psychology. Oberst (2012) notes how some lingering tensions between psychoanalytic⁽¹⁾ and Adlerian approaches persist, more than a century following the Freud/Adler split. I contend that some of this tension centres on the differing ways that psychoanalysis and Adlerian psychology conceive the “unconscious”.

And secondly, as a deliberation drawn from my work as a clinical supervisor with apprentice therapists from a number of differing theoretical orientations, Adlerian and non-Adlerian, I have noticed a consistent initial level of confusion as to the “depth” dimension in Adlerian psychology. In developing the metaphor of the three registers, I have sought to shed some clarity on this persisting debate in a way that also aids the clinical skills and conceptualisation of trainees.

If there is one area that challenges the quest to provide an Adlerian methodology that theoretically congeals, it surely has to do with the notion and status of being a contextual system that reaches from the community into the depth dimensions of the individual (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Whereas Psychoanalysis and Jungian Analytical Psychology have developed finely crafted sets of metaphors to convey notions of depth to the novice, metaphors that provide conceptual lenses and cultural landscapes upon which to tread, I argue that the Adlerian view remains ambivalent, an articulation pointed out many years ago (Datler, 1999).

Clearly, in the international Adlerian context, this fact has not changed. There are good reasons for this. The reverberating politics of the split between Adler and Freud, as well as divisions between psycho-analytic-oriented Adlerians and those with a constructivist, cognitive, or humanistic slant, continue to generate ambivalent reactions. The pragmatic orientation of Adler’s approach, often directed towards those with less financial means, or, more broadly, to professional as well as lay groups such as teachers, social workers and parents, cannot be underestimated. In the current climate of austerity and the difficulty of obtaining State-funding for longer-term psychotherapy (e.g., in English Canada where it is only available for those with a “psychiatric” disorder with no guarantee that long-term “analysis” or therapy would be given in any event, especially with the dominance of pharmacological management [see: Paris, 2005]), the relevant point is that those who cannot afford a long analysis are disadvantaged by the very structure of long-term analytic work to which psychoanalysis, with the potential of analysis *interminable*, could succumb. That private psychotherapy without third-party or State-

⁽¹⁾ My use of *psychoanalytic* is in line with Anglo-American as well as Adler’s (1927) original understanding of Freudian and post-Freudian-based discourse(s). Some European Adlerians use the term “psychoanalysis” as synonymous with psychotherapy, a version that can include Adlerian approaches (e.g., in France: *Psychoanalyse Adlérienne*).

subsidisation is expensive cannot be underestimated; it makes the *de facto* practice of therapy *elitist*. I contend that this is a very important factor contributing to the earlier stated ambivalence. Yet, in relation to this ambiguity, there are also important theoretical considerations. These include a rejection of a reified “unconscious” domain in polarity with a significantly smaller “ego-consciousness” as the objects of the therapeutic encounter or as an overall explanation of human nature. Since Adlerians generally reject this conceptualisation, there is room for considering a working metaphor that adequately conveys the Adlerian contours of depth that certainly differs from other psychodynamic and analytic systems. The metaphor I propose, that of the *three registers*, will accommodate an Adlerian focus on depth as well as contextual, somatic, here-and-now, concrete, and pragmatic dimensions of clinical work.

In pursuing this metaphoric conception, I view Adlerian Psychology as a multi-layered and overlapping system primarily embedded in a situated context, presently one of profound neo-liberal impacts and deepening levels of social inequality, yet for the “experiencing” individual, emphasising powerfully interconnected domains of here-and-now, depth and somatic-embodiment. We are in dynamic relationship with the socio/cultural/political and inner-subjective world(s).

Conceptualising these overlapping and oscillating inter-linkages is a task that is both simple and complex; simple in that the *register* metaphor is easily grasped yet complex in that it diverges from well-established conceptualisations of conscious/unconscious, such as Leibniz’s famous iceberg motif, a motif frequently, yet incorrectly attributed to psychoanalysis ⁽¹⁾. Perhaps it is global warming that is melting the iceberg conception, or rather new and evolving conceptions in psychology; nevertheless, the Adlerian perspective is, pragmatically, more topographically land-based than water-based.

Clearly psychoanalysis has had an impact on language. Notions of a conscious/unconscious dyad, which are certainly not unique to psycho-analysis, yet often automatically associated with it, are tied implicitly to typically Freudian-based language, embedded in “psycho-analyse” (McWilliams, 2011). Common terms such as the “ego” are typically conflated between the Latin word for “I” and an aspect of Freud’s metapsychology. Odd, since Freud restricted the term “ego” for his English writings and the alternate “*Ich*” (meaning “I”) for his German texts. With such deep conflation, we can easily see the impact that psychoanalysis has had on language. Nevertheless, I shall argue that Freud’s unconscious/conscious *binary*, heavily weighted to the unconscious pole, is incompatible with Adler’s view.

