

# Power Plays at Home and School

Andrea Williams

POWER—Isn't it a delicious word? What visions does it conjure up for you? A bejeweled potentate carried importantly in an ornate coach, loyal subjects awaiting his beckoning gesture? The brilliant scientist, for whom Nature opens her mysterious heart? The sensitive sculptor who all but breathes life into a lump of watery clay? The richest of life's rewards seem to fall upon those who seek and gain power, those who "make it to the top," those who excel. How is it then that the search for power, a goal that has meant achievement, success and glory to so many has begun to engender the tragic waste of human effort, the great bitterness, frustration and anger that characterizes the relationships between so many of today's parents and teachers and the children with whom they must live.

## Definition

Clearly, power has a multitude of definitions and many nuances of meaning—from the power one has while holding a gun to that of holding an electric switch. Here, we will define one specific kind of power; we will examine the factors which contribute to its perpetuation and discuss, lastly, what can be done about it.

The word *power* in Adlerian terms is neither an attribute nor a characteristic. It is a goal. Therefore, it is not something one possesses. Rather, it is something one *desires*. Secondly, power refers to other people and can therefore be understood only within a *social* context. And thirdly, as we deal with the concept, it requires overt or covert *resistance* on the part of the individual acted upon. Power, then, or more accurately stated, the "power struggle" can be defined as: "*the desire for control, command or authority over another person, with a concomitant desire and ability on the part of the other to resist.*"

References are frequently made in Adlerian literature to the "power-drunk child," as if he has had his fill of power and can hold no more. On the contrary, the power-drunk child is, in actuality, *power-starved*, in a constant power-deficit. If he indeed felt powerful, he would not have to fight so hard for it.

The power-hungry child is acutely, though unconsciously, aware of his basic *powerlessness* and must therefore engage in fight after fight

---

Andrea Williams, M.A., is a doctoral candidate at the University of Maryland and teaches at The Adler-Dreikurs Institute of Human Relations, Bowie, Maryland.

in pursuit of a fictitious goal: total power. Through example, through a series of misperceptions and mistaken judgments the child has come to the conclusion, "I can belong, I can overcome my feelings of inferiority and weakness by being bigger, stronger and more powerful than others." It is a pathological, self-defeating and highly self-reinforcing goal. Rollo May, in his recent book, *Power and Innocence*, quotes Edgar Friedenberg as saying, "All weakness tends to corrupt, and impotence corrupts absolutely" (Friedenberg, 1965, pp. 47-48).

### **The Power-Struggle Begins**

How does a power-struggle get started? Basic to Adlerian theory is the concept of overcoming or compensating for perceived handicaps. The child is born not only weak and helpless—a physical "inferior"—but he is born possessing an intense desire and capacity for mastery, for moving from a position of felt weakness to felt strength, from a position of inferiority to one of superiority. Within the first few years of life, he begins to master his body and a large part of his environment. But a significant part of that environment is other people whose lifestyles and behavior may reflect a compensatory struggle for their own unconscious feelings of powerlessness, inadequacy, or inferiority.

In the inevitable conflicts of everyday life, when the child's immediate purpose or desire is at odds with that of his parents, the scene is set for what may be called the "vicious triangle." Verbally or physically the adult conveys to the child the idea, "I don't like what you are doing, and I intend to have you behave differently." Segment two falls in place when the child, fully aware of his equal right to make choices, returns with the idea, "You can't make me." *But the struggle or power contest does not begin until segment three is added.* At the moment the adult says, "Oh, yes I can," the triangle becomes a closed and self-perpetuating system.

### **The Power-Struggle is Maintained**

Once the power-struggle, with its tension and frustration, has been set in motion, what makes it so difficult for an adult or child to say to the other, "Look, can't we be friends?" Let us consider three of the important factors which seem to play a critical role in the perpetuation of the struggle: techniques, life-situation (or cultural expectations) and lifestyle.

