

Olena Chorna

Candidate of Psychological Sciences, Docent

Vinnitsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi

State Pedagogical University Ukraine

elenachorna77@ukr.net

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7067-3695>

BASIC PROVISIONS OF A. ADLER'S INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY: AN ANALYSIS OF MODERN MEANING

Annotation. The article examines and analyzes the main provisions of the individual psychology of A. Adler, one of the leading representatives of neo-Freudianism, whose theory has significantly influenced the development of modern psychological thought. Individual psychology is considered as a humanistically oriented approach, based on the idea of a person as a holistic, social being capable of self-development and responsibility for his life.

Particular attention in the work is paid to the analysis of such key concepts as a sense of inferiority, inferiority complex, compensation mechanisms, striving for superiority, lifestyle, social interest, "Creative Self".

The peculiarities of the influence of A. Adler's ideas on the development of humanistic, cognitive-behavioral and positive approaches in modern psychology are revealed.

The theoretical analysis conducted allows us to conclude that A. Adler's individual psychology remains relevant in modern conditions. Her ideas contribute to the formation of a holistic vision of a person, focused on developing the positive potential of the individual, increasing the level of social interest, and a responsible attitude towards oneself and society.

It is concluded that Adlerian ideas remain relevant today and can be constructively integrated into psychotherapeutic practice (especially when working with self-esteem, life crises, interpersonal conflicts), psychological counseling, educational programs for personality development, etc.

Further research aimed at developing interventions that promote the development of social interaction, an active lifestyle, and strengthening the value correspondence of life goals with the public good is promising.

Key words: individual psychology, A. Adler, feelings of inferiority, inferiority complex, striving for superiority, lifestyle, social interest, "creative self", Adlerian psychotherapy, personal development.

Formulation of the problem. Alfred Adler's individual psychology is one of the most influential theories of personality in the history of psychological science. It was formed at the beginning of the 20th century as a response to the shortcomings of classical psychoanalysis and the desire to explain man as a holistic, social being. Adler was the first of the Freudians to propose a departure from biological determinism, putting forward the ideas of social context, purposeful behavior, feelings of inferiority and compensation, which still remain relevant in practical psychology, psychotherapy and education.

Individual psychology, developed by A. Adler, is one of the fundamental concepts in the history of depth psychology. It became an alternative to the classical psychoanalysis of S. Freud, offering a more humanistic understanding of the nature of personality. In the modern world, when attention is growing to the issues of self-actualization, holistic development of the personality and

social interaction, A. Adler's views acquire new significance. His ideas about social engagement, feelings of inferiority, the desire for superiority, and lifestyle become especially relevant.

In our time, when attention is growing to humanistic and positive approaches in understanding human nature, Adler's concepts are once again in the focus of scientific and practical attention. His ideas about social interdependence, the importance of early childhood, the role of purpose and lifestyle in the formation of personality open up new perspectives in the interpretation of psychological processes.

The modern world is characterized by a high level of social tension, individualization and increased psychological vulnerability of the individual. In this context, psychological assistance, focused on strengthening personal potential, social responsibility and inner harmony, is becoming especially in demand.

A. Adler's individual psychology offers a holistic concept that allows us to understand the deep motivations of behavior, mechanisms for overcoming feelings of inferiority, the formation of a lifestyle, and the development of social interest - a key component of psychological health. These provisions can be effectively applied in psychotherapy, counseling, and pedagogy.

The relevance of the study is also due to the need to understand classical theories of personality from the perspective of modern scientific achievements, in order to integrate proven approaches into the latest psychological practices.

The purpose of the article. The aim of the article is to systematize the main provisions of A. Adler's individual psychology and analyze their significance in the modern scientific and practical context.

The analysis of the latest research and publications. In modern psychological science, there is a growing interest in rethinking classical theories of personality in the light of the latest scientific discoveries and sociocultural challenges. A. Adler's individual psychology, despite its historical antiquity, remains a source of relevant ideas that are actively integrated into modern psychotherapeutic, educational and consulting practices.

Recent studies confirm that the basic concepts of A. Adler's theory, in particular, feelings of inferiority, the desire for superiority, lifestyle and social interest, are of direct importance in understanding the mechanisms of personality development and the formation of its adaptive or maladaptive patterns of behavior. The works of R. Watts [15] and J. Carlson, R. Watts and M. Maniaci [9] analyzed the influence of social interest on mental health, which allows us to consider this construct as central in the prevention and treatment of neurotic disorders. Researchers emphasize that social interest is closely related to an individual's capacity for empathy, prosocial behavior, and resilience to stress.

Analysis of modern works on cognitive-behavioral therapy by D. Clark, A. Beck [10] shows that many key provisions of this direction echo the ideas of A. Adler. In particular, the concept of irrational beliefs, which underlies anxiety and depressive disorders, has common features with Adlerian understanding of the subjective interpretation of experience and the formation of a lifestyle.