As an Adlerian, I prefer a holistic conception of depth and other dimensions, one that challenges the predominance of this asymmetrical dualism.

One could quite alternatively allow for greater complexity than this over-riding dualism permits,

⁽¹⁾ G.W. Leibniz is a 17th Century German philosopher who first introduced the concept of the unconscious. He designated by this word the “small perceptions”, too slender to be conscious, but which can produce a conscious impression if sustained in great number. Consciousness aggregates these and adds them up in such a manner that every conscious perception becomes a reality constituted by a myriad of unconscious perceptions.

just as Leo Gold⁽¹⁾ (1998) argued in his paper on chaos theory.

Writings on human unawareness precede Freud's "unconscious", indeed considerably so, stretching well back into antiquity. Heraclitus wrote about the soul, the metaphysical predecessor to the "unconscious", as having unknown dimensions which are a mystery to one's self. Self-knowledge, as a reflexive form of contemplation, is "hard won" (Claxton, 2006, p. 81). In the Adlerian discourse, we do have later metaphysical notions that once again point to the soul/self. Yet, there is also a secular view and style in Adlerian methodologies that are close to Socratic conceptions of unawareness. In the *Symposium*, Socrates tried to show those with whom he dialogued, things that they, in fact, did not know. Realising that one "does not know" allows for the birth of new self-knowledge, which is said to be initially latent. The ancient Greeks used the term *Maieutics* – akin to midwifery - where the Socratic practitioner aids the other in the birth of new self-knowledge: awareness. With the secularisation of knowledge, there was a movement away from notions of "soul" into structural models like Freud's, systems that re-conceived the unknown into the entity of "the unconscious". Seventeenth-century rationalists such as Rene Descartes split the knowing mind (thinking substance, *res cogitans*) from the unknowing body that further paved the way for aspects of the Age of Enlightenment. This separation was a gendered cut since rationality was identified with men and the body/nature with women.

As a feminist⁽¹⁾, I foreground the still often un-thought gendered effects this separation of the body has unleashed, such as associating rationality with the male mind and irrationality with the female body.

There is a body of feminist philosophy contesting the still reverberating effects of this split on the status of women and those constituted as *others* (Tong, 2014). This gendered cut, which has so marked Western philosophy and psychology, is *androcentric* in form. It requires on-going acknowledgement and awareness, so as to heal and repair these deep conventional biases that have shaped our historically constructed discourses under these androcentric lenses (Bem, 1993).

The Therapist as Instrument in the Service of the Client

I shall introduce the metaphor of the *Three Registers* by recourse to another important metaphor that I use in counselling therapy supervision, that of the *instrument*. In the early phases of supervision, I encourage supervisees to think of themselves in the therapy room as akin to being instruments in the service of their clients. The self-reflexive instrument itself serves two functions. Firstly, it signifies a construct (*instruere* – Latin for "construct") as well as a tool, "means" or device (Old French "*estruement*"), including music-making objects. The latter is resonant with Adler's (1930) contention that, "the total melody is to be found again in every one of its parts" (p. 390). The instrument can also be a tool of power. Yet I prefer Adlerian and

⁽¹⁾ Gold (1998) asserts that holistic models such as the Adlerian concept could benefit from "three-dimensional dynamic models that allow for greater depth and subtlety in our understanding" (p. 68). The present discussion on the "three Registers" is consistent with Gold's call.

⁽¹⁾ There are several common points between traditional and contemporary Adlerian psychotherapy and feminist psychotherapy. These include an emphasis on the collaborative relationship, social equality, empowerment, diversity, sensitivity to power dynamics, attention to the social world and the constructivist dimensions of gender as being more important than essentialist readings of the sexed body.

feminist arguments that pragmatically articulate imbalances in social power, including the unequal power in the therapeutic relationship. Although I disagree with Foucault's (1998) lack of holism, I do agree with his contention that the Psy-disciplines are imbued with social power which he argued in his conception of the *technologies of the self*. As a therapy supervisor, I emphasise the self-reflexive development of the power of the therapist so that it does not interfere with the integrity or the agency of the client. A parallel can be found in the famous 18th-century British feminist Mary Wollstonecraft who spoke of the aims of the liberation of women, drawing on Kant's instrumental/means analysis:

"Woman is not what the philosopher Kant called a *"mere means"*, or instrument, to someone else's happiness or perfection. Rather, woman is what Kant called an *"end,"* a rational agent whose dignity consists in having the capacity for self-determination" (as cited in Putnam Tong, 2014, p. 16).

