

**BOOK REVIEW**

***THE CLASSICAL ADLERIAN TRANSLATION PROJECT***

***EDUCATING CHILDREN FOR COOPERATION AND CONTRIBUTION: VOLUME II.***

***The Work of an Adlerian Psychologist in the Schools – Anthony Bruck; Selected Articles – Anthony Bruck, Alfred Adler & Theodore Grubbe.***

**Edited by Henry T. Stein & Laurie J. Stein (135 pp., US \$59).**

**Reviewed by Erik Mansager & Jane Pfefferlé**

Who was it anyway, who said, “All good things must end”?

Whether or not there is substance to the above statement, it does *not* apply to *The Classical Adlerian Translation Project*. The most recent volume to be turned out by Henry T. Stein in editorial collaboration with his wife, Laurie, is a wonderfully practical work of Adlerian child guidance materials.

While this slim volume is primarily an exposition of Anthony Bruck’s work, it also contains seven useful appendices (covering almost 30 pages), which contain previously unpublished works by Adler, a contribution by Theodore E. Grubbe and, perhaps surprisingly, a summary of work done by Rudolf Dreikurs and Vicki Soltz. Besides these, there are also two very useful charts by the Steins themselves. More on these later, but first an appreciation of the Bruck material.

The Steins present a brief but fascinating biography of Bruck’s life (1901-1979) – an incredibly versatile practitioner and scholar

who spoke and wrote in four European languages and Arabic, as well as worked and published on four continents (North and South America, Europe and Africa). His studies with Adler made a lasting impression and guided his long work among the school systems of Costa Rica, some aspects of which make up *Educating Children*.

### **Part 1: The Work of an Adlerian Psychologist in the Schools**

This section lays out one of Bruck's characteristic styles of working with children – the use of essays written by the children. He used these to understand and guide their character development. Reminiscent of Adler's own work in *The Case of Miss R.* (1929/2005) and *The Case of Mrs. A.* (1931/2005), Bruck quotes the children's essays line by line and comments on what relates uniquely to each pupil as he understands them. There is much captivating material in this regard – for example, seeing the direct application of Adler's style in another setting (showing the do-ability of such an approach) is very encouraging; further, the access Bruck had to these pupils at two and five year intervals helps demonstrate the effect of Bruck's interventions on the developing traits of the children.

Step-by-step, Bruck shows by his insight and the logic of his interventions the importance of encouraging children to operate on the useful side of life. He typically asked the pupils for essays on four topics: what they wanted to be when they grew up, one early recollection, a dream and a reflection on their family. He then used this information to formulate Life Style statements, to hone these statements into consistent viewpoints and to enrich his overall understanding of the pupils. Two such case studies contrast “Juan” and “Jose” who both planned to become physicians. Reading his comments and interpretations of each child's Life Style is as intriguing as it is instructive.

Another technique demonstrated in this section is Bruck's use of sociometry (Moreno, 1934/2007). He would ask children in a given class to list who they believed were, for example, the most courageous in the class. Then, he would help them understand the identified relationships among themselves. Based on their newly-understood relationships, he would then use *in vivo* discussions to guide the class into more respectful and productive activities. This was intended to help children who felt marginalised to become more positively popular among their classmates.

Bruck emphasises all the way through this section the important confluence of "self-confidence, the ability to face difficulties, and the feeling of community" (p. 31). He insists that: "The first two traits are dangerous without the last one; only if they are directed toward socially useful ends, under the control of co-feeling, are they valuable" (p. 35). In this way, Bruck anchors the aim of Social Interest for all his interventions.

The simplicity of his presentation here is straightforward and never loses sight of his respect for the young people with whom he is interacting. As in the next sections, Bruck uses simple and clear illustrations to demonstrate Adler's theory so that children – and their teachers – can understand and make practical use of the ideas.

One example is found on p. 32 (repeated on p. 89) where Bruck illustrates, in a few lines and a handful of descriptors, the concepts of Life Style, the Life Tasks and what he calls "the roots of personality". These are quite similar to what later Adlerians have called the "key features of the child's experience" (Powers & Griffith, 1987, p. 22).

