

**THE AMBITION OF WOMEN IN *LITTLE WOMEN* BY LOUISA MAY
ALCOTT**



THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty of Cultural Science, Hasanuddin University

In Partial Fulfillment to Obtain Sarjana Degree

In English Literature Study Program

WRITTEN BY

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Today, Thursday, 25th February 2021, the Board of Thesis Examination has kindly approved a thesis by **WINDA VITA LESTARI** (Student Number: **F21116022**) entitled, **THE AMBITION OF WOMEN IN *LITTLE WOMEN* BY LOUISA MAY ALCOTT**, submitted in fulfillment one of the requirements of undergraduate thesis examination to obtain Sarjana Sastra (S.S) Degree at the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Hasanuddin University.

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The thesis by **WINDA VITA LESTARI** (Student Number: **F21116022**) entitled, **THE AMBITION OF WOMEN IN *LITTLE WOMEN* BY LOUISA MAY ALCOTT**, has been revised as advised during the examination on 25th February 2021 and is approved by the Board of Undergraduate Thesis Examiners:

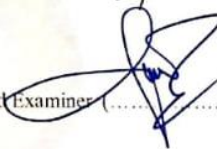
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Makassar, 04 Maret 2021



(WINDA VITA LESTARI)

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The writer hopes this thesis can give a bit contribution to English Literature Study Program, also for the future study that related with this topic. The writer realize that this thesis is still not perfect. So, any suggestion or criticism will very much appreciated for the improvement of this writing.

Makassar, January 26th 2021

Winda Vita Lestari

ABSTRAK

WINDA VITA LESTARI, 2021. *Ambisi Wanita dalam Novel Little Women Karya Louisa May Alcott* (dibimbing oleh **Abidin Pammu** dan **Rezky Ramadhani**)

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah mendeskripsikan perbedaan karakter wanita dalam novel *Little Women*, dan mendeskripsikan ambisi wanita dalam novel *Little Women* berdasarkan kehidupan wanita Amerika diabad 19. Novel ini mengungkap perbedaan dan ambisi karakter perempuan-perempuan keluarga March.

Analisis skripsi ini dipusatkan pada unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik yang membangun sebuah cerita. Analisis ini menggunakan pendekatan Genetik Strukturalisme dan metode analisis Deskriptif Kualitatif. Unsur intrinsik dalam cerita yaitu tema, tokoh, plot, dan setting. Selain itu, unsur ekstrinsik berupa kehidupan wanita Amerika pada abad 19.

Hasil dari analisis skripsi ini memperlihatkan bahwa ada tiga ciri-ciri ambisi yaitu berjuang untuk sukses, agresif, dan perfeksionis. Novel karya Louisa May Alcott ini dipengaruhi oleh kehidupan Wanita pada masa itu. Pengarang menggambarkan kehidupam wanita Amerika sebagai perempuan yang memiliki ambisi dan berjuang untuk mencapainya yang digambarkan melalui peran tokoh wanita dalam novel *Little Women*.

Kata Kunci : Perempuan, Ambisi, dan Genetik Strukturalisme

ABSTRACT

WINDA VITA LESTARI, 2021. *The Ambition of Women in Little Women by Louisa May Alcott* (supervised by **Abidin Pammu** and **Rezky Ramadhani**)

The aims of this study are to describe the portrayal of women in the novel *Little Women* and to describe the ambition of women in the novel *Little Women* based on the lives of women in the 19th century America. This novel revealed to the portrayal and ambition characters March's girls family.

This thesis analysis focuses on the intrinsic and extrinsic elements that build a story. This analysis uses a Structuralism Genetic approach and a Qualitative Descriptive analysis method. The intrinsic elements in the story are theme, characters, plot, and setting. In addition, extrinsic elements from the life of American women in the 19th century.

The result of this thesis analysis show that there are three characteristics of ambition, namely strive for success or excellent, aggressive, and perfectionist. This novel by Louisa May Alcott is influenced by the life of women at the time. The author describes the life of American women as women who have ambition and struggle to achieve it, which is illustrated through the role of female characters in the novel *Little Women*.