Turning the configuration inside out and re-applying the construct to the therapist-client dyad, in order to convey the power of the therapist's position, I encourage supervisees to consider themselves as instruments in the service of the client's self-development and self-needs. We are instruments in the service of the client and, in this sense, aspects of our selves are curtailed, held back so as to focus on the client's growth. Our clients are "ends" in and of themselves. A person who is an "end" is someone who possesses full self-hood with its attendant powers of agency, capacities for responsibility and choice-making sensibilities. Yet, the misuses of power can undermine these very virtues. In reaching for these virtues, one's citizenship is held as equal to others. For Adlerians, this inner sense of equity is a requisite to the requirements of democratic living, an argument that Karen John (2012; 2014) has so persuasively considered. An inner sense of equity is, in essence, a reasonable resolution of the inferiority/superiority dynamic, which provides the optimal conditions for positive community living, leadership and capacity for service.

Things can be of one's making but not of one's choosing. The aim for Adlerians is nevertheless the empowerment or enablement of the individual (who requires it) in establishing an encouraged state of being; or, the increasing self-reflexivity of those who do not wield their power wisely, consciously or with an awareness of their social impact. Hence a reduction in the sense of superiority in some is not an infrequent goal. Choice must be based on the maximisation of agency tempered by the ideals of equality in the community.

The Metaphor of the Register

In English, the etymological trace meaning of "register" begins with the Old French and 13th-century *register*, derived from the Medieval Latin *registrum*, and the root Latin *regestra*. The *regestra* connotes "lists" and those matters that were "recorded". The past participle is *regerer*, which means to carry a matter back (*re*), that is, to bring back from another time or place by means of bearing or carrying (*gerere*). The relevance to Adlerian Psychology is based on the core principle of "movement"; we move through life carrying matters from the past, brought into the present with the possibility or probability of continuing to carry such artefacts into the future unless some assimilation, alteration, or dispensation is made, e.g., through "reorientation". To bear or carry, such as on one's back, is an embodied process, one that contains somatic involvement. To carry a thing from one dimension of time (the past) into the here-and-now (the present, whereby something "registers") with the possibility or probability of carrying/bearing

implies a future orientation. These three dimensions of past, present and future are time-bound constructs, vital to the metaphor of the Register.

Yet, our etymology lesson is incomplete without considering the manifestation of the term “register” in Swedish (*registrera*), Danish (*registrere*), and German (*registrieren*), which carries an interpretation of the Latin *regere* as a form of “rule to adhere”. In Adlerian Psychology, these rules are found in the unique style of life, the pattern of one’s movement. Another progression of the Latin *regere* is found in the term “Registrar”, one who keeps records and enforces rules related to those records.

Furthermore, another meaning of register surfaces in a musical sense conveying the range of an instrument, including, of course, the human voice. By this, we mean the range that constitutes a series of tones in a scale such as the familiar basso, tenor, alto and soprano registers. Finally, the register can convey affect in the sense of registering a feeling. I might, for example, wish to register my annoyance, that is, to impress it, record it, or, to register my delight, likewise to impress it upon another.

The stance of objectivity and neutrality adopted in classical psychoanalysis with which Adler disagreed, seeks to provoke the patient to produce a range of transference reactions. The neutrality sought deliberately masks the actual affect the therapist feels so as to prevent an impression. Adlerians, in contrast, seek to impress hope in the client and to do so requires one to abandon the false “neutrality” of the orthodox psychoanalytic stance. Not hard to do temporarily since much discussion in psychoanalysis has already led to the dislodgment of this stance, such as witnessed in “relational psychoanalysis.” The use of encouragement, to the modulated degree that the client can tolerate it, nevertheless entails a rejection of professional facades in favour of genuine human engagement, such as smiling when appropriate, conveying empathy, demonstrating care and concern, sharing humour and authentically joining in to the degree that it is germane. Transference and countertransference, as shall be discussed, happen regardless and need not be deliberately provoked through an imposing demeanour or by hiding out of view where mirror neurons are subject to imagination rather than face-to-face encounter. At the foundation of psychoanalysis and some divergent Adlerian schools, this constitutes a significant methodological distinction.

The Three Registers as Comprising the Self-System

The Three Registers are conceived as an interconnected *holistic* dynamic that reflects the self-system. This holistic dynamic displaces binary distinctions and considers the relevance of the synthetic tendency towards the healing aims of therapy. What ties the self-system together is the person’s *style of life*, which organises one’s own *line of movement*. My invocation of holism is intentionally open to differing worldviews. One need not take a metaphysical explanation of holism if this is not compatible with one’s cosmology. If one considers the classic dialectic formula as an alternate to metaphysics, the well known formula of Thesis - Antithesis - Synthesis, one finds that the *synthesis* is synonymous, for some, to the holistic dynamic sought; to merge and transform opposites; to bring together; to resolve; to repair; to heal; to reconcile, etc. If one would rather turn to metaphysics and spirituality as the late writings of Adler (1938) did, then such a metaphysical conception is clearly available in Adlerian writings (Mansager et al., 2002). Let us now consider the Three Registers individually.

