

THE FOURTH NIGHT:

*Where the Center of the World Is*

*T*hat was close—I almost fell for it! The following week, the young man called on the philosopher again, and, with an indignant expression, knocked on the door.

*The idea of separating tasks is certainly a useful one. You had me completely convinced last time. But it seems like such a lonely way to live. Separating the tasks and lightening the load of one's interpersonal relations is just the same as cutting one's connection to other people. And, to top it off, you're telling me to be disliked by other people? If that's what you call freedom, then I'll choose not to be free!*

# Individual Psychology and Holism

**PHILOSOPHER:** Well, you're looking rather gloomy today.

**YOUTH:** You see, since we last met, I've been thinking calmly and carefully about the separation of tasks, and about freedom. I waited until my emotions had settled and then applied my reasoning mind. But the separation of tasks just doesn't seem realistic.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Hmm, okay. Please go on.

**YOUTH:** Separating tasks is basically an idea that boils down to defining a boundary and saying, "I am I, and you are you." Sure, there are probably fewer interpersonal relationship problems that way. But would you really say that such a way of life is right? To me, it just seems like an extremely self-centered, misguided individualism. On my first visit here, you told me that Adlerian psychology is formally referred to as "individual psychology." That term had been bothering me for quite a while, but I finally figured out why: What you're calling Adlerian psychology, or individual psychology, is essentially the study of an individualism that leads people into isolation.

**PHILOSOPHER:** It is true that the term "individual psychology," which Adler coined, has certain aspects that may invite misunderstanding. I will explain what I mean now. First of all, etymologically speaking, the word "individual" has the meaning "indivisible."

**YOUTH:** Indivisible?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes. In other words, it is the smallest possible unit and therefore cannot be broken down any further. Now, what is it exactly that cannot be divided? Adler was opposed to any kind of dualistic value system that treated the mind as separate from the body—reason as separate from emotion, or the conscious mind as separate from the unconscious mind.

**YOUTH:** What's the point of that?

**PHILOSOPHER:** For example, do you remember the story about the female student who came to me for counseling on account of her fear of blushing? Why did she develop that fear of blushing? In Adlerian psychology, physical symptoms are not regarded separately from the mind (psyche). The mind and body are viewed as one, as a whole that cannot be divided into parts. Tension in the mind can make one's arms and legs shake, or cause one's cheeks to turn red, and fear can make one's face turn white. And so on.

**YOUTH:** Well, sure, there are parts of the mind and body that are connected.

**PHILOSOPHER:** The same holds true for reason and emotion, and the conscious mind and the unconscious mind as well. A normally coolheaded person doesn't expect to have a fit of violent emotion and start shouting at someone. We are not struck by emotions that somehow exist independently from us. Each of us is a unified whole.

**YOUTH:** No, that is not true. It is precisely because we have the ability to view mind and body, reason and emotion, and the conscious and the unconscious mind as clearly separate from each other that we can gain a correct understanding of people. Isn't that a given?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Certainly it is true that the mind and the body are separate things, that reason and emotion are different, and that both the conscious mind and the unconscious mind exist. That said, however, when one flies into a rage and shouts at another person, it is "I as a whole" who is choosing to shout. One would never think of emotions that somehow exist independently—unrelated to

one's intentions, as it were—as having produced that shouting voice. When one separates the “I” from “emotion” and thinks, *It was the emotion that made me do it*, or *The emotion got the best of me, and I couldn't help it*, such thinking quickly becomes a life-lie.

**YOUTH:** You're referring to the time I yelled at that waiter, aren't you?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes. This view of the human being as “I as a whole,” as an indivisible being that cannot be broken down into parts, is referred to as “holism.”

**YOUTH:** Well, that's fine. But I wasn't asking you for an academic theory to provide a definition of “individual.” Look, if you take Adlerian psychology to its logical conclusion, it's basically saying, “I am I, and you are you,” and leading people toward isolation. It's saying, “I won't interfere with you, so don't interfere with me either, and we'll both go on living however we please.” Please tell me straightforwardly what your awareness is of that point.

**PHILOSOPHER:** All right. All problems are interpersonal relationship problems. You have an understanding of this basic tenet of Adlerian psychology, correct?

**YOUTH:** Yes, I do. The idea of noninterference in interpersonal relations, that is to say, the separation of tasks, probably came about as a way to resolve those problems.

**PHILOSOPHER:** This is something I believe I went over last time—that forming good interpersonal relationships requires a certain degree of distance. At the same time, people who get too close end up not even being able to speak to each other, so it is not good to get too far apart, either. Please do not think of the separation of tasks as something that is meant to keep other people away; instead, see it as a way of thinking with which to unravel the threads of the complex entanglement of one's interpersonal relations.

**YOUTH:** To unravel the threads?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Exactly. Right now, your threads and other people's threads are all tangled up in a confused mess, and you are looking at the world while in that condition. Red, blue, brown, and green—all the colors mixing together—you think of it as “connection.” But it is not.

**YOUTH:** So, then, what do you think connection is?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Last time, I spoke of the separation of tasks as a prescription for resolving interpersonal relationship problems. But interpersonal relationships are not something that end just because one has separated the tasks. The separating of tasks is actually the point of departure for interpersonal relations. Today, let's take the discussion deeper and address how interpersonal relations as a whole are viewed in Adlerian psychology, and consider the kind of relationships we should form with others.

# The Goal of Interpersonal Relationships Is a Feeling of Community

**YOUTH:** Okay, I have a question. Please give me a simple answer that gets straight to the heart of the matter. You said that the separating of tasks is the point of departure for interpersonal relations. Well, what is the goal of interpersonal relations?

**PHILOSOPHER:** To get straight to the heart of the matter, it is “community feeling.”

**YOUTH:** . . . Community feeling?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes. This is a key concept in Adlerian psychology, and views on its application have been the subject of much debate. In fact, Adler’s proposal of the concept of community feeling drove many people to part ways with him.

