A speech given more than fifteen years ago by Dr. Rudolf Dreikurs is published in this issue for several reasons:

1. It is as pertinent today as it was then.
2. Many predictions the author made have come true.
3. The war between the teenager and the adult which people scoffed at when they heard the speech is clearly observable today.
4. The remedial measures the author presents could have been initiated fifteen years ago. At what stage will we be fifteen years from today?

The Delinquent in the Community[*]

Rudolf Dreikurs

Delinquency, adult or adolescent, is a social problem of increasing significance. An alarming proportion of young people are drawn into anti-social behavior. Finding an effective solution requires, first, a realization of its social nature. Considering individual aberrations of character or personality as the main cause obstructs proper perspective for corrective efforts. Some delinquent behavior arises from individual rather than from group experiences, but even these individuals function in their social deviation within the sub-group of delinquents with whom they are integrated. Delinquency is one form of rebellion against society. The delinquent often belongs to the group of psychopathic personalities or character disorders characterized by faulty values, false social concepts, and a lack of what Adler (1938) called "Social Interest," a feeling of belonging, at least as far as society is concerned. According to the "private logic" of the delinquent, particularly of the juvenile offender, society is hostile and unfair and at war with him. He does not feel he belongs to the world around him, only to those who side with him. The treatment which he receives from the outraged community intensifies his defiance and conviction of not having a place in it.

Individual Treatment

Individual treatment of deviants is not feasible in most cases, not only because of their large number, but primarily because they generally are not

accessible. With few exceptions, they do not consider themselves sick or in need of help; if forcibly or otherwise induced to see a therapist, they generally cannot be reached.

Group Treatment

This is different in group psychotherapy. It is easier to treat a dozen juvenile offenders than one. There are several reasons for this surprising fact. First, they feel fortified and supported by a group of their kind and, therefore, are more willing to participate, despite their defiance and distrust. Further, the group setting offers opportunities to create interest, to drive a wedge between the participants, to win at least one or the other of them for an occasional expression of approval.

Third, the group is a value forming agent; the implicit value system on which the participants operate is subject to change, regardless of how subtle the change may be at first. Finally, one of the most significant aspects of group therapy with deviants is their position in the community. They feel a minority as delinquents, and doubly so as juveniles. In many instances they have no real, positive contact with any one who represents the community. Consequently, the therapist is often the first representative of the community who treats them with sincere interest and respect, with whom they can establish communication, and through it mutual trust and confidence. While this may be occasionally accomplished in the positive social contact with one authority figure, be it therapist, policeman, social worker or clergyman, such positive relationship is less likely to occur and less easy to accomplish than in the group. In his individual contacts, even with a friendly representative of society, loyalty and identification binds the delinquent to his group which remains outside of and hostile to the friendship with the "enemy." The situation is different when his whole group, or at least some members of his sub-group, join him in establishing similar relationships. In this way a conflict of loyalty is avoided. And the therapist who represents society can help to develop new attitudes toward society which may spell the end of delinquent behavior.

A Community Concern and Responsibility

Delinquency is a problem of the community. Corrective and, above all, preventive efforts must be made *within* the community. Delinquent behavior takes place within the community; it expresses a characteristic interaction between the majority and a hostile sub-group. The acts of warfare are by no means restricted to the offending group; the community and its representatives wage an equally ruthless, although in most cases less successful, war on the offenders. The extent of the warfare and the defeat of the adults by juvenile offenders is particularly obvious in their immediate conflicts at home and in school.

The community is responsible for the deviant and delinquent behavior of its sub-groups since the behavior of the latter fits in a strange way into the cultural pattern of the community. Each culture has its own forms of deviations, and the deviant group often operates on the same value system as the society, although the values may be distorted and serve destructive purposes. In other words, deviant sub-groups present a distorted image of the community; they have more in common with it than enraged citizens would be willing to admit. Juvenile offenders are driven by the same desire for prestige, status and over-ambition which is fostered in all children as part of the existing value-system of the community. The delinquent, unable to satisfy his ambition in a useful way, finds it easier to gain his ends through destructive behavior. The desire for quick and easy satisfaction is by no means limited to juveniles or delinquents; neither is the desire to make easy money. Preoccupation with sex is also shared by offenders and respectable citizens alike. Crime is big business, operating very often on similar principles found in successful enterprises. It is merely the switch from the constructive to the destructive ways and means which distinguishes social from anti-social behavior and endeavors; and even here the line is often not sharply drawn. Without recognition of the role which the community plays in the development of crime and delinquency, no full understanding of the latter is possible, and no effective means can be found in preventing and combatting successfully the spread of anti-social behavior.