The First Register – Here and Now

The First Register functions for the individual in the here-and-now dimension. Common notions such as “presence”, “awareness”, “consciousness”, feeling “awake” and a state of mindfulness pervade what the First Register indicates. In supervision, encouraging supervisees to work on the First Register is not usually difficult in North American contexts since the dominant culture emphasises this register. It is the usual basis for culpability in law, for responsibility in society and for the exercise of reason in democracy. In Western liberal democracies, the First Register is a cultural product of the Age of Enlightenment and cannot be assumed to be universal. In Adlerian psychology, it is only one dimension of life, experience and clinical work. The first-register dimension might feel “pure” but, for Adlerians, it is tempered by the ever-present influence of the style of life (Shelley, 2006), hence it overlaps synergistically with the Second and Third Registers. Common modalities of first-register-focused therapy include systems of work based on the encounter (e.g. some aspects of Gestalt, Feminist and Humanistic systems), CBT, Rogerian, Mindfulness approaches and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy. The emphasis on this register is for the enhancement and amplification of agency, empowerment, enablement, an increased sense of responsibility and greater self-regulation. For many Adlerians, the uses of *encouragement* (Yang, Milliren, Blagen, 2010; Schoenaker, 2011), and of *hope* in the encounter, as well as psycho-education and/or normalisation strategies, are typical first-register skills. Enhancing emotional self-regulation (e.g., anger management or anxiety control), motivational interviewing and other incentive techniques, self-soothing strategies, thought stopping, mindfulness-based breathing, mindful walking and mindful eating, etc., all are first-register methodologies. The overall effect of enhanced self-reflexivity across the registers in Adlerian psychology appears to favour the first-register dimension, which, I agree, is integral for the improvement of the individual and the community. The pragmatic emphasis of this register is clear. However, in order to maximise empowerment and agency of the First Register, Adlerians have been long aware of the necessity to work on other registers, often in tandem.

The Second Register – Not Yet Understood / There and Then

The Second Register – the not yet understood / there and then - is the primary dimension that commonly causes confusion amongst non-Adlerian supervisees. I agree with Stein (2013), whose mentor Sophia de Vries argues that the distinction between conscious/unconscious cannot be clearly demarcated due to Adler’s commitment to “totality” (p. 88): the “indivisibility”, that is, the true etymological meaning of the “individual” in Adlerian psychology (Shelley, 2008).

Leonhard Seif (1931) described the overlap between conscious and unconscious (the First and Second Registers) using the term *synergy* that emphasises holism rather than schism. Ansbacher (1982) speaks of “unaware” or “dimly aware” dimensions that, in essence, construct an “unconscious” field that is “quite real” (p. 32). Yet, as Dreikurs-Ferguson points out, for Adler, this conscious/unconscious is “relative, not absolute nor crucially distinct” (p. 22). This reflects Adler’s (1938) original statement: “even the so-called conscious ... is chock full of the unconscious, or, as I have called it, the not understood” (p. 202).

The guiding fiction, and fictions in general, were understood by Vaihinger, the originator of the concept, as “carried out in the darkness of the unconscious” (as cited in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 88). Dreikurs (1973) states that goals are, when in service of these fictions, “always hidden and unconscious” (p. 23).

For clients who can benefit from a focus on the Second Register, with requisite psychological tolerance, material for holistic engagement includes dream work⁽¹⁾, early recollections, other projective techniques and the working through of any non-primed counter/transferences⁽²⁾ (certainly by the termination of therapy) - only if necessary - since such a focus can also be a hindrance to the therapy itself (Prina, 2010; Walker 2010) and runs counter to Adler's (1992/1931) view that "we shall never run the risk of [deliberately] generating 'transferences'" (p. 70). Moreover, the linkage of typical parapraxes – lapses of memory or mental errors such as a slip of the tongue or the pen, or the misplacement of an object - to the safeguarding of the fictive final goal or other predominant second-register fictions are useful tools that can certainly be used by Adlerians. Other methods of focus, all of which can and do overlap with the other registers, include the identification and translation of "organ dialect" into associated affect and comprehension of first-register language; the creative and insightful syntheses of art therapy and the revealing and gentle possibilities of relaxing unhelpful safeguarding through Metaphor Therapy (Kopp, 1995).