**YOUTH:** Well, it sounds fascinating to me. What is this concept?

**PHILOSOPHER:** It was the time before last, I believe, that I brought up the matter of how one sees others, that is, as enemies or as comrades. Now, take that a step deeper. If other people are our comrades, and we live surrounded by them, we should be able to find in that life our own place of “refuge.” Moreover, in doing so, we should begin to have the desire to share with our comrades, to contribute to the community. This sense of others as comrades, this awareness of “having one’s own refuge,” is called “community feeling.”

**YOUTH:** But what part of this is open to debate? It seems like a completely irrefutable point.

**PHILOSOPHER:** The issue is community. What does it consist of? When you hear the word “community,” what images come to mind?

**YOUTH:** There are such frameworks as one’s household, school, workplace, or local society.

**PHILOSOPHER:** When Adler refers to community, he goes beyond the household, school, workplace, and local society, and treats it as all-inclusive, covering not only nations and all of humanity but also the entire axis of time from the past to the future—and he includes plants and animals and even inanimate objects.

**YOUTH:** Huh?

**PHILOSOPHER:** In other words, he is espousing that community is not merely one of the preexisting frameworks that the word might bring to mind but is also inclusive of literally *everything*—the entire universe, from the past to the future.

**YOUTH:** No way. Now you’ve lost me. The universe? Past and future? What on earth are you talking about?

**PHILOSOPHER:** The majority of those who hear this have similar doubts. This is not something one can comprehend immediately. Adler himself acknowledged that the community he was espousing was “an unattainable ideal.”

**YOUTH:** Ha-ha. Well, that’s perplexing, isn’t it? How about the other way around, then? Do you really comprehend and accept this community feeling, or whatever it is, that includes the entire universe?

**PHILOSOPHER:** I try to. Because I feel that one cannot truly comprehend Adlerian psychology without comprehending this point.

**YOUTH:** Okay then!



**PHILOSOPHER:** As I have been saying all along, Adlerian psychology has the view that all problems are interpersonal relationship problems. Interpersonal relations are the source of unhappiness. And the opposite can be said, too—interpersonal relations are the source of happiness.

**YOUTH:** Indeed.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Furthermore, community feeling is the most important index for considering a state of interpersonal relations that is happy.

**YOUTH:** All right. I'd like to hear all about it.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Community feeling is also referred to as “social interest,” that is to say, “interest in society.” So now I have a question for you: Do you know what society's smallest unit is, from the point of view of sociology?

**YOUTH:** Society's smallest unit, huh? I'd say the family.

**PHILOSOPHER:** No, it is “you and I.” When there are two people, society emerges in their presence, and community emerges there too. To gain an understanding of the community feeling that Adler speaks of, it is advisable to use “you and I” as the starting point.

**YOUTH:** And what do you do with that as the starting point?

**PHILOSOPHER:** You make the switch from attachment to self (self-interest) to concern for others (social interest).

**YOUTH:** Attachment to self? Concern for others? What's all that about?

# Why Am I Only Interested in Myself?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Well, let's consider this concretely. For purposes of clarity, in place of "attachment to self" I will use the word "self-centered." In your view, someone who is self-centered is what sort of person?

**YOUTH:** Hmm, I guess the first thing that comes to mind is the kind of person who's like a tyrant. Someone who's domineering, has no qualms about being a nuisance to others, and thinks only about things that are to his own advantage. He thinks that the world revolves around him, and he behaves like a dictator who rules by absolute authority and force. He's the kind of person who creates an enormous amount of trouble for everyone around him. Someone who's just like Shakespeare's King Lear, a typical tyrant.

**PHILOSOPHER:** I see.

**YOUTH:** On the other hand, he wouldn't necessarily be a tyrant—one might speak of the sort of person who disturbs the harmony of a group as self-centered, too. He's someone who can't operate in a group and prefers to act alone. He never stops to reflect on his actions, even when he's late for appointments or fails to keep his promises. In a word, he is an egotist.

**PHILOSOPHER:** To be sure, that is the kind of image that generally comes to mind when thinking of self-centered people. But there is another type that must be taken into account. People who are incapable of carrying out the separation of tasks and who are obsessed with the desire for recognition are also extremely self-centered.

**YOUTH:** Why is that?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Consider the reality of the desire for recognition. How much do others pay attention to you, and what is their judgment of you? That is to say, how much do they satisfy your desire? People who are obsessed with such a desire for recognition will seem to be looking at other people, while they are actually looking only at themselves. They lack concern for others and are concerned solely with the “I.” Simply put, they are self-centered.

**YOUTH:** So would you say that people like me, who fear being judged by others, are self-centered, too? Even though I try so hard to be mindful of others and adjust myself to them?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes. In the sense that you are concerned solely with the “I,” you are self-centered. You want to be thought well of by others, and that is why you worry about the way they look at you. That is not concern for others. It is nothing but attachment to self.

**YOUTH:** But . . .

**PHILOSOPHER:** This is something I spoke of last time. The fact that there are people who do not think well of you is proof that you are living in freedom. You might have a sense of something about this that seems self-centered. But I think you have understood this from today’s discussion: A way of living in which one is constantly troubled by how one is seen by others is a self-centered lifestyle in which one’s sole concern is with the “I.”

**YOUTH:** Well, now, that is an astounding statement!

**PHILOSOPHER:** Not just you, but all people who are attached to the “I” are self-centered. And that is precisely why it is necessary to make the switch from “attachment to self” to “concern for others.”

**YOUTH:** Okay, so yes, it is true that I am always looking only at myself, that, I acknowledge. I’m constantly worried about how other people see me, but not

about how I see them. If you are saying I am self-centered, there is nothing that I can say to refute that. But think about it like this: If my life were a feature-length movie, the protagonist would certainly be this “I,” wouldn’t it? Is pointing the camera at the protagonist really such a reprehensible thing?

# You Are Not the Center of the World

**PHILOSOPHER:** Let's go over things in order. First of all, each of us is a member of a community, and that is where we belong. Feeling that one has one's own place of refuge within the community, feeling that "it's okay to be here," and having a sense of belonging—these are basic human desires. Whether it is one's studies, work, or friendships, or one's love or marriage, all these things are connected to one's search for places and relationships in which one can feel "it's okay to be here." Wouldn't you agree?

