

## A CASE OF IDENTICAL TWINS: PERSONALITY VARIATION

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The following case illustrates the Adlerian concept regarding identical twins, that identical twins, although alike in physical appearance, are usually very dissimilar in personality and that in all instances one twin is decidedly more mature than the other without regard to its time of arrival into the world.

As we approached the closed door, we heard a cacophony of wild, almost savage-like sounds from within. Upon entering the room, I observed that its occupants were ten boys of about 8 and 9 years of age. They were in a frenzy, striking out at each other, punching, kicking, brawling--all except one.

There was a boy, crouched in a corner, all by himself, his eyes fixed blankly at the floor beneath him.

All the children in this room were emotionally disturbed.

The supervisor of the youngsters accompanying me, turned to me and said, "The only way I can get their attention is by shouting at them to quiet them down."

I replied, "Please don't. Let me try to handle this."

From the several phonograph records I had brought with me, I selected one which I thought would be suitable for this situation. It was a vigorous military march. Seconds after the music flooded the room, the boys commenced strutting back and forth in various directions--all except the withdrawn boy in the corner. When the martial sounds began to come from the record player, he raised his head. Then he fixed his eyes upon the other boys.

As we observed the children marching, the supervisor gave me a quick briefing on the disorder of each child.

Suddenly the music stopped, and the marching boys all froze in their places. At this point, I asked loudly, "What was this all about?"

Several of them exclaimed forcefully, "Soldiers! Soldiers!" On hearing this, I replied in wonderment, "Soldiers? Why you fellows didn't act like real soldiers. Real soldiers always march in straight lines." Suddenly, one boy, who was obviously quite aggressive, dashed around and pushing the others into a single column, placed himself at its head.

I replayed the record, and the youngsters marched once again

this time in a column and in an orderly fashion. After a moment or so, the ultra-inhibited boy in the corner, the boy who had been gazing at the others, moved cautiously toward the line and began marching too, although he kept himself several feet behind the last boy in the column.

After I had observed this, my attention was again distracted to the nervously energetic lad up front. Suddenly I realized that these two boys--so opposite in behavior--were exactly the same in physical appearance. They were--without a doubt--identical twins.

I checked the notes I had taken down during the supervisor's briefing and studied the synopsis regarding these twins. Apparently, these two boys had become disturbed as the result of constant bickering and tension that had existed between their parents, who eventually were divorced. And they were, of course, as identical twins usually are, very dissimilar in personality.

I then approached the straggling twin in order to coax him to get closer to the last boy in the marching column. As soon as he realized that I was heading toward him, he became terrified and screamed repeatedly, "Don't touch me!"

"All right, you can march the way you like," I told him. "Nobody will touch you, and you needn't touch anyone else. But, why don't you try clapping your own two hands together? That would be nice, wouldn't it?" On hearing this, he calmed down, but he returned to his corner and into his crouched position there.

He stayed that way for about ten minutes, staring at the other boys while they performed various movements to music, which I demonstrated for them. Then, with trepidation, he moved onto the floor and began movements awkwardly--but at all times maintaining a "safe" distance from the other children.

During the next two or three months, I worked continuously with this group--making liberal use of phonograph records of various marches and masculine dances (for example, cowboy and folk dances). However, I also made certain to demonstrate exercises in which the boys would not come into any physical contact with one another. The melancholy twin participated frequently, but as on the first day--with great care to remain away from the others. Throughout this period, I observed this child with concern, trying to hit upon some method of getting him to come out of his shell. I rejected any procedure that would entail direct action, anything that the boy could interpret as "forcing," since Adlerian psychology is not a psychology of "domination" but the psychology of "use." But what was I to use?

With the aggressive twin, it was relatively simple to keep him restrained--that is, to reduce his noisiness and boisterousness. I simply would warn him, whenever it was necessary, that

if he didn't quiet down, there would be no more dancing. Since he loved to prance around to the music, this would invariably calm him down.

One day an idea struck me. I happened to recall a certain folk dance from my native Romania. During this dance, each person would place a kerchief around the neck of another dancer.

The next day I brought along a record of this folk dance and a kerchief. After describing the dance to the group of boys, I spoke to the withdrawn twin and told him, "You needn't be afraid to join in this dance. Although you will place a kerchief around your neck, no hands will touch anybody. And today I will be your partner. All right?"

He agreed. We did the dance and he seemed pleased with it. During the next few weeks, he participated in this dance with various boys as partners. One day he performed it with his brother. I now felt that the moment had arrived. We began the dance and once again I was his partner. When the time came, I placed the kerchief around his neck and then quickly embraced him and kissed him. He was stunned momentarily but recovered almost immediately. And then he said with feeling, "I am not afraid any more."

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