Second-register work, with its largely symbolic content, is a common focus for Adlerian psychology, consistent with Adler's proclamation that we often "know much more than we understand" (Adler, 1938, p.7). It allows for right-brain (client) to right-brain (therapist) communication that can impart valuable insights to both parties, insights that can lead to positive transformation of the style of life and greater overall self-reflexivity. Nevertheless, Adler did appreciate the depth dimension, providing methodological guidance for working on it and even commended Freud for his dream work on what I call the Second Register. Adler wrote in 1933:

"Freud was the first to have undertaken the attempt of developing a scientific dream theory. This as well as certain observations which he described as belonging to the 'unconscious', are a lasting contribution which no one can lessen" (Adler, as cited in Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 75).

For the purposes of clarity, I shall briefly go through Freud's (1900) dream hypotheses, drawn from his seminal *Interpretation of Dreams*, with brief Adlerian commentary as follows:

- *manifest content* (recalled by conscious memory, therefore First Register);
- *latent content* (revealed through "analysis" in psychoanalysis; unconscious, therefore Second Register);
- *condensation* (compressed, amalgamated or composite material straddling the Second and First Registers);
- *dream displacement and/or distortion* (a creative device, the Second Register);

⁽¹⁾ Adlerian dream work theorists such as Gold (2013) favour an encounter/enactment approach that is principally First Register. In reading his work, I contend that the second- and third-register connotations are implicit. Gold did not accept the notion of a distinct unconscious realm.

⁽²⁾ Countertransference management is a necessary factor in therapeutic best practices; for example, in developing the well supported dimensions of therapist "self-insight, self-integration, anxiety management, empathy, and conceptualizing ability" (Walker, 2010, p. 108). In instances of borderline, narcissistic, histrionic, paranoid and sociopathic pathology, particular countertransference reactions are common and can be useful in the psychodynamic diagnostic/assessment processes (McWilliams, 2011).

- *double meaning of the word* (First and Second Registers);
- *repression* (a supposed *incapacity of consciousness* or denial of the First Register; a concept Adlerians generally reject in favour of alternate explanations such as preservation of the fictive final goal);
- *symbols* (in classical psychoanalysis, the dreamers are unconscious of the meaning of their symbols).

Symbols are exclusively second-register phenomena in psychoanalysis. For Adlerians, this is not necessarily so (Gold, 2013). Although Adler praised Freud's work on dreams (Fiebert, 1997), he did not theoretically consider nor methodologically apply Freud's concepts. Rather, he created his own unique dream theory (Adler, 2005).

Finally, I have found the method of identifying and working with *parallel process* to be indispensable in training counselling therapy interns. Parallel process is defined as "the isomorphic replication between counselling and supervision ... it can be bottom up (therapy to supervision) or top down (i.e. supervision to therapy)" (Inman & Soheilian, 2010, p. 420). The authors define these categories:

"Bottom up parallel process occurs when a certain dynamic interaction, or behaviour that occurs in therapy is replicated in supervision ... Top down parallel process on the other hand is the unconscious replication of the supervisory relationship in the therapy itself ... because of identification with their supervisors, supervisees recreate the feelings that they experience with their supervisors with their clients in therapy" (p. 420).

A brief example of the parallel process comes to mind:

A 55-year-old woman contemplates suicide by walking into traffic. Her counsellor ends her account of the session – upon my debriefing with her - feeling as though she had been "hit by a bus." As parallel process works on the Second Register, the supervisee's metaphoric connection to the client's suicidal gesture was not immediately apparent. The supervisee was again "struck" by the coincidence upon our further considering it.

The Third Register – Embodied / Somatisation / Organ Dialect

In every movement of the body, in every expression and symptom, we can see the impress of the mind's purpose. (Adler, 1931, pp. 27-28).

In many ways, for psychology as a whole, the Third Register – *embodied / somatisation / organ dialect* - is among the most difficult of our problems. With psychology's association with mind/brain, the body is the corporeal site of the Cartesian split discussed earlier. Adler's psychology was one of the very few that, through a deftly articulated holism⁽¹⁾, was able adequately to circumvent this separation and theorise psychology from the soma itself. *Organ inferiority* is the specific discourse with which Adler embodied psychology. In this regard, McNeely (1987) identified Adler as one of the founding figures of body therapy along with Freud,

⁽¹⁾ Adler's holism, somewhat consonant with early 20th-century German *Ganzheitspsychologie*, was directly influenced by the work of the South African statesman J.C. Smuts (1926).

Otto Rank, Sandor Ferenczi, Wilhelm Reich and Carl Jung. Adler's attention to the dynamics of embodied compensation represent a set of original and highly valuable insights that have been sustained until the present day.