*Technique or manner.* The first factor—that of technique—is easy to spot, particularly in the classroom. As a matter of cultural mores, most parents and teachers spend the day directing, deciding and organizing life for their children. Most children take this in stride, accepting to various degrees the right and responsibility of their elders to tell them

what to do. A small percentage, however, become irritated by this imposing manner and begin to resist. Many bring a well-established power-struggle from the home to the school, where teachers are as ill-equipped to deal with them as were the parents. While a parent or teacher's autocratic techniques often do reflect an underlying need for power on the part of the adult, that is not always the case. Operationally, however, the power-hungry child tends to *interpret* rules, regulations and commands on the part of the teacher as if they were a show of force which must be resisted.

*The culture-expectation trap.* Secondly, we can examine the role of the life-situation and cultural expectations in maintaining a power-struggle. Consider the question: "Who is most responsible for the way children turn out?" And when we ask, "Who is responsible?" are we not really asking whom we can blame when things go wrong? (There was one advantage to the "good old days," when people believed undesirable characteristics to be inherited. At least it got parents and teachers off the hook. Today, the guilty finger usually points straight at—Mother.)

Without debating now the merits or fallacies of this position, I believe most of us would agree that mothers tend to *feel* acutely responsible not only for their children's physical welfare but for their children's *moral* standing in the community. From this attitude spring such statements as, "Aren't those lovely children. She must be a wonderful mother." And the obverse, "Look at how those kids behave. Their mother must not give a damn."

Now, consider also the fact that for most women in our society, motherhood continues to be their occupation, their way of life, indeed their main avenue of success, achievement, and recognition. Mothers observe their *children* developing and ask themselves, "How am I doing? Is my main purpose in life being fulfilled?" In such a life-situation, where the value or worth of one person is measured by the behavior of another, a power contest borders on the inevitable. The mother conveys to the child the message, "Look, you *have* to behave. People are going to look at what *you* are doing and judge *me*! The child, sensing the underlying vulnerability and prestige-centeredness of his parents has, *if he chooses to use it*, an immensely effective tool for avoiding their manipulation and demonstrating his own superiority. That tool is his defiance. An adult whose personal self-esteem depends on the obedience and/or achievements of his or her children may pass from initial feelings of annoyance and frustration regarding this defiance to feelings over the years of panic or desperation. Ultimately, the parent, usually the mother, comes to feel that as a person and as a human being she has failed.

*What about lifestyle?* The third factor in the perpetuation of the power-struggle, that of lifestyle, presents an unusual paradox. Whereas the separate concepts of both lifestyle and power-striving in children have been well developed in Adlerian theory and practice the relationship between the two has not, to my knowledge, been systematically explored. I would like, therefore, to offer the information which follows as personal speculation, based solely on experience, hopefully to be explored further in a research setting.

In working closely with parents over the last seven or eight years, I have been struck repeatedly by the ease with which many become involved in power struggles with their children and by the varying degrees of success with which they manage to extricate themselves from the struggle. Some families, with a minimum of counseling, learn to recognize the dynamics of a power contest and are able to take measures that quickly and dramatically lessen the number and intensity of conflicts within the home. In other families, the situation may improve slightly, then get much worse. Sometimes, the counselor seems to have no effect whatever on the family. Or, the original difficulties are smoothed out, but a whole new batch of problems has arisen. I suggest that in some rare cases one must go beyond the area of "management techniques," beyond the cultural expectations for parents in general, and examine more closely the individual lifestyle of the parent who is most influential in that child's life.

Although Adler was not prone to classify personalities as "types," he did allude to four very broad categories into which behavioral and attitudinal characteristics could be grouped.

Thus, we find individuals whose approach to reality shows, from early childhood through their whole lives, a more or less dominant or "ruling" attitude. This attitude appears in all their relationships. A second type . . . expects everything from others and leans on others. I might call it the "getting type." A third type is inclined to feel successful by avoiding the solution of problems. Instead of struggling with a problem, a person of this type merely tries to sidestep it, in an effort to avoid defeat. The fourth type struggles, to a greater or lesser degree, for a solution of these problems in a way which is useful to others. (Allen, 1938, 149 ff.)