**YOUTH:** Ah, yes, I do! That's it exactly!

**PHILOSOPHER:** And the protagonist in one's life is the "I." There is nothing wrong with the train of thought up to this point. But the "I" does not rule the center of the world. While the "I" is life's protagonist, it is never more than a member of the community and a part of the whole.

**YOUTH:** A part of the whole?

**PHILOSOPHER:** People who have concern only for themselves think that they are at the center of the world. To such people, others are merely "people who will do something *for* me." They half genuinely believe that everyone else exists to serve them and should give precedence to their feelings.

**YOUTH:** Just like a prince or a princess.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes, exactly. They make a leap from being "life's protagonist" to becoming "the world's protagonist." For this reason, whenever they come into contact with another person, all they can think is, *What will this person give me?*

However—and this is something that does not hold true for princes and princesses—this expectation is not going to be satisfied on every occasion. Because other people are not living to satisfy your expectations.

**YOUTH:** Indeed.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Then, when those expectations are not satisfied, they become deeply disillusioned and feel as if they have been horribly insulted. And they become resentful, and think, *That person didn't do anything for me. That person let me down. That person isn't my comrade anymore. He's my enemy.* People who hold the belief that they are the center of the world always end up losing their comrades before long.

**YOUTH:** That's strange. Didn't you say that we are living in a subjective world? As long as the world is a subjective space, I am the only one who can be at its center. I won't let anyone else be there.

**PHILOSOPHER:** I think that when you speak of “the world,” what you have in mind is something like a map of the world.

**YOUTH:** A map of the world? What are you talking about?

**PHILOSOPHER:** For example, on the map of the world used in France, the Americas are located on the left side, and Asia is on the right. Europe and France are depicted at the center of the map, of course. The map of the world used in China, on the other hand, shows the Americas on the right side and Europe on the left. French people who see the Chinese map of the world will most likely experience a difficult-to-describe sense of incongruity, as if they have been driven unjustly to the fringes, or cut out of the world arbitrarily.

**YOUTH:** Yes, I see your point.

**PHILOSOPHER:** But what happens when a globe is used to represent the world? Because with a globe, you can look at the world with France at the center, or China, or Brazil, for that matter. Every place is central, and no place is, at the

same time. The globe may be dotted with an infinite number of centers, in accordance with the viewer's location and angle of view. That is the nature of a globe.

**YOUTH:** Hmm, that is true.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Think of what I said earlier—that you are not the center of the world—as being the same thing. You are a part of a community, not its center.

**YOUTH:** I am not the center of the world. Our world is a globe, not a map that has been cut out on a plane. Well, I can understand that in theory, anyway. But why do I have to be aware of the fact that I'm not the center of the world?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Now we will go back to where we started. All of us are searching for the sense of belonging, that “it's okay to be here.” In Adlerian psychology, however, a sense of belonging is something that one can attain only by making an active commitment to the community of one's own accord, and not simply by being here.

**YOUTH:** By making an active commitment? What does one do, exactly?

**PHILOSOPHER:** One faces one's life tasks. In other words, one takes steps forward on one's own, without avoiding the tasks of the interpersonal relations of work, friendship, and love. If you are “the center of the world,” you will have no thoughts whatsoever regarding commitment to the community; because everyone else is “someone who will do something for me,” and there is no need for you to do things yourself. But you are not the center of the world, and neither am I. One has to stand on one's own two feet, and take one's own steps forward with the tasks of interpersonal relations. One needs to think not, *What will this person give me?* but rather, *What can I give to this person?* That is commitment to the community.

**YOUTH:** It is because one gives something that one can find one's refuge?

**PHILOSOPHER:** That's right. A sense of belonging is something that one acquires through one's own efforts—it is not something one is endowed with at birth. Community feeling is the much-debated key concept of Adlerian psychology.



It was certainly a concept that the young man found difficult to accept at first. And naturally, it upset him to be told he was self-centered. But what he found hardest to accept was the incredible extent of that community, which included the universe and inanimate objects. What were Adler and this philosopher talking about, anyway? With a bewildered expression, the young man slowly opened his mouth to speak.



# Listen to the Voice of a Larger Community

**YOUTH:** I must admit, you're starting to lose me. Let me try to straighten things out a bit. First, at the gateway of interpersonal relations, we've got the separation of tasks, and as the goal, there's community feeling. And you're saying that community feeling is having "a sense of others as comrades" and "an awareness of having one's own refuge" within the community. Up to this point, it is something I can understand and accept. But the details still seem a bit far-fetched. For one thing, what do you mean by expanding this thing you call "community" to include the entire universe, and then even the past and the future, and everything from living things to inanimate objects?

**PHILOSOPHER:** It certainly does make things more difficult to understand if one takes Adler's concept of community literally and tries to actually imagine it including the universe and inanimate objects. For the time being, suffice it to say that the scope of community is infinite.

**YOUTH:** Infinite?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Take, for example, a man who, on reaching retirement age and stopping work, quickly loses his vitality and becomes depressed. Abruptly cut off from the company that was his community and bereft of title or profession, he becomes an "ordinary nobody." As he is unable to accept the fact that he is now "normal," he becomes old practically overnight. But all that really happened to the man is that he was cut off from the small community that is his company. Each person belongs to a separate community. And when it comes down to it, all of us belong to the community of the earth, and the community of the universe.

**YOUTH:** That's pure sophistry! To suddenly come out with "You belong to the universe," as if that could give someone a sense of belonging.

**PHILOSOPHER:** It's true, there's no way one can just imagine the entire universe all of a sudden. Even so, I would like you to gain the awareness that you belong to a separate, larger community that is beyond the one you see in your immediate vicinity—for example, the country or local society in which you live—and that you are contributing in some way within that community.

**YOUTH:** Then what about in a situation like this? Say there's a guy who's unmarried, who has lost his job and his friends, and who avoids the company of other people and just lives off the money his parents left him. So he's basically running away from all the tasks of work and tasks of friendship and tasks of love. Would you say that even a guy like that belongs to some sort of community?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Of course. Say he goes out to buy a loaf of bread. He pays for it with a coin. That coin does not simply go back to the bakers of the bread. It goes to the producers of flour and butter, to the people who deliver those ingredients, to the purveyors of the gasoline used by the delivery vehicles, to people in the oil-producing countries where that fuel comes from, and so on. So it's all connected. People are never truly alone or separate from community, and cannot be.