For both psychoanalysts (McWilliams, 2011) and Adlerians, the idea of *somatisation*, to which we Adlerians more specifically refer as *organ dialect* or *jargon*, speaks to the process in which psychological and emotional experience is translated into embodied symptoms. For "talk therapy", the idea of transforming such embodied states into words is often a part of the aims of our work. Yet, experience tells us that a more somatic-based approach, one that does not necessarily favour lingual transition, might be the best course of action, or, at the least, the accompanying technique to counselling therapy. Certainly there are therapeutic systems that concentrate on sensori-motor-bodywork as the best method for such individuals (McNeely, 1987; Ogden, Minton, & Pain, 2006; Levine, 2010). As a first-register strategy, I find it vital to debrief supervisees' intake and assessment work, to ensure sufficient probity into a client's embodied practices and activities such as diet, sleep hygiene, exercise, alcohol and drug use, sexual health and past or present illnesses. We often find that clients might benefit from engaging in accompanying somatic interventions and we will ask, for example, if particularly tense or stressed clients, or those with chronic pain have received therapeutic massage, engaged in yoga, dance, swimming, hiking, sports, stretching, martial arts, gardening, etc. Visiting a dietician or attending a meditation group can also be quite beneficial to some. Similarly, mindful-breathing, walking or pacing during the session are also helpful to some clients as are varied grounding exercises. Psychodrama, such as used in Gold's (2013) dream work is also a possibility as is a therapy with accompanying animal support such as equine-based programmes (Williams, 2014). Whilst all these suggestions can indeed be useful, I remain aligned with Adler's (1992) viewpoint:

"We must never treat one symptom or one single aspect of someone's personality. We must discover the [maladaptive] assumptions the person has made in choosing his [her] life style, the way his [her] mind has interpreted his [her] experiences, the meaning he [she] has ascribed to life, and the actions with which he [she] has responded to the impressions received from his [her] body and his [her] environment. This is the real task of psychology" (p. 51).

The Dimension of Time

I am reminded of the importance that existential psychotherapists place on the experience of time, linked to the very idea of existence. For example, Rollo May and Irving Yalom (2000) cite the German proverb: "No clock strikes for the happy one" (p. 277). Likewise, time plays a crucial role in the Adlerian conception of the Three Registers. Just as the musician must keep time in the enacting of music, so too must the therapist. The therapy hour is a crucial element in the context of the work. Yet in consideration and application of methodologies to the Registers, one cannot help but connote various developmental features. We have seen through the etymological traces that the register metaphor already functions as a mechanism by which one carries or bears material brought forward from the past into the present as well as the possibilities of carrying such like into the direction of the future.

In their discussion, Holman & Zimbardo (2009) discuss time with clear relevance to psychotherapy:

“We think of it as a healer ... Without a complete sense of time’s flow, we would have no personal history or sense of self, no ambition to strive for distant goals” (p. 136).

These authors also highlight how “life stress” and “adversity” experiences hold the capacity “to affect powerfully an individual’s sense of time” (p. 137).

The First Register, in its here-and-now constitution, attempts to stop time by privileging the Now moment. This Now moment assumes the maximum agency for the person to take the response-ability for directing their awareness of now-ness, especially the sedimented or residual past.

The Second Register is, in many ways, a repository of time as well, and for Adlerians more fundamentally, a space whereby the anticipation of future events that have not as yet occurred impinges in positive or negative, adaptive or maladaptive ways. The Second Register is the movement orienting the life-line towards teleo-analytic goals. Time here can be bent and distorted to suit the safeguarding needs of the person. The experience of trauma and its associations are often found on this register.

Holman & Zimbardo (2009) comment that:

“A common manifestation of ... disturbance may occur through ‘transference’ – when cognitive representations of important past relationships are thought to be triggered by people in the current environment” (p. 138).

The phenomena of transference, countertransference and parallel process are common second-register manifestations. Each of these dynamics makes curious use of time. Over the past century, psychologists have suggested that time perspective (TP) is a “non conscious process” that lays the foundation from which conscious thought and meaningful behaviour emerge (ibid., pp. 136-137). In an Adlerian frame, time perspective is consistent with the unique movement of the style of life of the individual. This is consistent with Holman & Zimbardo’s observation that, “Time Perspective is a pivotal cognitive filter that parses the on-going sense of [one’s] life experiences and organize[s] their behavior” (ibid., p. 137).

Commonly, to describe something as “timeless” is to equate it with perfection. “Now” and “Presence” might approximate “timeless” states, yet the conception of timelessness as equivalent to perfection renders it more a second-register fictive phenomenon that might, in turn, produce first-register effects. If time were, for example, related to the turning of the earth or the seasons of the year, then I have seen no evidence to suggest these phenomena have ceased; hence, a powerfully meaningful yet fictive experience, quite subjective, is nevertheless quite “true” for the self experiencing such a state. This discussion is, however, biased by Western Enlightenment values. My understanding of the goals of metaphysical enlightenment in Eastern traditions is to real-ise or at least aspire towards this timeless virtue of the Now on the level of the First Register, to bring it to pass as a real state of growth. Apparently, very few are able to achieve such a spiritual state.