Dr. Harold Mosak has further refined these broad categories into 14 **more or less recognizable types** (Mosak, 1971, 77 ff.). Remember, however, that these are patterns only—that no individual "fits" precisely in any type, and that each individual's lifestyle is truly unique. Nevertheless, it would seem that six of the types described by Dr. Mosak are considerably prone to become involved in power struggles with their children. As might be expected, they fall into the category which Adler refers to as the "ruler."

First of all, let us consider both the person who needs to be superior—that is, the person who needs to be the center or the best—and the person who needs to be right. Although the former often turns to nonconstructive endeavors and tries to be the last or worst instead of the best, he is often an individual of high achievement and significant accomplishments. The problem arises when that individual's *children* are used to enhance the parents' own position of personal prestige, reflecting on them as the "best" or "most superior" parents in the neighborhood. Often the techniques the parents are using are those that *were* considered superior in a more autocratic setting. If this parent by some means becomes convinced that a more democratic approach is superior to his, he can do a complete reversal overnight. In his striving to be superior he is likely to be susceptible to education, and these may be some of the more dramatic success stories experienced by the family counselor. Similarly, the individual who needs to be right is careful to avoid error and is open to ideas that seem "righter," especially if he can still look down on others who are doing things the "wrong" way. His friends may suffer, but his children may profit.

Somewhat more difficult to work with are the "driver" and the "controller." Both derive satisfaction from putting things or people in motion. The driver wants to get things done. He often throws himself into successive paroxysms of activity. He or she is a great organization member, though sometimes he comes across as "pushy." If the driver attempts to set his children in motion, they will probably resist. My guess is that the driver's children are more passive than active in their expression of power. But the driver can be diverted. As a healthier, more tolerant relationship is being developed within the family, the driver's activities might be redirected into a job, into the community, or into a creative project.

The "controller" is a great deal less objective, more personally involved, than the driver. He not only wants to put others *in* motion but to *stop* them from moving, or to turn them in a direction that suits him. He is, in essence, a "decider." He decides what everyone else should do. When one of his or her children misbehaves, the pain is not primarily because the activity itself is harmful; it is not because the parent will suffer in the eyes of society; it is because he or she has failed in a way that is personally frightening and threatening. Misbehavior by the child shows that the adult is *losing control*, and to the controller, there is very little middle-ground between total control and total chaos. As their efforts to control their children become more frantic and intensified, the children become, naturally, more and more uncontrollable.

The last two lifestyles present a situation that is unique indeed. The person who needs to be "good" and the "martyr" operate on a prin-

ciple that is not nearly as evident in other lifestyles—the principle of *moral* superiority. Whereas other lifestyles such as the Baby, the Inadequate Person, the Pleaser tend to stimulate protective, approving or responsible behavior in others, those who are pursuing the goals of being “good” or being a “martyr” have a personal stake in putting others down—in assuring that the behavior of others is morally worse than their own.

The degree to which these individuals control others through their goodness and suffering and the degree to which they subtly discourage and provoke those whom they consider “inferior” is usually missed because of the social acceptability of their outward behavior. Adler discusses in vivid detail the possible behavior of such an individual—in this case a little girl who has been much admired for her sweetness and goodness. Throughout her life she discovers that she may use sweetness and bravery to demonstrate her superiority and to gain her own ends.

