

Chapter 4

Essay Questions: Adler

Question #1

Social interest is defined as one's desire to adapt to oneself and the conditions of society and the environment. The way social interest relates to a person's psychological health is the belief that people's mental health and personal growth depend on the efforts of the person contributing to the betterment of their community. He compared this to an infant needing an adult to nurture and care for them to grow mentally and physically. Adler felt that we were all born with a potential for social feelings or interests. But this was only possible with proper guidance and training. Adler defined social interest as "a striving for a form of community which must be thought of as everlasting as it could be thought of if humanity had reached the goal of perfection." (Adler, 1973c, pp 34-35). The idea was that by helping others succeed, the other person also benefits and grows. The striving for others' goals also brought respect and consideration for all human beings. Research has shown that people who score high on social interest tests are more altruistic, trustworthy, socially adjusted, have greater life satisfaction, and are more helpful to others.

Question #2

Adler's four major lifestyle types were the ruling type, the getting type, the avoiding type, and the socially helpful type. The ruling types lack social interest. They aren't very courageous and tend to act anti-social when threatened as a way to protect themselves, which they use to cope with their anxiety. They strive for personal superiority to the extent that they end up hurting others. They need to control others to feel powerful and significant.

On the other hand, the getting type is passive and takes little intuition to solve their problems. They prefer to rely on others to take care of them. The individual needs more confidence and more awareness of their abilities. So to achieve this, they surround themselves with people who will do things for them. The avoiding type avoids solving problems or shies away from taking care of any crisis life brings them. This way, they avoid failure or defeat. These individuals are usually self-absorbed and daydream and fantasize about being superior.

Question #6

The masculine protest is Adler's concept describing the inferiority of men and women, especially women. He suggests that women reject a feminine identity to be valued and compensated in the same way as men. Women were rebelling against the position that society had constructed for them. Adler believed that superiority equates with masculine behaviors such as assertiveness, independence, and dominance. Inferiority tends to be stereotypically feminine, with behaviors such as passivity, submissiveness, and dependence. He uses the masculine protest concept to show that women were placed in an inferior position by society and that, because of this, they had to overcome their feeling of inadequacy by acting in masculine ways. He cited that some women would behave using obscenities, a swagger in their walk, and acting tough.

On the other hand, some other women's compensatory behaviors would go to the other extreme and act super femininely. This type would lure men whom they would humiliate and dominate over. Adler also applied masculine protest to men. Men who felt insecure would acquire an exaggerated way of behaving to compensate and show that they were real men. The overly secure Casanova type overcompensates by trying to prove his manhood by seducing countless women. Adler felt that in either sex, the manifestations were neurotic in character.