Community Treatment

The whole community must become involved in preventive and corrective efforts. Or perhaps more clearly stated, those entrusted with the responsibility of devising means of help and remedy must direct their efforts not merely to the individual delinquent, but to the whole community. So far, very few attempts have been made in this regard, and those attempts mark a new phase in community services. They help to bring to an end an era when recreational facilities were considered the main instruments for curbing juvenile delinquency in order to "take the youngsters off the street," when slums, poor housing and poverty were considered as the main sources of juvenile delinquency, and broken homes the sole cause. All these social factors undoubtedly play a role; but they are highly overrated, and — above all — do not touch the core of the problem. Recreational facilities are mostly used by those who are not delinquent, and if deviant children attend, they only create disturbance with which the workers usually cannot cope. Juvenile delinquents are by no means limited to slum areas; they are also found among the middle and upper middle class of the population. Detrimental family experiences exert their influence long before the family is broken up or even without it every breaking up. The issue at stake is much bigger and of much wider scope and significance.

War Between Generations

At the root of contemporary juvenile delinquency lies a fact, unknown to most and yet only too obvious once pointed out. Our whole generation of children is at war with the whole generation of adults. Maria Montessori, (1950) shortly before her death, published a touching appeal for a truce in this war between adults and children which involves the home, school, and community. The war between the generations is age-old. Whenever one group sets itself up as superior and dominates another, an uneasy equilibrium covers resentment and rebellion. This war between the generations, as the war between the sexes, had to remain limited in scope as long as an autocratic society upheld the dominant power of one group over the other. It is only in our democratic era that the rapidly increasing status of equality for all brings the conflict between the formerly superior and inferior group into the open. with unprecedented fury. All previously subdued groups are in revolt and contest the power of their former masters, as do women, colored races, labor — and children. They all are becoming equals and fight for their right to be treated as such. As a result, the tensions and frictions are intensified, distrust reigns, and the war is on.

Our children are at war because they are not treated as equals. As a matter of fact, we can speak of an "unrecognized prejudice against children" (Dreikurs, 1950) which characterizes the attitude of most adults toward them. They are not recognized in their strength, ability, integrity; they are not treated with the respect which they deserve as equals. Such a request appears as downright preposterous to intransigent adults who claim that the children first have to earn their right to be treated with respect, while at the same time assuming that adults have the right to demand respect before they earn it. This was true in an autocratic era but is no longer true today.

The acts of open defiance and rebellion, which constitute delinquency, are only the extreme symptoms of the generalized warfare. Almost all children participate in it in one way or the other from mild mischief to utter disregard of order and cooperation. Any program of prevention must concern itself with this total situation, with incipient rebellion as well as with full-blown transgression. Therapeutic efforts are insignificant if they are directed toward the "adjustment" of individual offenders. Many of them find their way back to society without any specific treatment when they outgrow adolescence and identify themselves with adults — provided they were not driven to lasting ostracism during their state of rebellion by the punitive and retaliatory forces of the community. Therapeutic plans must be designed to reach the whole sub-group of adolescents who deliberately oppose society and what it stands for, and who are determined to defeat its representatives of law and order at home, in the school, and in the community.

Preventative Approaches

Prevention must begin within the family. The first line of approach should be directed toward parents. To the child they represent society and its demands and

needs. Defiance of the community mores is a continuation of the child's earlier rebellion against the parents and things for which they stand. The fact that our entire generation of parents is in need of help and advice is widely recognized. Never before were parents confronted with such open rebellion and forceful demands of their children. Our children dare to do to their parents what the parents never would have dared to do to theirs. To make it worse, traditional methods of raising children are no longer effective; and methods which are effective in a democratic era, and which are fairly well established, are not known to most. Parents need training. However, it is not enough to have courses for them; more important is *what* these courses offer. The main issue is to help parents in their treatment of children. It is not sufficient to speak about general desirable attitudes. Parents are in need of specific instruction, replacing the time-honored methods of raising children — not with laissez-faire indulgence and permissiveness, but with efficient and yet democratic methods which permit freedom *and* order within the family. Any training course which does not provide concrete instruction of this nature is inadequate. What parents need desperately is specific advice for specific problems, not platitudes or generalities which they are not able to put into action, even if they accept the principles.

Similar considerations apply to the training of teachers. It is no longer sufficient for a teacher to provide the pupils with information and academic indoctrination. She plays an important role in the child's social orientation. Since the traditional methods of education are no longer effective and pressure from without has become inadequate to promote cooperation and learning, the teacher needs information in psychodynamics which enables her to understand the individual child in his motivation. Furthermore, in a democratic atmosphere the power of an authority is replaced by the power of the peer group. Therefore, the teacher is no longer teaching individual children; she is confronted with a group and its sub-groups. Unless she understands group dynamics and can utilize the group for her purpose, she may be defeated by the group. Group discussions of an almost therapeutic nature are essential for prevention and correction of undesirable tendencies of individual children in the class.