She is so easily hurt, so helpless, such a delicate plant that her husband cannot hurt her. Consequently, she rules him with a rod of iron, and her tears are more to be feared than the anger of another. Perhaps, later, she has children, and again she is very successful in using the same technique on them. “Oh, you wouldn’t do that, darling, would you? It would hurt mother so,” will spike any of the child’s guns, and he may rage inwardly, but the universal condemnation which will greet any revolt against the sweet mother will break the child’s spirit, and make him obedient to the steel hand which he soon discovers is concealed behind the velvet glove.\* It is little wonder that such a woman, if she finds her technique of no avail, will be made ill by her erring husband or child. She will suffer her illness with superb courage, so that her behavior will be the admiration of the whole district, and the wicked child or husband who has brought on her illness will be universally condemned. (Allen, 1938, 149 ff)

Thus, in our counseling sessions we are sometimes presented with this most difficult of situations—one in which the parent has an unconscious stake in *maintaining the child’s misbehavior*. The misbehavior is *required* for the working out of someone else’s neurotic lifestyle. In cases where a disturbed family or classroom seem not to profit from extended counseling, the possibility of lifestyle analysis might be explored. Occasionally, individual psychotherapy is required, either for the benefit of the parent or teacher or for the encouragement of the child, helping him to understand and cope with the double message: Behave—don’t behave.

\*Incidentally, I think Adler may have underestimated the resistance of today’s children.

## A Peace Settlement

Having explored some of the factors which contribute to the investigation and perpetuation of a power-struggle, we are now ready to consider the circumstances under which it might be alleviated. In reverse order, let us discuss the factors of lifestyle, expectations and lastly, specific techniques or mannerisms.

*A talk with yourself.* I believe it to be supremely beneficial for any parent or teacher who finds herself in a power-struggle—that is, frequently angered or defeated by the behavior of her children—to make a sincere attempt to identify the underlying personality dynamics which may be causing the situation to continue or worsen. Self-analysis is *ipso facto* incomplete and distorted. One always hides the crucial facts from oneself. Nevertheless, some of those insights can be remarkably helpful and accurate. You may want to try this brief exercise. Ask yourself which of the child's behaviors makes you the most angry. **Now ask, what happens when he performs this behavior.** Now ask, *how* does this reflect on you? What is it *specifically* that causes your upset? A typical example might go like this, "It really boils me when he refuses to do his assignments." "And if he doesn't do his work, what then?" "Then he won't learn anything." "And if he doesn't learn anything?" "*Then people will think I'm not a good teacher.*" Ask yourself, then, "What does his behavior mean to your image of yourself." If a child fights, if he disrupts the class by shouting out, if he refuses to eat, if he lies or steals, ask, "How does this behavior reflect on your self-worth, your feelings of competence?" If you are found to be less than perfectly competent, then what? *Why* will you suffer so if your principal finds that you cannot motivate a particular child? *Why* will you suffer so if your neighbors learn that your children are disobedient? Consider whether your difficulties are primarily a matter of not knowing what to do or whether there might be some personality factor which prevents you from dealing with the child in a less competitive manner.

*What will people think?* Naturally, this leads us into the area of cultural expectations. It is here that I believe the greatest changes can be made. It is here that the burden of total responsibility which weighs so heavily on the majority of our parents and teachers can be, if not completely lifted, at least shared. What is it that we *expect* children to be? What is it that we *expect* ourselves to be able to do about it?

Any 50 adults will give 50 different lists of attributes to describe how they believe children ought to behave. But I suspect you will find great **unanimity concerning what they ought not to be doing.** They should not be fighting with their brothers and sisters; they should not be sassing their teachers; they should not be letting the dog starve, etc.,

etc. They *shouldn't* be doing those or any of the other things that so distress themselves and those around them. Perhaps if we had known how to influence them in the first place and *had* half the influence we think we have, these power-struggles might neither arise nor flourish. Few of us are that fortunate. Teachers, in particular, are presented with a few power-hungry children every Tuesday after Labor Day—children in whom the power-struggle is highly developed—children who are creative, sometimes ruthless, vulnerable yet tough—children who come to you ready to fight, ready to make you fight and ready to win. I strongly believe that it is not simply the behavior of these children that is so disturbing. It is rather the idea in the teacher's or parent's mind that the child *has no right to be the way he is*, and that she *should not be required to deal with such behavior*. It is *her own expectations*, not the child's behavior that are causing her to suffer. Any effort to help bring her expectations more in line with reality can both ease her burden of responsibility and create a mental attitude in which the problem can be dealt with more objectively.