Keywords : *Women, Ambition, Genetic Structuralism*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COVER	i
APPROVAL FORM	ii
LEGITIMACY SHEET	iii
AGREEMENT SHEET.....	iv
DECLARATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
ABSTRAK	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
TABLE OF CONTENTS	x
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Scope of Problem	3
1.3 Research of Question	3
1.4 Objective of Study	3
1.5 Sequence of Study.....	3
CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1 Previous Study	5
2.2 Genetic Structuralism.....	6
2.2.1 Intrinsic Elements	8
2.2.2 Social Background of Author	12
2.2.3 American Women in 19 th Century.....	14
2.3 Concept of Ambition.....	
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY	21
3.1 Methodological Design	21
3.2 Method of Collecting Data	21
3.3 Method of Analyzing Data	22
3.4 Research Procedures	22
CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS.....	23
4.1 Structural Aspect of <i>Little Women</i>	24
4.2 The Portrayal of Women in Novel <i>Little Women</i>	40
4.3 Characters' Ambition in Novel <i>Little Women</i>	44
4.4 Character's Ambition based on the 19 th Century Women America	52

CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	51
5.1 Conclusion	51
5.2 Suggestion	56
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 57
APPENDIX I (Sinopsis of <i>Little Women</i>).....	59

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the writer explain about the introduction, consists of several items such as background of study, scope of problem, research question, objective of study, and sequence of study.

1.1. Background of Study

Literature is a creative work and art through the imagination of the author. Although the source of the imagination or inspiration sometimes comes from reality, for instance, religion, culture, history, politics, and society's life, the result is mixed with the author's interpretation. The author is free to express feelings, emotions, thoughts, and ideas.

Nowadays, literature can be said to have important roles in society, many of authors express their opinions and even criticize the government through literary works. Literary works are the media used by literary writers to communicate with people.

In Encyclopedia American, it is that said literature is one of the great creative and universal means of communicating the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual concern of mankind (1892:556). Literature also can be the expression of the author's life, human life, or about society.

The writer chooses the novel as the object of research because the novel is the most complete literary work which has a more detailed description of the theme, plot, character, and setting.

Women have double burden to their role, be good mother and wives, take care of the family, prepare food, look after children, serve their husbands, and etcetera. Women are also human beings who has the right to get what they want, such as education and work.

The novel, *Little Women* tells about the ambition of the four siblings and their mother, Meg, Jo, Beth, Amy, and Mrs. March. In addition to their ambition, they also want to prove that women have desires like a man. Their life is simple but full of warmth. Even so, they are also not far from problems, grief, and strife. They have different characters, ranging from motherly, shy, tomboyish. From that difference, it grows a unique story from the novel. *Little Women's* story were adapted from the real experience of the author. Louisa May Alcott, has a very strong relationship with one of the character so that it seems as if the author is present in the story being made.

Based on the explanation above, the writer discuss about the portrayal and ambition of each character who want to achieve dreams in the midst of world war and the limitations of the family economy. This research aims to convey to the readers that every women are not only required to work at home. Women can also have careers outside the home according to what they want.

1.2. Scope of Problem

According to the title, the writer limits the problem which only analyzed the women in *Little Women*. In this thesis, the writer scopes to analyze the portrayal and ambition of the characters.

1.3. Research of Question

1. How is the portrayal of women in the novel *Little Women*?
2. How is the ambition of women in the novel *Little Women* based on the lives of women in the 19th century America?

1.4. Objective of Study

1. To describe the portrayal of women in the novel *Little Women*.
2. To describe the ambition of women in the novel *Little Women* based on the lives of women in the 19th century America.

1.5. Sequence of Study

This thesis consists of five chapters:

1. Chapter one is the introduction that consists of the background of study, the scope of problem, research of question, objectives of study, and sequence of study.
2. Chapter two, is literary review consists of the previous study, Genetic Structuralism, intrinsic elements of the novel such as plot, theme, character, and setting. Extrinsic elements such as social background of author, women in the nineteenth-century of America and concept of Ambition.

