

Adler's Gemeinschaftsgefühl Gives New Meaning to Shakespeare's Sonnet 8
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Background - Adler, Social Interest and Community Feeling

The human feeling of oneness and harmony with life is not limited to descriptions in English literature like those of Whitman, Emerson or Shakespeare. Viennese physician Alfred Adler brought a related and practical concept into modern psychology, namely the importance of “striving to take an interest in the interests of others” so as to gain a feeling of belonging and having a place in this life; in German *gemeinschaftsgefühl*.” (Adler, 1979, p. 34; Ansbacher, 1968, p.131-133) This is an expression of Adler's expansive feeling of community with all of life, *des Einigseins mit dem All* (feeling of oneness with the All) which, though it is innate in human beings, must be developed (Adler, 1964, p. 142(; Eriksson 2017, p. 252 ; Ansbacher 1968, p.134). Adler (1964, p. 329) tells us explicitly that Shakespeare was one of the great literary influences that led him to the insights of Individual Psychology.

Thesis - Musical Overtones are Social Overtones in Shakespeare's Sonnet 8

Shakespeare's Sonnet 8 appears to refer poetically to the harmonic or overtone series, long understood by musicians, mathematicians, and physicists. e can use music to suit the purpose we have in mind, as Dreikurs (1953, p. 17; 1961, p.13) understood well being a musician himself as well as a physician. He described music as a natural, non-verbal language and an orderly form of communication. (Dreikurs, 1953, p. 20; 1961, p.15)

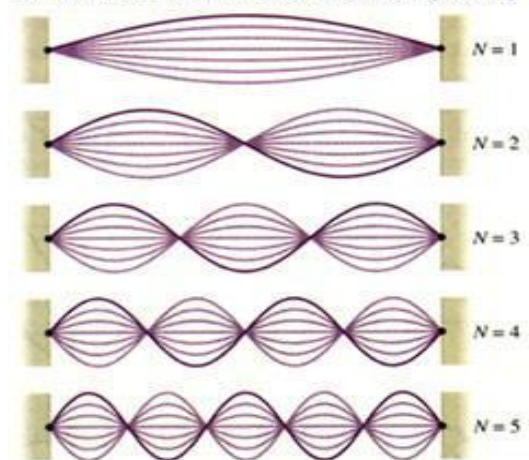
Shakespeare (1609, 2005) shows us in Sonnet 8 that he knows what Pythagoras is credited with discovering; namely that single notes played on a musical instrument do not just vibrate at one frequency, the fundamental, but vibrate in a complex way made up of a family of overtones or harmonics and of different sizes that characterize the rich timbre of the particular instrument as shown below (Kung 2013). Adler’s genius here is that he picks up on this and shows us the advantages of developing these natural and orderly overtones into demonstrable and practically useful social overtones, and how everyone can achieve this.

Evidence

Shakespeare Sonnet 8

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
 Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy.
 Why lovest thou that which thou receivest not gladly,
 Or else receivest with pleasure thine annoy?
 If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,
 By unions married, do offend thine ear,
 They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
 In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear.
**Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
 Strikes each in each by mutual ordering,
 Resembling sire and child and happy mother
 Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
 Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,
 Sings this to thee: 'thou single wilt prove none.'**

1st thru 5th harmonics of a vibrating string



“Thou single wilt prove none,” the last line in Sonnet 8 (line 14 above), is unlikely to refer to being single and unmarried as some have suggested. Considering Shakespeare’s profound knowledge (Shehan, 2009; Bloom, 1994), it is more likely that Shakespeare is advising us to cultivate an interest in the interests of others as Adlerians recommend for good mental health and for developing a feeling of community with all of life (gemeinschaftsgefühl). We will then increasingly feel a natural sympathy for others and for life itself. If we do this, Shakespeare tells

us, we will be much richer (meaning, I now really belong!). We will be like a family within ourselves, having our place in life, or in musical terms, like a symphony of musical overtones yet in a single note, “us”. (Eriksson 2017, p. 251).

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