**YOUTH:** So you're saying I should fantasize more when I buy bread?

**PHILOSOPHER:** It is not fantasy. It is fact. The community Adler speaks of goes beyond things we can see, like our households and societies, to include those connections that we cannot see.

**YOUTH:** Excuse me for saying so, but you're escaping into abstract theory. The issue we should be addressing here is the sense of belonging, that "it's okay to be here." And then, with regard to the meaning of this sense of belonging, it is the community we can see that is stronger. You will agree with that, won't you? For example, if we compare the "company" community with the "earth"

community, the sense of belonging of someone who says “I am a member of this company” would be stronger. To borrow your terminology, the distance and depth of the interpersonal relations are completely different. It’s only natural that when we search for a sense of belonging, we will be attracted to the smaller community.

**PHILOSOPHER:** That is a perceptive observation. So let’s start thinking about why we should be aware of multiple and larger communities. As I stated earlier, all of us belong to multiple communities. We belong to our households, our schools, our workplaces, and the local societies and the countries in which we live. This far you agree, yes?

**YOUTH:** Yes, I do.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Well, suppose that you, as a student, regarded the community that is “school” as absolute. In other words, school is everything to you, your “I” exists because of school, and no other “I” is possible without it. But naturally, there will be occasions within that community when you run into adversity. It could be getting bullied, or not being able to make friends, or not keeping up with your schoolwork, or not adapting to the system of the school in the first place. That is to say, it’s possible that with regard to the community that is your school, you won’t have that “It’s okay to be here” sense of belonging.

**YOUTH:** Yes, absolutely. That’s quite possible.

**PHILOSOPHER:** When that happens, if you are thinking of school as being everything to you, you will end up without a sense of belonging to anything. And then, you will escape within a smaller community, such as your home. You will shut yourself in, and maybe even turn to violence against members of your own family. And by doing such things, you will be attempting to gain a sense of belonging somehow. What I would like you to focus on here, though, is that there is “a more separate community” and, moreover, that there is “a larger community.”

**YOUTH:** What does that mean?

**PHILOSOPHER:** That there is a larger world that extends far beyond the confines of the school. And every one of us is a member of that world. If there is no place of refuge in your school, you should find a different refuge outside the walls of the school. You can change schools, and it's fine to withdraw from school, too. A community that you can break relations with by simply submitting a withdrawal notice is one that you can have only so much connection to, in any case. Once you know how big the world is, you will see that all the hardship you went through in school was a storm in a teacup. The moment you leave the teacup, that raging storm will be gone, and a gentle breeze will greet you in its place.

**YOUTH:** Are you saying that as long as you keep yourself shut up inside the teacup, you'll never stand a chance outside it?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Secluding yourself in your room is akin to staying in the teacup, as if you are hunkering down in a small shelter. You might be able to wait out the rain for a short while, but the storm will continue unabated.

**YOUTH:** Well, maybe in theory, anyway. But it's hard to break out. The decision to withdraw from school itself isn't something to be taken lightly.

**PHILOSOPHER:** I am sure you are right—it would not be easy. Therefore, there is a principle of action that I would like you to commit to memory. When we run into difficulties in our interpersonal relations, or when we can no longer see a way out, what we should consider first and foremost is the principle that says, "Listen to the voice of the larger community."

**YOUTH:** The voice of the larger community?

**PHILOSOPHER:** If it is a school, one does not judge things with the common sense of the community that is the school, but instead follows the common sense of a larger community. Now, let's say it's your school, and your teacher has been behaving in an authoritarian manner. But the power or authority your teacher

wields are nothing more than an aspect of the common sense that operates only within the small community that is the school. From the standpoint of the community that is “human society,” both you and your teacher are equal humans. If unreasonable demands are being thrust on you, it is fine to object to them directly.

**YOUTH:** But it will be very difficult to object when the teacher is right in front of me.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Not at all. Though this might be termed a “you and I” relationship, if it is one that can break down just because you raise an objection, then it is not the sort of relationship you need to get into in the first place. It is fine to just let go of it. Living in fear of one’s relationships falling apart is an unfree way to live, in which one is living for other people.

**YOUTH:** You’re saying to choose freedom at the same time that I have community feeling?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes, of course. Do not cling to the small community right in front of you. There will always be more “you and I,” and more “everyone,” and larger communities that exist.

# Do Not Rebuke or Praise

**YOUTH:** Well, all right. But don't you see? You haven't touched on the essential point, that is, the course of progression from the separation of tasks to community feeling. So first, I separate the tasks. I think of my tasks as being up to this point, and everything beyond that is other people's tasks. I don't intervene in other people's tasks, and I draw a line so that other people won't intervene in mine. But how can one build interpersonal relations with this separation of tasks and arrive in the end at the community feeling that "it's okay to be here"? How does Adlerian psychology advise us to overcome the life tasks of work, friendship, and love? It seems like you're just trying to confuse me with abstract words, without going into any concrete explanation.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes, you've hit on the important point. How does carrying out the separating of tasks connect with good relations? That is to say, how does it connect with building the kind of relations in which we cooperate and act in harmony with each other? Which brings us to the concept of "horizontal relationship."

**YOUTH:** Horizontal relationship?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Let's start with an easily understood example, that of the parent-child relationship. Whether the circumstances are, for example, those of child-rearing, or of training junior staff in the workplace, generally speaking there are two approaches that are considered: one is the method of raising by rebuke, and the other is the method of raising by praise.

**YOUTH:** Ah. That is a hotly debated issue.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Which one do you think is the better choice? To rebuke or to praise?