3. Chapter three covers the research methodology of the study, including methodological design, method of collecting data, method of analyzing data, and research procedure.
4. Chapter four is the analysis which presents the result of the study.
5. Chapter five consists of the conclusion and suggestion.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, the writer explain about the literature review, which consists of previous study, genetic structuralism, intrinsic elements such as theme, character, plot, and setting. Extrinsic elements such as social background of author, women in the nineteenth century of America, and concept of ambition.

2.1. Previous Study

In this study, the writer analyzes the portrayal and ambition of characters. Some previous studies that the writer finds out to support this writing, can be seen :

First, *An Analysis of Woman Struggle in Lousia May Alcott's novel Little Women* by Rahayu Heni (2018). Rahayu Heni analyzed the discovery of woman struggle contained in the novel and also the struggle of the main character in achieving her dream. The purpose of this thesis is to find a picture of a woman struggle that occurred during the American civil war in the life of Josephine March and her three sisters and mother in survival when her father became a volunteer in the war.

Second, *The Portrait of Woman in Lousia May Alcott's Little Women* by A. ST. Aldilah Kaerana (2009). This research shows that the portrait of five women from the main characters to whom they are no longer restricted by the traditional rules which limit woman to do an activity outside the house.

Last, "*The Social Environment influence in the March of L. M. Alcott's Little Women*" by Cecilia Desyanar A. R (2011). Cecilia analyzed the social environment has a great influence on a person's character development. It also presents the message that is worth mentioning in the light of their advantageous points for the sake of family management and family proper handing.

It would be more interesting if the writer analyzes the novel from the main concept of the novel, where the novel is all about ambition. This study analyze one of the essential meanings of the novel which covers by the ambition of women aspect deeply. The reader can know deeper about the novel by study the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the novel and also see the reality of women's life in America in 19th century as the supporter of the analysis by using genetic structuralism.

2.2. Genetic Structuralism

The writer uses the genetic structuralism approach to analyze the ambition of women in *Little Women*. Due to this, the writer explains the portrayal and ambition of characters in *Little Women*.

Genetic structuralism is the reaction of pure structuralism ideas which only observes the literary work as an autonomous structure. It is an approach in literature research that was born as the reaction of pure structuralism approach and anti-casual and historical. Genetic structuralism adds the genetic elements, which also influence the literary work such as the biographical and historical background.

Genetic structuralism is an approach that uses genetic factors to understand literary work. Literature genetic means that the origami of literary works, such as the author and historical background which also influences literary, historical production, like in its volume and its structure. Therefore, literary works depend on the social environment in a certain country.

Genetic structuralism is expanded by Lucian Goldman in France. Goldman thinks that the background of literary work was made is the point of this approach. In this theory, he has two points of view. Endraswara in his book, *Metode Penelitian Sastra* (2003:56) divides genetic structuralism research framework into two groups. First, the relationship of meaning between one element and another in one work. Second, this relationship forms a network that is interconnected with one another.

According Goldman in Faruk (1992:2) literature is a structure, but the structure is not a static thing. It is a product of a continuous historical process, and the structure process that growing up. In this case, the interaction between the creator of literary works with the community and the conditions of social, political, cultural, and economic are produced the world-view.

Genetic structuralism is the study which focuses on the structure. What the structure means here is the relation between the whole of the text. They are intrinsic elements or the structure which builds the literary works inside aspects and the extrinsic elements or the structure which builds literary works outside. Besides that, the focuses of Genetic Structuralism are the literary works, the author, and social factors.

Genetic structuralism has some benefits by paying attention to intrinsic elements that form a literary work and also attend to sociological factors realize that literary work has been made by the creativity of imagination.

2.2.1. Intrinsic Elements of the Novel

a. Theme

The theme is the main idea that the writer expresses. A theme can also be defined as the underlying meaning of the story. The theme is another prime element of literature, which contains the central idea of all literary forms such as a novel, drama, and short story. It reflects innocence, experience, life, death, reality, fate, madness, sanity, love, society, individual, and etcetera. Reading literary work such as novel is not only for pleasure or to enjoy it, but also to know what the author's message wants to be delivered to the reader, or questioning the meaning consists in the story.