A power-hungry child is a disturbed child, and disturbed people behave in disturbed ways.

This statement bears repeating: A power-hungry child is a disturbed child, and disturbed people behave in disturbed ways . . . . Expect it! **His perceptions are often inaccurate. The statement, "Take out your pencil and paper," might be interpreted: "You trying to tell me what to do?"** His judgments are faulty: "No one around here is going to push me around!" He is supersensitive: "Why is she always picking on me anyway?"

Suppose one morning a teacher showed up for work and found the sign changed outside the school. Instead of *Green Pastures Elementary School*, it now says, *Green Pastures Educational Facility for Delinquent Children*. Would she be mentally prepared not to become upset at the behavior, to deal with it objectively and creatively? With help, perhaps.

In *How to Live with a Neurotic*, Albert Ellis (1975) states: You'd better *unreservedly* accept them as troubled, and expect them to act accordingly. Don't demand that they seem stable, sane, rational, logical, well-behaved, sober, mature, reliable, steady, hardworking, or anything else you may expect (and often fail to find) in non-"neurotics" . . . . Not accepting people with their disturbances amounts to blaming them for having them. And this helps them to act even more disturbed. For neurosis largely springs from people's internalizing and turning against themselves the criticism of others. You have condemned troubled people directly or indirectly. Indirect blame may show itself in **your distress**.



(Those of you who are familiar with Dreikurs' goals of misbehavior will recognize that one of the main conditions for the continuance of a power-struggle is the internal "upsetness" of the adult involved.) Ellis continues.

All right! So Jones gets drunk every night and raises noisy hell. So Smith snobs us on the street. So Mrs. Henry spies on her neighbor's activities. What can we expect "neurotics" like Jones, Smith, and Mrs. Henry to do—behave soberly, nicely, and trustingly? (Ellis, 1975, p. 114)

Similarly, we may ask, "What can we expect a power-hungry child to be—reasonable?"

And what do you expect of yourself? Do you expect that by reading or joining a study group you will then be able to change these disturbed children, to turn their misbehavior into cooperation, to *make* them normal? Maybe—and maybe not. Let us suppose, for the purpose of illustration, that a teacher and her principal are having a difficult time getting along with each other. The principal asks the school psychologist for help in dealing with the teacher. But the teacher overhears the psychologist say, "Look, if you handle Mrs. B. in such and such a way, I'm sure she'll change." Is not the teacher likely to say to herself, "What, me?! Never!" In the same way, a child can often sense your intent to *make him change* and will interpret your new-found techniques as power ploys on your part, worthy of all his skill to resist and defeat.

A parent or teacher is bound to become discouraged or angry if the "Master Plan" does not unfold on schedule. It is the common pitfall of all those who accept society's dictum, "The adult is responsible for the child's behavior." It is the pitfall of those who judge their own success in a venture, in a therapeutic endeavor, or in life itself, by the degree of change in another.

Your efforts to establish worthwhile communication with a power-hungry child are almost like using the telephone. Usually if you dial the right number, you will get through. But sometimes you get a busy signal. And of course you might get the disappointing message: "I'm sorry, but at the customer's request, that number has been temporarily disconnected." What else can you do but hang up, wait awhile and try again later.

*What might work?* Let us, then consider some of the techniques that can be attempted in order to alleviate the power struggles in which we find ourselves hopelessly locked. Some of the techniques are simple and are often thought of as "just good human relations." Some are much more complicated and require a high degree of leadership skill.

But they are the techniques that have been found to be most suitable in dealing with the power-hungry child. Broadly, they fall into the two basic categories of: (a) dealing with immediate behavior, and (b) building a long-term relationship.