## **Part 2: Enlightening Children**

This briefer section is a reprint of Bruck's article that appeared in *The American Journal of Individual Psychology* in 1956. It serves as a primer of how to implement another technique Bruck used to great effect. This consisted of drawing out a "V" before a pupil and using one arm of the letter to point in a positive direction and the other in a negative – with the decision-making child at the convergence of the arms.

For Bruck, one arm would point in the direction of useful activity (+) and the other in the direction of useless behaviour (-). For example, with younger children, one arm could point in the direction of being "nice" (+) and the other "naughty" (-), while for older children he may want to illustrate the subtle differences between "creative pleasure" (+) and "recreational pleasure" (-). Bruck would use the "V" to illustrate that a pupil could be clever in either direction – then use discussion to help the student explore just what types of behaviour belong to each arm.

Particularly engaging is Bruck's conveying the story of eight year-old "Jimmy" – the son of one his graduate students – who helped demonstrate within a live presentation the clarity of the "V" intervention. The transcript of these interviews brims, again, with do-ability, simplicity and encouragement.

## **Part 3: Influencing the Child**

The last major section of the Bruck material is drawn from a lecture. It continues to reveal the creativity of a person who had an intuitive grasp of Adler and wanted to share this with others – simply and profoundly. Here the "roots of the personality" are explained in greater depth and his amusing "Ten Commandments of Creative Education" are listed.

The so-called commandments are humorous neologisms Bruck created to help pupils grasp the importance of action-oriented engagement. That is, pupils are encouraged to seize opportunities to build self-confidence and to reject self-doubt. These he made into actions – such was the importance of embracing activities of “self-confidentizing” and “sticktoitizing” while refusing to “self-doubtize” or to “impatientize.”

This is a fun section that also extends further his “V” technique of enlightening children and seems to invite the reader to carry forward the enterprise of illustrating Adler.

## **Appendices**

Although placed after a very helpful index, this series of child guidance tools is a small compilation, but surely an important contribution to our Adlerian literature.

For one who has been critical of Dreikurs’ personal therapeutic style (see “Editor’s note” on p. 132), Henry Stein also has appreciated the contributions Dreikurs made to child guidance. Here, again, Stein demonstrates his appreciation by including a handy single-page summary of Dreikurs and Soltz’s (1964) “*Adlerian Child Guidance Principles for Teachers*” (p. 107).

Appendix A is book-ended by the Steins’ Appendix G, “Dealing Effectively with Students’ Mistaken Goals” (p. 135). This can be thought of as an extension of Dreikurs’ behavioural motivation concept. Stein’s chart has a long history of development: from Soltz’s (1967) publication of Bullard’s original semi-narrative synopsis (pp. 70-74) to Dinkmeyer and McKay’s (1976) initial chart structure (p. 14) to Nelson’s (1987) addition of alternative interventions (p. 71) to Lew and Bettner’s (1995) aligning the

negative short-term goals with children's positive goals (pp. 62-63). The Steins' own contributions include their "democratic teacher action alternatives" as well as the addition of a fifth goal, "escape from reality" along with its respective diagnostics and teacher alternatives.

Appendices B ("Children's Life Tests"), C ("Training for Courage"), and D ("The Lazy Child") are brief unpublished notes (1 to 6 pages) made by Adler himself. While nothing revelatory appears in them, they are very fitting summaries to portions of his child guidance theory.

The first article by Alfred Adler was provided by his son, Kurt, to his father's biographer, Edward Hoffman, who edited it. Its concise two pages is packed-full of Adlerian prescience. That is, references to temperamental differences and different levels of intelligence appear here long before they were popularised concepts. One is reminded of the oft-repeated Adlerian lament that Adler is overlooked as the originator of a number of current psychological ideas. At the same time, we, Adlerians, tend not to give credit for the important work of expanding and applying such ideas - which is most often carried on outside the Adlerian body (cf. Mansager, 2005). This lack of appreciation and recognition is too often mutual.