**YOUTH:** It's better to raise by praising, of course.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Why?

**YOUTH:** Take animal training, for example. When teaching animals to do tricks, you can make them obey with a whip. This is the typical "raising by rebuke" way. On the other hand, it's also possible to get animals to learn tricks by holding up rewards of food or saying kind words. This is "raising by praise." Both ways can lead to the same results—they learn new tricks. But the motivation for moving toward the objective is completely different if the animal is doing it because it will be rebuked or doing it because it wants to be praised. In the latter instance, it will come with a feeling of joy. Rebuke only makes the animal wither. But raising with praise naturally allows it to grow strong and healthy. This seems like an obvious conclusion.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Animal training is an interesting example. Now let's look at this from the standpoint of Adlerian psychology. In Adlerian psychology, we take the stance that in child-rearing, and in all other forms of communication with other people, one must not praise.

**YOUTH:** One must not praise?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Physical punishment is out of the question, of course, and rebuking is not accepted, either. One must not praise, and one must not rebuke. That is the standpoint of Adlerian psychology.

**YOUTH:** But how is that even possible?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Consider the reality of the act of praise. For example, suppose I praised a statement you made by saying, "Good job!" Wouldn't hearing those words seem strange somehow?

**YOUTH:** Yes, I guess it would put me in an unpleasant mood.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Can you explain why it would feel unpleasant?

**YOUTH:** What's unpleasant is the feeling that from the words "Good job!" one is being talked down to.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Exactly. In the act of praise, there is the aspect of it being "the passing of judgment by a person of ability on a person of no ability." A mother praises her child who has helped her prepare dinner, saying, "You're such a good helper!" But when her husband does the same things, you can be sure she won't be telling him, "You're such a good helper!"

**YOUTH:** Ha-ha, you are right about that.

**PHILOSOPHER:** In other words, the mother who praises the child by saying things like "You're such a good helper!" or "Good job!" or "Well, aren't you something!" is unconsciously creating a hierarchical relationship and seeing the child as beneath her. The example of animal training that you just gave is also emblematic of the hierarchical relationship—the vertical relationship—that is behind the praising. When one person praises another, the goal is "to manipulate someone who has less ability than you." It is not done out of gratitude or respect.

**YOUTH:** So you're saying that one praises in order to manipulate?

**PHILOSOPHER:** That's right. Whether we praise or rebuke others, the only difference is one of the carrot or the stick, and the background goal is manipulation. The reason Adlerian psychology is highly critical of reward-and-punishment education is that its intention is to manipulate children.

**YOUTH:** No way, you're wrong there. Because think of it from the standpoint of the child. For children, isn't being praised by their parents the greatest joy of all? It's because they want praise that they do their studies. It's because they want praise that they learn to behave properly. That's how it was for me when I was a



child. How I craved praise from my parents! And even after becoming an adult, it's been the same way. When your boss praises you, it feels good. That's how it is for everyone. This has nothing to do with reason—it's just instinctual emotion!

**PHILOSOPHER:** One wishes to be praised by someone. Or conversely, one decides to give praise to someone. This is proof that one is seeing all interpersonal relationships as “vertical relationships.” This holds true for you, too: It is because you are living in vertical relationships that you want to be praised. Adlerian psychology refutes all manner of vertical relationships and proposes that all interpersonal relationships be horizontal relationships. In a sense, this point may be regarded as the fundamental principle of Adlerian psychology.

**YOUTH:** Is this something that is conveyed by the words “equal but not the same”?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes. Equal, that is to say, horizontal. For example, there are men who verbally abuse their wives, who do all the housework, with such remarks as “You're not bringing in any money, so I don't want to hear it” or “It's thanks to me that there's food on the table.” And I'm sure you've heard this one before: “You have everything you need, so what are you complaining about?” It's perfectly shameful. Such statements of economic superiority or the like have no connection whatsoever to human worth. A company employee and a full-time housewife simply have different workplaces and roles, and are truly “equal but not the same.”

**YOUTH:** I agree entirely.

**PHILOSOPHER:** They are probably afraid that women will grow wise to their situation and start earning more than men do, and that women will start asserting themselves. They see all interpersonal relations as vertical relationships, and they are afraid of being seen by women as beneath them. That is to say, they have intense, hidden feelings of inferiority.

**YOUTH:** So in a sense, they are getting into a superiority complex in which they are trying to make a show of their abilities?

**PHILOSOPHER:** So it seems. In the first place, the feeling of inferiority is an awareness that arises within vertical relationships. If one can build horizontal relationships that are “equal but not the same” for all people, there will no longer be any room for inferiority complexes to emerge.

**YOUTH:** Hmm. Maybe I do have an awareness of manipulation somewhere in my psyche when I go about praising other people. Laying on the flattery to get in good favor with my boss—that’s definitely manipulation, isn’t it? And it’s the other way around, too. I’ve been manipulated by being praised by others. Funny, I guess that’s just the sort of person I am!

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes, in the sense that you have not been able to break out of vertical relationships, it would seem so.

**YOUTH:** This is getting interesting! Please go on!

# The Encouragement Approach

**PHILOSOPHER:** As you may recall from our discussion on the separation of tasks, I brought up the subject of intervention. This is the act of intruding on other people's tasks. So why does a person intervene? Here, too, in the background, vertical relationships are at play. It is precisely because one perceives interpersonal relations as vertical, and sees the other party as beneath one, that one intervenes. Through intervention, one tries to lead the other party in the desired direction. One has convinced oneself that one is right and that the other party is wrong. Of course, the intervention here is manipulation, pure and simple. Parents commanding a child to study is a typical example of this. They might be acting out of the best of intentions from their points of view, but when it comes down to it, the parents are intruding and attempting to manipulate the child to go in their desired direction.

**YOUTH:** If one can build horizontal relationships, will that intervention disappear?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes, it will.

**YOUTH:** Well, it's one thing if you're just talking about a child's studies. But when someone's suffering right there in front of you, you can't just leave him or her be, can you? Would you still say that lending a helping hand is intervention, and then do nothing?

**PHILOSOPHER:** One must not let it go unnoticed. It is necessary to offer assistance that does not turn into intervention.

**YOUTH:** What is the difference between intervention and assistance?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Think back to our discussion of the separation of tasks, to the subject of a child's schoolwork. As I stated then, this is a task that the child has to resolve himself, not something that parents or teachers can do for him. So intervention is this kind of intruding on other people's tasks and directing them by saying things like "You have to study" or "Get into that university." Whereas assistance, on the other hand, presupposes the separation of tasks, and also horizontal relationships. Having understood that studying is the child's task, one considers what one can do for him. Concretely speaking, instead of commanding from above that the child must study, one acts on him in such a way that he can gain the confidence to take care of his own studies and face his tasks on his own.