Santon and Kenny (in Nurgiyantoro, 1995:67) said the theme is the meaning in a story. The theme becomes the basis of the elaboration of the plot, so the theme ought to be the entire story's soul. The theme was a common generalization, wider and abstract. The author delivers her/his story's message by the theme. The theme is one important element in literary work. Without a theme, a literary work is worthless.

b. Character

Characters are people in the story. The process by which the writer makes that character seem real to the reader called characterization. The characters make up the central interest of many novels, as well as biographies and autobiographies.

Characterization is a drawing of a simple image of someone in a tale that reveals (in Burhan Nurgiantoro, 1995:165). Characterization can be said as attitudes, action, and nature that within the figures and become the characteristic of these figures. Characterization would easily give a clear picture of the character that is created by the author.

The classification of character is based on the character's role and function (Burhan Nurgiantoro, 1995:165). This classification is divided into types:

a. Protagonist

Protagonist is the character that the reader admires , sometimes called the hero of the story. The protagonist shown something which agrees with the reader's view of hope.

b. Antagonist

Antagonist is the characters which cause the conflict in the story. Sometimes the antagonist called the enemy of the protagonist, directly or indirectly, physically or spiritually.

According to Abrams (in Burhan Nurgiantoro, 1995:165) character is the people shown in narrative work, or play, interpreted by the reader that the people have moral quality and particular tendency expressed in utterance and action.

c. Plot

The plot is an important element of fiction. Even some experts assume it as the most important element of the fiction. The coherence inter events in the story is determined by the plot. In the plot, the story is not only chronological but also should be causal.

According to Stanton (in Nurgiantoro, 2007:113), the plot is a chronological story, but the event is related causally, one event causing the other event. Commonly plot is assumed as a simple element of fiction, but actually, the plot is not as simple as we assume. The author of a story arranges the events in the story based on casual relevancy.

According to Robert (1997:178) says that the meaning of plot as, The plan or groundwork for a story, with the action from believable and authentic human response to a conflict. It is causation, conflict response, opposition, and interaction that make a plot out of the series of actions. Robert also divides plot in to five categories, they are :

1. Exposition

Exposition is the beginning section in which the author provides the necessary background information, sets the scene, establishes the situation, and the action.

2. Rising Action

Rising action is sometimes referred to as the rising action, breaks the existing equilibrium, and introduces the characters underlying or inciting conflict.

3. Climax

The climax is that moment at which the plot reaches its point of greatest emotional intensity. It is the turning point of the plot, directly precipitating its resolution.

4. Falling Action

Falling action is the one crisis or turning point has been reached, the tension subsides and the plot moves toward its appointed condition.

5. Resolution

Resolution is the final section of the plot is its resolution. It refers to the outcome of the conflict and establishes some new equilibrium stability.

d. Setting

The setting is another important element in a novel that informs the reader about the place and the time of the story. Setting answers the question of the "where"

and "when" the events in the story happen. "Where" means the place and "when" means the time of the events.

Setting is divided into three dimensions. They are place, time, and environment (Nurdiyanto, 1995:227). In place, the setting represents where the story takes place. The time setting represents when the story takes place. The environment represents the social-cultural in the story.

2.2.2. Social Background of Author

Born on November 29, 1832, Louisa May Alcott led a fascinating life. Besides enchanting millions of readers with her novel *Little Women*, she worked as a Civil War nurse, fought against slavery, and registered women to vote.

Louisa's parents, Bronson and Abigail Alcott, raised their four daughters in a politically active household in Massachusetts. As a child, Alcott briefly lived with her family in a failed Transcendentalist commune, helped her parents hide slaves who had escaped via the Underground Railroad, and had a discussion about women's right with Margaret Fuller.

Before writing *Little Women*, Alcott wrote Gothic pulp fiction under the nom de plume A.M. Barnard. Continuing her amusing penchant for alliteration, she wrote books and plays called *Perilous Play* and *Pauline's Passion and Punishment* to make easy money. These sensational, melodramatic works are strikingly different than the more wholesome, righteous vibe she captured in *Little Women*, and she did not advertise her former writing as her own after *Little Women* became popular.