Be that as it may, the "Adlerian" ideas herein may well remind readers of other ground-breaking works by authors who have carried them forward; for example, Chess and Thomas (1996) on children's temperament and Gardner (1983) on multiple intelligences. Still, one is also reminded here of the very real benefit of Adler having been such a broad-minded theoretician: it has resulted in his approach being one that can synthesise a great number of theories without doing violence to its holistic conceptions (Mosak & Maniaci, 1999).

The second of Adler's articles is important on at least two levels. First, it is a concise insistence that "training in courage and cooperation provides the remedy against all failures" (p. 111) as the author of the unknown introduction emphasises. Secondly, of some historical note, is the following observation by Adler:

"If a man went through life with undiminished courage, he would never evade the problems of occupation, friendship, or love. He would make mistakes, of course, for we learn by our mistakes; but his mistakes would be small, and he would never make the same mistake twice. One of the highest expressions of courage is *the courage to be imperfect*, the courage to risk failure and to be proved wrong. He would be a good worker ... [h]e would be a good friend ... and ... [h]e would be a true partner in love..." (p. 112, emphasis added).

Although the Steins were unable to locate the date of this paper, it is authenticated as Adler's and perhaps the only reference in print to the famous phrase "the courage to be imperfect." While neither claimed to have coined the phrase themselves, it is frequently attributed to Sophie Lazarsfeld (1926, 1936, 1966) or more frequently to Dreikurs (Turner & Pew, 1978). Here, and in fitting context, we can read Adler himself speak of its importance.

The third of his articles, also undated, addresses the issue of purposive behaviour. Adler reveals a certain appreciation for the hidden creativity of "lazy children," and far from feeling sorry or defeated by them, he encourages teachers and parents never to give up on them.

After this series of articles, the Steins include as Appendix E, "The Challenge of Kindergarten. Toward a Better Understanding of Parent-Teacher-Child Relationships," by Theodor E. Grubbe.

The author, a psychologist at the Castro Valley Elementary School District in California originally presented the paper in 1963. This, it might be noted, is a year prior to the publication of *Children: The Challenge* although this publication version makes reference to Dreikurs and Soltz's classic text. The 14-page article is full of theoretical concepts and practical applications. Timeless notions such as the dignity of the child and accepting the child as the child is, are placed in a context that lets them come alive again. Grubbe also offers a series of specific considerations on crying, selective mutism and other challenging behaviours. The paper is a fine complement to an issue chock-o-block with friendly and usable interventions.

The last appendix (F) to be reviewed here is the chart of the Steins' own composition entitled, "Impact of Teaching Styles on Students". They acknowledge the use of Missildine's (1991) work for the chart. It is an intriguing compilation of five teaching styles and their supporting fictional images. The resulting "teachers' attitudes" and "students' responses" provide a sound theoretical understanding of the psychological movement familiar to Adlerians. The Steins anticipate a more extended work just published by Bitter (2009) about the "mistaken notions of adults with children" which can be read as a helpful adjunct.

## **Conclusion**

If *Educating Children for Cooperation and Contribution* is a second volume, you may wonder what the previous volume was. When sold as a two volume set, "Volume I" is composed of the eleventh volume of *The Collected Clinical Works of Alfred Adler* (see Mansager, 2009). This contains two extended pieces by Adler on working with school-aged children within the school system.

Still, when standing alone, this addition to *The Classical Adlerian Translation Project* is a valuable one. It is a surprisingly fresh presentation of unique techniques. In spite of many of the dates of original presentation, much of this material is readily applicable to work with children and young people and is not to be found elsewhere. For example, the reviewers have both applied Bruck's "V" technique to good effect with school-aged clients (from 8-18) and have been delighted by the clarity it represents to them.

This volume, focusing as it does on Anthony Bruck, also joins one other volume not specifically part of the 12-volume series of *The Collected Clinical Works of Alfred Adler (CCWAA)*. The earlier work was by another "classical Adlerian," Alexander Mueller (1992). His treatise, *You Shall be a Blessing*, was the Steins' first go at publishing the vast holdings of unpublished Adlerian materials they have acquired.

Let's all hope this "good thing," the Steins' translation project, does not end any time soon.

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