Generally, it is of utmost importance in dealing with immediate power-type behavior to avoid your internal feeling of upsetness or anger which will convince the child that power is what counts and that he has succeeded. (Hopefully, the preceding material concerning expectations of the child and of yourself can help in this regard.) The anger, or lack of it, will show clearly in your tone of voice, even in the way you hold your body. To the child, these are almost infallible guides to your true state of mind.

In settling an immediate problem, you are likely to find the power-hungry child particularly responsive to such techniques as: avoidance of blame or criticism, firmness without domination, and active listening.

First, avoiding blame deprives him of the response which he is expecting and is well prepared to handle. It takes him by surprise. He may be so caught off guard that you might be able to slip in a few words of encouragement before he realizes that they've gotten by. "Look, Jim, I can see how Bruce got your goat out there on the playground." He is waiting for the second punch: "But that's still no reason for you to hit him so hard!" Bite your tongue. Such a statement reinforces his notice that you don't think much of him or of his reasons for behaving as he does. If you could see with his eyes, you *would* understand how his actions seem justified to him. By avoiding the issue of *placing blame*, you can serve the vital function of removing the problem behavior from the arena of "you-me" confrontation to a realistic and objective appraisal of the issue at hand.

You may be surprised to find that at the moment of conflict, you can lessen the tension by saying nothing at all—simply acting. If a young child is throwing food on the floor, he can matter-of-factly be removed from the table. If a scuffle is in progress, the participants can be separated and the fight stopped without the futile attempt to "get to the bottom of it." If you suspect that what you are about to say will put a child on the defensive, and you can't think of anything else to say, practice the exercise highly recommended by Dreikurs—keeping the jaws firmly pressed together.

Firmness without domination can be very effective, primarily because it avoids a confrontation of wills. Firmness describes the action the adult is prepared to take. Domination not only describes the action the adult wants *the child* to take but has an element of "seeing

to it” that the action does in fact take place. The former is a democratic procedure, in line with the idea that an individual is responsible for and controls his own actions, in which the intent is to supply him with *knowledge*—with an accurate understanding of the consequences of the alternatives. The latter, an autocratic procedure, conveys the idea that one individual is responsible for and can control the actions of another. It is the difference between saying, “Will you please sit down and be quiet?” and saying, “I can’t teach until it’s quieter in here.” It is the difference between saying, “Go wash those filthy hands,” and saying, “I can’t serve anyone whose hands are dirty.” Subtle differences? It depends on your point of view. If you are a teacher or parent who believes that children need to be told what to do, there may appear to be very little difference. If you are a power-hungry child, who feels pushed around anyway, the two kinds of statements are vastly different. The one appears to be another instance of someone trying to demonstrate his control and superiority. It fairly begs to be challenged. The other expresses the reality of the situation and leaves the *critical element of choice* up to the child.

Lastly, it is most important for future encounters that the matter be saved for discussion with the child at a later time, when feelings are not so high. Take the child aside, but don’t have a talk with him. Have a *listen with him*. Ask him to explain all the details; paraphrase the details and guess at what his feelings were at the time until you feel you can understand how it looked to *him* and can demonstrate to him that you understand. There is probably no greater agent for defusing anger or for helping a child evaluate a situation objectively than a non-judgmental, emphathetic listener. If some further action has to be taken in the matter, he must be allowed to have an input to suggest alternatives. Stimulate him into thinking through the likely consequences of the possible choices, but it is crucial that you convey to him your respect for his right eventually to decide for himself which course to take. This is nothing more than reality. He is going to make the choice anyway, with or without your approval! But you are giving him something he may not have had previously—your *respect* for his right to choose.

*The long-haul.* None of the above techniques, however, will have a lasting beneficial effect without a sincere effort on the part of the adult to build a healthy long-term relationship. It starts with an attitude of friendliness. Are you kind to your children? If one of them were an adult, would he want you for a friend? Now, if you very much wanted that child to be a good friend of yours, how would you go about it? Here is where one can hardly give you any specifics. You have the skills, and you can do it—if you want to.