In 1861, at the beginning of the U.S. Civil war, Alcott sewed Union uniforms in Concord and the next year, enlisted as an army nurse. In a Washington, D.C. hotel-turned-hospital, she comforted dying soldiers and helped doctors perform amputations. During this time, she wrote about her experience in her journal and in letters to her family. In 1863, she published *Hospital Sketches*, a fictionalized account, based on her letters, of her stressful yet meaningful experiences as a wartime nurse. The book became massively popular and was reprinted in 1869 with more material.

Louisa May Alcott wrote *Little Women* to help her father. In 1867, Thomas Niles, an editor at a publishing house, asked Alcott if she wanted to write a novel for girls. Although she tried to get excited about the project, she thought she would not have much time to write about girls because she was a tomboy. The next year, Alcott's father was trying to convince Niles to publish his manuscript about philosophy. He told Niles that his daughter could write a book of fairy stories, but Niles still wanted a novel about girls. Niles told Alcott's father that if he could get his daughter to write a (non fairy) novel girls, he would publish his philosophy manuscript. So to make her father happy and help her writing career, Alcott wrote about her adolescence growing up with her three sisters. Published in September 1868, the first part of *Little Women* was a huge success. The second part was published in 1869, and Alcott went on to write sequels such as *Little Men* (1872) and *Jo's Boys* (1886).

2.2.3. American Women in 19th Century

During the nineteenth century, women were viewed as homemakers, not able to perform in society with men. They were degraded and debased by men. Many women feeling trapped in their own homes. They unable to escape from the confinements placed on them by their husbands.

Megawangi in her book, *Membiarkan Berbeda? Sudut Pandang Baru tentang Gender* (1999:133), describes us the fact that women are opporessed by men because women are considered to have the same position as the upper class. They argue about ownership and consider the wife as private property.

Some women work as launderers, seamstresses, or nurse. They can only get a higher salary if they become midwives or dressmakers, because these jobs required more skill and training. In these ways, American women were able to help their families from poverty.

Their life expentancy in the 19th century was in the late fortiest. It is very low compared to the late seventies life expectancy today. Women have no few political rights. She was unable to vote, or have any political views. She also had a very limited career selection and women were excluded from most jobs. Before the world war happened, women were rarely got an education. At the time, only three colleges that can be followed by the women. According to Sapiro (in Jamil, 2014:23), in *Women in American Society* explains that women have limitations and a lack of

opportunities in the aspect of education and work. No ownership of property is obtained and there are no regulations regarding marriage that harm women.

If American women have married, she does not get rights to work outside because all activities are watched by husband. They only work as housewife and take care their family.

2.3. Concept of Ambition

This study focus on the portrayal and ambition of women in *Little Women*. It is important to know exactly about the definition of ambition, the cause of ambition, and the effect of ambition.

1. Definition of Ambition

In the world, every people have ambition. Generally, ambition is a positive thing that every person must own. Ambition is a strong desire to achieve the success. Supporting the explanation, Crowther (1995:35) states, "Ambition is strong desire to achieve something."

According to Harvey (2010:12), "Ambition is the instinctual motivation to aspire to things, to make something happen, to have an impact, to count for something in life."

In conclusion, the above experts identify ambition as a motivation that drives achievement among individuals. In other words, ambition will make it possible for individuals to achieve a greater level or role.

2. The Caused of Ambition

Ambition can be good or positive for anyone, and it can also be bad or negative. A positive ambition has a good impact on individuals because a positive ambition would help someone who cares about the situation and will not hurt someone else to achieve their ambition.

They never think are going to take vengeance on someone who wants to keep their dreams going. Negative ambition, on the other hand means that their ambition itself is crossed by ambition. Up to the point of being cruel, greedy, and selfish, they can make attempts.

The negative ambition is usually caused by a bad mental attitude. Supporting the explanation, Widarso (2012:21) stated that the negative ambition can be caused by four bad mental attitudes which consist of selfishness, perfectionism, workaholic, and type "A" personality.

1. Selfishness

Selfishness is the act that emphasizes himself. Supporting the explanation, Crowther (1995:530) says, "selfishness is the lack of consideration for other people". There are several characteristics of people who are selfishness. First, people love themselves. Second, people will pleasure if they are given something and feel sad if they give something to others. Third, people will are explore other people to satisfy themselves.