A. Beck openly acknowledged the influence of A. Adler on his theoretical approaches, especially in aspects related to the role of thinking, goals and coping styles in psychological functioning [10].

A. Adler's ideas also have a significant influence on humanistic psychology. Thus, A. Maslow [13] in his concept of self-actualization is based on Adlerian vision of a person as a holistic, purposeful and capable of self-development being. His hierarchy of needs, in which the highest level is the realization of personal potential, is conceptually close to the Adlerian desire for superiority as a driving force for development.

Positive psychology, whose representatives focus on the development of personal strengths,

well-being and quality of life, also shows the influence of A. Adler's ideas. M. Seligman and M. Csikszentmihalyi [14] directly refer to the importance of social interest as a component of psychological well-being and effective functioning in society. Their empirical studies prove that the development of social interest correlates with a higher level of life satisfaction, tolerance and altruism.

In addition, modern empirical studies confirm the effectiveness of Adlerian psychotherapy as a separate direction of psychocorrectional work. In particular, the work of G. Corey, J. R. Bitter [11] systematically outlines the principles of Adlerian therapy, which retain their effectiveness in working with a wide range of clients, from children to adults, with various requests: anxiety, low self-esteem, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, identical problems, family conflicts, etc.

It should also be noted that in modern research there is a growing interest in integrating A. Adler's ideas into multidisciplinary approaches. This concerns the possibility of combining Adlerian concepts with systemic therapy, coaching, educational programs for the development of emotional intelligence and prosocial skills, etc. Such integration allows for a more holistic understanding of individual behavior and the development of comprehensive approaches to its support and development.

Thus, the analysis of recent research confirms that A. Adler's individual psychology not only retains its scientific and practical significance, but also continues to actively influence the formation of new directions in psychotherapy and personal development. Its principles remain extremely relevant in the context of social transformations, increasing psycho-emotional stress, and the need to form a responsible and holistic subject of activity.

Presenting main material. One of Adler's fundamental ideas is the concept of the integrity of the personality, according to which human behavior is the result of a single internal "life plan", which is formed in childhood and is implemented throughout life [1]. Unlike S. Freud, who considered a person as an arena of internal conflicts between the Id, Ego and Superego, A. Adler believed that the personality acts as a single whole, oriented towards achieving goals.

A. Adler gave his theory the name "individual psychology", since in Latin "individuum" means "indivisible" - that is, an entity that cannot be divided. The scientist proceeded from the fact that no manifestation of life activity can be considered in isolation, but only in relation to the personality as a whole. The personality is an indivisible whole both in relation to the relationship between the brain and the body, and in relation to mental life. The main requirement for individual psychology according to A. Adler is to prove that unity exists in every manifestation of personality [6].

One of the central concepts in A. Adler's theory is the concept of a sense of inferiority. This is an emotional state that arises as a result of the awareness of physical, psychological or social limitations. All people, according to A. Adler, feel inadequate in certain situations, when faced with life difficulties and the awareness of their own helplessness. He draws an analogy between the dependence of a child on the family and an adult on society. In this he sees the origins of that human weakness that gives rise to a sense of inferiority. To feel one's own inferiority means to feel "worse than others". A. Adler believes that the feeling of inferiority is inherent in every person. Usually he defines it as a positive dissatisfaction that lasts, at least until some task or need is solved.

A. Adler defended the idea that all people from childhood feel a certain inferiority (physical, social or psychological). Instead of considering it as a pathology, A. Adler saw it as a normal and even necessary condition of development, which encourages a person to compensate, that is, to grow, self-improvement and strive for superiority, acting as a driver of personal development. In modern psychology, this idea is reflected in the theories of achievement motivation (A. Maslow, D. McClelland) and the psychology of success [3].

The desire for superiority is also called the "desire for perfection" or the "desire for

progressive development". According to A. Adler, human dynamics are considered dialectically – there is a goal (the desire for superiority or completeness) and a starting point (a feeling of inferiority). Therefore, the desire for superiority (or for achieving a goal) and the feeling of inferiority are mutually complementary forces – one does not exist without the other [3].

In later works, A. Adler distinguishes between a feeling of inferiority and an inferiority complex. He considers the latter as a pathological result of the development of a feeling of inferiority, a kind of personality disease, where inferiority acquires a chronic hypertrophied character. A. Adler identified four groups of conditions that can give rise to a feeling of inferiority: 1) organic defects of the child; 2) the socio-economic situation of the family (poverty, dependence, etc.); 3) belonging to a discriminated sex; 4) the child's place in the family (family structure) [4].

In clinical practice, inadequate compensation for feelings of inferiority can lead to an inferiority complex or, conversely, to a superiority complex, which manifests itself in the form of narcissism, aggression or excessive dominance.