It is a process that might include such a simple change as using requests instead of commands. How much more willing might a child be to do what needs to be done if he were *asked* instead of told. Some parents and teachers feel that their word does not carry enough authority unless phrased as a firm command. Consider, however, that if the child refuses your *request*, you are left with one problem to be solved—the undone task. If he refuses your *command* you are left with two problems—the undone task and your undone authority.

The active listening procedure described previously is most helpful in building a long-term relationship. Being non-evaluative, it does not put children on the defensive, and the understanding shown by the adult can provide a firm foundation for mutual trust. The technique itself is very similar to the client-centered approach developed by Carl Rogers and widely used in many schools of psychotherapy. It is not difficult to use with power-hungry children since, as many of us know all too well, they are often highly verbal and energetic. They crave the opportunity to have their say and to convince you that they are justified in their actions. It may seem that by simply listening and paraphrasing you are giving tacit support to the child's position. To be sure the child may occasionally feel this way. However, the first step in the encouragement process is accepting the child as he is right now—respecting, if not condoning, the decisions he is now making. **Only when the child feels, "I am understood," can he begin to make real progress.**

Although the methods outlined briefly above will go far toward preventing conflict, defusing the child's anger and solving immediate problems, there is one procedure that is eminently well-suited to the ongoing needs of the power-hungry child: the family council or class council. By observing how the opinion of each member of the council is carefully considered, he can come to learn that others believe what *he* has to say is worth something and his opinions will be taken seriously. By observing the wide range of ideas offered as solutions to a problem, particularly if his suggestions are carried out, he comes to see that there is usually more than one way to resolve a conflict and that force and resistance usually serve only to make things worse.

The attitude of mutual help and problem-solving that exists in a well run council may open his eyes for the first time to *his* capacity for helping others—an effective counterforce to the supersensitivity and self-centeredness that often characterizes the power-hungry child. Thus, the council is in the unique position of providing a ready-made setting for the development and operation of social interest.

The characteristic of the council which is probably most effective for the unique needs of the power-hungry child is its ability to *deper-*

sonalize and objectify the locus of authority. The responsibility for the welfare and progress of the group becomes dependent upon the participation of each member. The attitude within the family or classroom changes from, "You do it because I said so, and I have the right to decide," to, "We do it because it is necessary, and we all have the obligation and the ability to decide what is best for our group."

Now, a power-hungry child often has superb leadership ability and is in the possibly enviable position of knowing what conflict is all about from the inside. He is highly concerned with fairness and can show great insight into the conflicts of others. If won over, *if won over*, his creative talents can be of immense value to the smooth running of a family or classroom. One hears occasionally, for example, of a child who has presented serious behavior problems in school for years, then one teacher manages to avoid confrontation and win him over. He becomes a fine student and indispensable class member. Why should someone else have all this pleasure? Why not you? Can we help our fellow human beings understand that the "ironclad logic of social living" is not a cage, but a foundation of steel? And if we cannot, do not, help children understand this because of *our own* power-striving, what kind of future may we expect? Let me share with you one last vision, spoken by Ulysses in Shakespeare's tragedy, *Troilus and Cressida*, while describing the dangers of conflict in human life:

Force shall be right, or rather, right and wrong,  
Between whose endless jar justice resides,  
Shall lose their names, and so shall justice too.  
Then everything includes itself in power,  
Power into will, will into appetite,  
And appetite, a universal wolf,  
So doubly seconded with will and power,  
Must make perforce a universal prey,  
And last eat up himself.

## References

- Allen, C. Adler and the power instinct. In his *Modern discoveries in medical psychology*. London: Macmillan, 1938.
- Ellis, A. *How to live with a neurotic*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., (Rev. ed.) 1975.
- Friedenberg, E.Z. *Coming of age in America*. New York: Random House, 1965.
- Mosak, H. Life style. In A.G. Nikelly (Ed.) *Techniques for behavior change: Applications of Adlerian theory*. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1971.