2. Perfectionism

Perfectionism is struggle to reach a high position or struggle to the perfect accomplishment, degree, or quality of trait. As Frost stated (in Sirois and Molnar, 2016:1), "perfectionism can be described as setting and striving for excessively high and often unrealistic standard, accompany by frequent thoughts focused on the attainment of these standards and overly critical self-evaluation". From this definition, it can be concluded that perfectionism is a negative sort of ambition. The people who are perfectionism always wish everything should be perfect.

3. Workaholic

Workaholic comes from to word that consists of work and aholic. Work means an act to do something and aholic means people that are addicted as a real worker. Thus, workaholic is a addicted to do something. There are four motives that makes the people become workaholic. First motive, there is desire to collect money. Second motive, there is desire to equalize themselves with idealizing. Next, there is fear that faced themselves. The last motive is incapacity to find the actualization. People who are workaholic have life that is not complete because they forget another things, includes themselves. They are not interested in searching experience outside their profession.

4. Type "A" Personality

The people who have type "A" personality that has characteristics such as aggressive, competitive, not calm. In other words, the people who have type "A" will

always be in a stress area. The type "A" personality has the ambition to become number one. It is the same with people who workaholic, they work hard. However, the different people who workaholic between people who have type "A" personality can be found on the stress level. People who have type "A" personality have the stress level that high more than people who workaholic.

Based on the whole explanation above, the writer can conclude that ambition can be caused by some factors such as the background of the family, background of live or social condition where the people life. Ambition can be positive or negative. The negative ambition can be caused by four bad mental attitudes which contain selfishness, perfectionism, workaholic, and type "A" personality.

5. The Effect of Ambition

When people effort to achieve their ambition, they will be a success or failure. This is stuff that has a good and bad effect. If people are successful, they will be happy. On the other hand, if individuals struggle to achieve their goals, people have to try again or make other plans to achieve their ambition.

However, if people that have ambition is a failure again to reach their ambition, they will face a big problem in their life which drivers them to become jealous and uncontrollable. As Harvey (2010:139) says, "There's also a darker reason for failure, and we can't avoid taking about it. Sometimes we fail because of sin-we peak callously, respond angrily, cover secretly, nature jealously, lust uncontrollably."

Ambition causes certain individuals to become uncontrollable, causing people to lose their common sense and leading them to take the wrong path to fulfill their ambition. It will be dangerous for them or other individuals around them when they are unable to respond to their ambition. The failed ambition, therefore, would have a negative impact on individuals depending on the big or small ambition that individuals have.

Supporting the explanation, Harvey (2010:140) states, "With ambition comes failure, small ambition can lead to small failures, like the new recipe that results in a culinary disaster. Large ambitions open the door to bigger disaster."

Based on the whole explanation above, the writer can conclude that individuals with ambition can succeed or fail to achieve their ambition. People who are good in achieving their goals would be satisfied. In other words, people who struggle to fulfill their desire will be selfish, jealous, and uncontrollable until they can be dangerous to themselves and those around them.

According to Alder in *Understanding Life* (in Dado:2010) define some of the characteristic of ambition :

1. Strive For Success or Excellence

The first principle put forward by Adler about a person's behavior is the willingness to strive for success or excellence. Someone who is initially weak, inferior, will look for ways to get success, that is, a deep form of superiority. In his view, someone will be considered healthy psychologically if he is able to fight for

success for everyone. While unhealthy individuals will fight for their personal success.

2. Aggressive

Adler argues in his theory that the object of a person's life is to become more violent and stronger than anyone around him. For the sake of one's own desires, people become greedy. The effort to be the best, including the movement to perfection on a path to wealth from another, through safe citizens.

3. Perfectionist

Individuals have an aim to achieve perfection in life. Through an all-in-one state, this search for excellence is established. It can thus be inferred that the desire of a person is born from a multi-faceted circumstance in order to attain perfection in his life. Basically people who are perfectionists are a person who does not want something he can only do so she tried to show it to be ideal as best she could look. These principles are the theory put forward by Adler in describe a person's personality. What happens in someone's life, including the way he behaves, is influenced by these principles.