Another key concept in A. Adler's theory is "lifestyle", by which the scientist meant a unique way in which an individual overcomes difficulties, interacts with others and realizes his goals. According to A. Adler, each person develops a unique lifestyle - a stable system of attitudes, goals and strategies for interacting with the world. Lifestyle is formed in early childhood, mainly by the age of 5, on the basis of the child's subjective experience, under the influence of the family environment and further determines the person's behavior. According to A. Adler, a person can find new ways to express his unique lifestyle, but this is nothing more than a concretization of the basic style that was formed in childhood. In addition, A. Adler believed that the key to understanding the basic lifestyle may be the earliest memories that a person can report [2].

Today, this idea is used in family therapy, psychological counseling, and in the prevention of deviant behavior.

In contrast to the typological approach, A. Adler emphasized that each person is unique, and his lifestyle is unrepeatable. In this aspect, he was a predecessor of humanistic psychology, in particular the ideas of K. Rogers and A. Maslow [13].

In the practice of psychological counseling, lifestyle analysis allows you to identify maladaptive patterns of thinking and behavior that can be corrected through increased awareness, development of social skills, and emotional maturity [10].

Another important concept in A. Adler's theory is social interest, which, according to the scientist, is innate. After all, from the first day of life, a person is rooted in society. The first social ties begin to be built through relationships with the mother, and from this time on, a person is continuously included in the system of interpersonal relationships that form the personality and provide specific ways to seek advantages, which, thanks to social interest, become socialized [4].

A. Adler considered social interest as the highest manifestation of psychological maturity of the individual. It is not just the ability to empathize or sympathize, but an active desire for cooperation, participation in social life, and responsibility for others [4].

In today's world, where individualism and competition often dominate, the development of social interest is of particular relevance. Studies show that a high level of social interest is positively correlated with emotional stability, altruism, tolerance, and life satisfaction [15].

A. Adler emphasized the importance of social interest as an indicator of a mature personality. A person who has a high level of compassion, responsibility to society, and the ability to cooperate is considered psychologically healthy. In modern research, this concept correlates with the concepts of emotional intelligence, social capital, and prosocial behavior [8].

A. Adler believed that a person's erroneous lifestyle and insufficiently developed social interest are the cause of neurosis [4].

A. Adler was deeply convinced that a person has a desire for his goals. According to him,

every person has a concept of a goal or ideal, to which he will strive from a real state of inferiority, overcoming existing shortcomings and difficulties by setting specific goals for the future. The goals that people strive for are set in the first years of life and later become the organizing principle of the functioning of the personality, moving the person forward [3].

A. Adler in his theory also proposed such a concept as the “Creative Self”. According to the idea of the creative self, a person creates his own personality, creating himself from the raw material of heredity and experience [3].

Psychotherapeutic work in the spirit of A. Adler is aimed at expanding the client’s social interest, which helps to overcome isolation, anxiety and narcissism.

The main goals of therapy according to A. Adler are: 1) identifying erroneous judgments about oneself and others; 2) eliminating erroneous goals; 3) the formation of new life goals that will help to realize personal potential. At the same time, A. Adler reminded that these therapeutic goals are best achieved through understanding the patient, increasing his level of self-understanding and strengthening his social interest [2].

Individual psychology formed the basis of short-term therapy, focused on changing the destructive lifestyle and increasing the client's level of social interest. Modern psychotherapists, in particular those working in the direction of cognitive therapy, recognize the influence of A. Adler on the development of metacognitive approaches [2].

A. Adler's theory historically and conceptually underlies the psychotherapeutic approach – individual (Adlerian) psychotherapy [7].

A. Adler's ideas are actively used in modern psychotherapeutic approaches, in particular in Adlerian psychotherapy, which has its own established theoretical and practical basis. The main goals of such therapy are to increase the client's level of awareness of his lifestyle, the development of social interest, and the reassessment of destructive life beliefs [11].

Adlerian psychotherapy is an independent direction in modern psychotherapy, with its own methodology, techniques (working with memories, lifestyle analysis, modeling the future, developing social interest, etc.), stages of therapy, clear goals, and most importantly, with proven effectiveness in some cases (especially in anxiety disorders, self-esteem disorders, personality difficulties, family conflicts, etc.).

An important feature of Adlerian therapy is its orientation to the future, not the past. Although the analysis of childhood experience occupies an important place, it is needed not to "dig" in the past, but to understand how today's behavior is shaped by the subjective perception of children's events [8].

The classic stages of Adlerian therapy include:

- establishing a therapeutic alliance;
- studying the client's lifestyle;
- providing clinical understanding of the problem;
- encouraging change through support and reformulation of values [9].