**YOUTH:** And that action isn't forced?

**PHILOSOPHER:** No, it's not. Without forcing, and with the tasks always kept separate, one assists the child to resolve them by his own efforts. It's the approach of "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." He is the one who has to face his tasks, and he is the one who makes the resolution.

**YOUTH:** So you neither praise nor rebuke?

**PHILOSOPHER:** That's right, one neither praises nor rebukes. This kind of assistance, which is based on horizontal relationships, is referred to in Adlerian psychology as "encouragement."

**YOUTH:** Encouragement, huh? Right, that's the term you mentioned some time ago. You said you'd explain at a later date.

**PHILOSOPHER:** When one is not following through with one's tasks, it is not because one is without ability. Adlerian psychology tells us that the issue here is not one of ability but simply that "one has lost the *courage* to face one's tasks."

And if that is the case, the thing to do before anything else is to recover that lost courage.

**YOUTH:** But we're just going around in circles! That's basically the same as giving praise. When one is praised by another person, one becomes truly aware of one's ability and regains one's courage. Please do not be stubborn about this point—just acknowledge the necessity of giving praise.

**PHILOSOPHER:** No, I will not acknowledge that.

**YOUTH:** Why not?

**PHILOSOPHER:** The reason is clear. Being praised is what leads people to form the belief that they have no ability.

**YOUTH:** What did you say?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Shall I repeat myself? The more one is praised by another person, the more one forms the belief that one has no ability. Please do your best to remember this.

**YOUTH:** Do such foolish people even exist? It's got to be the other way around! It is as a result of being praised that one becomes truly aware of one's ability. Isn't that obvious?

**PHILOSOPHER:** You are wrong. Even if you do derive joy from being praised, it is the same as being dependent on vertical relationships and acknowledging that you have no ability. Because giving praise is a judgment that is passed by a person of ability onto a person without ability.

**YOUTH:** I just cannot agree with that.

**PHILOSOPHER:** When receiving praise becomes one's goal, one is choosing a way of living that is in line with another person's system of values. Looking at your life until now, aren't you tired of trying to live up to your parents' expectations?

**YOUTH:** Um, well, I guess so.

**PHILOSOPHER:** First, do the separation of tasks. Then, while accepting each other's differences, build equal horizontal relationships. Encouragement is the approach that comes next.

# How to Feel You Have Value

**YOUTH:** So concretely speaking, how does one go about this? One cannot praise, and one cannot rebuke. What other words and choices are there?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Think about a time when you've had help in your work—not from a child but from a partner who is your equal—and you will probably see the answer right away. When a friend helps you clean your home, what do you say to him?

**YOUTH:** I say, "Thank you."

**PHILOSOPHER:** Right. You convey words of gratitude, saying thank you to this partner who has helped you with your work. You might express straightforward delight: "I'm glad." Or you could convey your thanks by saying, "That was a big help." This is an approach to encouragement that is based on horizontal relationships.

**YOUTH:** That's all?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes. The most important thing is to not judge other people. "Judgment" is a word that comes out of vertical relationships. If one is building horizontal relationships, there will be words of more straightforward gratitude and respect and joy.

**YOUTH:** Hmm, your point that judgment is created by vertical relationships certainly seems to be true. But what about this? Could the words "thank you" actually have such a great power as to be able to bring back courage? After all, I

think I'd prefer to be praised, even if the words I hear are ones that come from vertical relationships.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Being praised essentially means that one is receiving judgment from another person as “good.” And the measure of what is good or bad about that act is that person’s yardstick. If receiving praise is what one is after, one will have no choice but to adapt to that person’s yardstick and put the brakes on one’s own freedom. “Thank you,” on the other hand, rather than being judgment, is a clear expression of gratitude. When one hears words of gratitude, one knows that one has made a contribution to another person.

**YOUTH:** So even if you’re judged as “good” by another person, you don’t feel that you’ve made a contribution?

**PHILOSOPHER:** That’s right. This is a point that will connect to our subsequent discussion as well—in Adlerian psychology, a great deal of emphasis is given to “contribution.”

**YOUTH:** Why is that?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Well, what does a person have to do to get courage? In Adler’s view, “It is only when a person is able to feel that he has worth that he can possess courage.”

**YOUTH:** When a person is able to feel that he has worth?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Do you recall when we were discussing the feeling of inferiority that I spoke of this as being an issue of subjective worth? Is one able to feel one has worth, or does one feel one is a worthless being? If one is able to feel one has worth, then one can accept oneself just as one is and have the courage to face one’s life tasks. So the issue that arises at this point is how on earth can one become able to feel one has worth?

**YOUTH:** Yes, that’s it exactly! I need you to explain that very clearly, please.



**PHILOSOPHER:** It's quite simple. It is when one is able to feel "I am beneficial to the community" that one can have a true sense of one's worth. This is the answer that would be offered in Adlerian psychology.

**YOUTH:** That I am beneficial to the community?

**PHILOSOPHER:** That one can act on the community, that is to say, on other people, and that one can feel "I am of use to someone." Instead of feeling judged by another person as "good," being able to feel, by way of one's own subjective viewpoint, that "I can make contributions to other people." It is at that point that, at last, we can have a true sense of our own worth. Everything we have been discussing about community feeling and encouragement connects here.

**YOUTH:** Hmm. I don't know, it's starting to get a bit confusing.

**PHILOSOPHER:** We are getting to the heart of the discussion now. Please stick with me awhile longer. It is about having concern for others, building horizontal relationships, and taking the approach of encouragement. All these things connect to the deep life awareness of "I am of use to someone," and in turn, to your courage to live.

**YOUTH:** To be of use to someone. That is what my life is worth living for . . . ?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Let's take a little break. Would you like some coffee?