Since an increasing number of children present difficulties with which neither parents nor teachers can cope, Child Guidance Clinics, often under the name of Mental Hygiene Clinics, have been developed in almost every larger community. Their work, too, merits careful reconsideration. It is the general practice to treat individual children, and wherever possible, to treat the mother independently. However, the difficultues do not lie, in most cases, *within* each child and *within* his mother. The "emotional" disturbance of each is not the cause, but the consequence of disturbed social interaction. A child guidance treatment which does not advise the mother as to what she should and could do, and why she finds it difficult to do it, is missing the main point. Furthermore, it is not sufficient to treat individual children and their mothers. The need is much too great, and the number of therapists far too small, to consider individual therapy as an efficient approach to the problem of our children and parents.

The term guidance should be considered from an educational rather than from a psychiatric point of view. What parents and children need is not so much psychiatric treatment but educational guidance. It is significant that the first child guidance clinics in Europe were called "Erziehungsberatungstellen" which means counseling centers for raising children. Even severly disturbed children and their parents can profit significantly from this type of guidance. The number of mothers who are so emotionally disturbed that they cannot respond to counseling and, therefore, need therapy is relatively small. However, these emotionally disturbed mothers may also benefit more from group therapy than from individual psychotherapy. It is again the similarity of their most distressing life problems, their relationship with the other members of the family, which forms a common ground for the necessary changes in attitudes and concepts.

The emphasis on parental guidance, both for the prevention and the correction of children's maladjustment diminishes with the age of the child. It is evident that our teenagers form a sub-group in our society, different from and in many instances hostile to the rest of society. Characteristic expressions of such sub-group formation are the tendency to wear special attire, to look different, and to create their own language. Relatively few adolescents have any adult in whom they have full confidence, in whom they can confide, and by whom they feel understood and respected. Distrust against adults is by no means limited to the juvenile offenders. Therefore, the correction of juvenile behavior cannot be limited to efforts to reach the law-breaking segment of the adolescent population. All must be considered in their place within society. It is this lack of a respected place in the community for youth which may be considered one of the main causes of juvenile hostility. These youngsters have been impressed with the importance of being ambitious, of striving for significance, and they find themselves in a situation where little significance is available, yet. For every one who can obtain special status through academic, social, athletic or other achievements, there are literally hundreds or thousands who are deprived of any social significance. No wonder that so many turn, in their frustrated ambition, to socially unacceptable or useless means. Smoking, drinking, driving a car recklessly, and sex indulgence are easy ways to feel important. Others strive to gain recognition by breaking windows, breaking the law, and being violent, and these activities may eventually take on the proportion of heroic ventures. There is no chance to correct the situation by trying therapeutic efforts on a few isolated youngsters. The total field must be considered. Without soliciting the help of the total group of adolescents, society will not be able to cope with the challenge.

Developing Self-Help Model

Help cannot come from the outside; it cannot be imposed upon our youngsters. Ways must be found to help them help each other. The direction of therapeutic and corrective endeavors is toward self-help within the group and by the group. Alcoholics Anonymous showed the way.

As a first step we need a truce between the teenagers and their parents and teachers. It was my privilege to submit a plan for such a public truce meeting to a meeting of representatives of ten high schools in Chicago. In the panel of five teenagers and five adults the children presented their problems clearly, while the adults found it difficult to recognize the issues at stake. Soft, benevolent words are not enough to insure a mutual understanding and communication. So far, the adults in general are little prepared even to listen to what the youngsters have to say. It may be difficult at first to step down from the throne which adults have occupied for so many centuries, and to sit down with the youngsters in an atmosphere of equality and mutual respect. But without doing so, no progress can be achieved.

One group which seems to be endowed with particular ability to influence the delinquent segment is the former prisoners who share with juveniles their difficulty to integrate themselves into the community. If their cooperation could be gained, they could be of great assistance to a worker in the community in influencing the tougher element. Doing so they would also help themselves in their adjustment, just as former alcoholics can maintain their new equilibrium by helping those who have not found it yet. It is the element of mutual help which is required. The so-called "good" kids must become willing to help the tough guys instead of being either afraid of them or looking down on them. The former deviant can provide more help to other deviants than can the "outsider."

In this sense, the former adult or youthful offender should be drawn into the process of mutual help. Group psychotherapy for the purpose of rehabilitation cannot be limited to prisons; it must be continued in the community. At the present time, group therapy for parolees encounters occasional snags because of the law forbidding meetings of parolees. Community agencies must be set up for such therapeutic procedure, and not merely for economic assistance and the routine social work approach. Welfare agencies, settlement and community houses, churches and schools, the police force, civic organizations and all other agencies which represent the community must combine their efforts in a planned approach toward the integration of the deviant and delinquent into the community. Punitive retaliation and temporary isolation have no remedial benefit. Removal may be necessary, but it can have meaning only if this isolation from society is used for rehabilitation purposes. The experiences with group therapy have proven that rehabilitation may be possible where previously hardly anything constructive could be achieved. The new vista opens new avenues, but requires also reconsideration of cherished and time-honored convictions. This may not be easy to achieve.

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