The Third Register enacts time through the finiteness and mortality of the body. The Third Register is the site of embodied ageing, of cellular growth and eventual decay. The First Register overlaps with the Second and Third Registers, which points to the existential knowledge of illness and death, of time ceasing, of movement stopping (de-cease), of corporeal decay. The Third Register with its natural pre-symbolic structures is the site in which the Second and Third Registers emerge and with which it is finely interlaced. The Third Register carries within it the past, present and the fleshy un-lived future of the person.

Conclusion

Whilst it is understood that some clients either desire or require a focused clinical concentration on the First, Second or Third Registers, I contend that supervisees in Adlerian practice can feel confused, mis-aligned or even unprepared for work that combines – holistically - all three. This might reflect long-standing ambivalence, especially towards the Second Register by Adlerians who have historically associated this register, when isolated from the others, as synonymous with Freud's psychoanalytic theory and methods. Nevertheless, effective Adlerian work could be accomplished by a focus on a specific register since the registers overlap and are typically connected. The line of movement unifies all three Registers even when it might not seem so (e.g., in the dissociative states witnessed in varying degrees of trauma).

Aside from the fact that I have found the use of parallel process and countertransference phenomena that are related to the Second Register to be valuable and essential tools in training supervisees, my abiding concern remains with the problem of *social inequality* and how the second register phenomena function to perpetuate aspects of it.

For Adlerians, with our pragmatic social justice accentuation, I argue that it is important not to lose sight of relevant social dynamics that may act as the true impeding factor in our clients' lives. For example, we might consider the ways in which deep and persistent “-isms” continue to beset our clients, families, communities and the social world more broadly. The on-going reproduction of misogyny, racism, homophobia, transphobia, islamaphobia, and victim blaming of the poor and dispossessed require – I contend - a powerful Second Register distortion among those who are perpetrators. Many who behave in subjugating ways are often unaware and fail to understand the deleterious effects they have on others. With the raising of consciousness and the dislodgment of Second Register material into the First, greater self-reflexivity and greater responsibility can be achieved for effective re-orientation and social change work to occur. In this view, Adlerian depth psychology retains significance in comprehending the complexities of inner experience and the dynamics of social power and (in)justice. This is the core message I have taken from the Adlerian literature and remains a vital aspect of the training and supervision of counselling therapy supervisees.

References

- Adler, A. (1927). *Understanding Human Nature*. Garden City, NY: Garden City Publishing.
- Adler, A. (1931). *What Life Should Mean to You*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.
- Adler, A. (1938). *Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind* (J. Linton & R. Vaughan, Transl.). London: Faber & Faber Ltd.

- Adler, A. (1992). *What Life Could Mean to You*. C. Brett (Transl.). Oxford: Oneworld Publications. (Original work published in 1931).
- Adler, A. (2005). On the Interpretation of Dreams. H. Stein (Ed.) & G.L. Liebenau (Transl.). *The Collected Works of Alfred Adler*, 7, 157-169. (Original work published in 1936).
- Ansbacher, H.L. & Ansbacher, R.R. (Eds.). (1956). *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler A Systematic Presentation in Selections from his Writings*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- Ansbacher, H.L. (1982). Alfred Adler's Views on the Unconscious. *Individual psychology*, 38(1), 32-41.
- Bem, S. (1993). *The Lenses of Gender*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Claxton, G. (2006). Why So Wayward? *The Psychologist*, 19(4), 212-214.
- Datler, W. (1999). Adler's Ambiguity about the Concept of the Dynamic Unconscious and the Identity of Individual Psychology. K. John & M. Richardson (Transl.). In: P. Prina, C. Shelley & C. Thompson (Eds.). *Adlerian Year Book 1999*. (pp. 20-44). London: Adlerian Society (UK) and Institute for Individual Psychology.
- Dreikurs, R. (1973). The Private Logic. In: H. Mosak (Ed.) *Alfred Adler's Influence on Psychology Today*. (pp. 19-32). Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press.
- Dreikurs-Ferguson, E. (1984). *Adlerian Theory: An Introduction*. Vancouver, BC: Adlerian Psychology Association of BC.
- Fiebert, M.S. (1997). In and Out of Freud's Shadow: A Chronology of Adler's Relationship with Freud. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 53(3), 241-269.
- Foucault, M. (1998). "Technologies of the Self – A Seminar with Michel Foucault). In: L.H. Martin, H. Gutman & P.H. Hutton (Eds.). (pp. 16-49). Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Gold, L. (1998). Chaos Theory as a Holistic Model for the Future Evolution of Adlerian Thought and Practice. In: P. Prina, C. Shelley & C. Thompson (Eds.). *UK Adlerian Year Book 1998*. (pp. 68-78). London: Adlerian Society (UK) and Institute for Individual Psychology.
- Gold, L. (2013). *Perchance to Dream - Dream Work in Four Movements: Language, Symbolism, Interpretation, Therapy*. London: Adlerian Society (UK) and Institute for Individual Psychology.
- Holman, E.A. & Zimbardo, P.G. (2009). The Social Language of Time: The Time Perspective - Social Network Connection. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 31, 136-147.
- Inman, A.G. & Soheilian, S. (2010). Training Supervisors. In: N. Ladany & L.J. Bradley (Eds.). *Counselor Supervision*. (4th Ed.). (pp. 413-435). New York: Routledge.
- John, K. (2014). A Case Study of Efforts to Lead Democratically when Good Authority is Undermined. In: P. Prina, C. Shelley, K. John & A. Millar (Eds.). *UK Adlerian Year Book 2014*. (pp. 82-94). London: Adlerian Society (UK) and Institute for Individual Psychology.
- John, K. (2012). Authority and Democracy 100 years On. In: P. Prina, C. Shelley, K. John & A. Millar (Eds.). *UK Adlerian Year Book 2012*. (pp. 107-131). London: Adlerian Society (UK) and Institute for Individual Psychology.
- Kopp, R.R. (1995). *Metaphor Therapy: Using Client-Generated Metaphors in Psychotherapy*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Levine, P. (2010). *In an Unspoken Voice: How the Body Releases Trauma and Restores Goodness*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.
- Mansager, E., Gold, L., Griffith, B., Kal, E., Mansaster, G., McArter, G., Powers, R.L., Schnebly, L., Schneider, M.F. & Silverman, N.N. (2002). Spirituality in the Adlerian Forum. *The Journal of Individual Psychology*, 58, 177-196.