**YOUTH:** Yes, please.



The discussion of community feeling had become more confusing than ever. One must not praise. And one must not rebuke, either. All words that are used to judge other people are words that come out of vertical relationships, and we need to build horizontal relationships. And it is only when one is able to feel that one is of use to someone that one can have a true awareness of one's worth. There was a major flaw in this logic

somewhere. The young man felt it instinctively. As he sipped the hot coffee, thoughts of his grandfather crossed his mind.

# Exist in the Present

**PHILOSOPHER:** Well, have you worked things out?

**YOUTH:** Gradually, but yes, it's getting clearer. You don't seem to be aware of it, but just now you said something really over the top. It's a dangerous, rather extreme opinion that just negates everything in the world.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Oh, really? What is it?

**YOUTH:** It's the idea that being of use to someone is what gives one a true awareness of one's worth. If you put it the other way around, a person who isn't of any use to others has no worth at all. That's what you are saying, isn't it? If one takes that to its logical conclusion, then the lives of newborn babies and of invalids and old people who are bedridden aren't worth living either. How could this be? Let's talk about my grandfather. He spends his days bedridden at an old people's home. Since he has dementia, he doesn't recognize any of his children or grandchildren, and his condition is such that he would not be able to go on living without constant care. One simply couldn't think of him as being of use to someone. Don't you see? Your opinion is basically the same thing as saying to my grandfather, "People like you aren't qualified to live!"

**PHILOSOPHER:** I reject that definitively.

**YOUTH:** How do you reject that?

**PHILOSOPHER:** There are parents who refute my explanation of the concept of encouragement by saying, "Our child does bad things from morning to night,

and there is never an occasion to tell him, ‘Thank you,’ or ‘You helped a lot.’” The context is probably the same as what you are talking about, isn’t it?

**YOUTH:** Yes, it is. So tell me please how you justify that.

**PHILOSOPHER:** At this point, you are looking at another person on the level of his acts. In other words, that that person “did something.” So from that point of view, it might seem that bedridden old people are only a nuisance and are of no use to anyone. So let’s look at other people not on the “level of acts” but on the “level of being.” Without judging whether or not other people did something, one rejoices in their being there, in their very existence, and one calls out to them with words of gratitude.

**YOUTH:** You call out to their existence? What on earth are you talking about?

**PHILOSOPHER:** If you consider things at the level of being, we are of use to others and have worth just by being here. This is an indisputable fact.

**YOUTH:** No way! Enough joking around. Being of use to someone just by being here—that’s got to be straight out of some new religion.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Well, for example, suppose your mother has a car accident. Her condition is serious, and her life may be in danger. At a time like that, you would not be wondering if your mother “did something,” or anything of the sort. More than likely, you will just be thinking you’ll be glad if she makes it, and you’re glad she is holding on right now.

**YOUTH:** Of course I would!

**PHILOSOPHER:** That’s what it means to be grateful on the level of being. Your mother might not be able to do anything in her critical condition that would be considered an act, but just by being alive, she would be supporting the psychological state of you and your family, and would therefore be of use. The same could be said for you, too. If your life were in danger, and you were hanging on by a thread, the people around you would probably feel very

gladdened just by the very fact of your existing. They would simply feel thankful that you are safe in the here and now, and would not be wanting you to perform some direct act. At the very least, there is no reason they would have to think that way. So instead of thinking of oneself on the level of acts, first of all one accepts oneself on the level of being.

**YOUTH:** That's an extreme example—everyday life is different.

**PHILOSOPHER:** No, it is the same.

**YOUTH:** What is the same about it? Try and give me a more everyday example, please. If you can't, I won't be able to agree with this.

**PHILOSOPHER:** All right. When we look at other people, we are prone to construct our own ideal images of ourselves, which we then detract from and judge. Imagine, for example, a child who never talks back to his parents, excels in both schoolwork and sports, attends a good university, and joins a large company. There are parents who will compare their child to such an image of an ideal child—which is an impossible fiction—and then be filled with complaints and dissatisfaction. They treat the idealized image as one hundred points, and they gradually subtract from that. This is truly a “judgment” way of thinking. Instead, the parents could refrain from comparing their child to anyone else, see him for who he actually is, and be glad and grateful for his being there. Instead of taking away points from some idealized image, they could start from zero. And if they do that, they should be able to call out to his existence itself.

**YOUTH:** Okay, but I'd say that's just an idealistic approach. So are you saying that even with the kind of child who never goes to school or gets a job, but just shuts himself in and stays home, one should still communicate one's gratitude and say thank you?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Of course. Suppose your shut-in child helped you wash the dishes after a meal. If you were to say then, “Enough of that already—just go to school,” you would be using the words of such parents who detract from an

image of an ideal child. If you were to take such an approach, the child would probably end up even more discouraged. However, if you can say a straightforward thank you, the child just might feel his own worth and take a new step forward.

**YOUTH:** That's just utterly hypocritical! It's nothing more than the nonsensical talk of a hypocrite. It sounds like the "neighborly love" that Christians talk about. The community feeling, the horizontal relationships, the gratitude for existence, and so on. Who on earth could actually do such things?

**PHILOSOPHER:** With regard to this issue of community feeling, there was a person who asked Adler a similar question. Adler's reply was the following: "Someone has to start. Other people might not be cooperative, but that is not connected to you. My advice is this: you should start. With no regard to whether others are cooperative or not." My advice is exactly the same.

# People Cannot Make Proper Use of Self

**YOUTH:** I should start?

**PHILOSOPHER:** That's right. Without regard to whether other people are cooperative or not.

**YOUTH:** All right, I'll ask you again. "People can be of use to someone else simply by being alive, and have a true sense of their worth just by being alive." Is that what you are saying?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes.

**YOUTH:** Well, I don't know. I am alive, right here and now. "I," who is no one else but me, am alive right here. But even so, I don't really feel that I have worth.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Can you describe in words why you do not feel that you have worth?

**YOUTH:** I suppose it's what you've been referring to as interpersonal relations. From childhood up to the present, I have always been belittled by people around me, especially my parents, as a poor excuse for a little brother. They have never really tried to recognize me for who I am. You say that worth is something one gives to oneself. But that's just an impracticable theory. For example, at the library where I work, for the most part my job is just sorting the returned books and putting them back on the shelves. It's routine work that anyone could do once they've been taught. If I stopped going to work, my boss would have no trouble finding someone to replace me. I am needed only for the unskilled labor I provide, and it doesn't actually matter at all if it is "I" who is working there or

someone else, or a machine, for that matter. No one is requiring “this me” in particular. In such circumstances, would you have confidence in yourself? Would you be able to have a true sense of worth?