Despite their relative independence, many of Adler’s ideas were integrated or became the basis for the development of other schools of psychotherapy. In particular, the founders of cognitive behavioral therapy A. Beck and A. Ellis openly acknowledged Adler’s influence. The concept of irrational beliefs leading to psychological distress resonates with Adlerian ideas about lifestyle and subjective interpretation of reality [10; 12].

The ideas of self-actualization, responsibility and integrity of the personality inherent in K. Rogers and A. Maslow have distinct Adlerian roots [13].

Modern models of positive psychotherapy, focused on the development of strengths, empathy, compassion and prosocial behavior, are also close to Adler’s concept of social interest [14].

Conclusions. A. Adler's individual psychology is a multidimensional theory that retains its significance today. The main provisions of the theory, in particular, feelings of inferiority, the desire for superiority, lifestyle, social interest, have become fundamental in the formation of not only a separate school of psychotherapy, but also a number of modern psychological concepts.

The modern interpretation of Adlerian ideas indicates their adaptability and ability to integrate into the latest scientific paradigms. In the context of social challenges, increasing levels of psychological anxiety and isolation, A. Adler's ideas about responsibility, cooperation, personal development and self-improvement have powerful potential both in psychotherapy and in a broader social context.

A. Adler proposed a psychological concept that focuses on a person as a holistic, socially motivated personality. His provisions about feelings of inferiority, the desire for superiority, lifestyle and social interest remain relevant in modern psychology and psychotherapy. They provide valuable tools for analyzing personal development, interpersonal conflicts, and the formation of healthy self-esteem. Taking into account Adlerian ideas contributes to a deeper understanding of the personality in the conditions of the modern world.

Prospects for further explorations in this direction. Further research aimed at developing interventions that will promote the development of social interaction, an active lifestyle, and strengthening the value correspondence of life goals with the public good is promising. In particular, a relevant direction is the creation and empirical testing of programs aimed at increasing the level of social interest, developing a healthy lifestyle, overcoming inferiority complexes, and forming adaptive life goals. These programs can be implemented in the format of psychotherapeutic groups, educational modules, school and extracurricular initiatives (clubs, trainings, consulting centers). The effectiveness of such interventions should be assessed both using qualitative methods (for example, in-depth interviews or thematic analysis) and through experimental or quasi-experimental studies with control groups.

References:

- [1] Adler A. Indyvidual'na psykholohiya: vybrani pratsi / Per. z anhl. ta nauk. red. I.I. Ratushnoho. Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 2015. 420 s.
- [2] Adler A. Praktyka i teoriya indyvidual'noyi psykholohiyi / Per. z nim. Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo «Naukova dumka», 2015. 420 s.
- [3] Adler A. Zrozumity pryrodu lyudyny / Per. z anhl. Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo «Fenyks», 2010. 256 s.
- [4] Adler A. Nauka zhyty / Per. z anhl. Kyiv: Vydavnytstvo «Kyivs'ka shkola ekonomiky», 2018. 312 s.
- [5] Kozachenko I.V. Psykholohichni zasady formuvannya zhyttyevoho stylu osobystosti. Kharkiv: Vydavnytstvo «Faktor», 2017. 280 s.
- [6] Kokorina Yu.Ye. Hlybyнна psykholohiya (v korotkomu vykladі): navchal'no-metodychnyy posibnyk. Odesa: Astro-prynt, 2021. 120 s.
- [7] Medvid' Ye.S. Osnovy hlybynnoyi psykholohiyi. Nizhyn: NDU imeni Mykoly Hoholya, 2019. 203 s.
- [8] Shevchenko O.M. Psykholohiya osobystosti: teoriya i praktyka. Kyiv: VPTs «Kyivs'kyy universytet», 2018. 350 s.
- [9] Carlson J., Watts R. E., Maniaci M. P. *Adlerian Therapy: Theory and Practice*. Washington: American Psychological Association, 2006.
- [10] Clark D. A., Beck A. T. *Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders: Science and Practice*. New York: The Guilford Press, 2011. 628 p.

- [11] Corey G., Bitter J. R. *Adlerian Therapy. Theory & Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2016. P. 95-128.
- [12] Ellis A., Dryden W. *The Practice of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy* (2nd ed.). New York: Springer Publishing Company, 1997. 272 p.
- [13] Maslow A. *The Development of the Concept of Self-Actualization in the Writings of Abraham Maslow*. Current Psychological Reviews, 1982. Vol. 2. P. 61-75.
- [14] Seligman M., Csikszentmihalyi M. *Happiness, Excellence, and Optimal Human Functioning: Review of a Special Issue of American Psychologist*. American Psychologist, 2000. Vol. 55. P. 5-183.
- [15] Watts R. E. *Social Interest and Mental Health: Adlerian, Cognitive-Behavioral, and Systems Perspectives*. Journal of Individual Psychology, 1999. Vol. 55(3), P. 230-241.

Review received 08.06.2023