- May, R. & Yalom, I. (2000). Existential Psychotherapy. In: R.J. Corsini & D. Wedding (Eds.). *Current Psychotherapies*. (6th Ed.). (pp. 273-302). Itasca, IL: F. E. Peacock.
- McNeely, D.A. (1987). *Touching: Body Therapy and Depth Psychology*. Toronto, ON: Inner City Books.
- McWilliams, N. (2011). *Psychoanalytic Diagnosis: Understanding Personality Structure in the Clinical Process*. (2nd Ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Oberst, U. (2012). Individual Psychology after 100 Years: State of Play. In: P Prina, C. Shelley, A. Millar & K. John (Eds.). *UK Adlerian Year Book*. (pp. 33–60). London: Adlerian Society (UK) & Institute for Individual Psychology.
- Ogden, P., Minton, K. & Pain, C. (2006). *Trauma and the Body: A Sensorimotor Approach to Psychotherapy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Paris, J. (2005). *The Fall of an Icon: Psychoanalysis and Academic Psychiatry*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Prina, P. (2010). Collaborative Response: Transference and Individual Psychology. In: P. Prina, C. Shelley, K. John & A. Millar (Eds.). *UK Adlerian Year Book 2010*. (pp. 59-63). London: Adlerian Society (UK) and Institute for Individual Psychology.
- Schoenaker, T. (2011). *Encouragement Makes Good Things Happen*. R.J. Huber, J. Street & S. Losa (Transl.). New York: Routledge.
- Shelley, C. (2006). Phenomenology and the Qualitative in Individual Psychology. In: J. Carlson & S. Slavik (Eds.). *Readings in the Theory of Individual Psychology*. (pp. 407-422). London/New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Shelley, C. (2008). Jan Smuts and Personality Theory: The Problem of Holism in Psychology. In: R. Diriwächter & J. Valsiner (Eds.). *Striving for the Whole: Creating Theoretical Syntheses*. (pp. 89-109). Somerset, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Smuts, J.C. (1926). *Holism and Evolution*. London: Macmillan Company.
- Stein, H.T. (2013). *Theory and Practice: A Socratic Approach to Democratic Living*. Bellingham, WA: The Alfred Adler Institute of Northwestern Washington.
- Tong, R. (2014). *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. (4th Ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Walker, J.A. (2010). Supervision Techniques. In: N. Ladany & L.J. Bradley (Eds.). *Counselor Supervision*. (4th Ed.). (pp. 97–122). New York: Routledge.
- Williams, M. (2014). The Eagle and the Horse: Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy from an Adlerian Perspective. In: P Prina, C. Shelley, A. Millar & K. John (Eds.). *UK Adlerian Year Book 2014*. (pp. 95-110). London: Adlerian Society (UK) & Institute for Individual Psychology.
- Yang, J., Milliren, A. & Blagen, M. (2010). *The Psychology of Courage: An Adlerian Handbook for Healthy Social Living*. New York: Routledge.