**PHILOSOPHER:** From an Adlerian psychology point of view, the answer is simple. First of all, build a horizontal relationship between yourself and another person. One is enough. Let’s start from there.

**YOUTH:** Please don’t treat me like a fool! Look, I have friends. And I am building solid horizontal relationships with them.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Even so, I suspect that with your parents and your boss, and with your junior colleagues and other people as well, the relationships you are building are vertical ones.

**YOUTH:** Of course, I have different kinds of relationships. That’s how it is for everyone.

**PHILOSOPHER:** This is a very important point. Does one build vertical relationships, or does one build horizontal relationships? This is an issue of lifestyle, and human beings are not so clever as to be able to have different lifestyles available whenever the need arises. In other words, deciding that one is “equal to this person” or “in a hierarchical relationship with that person” does not work.

**YOUTH:** Do you mean that one has to choose one or the other—vertical relationships or horizontal relationships?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Absolutely, yes. If you are building even one vertical relationship with someone, before you even notice what is happening, you will be treating all your interpersonal relations as vertical.

**YOUTH:** So I am treating even my relationships with my friends as vertical?



**PHILOSOPHER:** That is correct. Even if you are not treating them in a boss-or-subordinate kind of way, it is as if you are saying, “A is above me, and B is below me,” for example, or “I’ll follow A’s advice, but ignore what B says,” or “I don’t mind breaking my promise to C.”

**YOUTH:** Hmm!

**PHILOSOPHER:** On the other hand, if one has managed to build a horizontal relationship with at least one person—if one has been able to build a relationship of equals in the true sense of the term—that is a major lifestyle transformation. With that breakthrough, all one’s interpersonal relations will gradually become horizontal.

**YOUTH:** What nonsense! There are so many ways I could refute that. Think of a company setting, for example. It wouldn’t really be feasible for the director and his new recruits to form relationships as equals, would it? Hierarchical relationships are part of the system of our society, and to ignore that is to ignore the social order. Look, if you heard that a new recruit at your company, who’s only twenty or so, had suddenly started buddying up to the sixty-something director, don’t you think it would sound pretty far-fetched?

**PHILOSOPHER:** It is certainly important to respect one’s elders. In a company structure, it is only natural for there to be different levels of responsibility. I am not telling you to make friends with everyone, or behave as if you are close friends. Rather, what is important is to be equal in consciousness, and to assert that which needs to be asserted.

**YOUTH:** I am not someone who can mouth off to my seniors, and I would never think of trying. My social common sense would be called into question if I did.

**PHILOSOPHER:** What is “senior”? What is this “mouthing off”? If one is gauging the atmosphere of a situation and being dependent on vertical relationships, one is engaging in irresponsible acts—one is trying to avoid one’s responsibilities.

**YOUTH:** What is irresponsible about it?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Suppose that as a result of following your boss's instructions, your work ends in failure. Whose responsibility is it then?

**YOUTH:** Well, that'd be my boss's responsibility. Because I was just following orders, and he was the one who decided on them.

**PHILOSOPHER:** None of the responsibility is yours?

**YOUTH:** No, it isn't. It's the responsibility of the boss who gave the orders. This is what's known as organizational accountability.

**PHILOSOPHER:** You are wrong. That is a life-lie. There *is* space for you to refuse, and there should also be space to propose a better way of doing things. You are just thinking there is no space to refuse so that you can avoid the conflict of the associated interpersonal relations and avoid responsibility—and you are being dependent on vertical relationships.

**YOUTH:** Are you saying I should disobey my boss? Sure, in theory, I should. Theoretically, it's exactly as you say. But I can't do that! There's no way I could build a relationship like that.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Really? You are building a horizontal relationship with me right now. You are asserting yourself very well. Instead of thinking about this or that difficulty, you can just start here.

**YOUTH:** I can start here?

**PHILOSOPHER:** Yes, in this small study. As I told you earlier, to me you are an irreplaceable friend.

**YOUTH:** . . .

**PHILOSOPHER:** Am I wrong?

**YOUTH:** I appreciate it, I really do. But I am afraid. I am afraid of accepting your proposal.

**PHILOSOPHER:** What are you afraid of, exactly?

**YOUTH:** The tasks of friendship, naturally. I have never befriended an older man like you. I have no idea if a friend relationship with such a difference in age is even possible, or if I had better think of it as a student-teacher relationship.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Age does not matter in love and friendship. It is certainly true that the tasks of friendship require a steady courage. With regard to your relationship with me, it will be fine to reduce the distance little by little. To a degree of distance in which we are not in very close contact but can still reach out and touch each other's faces with our outstretched arms, so to speak.

**YOUTH:** Please give me some time. Just once more, I would like some time to try to figure things out on my own. Our discussion today has given me much to think about. I would like to take it all home and ruminate on it calmly on my own.

**PHILOSOPHER:** It takes time to gain a true understanding of community feeling. It would be quite impossible to understand everything about it right here and now. Please return to your home and give it some careful thought, while checking it against everything else we have discussed.

**YOUTH:** I will. In any case, it was quite a blow to be told that I never really look at others, and I only have concern for myself. You're really a dreadful fellow!

**PHILOSOPHER:** Ha-ha. You say it in such a happy way.

**YOUTH:** Yes, I enjoy it immensely. It hurts, of course. It's like a sharp pain that shoots through me, as if I were swallowing needles. But still, I enjoy it immensely. It's habit-forming, having these discussions with you. I realized a little while ago that maybe I don't just want to take apart your argument—I want you to take apart mine, too.

**PHILOSOPHER:** I see. That's an interesting analysis.

**YOUTH:** But don't forget. I told you that I am going to take apart your argument and bring you to your knees, and I haven't given up.

**PHILOSOPHER:** Thank you. I've had a good time, too. Come by whenever you're ready to pick this back up.