

## THE PRESENT POSITION OF INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY

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We all feel the need to realize where Individual Psychology has its place today in the progress of science as well as in public opinion, represented by laymen and professionals. Dr. Lydia Sicher recognized the necessity for clarification when she wrote "The Scope of Individual Psychology" in No. 5 of the INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY NEWS. The present survey is an attempt to summarize only superficially a few points, to stimulate discussion and more detailed surveys. We need more specific accounts about the present situation in any particular field of science and about the place where Individual Psychology fits into the general picture. We have to realize distinctly our function and thereby determine the way we should go.

There is a definite dislike in American public opinion for any one-sided scientific approach. People want to know what "psychology" has to say, but not what one or the other school of thought believes. The greater the number of existing differences in opinions, the less confidence the entire field of psychology evokes. We Individual Psychologists have to bear the whole brunt of this objection against any one school because we do not represent as yet the majority among the scientific workers. The difference between a "sect" and a publicly accepted opinion is, unfortunately, still determined by numbers and not by the value of the contribution. Individual Psychology is new in America, although its findings have been for quite some time a part of scientific knowledge.

We must realize the causes for the deplorable fact that psychology today does not present one body of knowledge, but many schools of thought. How difficult it is to establish any definite truth, in general, is well recognized by modern epistemology, i.e. science of knowledge. Our present thought is profoundly influenced by discoveries of the unavoidable limitations and, above all, the relativity of all scientific observations and findings. The general insecurity caused by controversial opinions corresponds to the present stage of our society. We are living in a state of transition, socially and mentally; old values crumble--old ways of thinking are abandoned. A new picture of the world appears on the horizon; there is no definite truth to rely on, no guide from the outside except human courage, looking for a way out of the darkness. Partisan-opinion rules politics, economics, morals--and science.

This uncertainty and insecurity is even more obvious in the science of psychology. We know that there exists hardly any "objective" science because no human being, and therefore no scientist, can be truly "objective." But in other fields of research the subjective factor of personal interest interferes only incidentally and occasionally with a factual concern for scientific truth. In psychology, however, the investigator and the object of the investigation are identical. No research in psychology deals only with "the other" persons. Whatever anybody discovers about human nature includes

himself. What he likes to overlook in himself, he tries to find in others instead. Therefore, psychological research is, more than other scientific research, influenced by personal inclinations, tendencies, and dislikes. Most psychologists reveal in their scientific work their own personal problems.

Thus, we will have to content ourselves for quite some time with the unavoidable fact that psychology as a science will be dominated less by "objective," incontestable discoveries than by theories. It would be foolish, however, to deny psychology for this reason the status of a science. Modern physics does not lose the status of objective science because it is at the present a battlefield of controversial opinions and theories. Relativity will remain an essential part of human knowledge.

In this present struggle for better insight into human nature, Individual Psychology offers a well-defined approach. The entity and unity which Alfred Adler has discovered for the single individual personality, characterizes his whole theory. It is impossible to separate any Adlerian formulation from the whole concept, which by no means is just a variety of Freud's Psychoanalysis. Because of their superficiality all references to terms like "inferiority feeling" and "striving for power" as characterizing the Adlerian psychology are incorrect. The wholeness of the human personality is only another aspect of the equally important fact that the individual develops his personality in his attempt to interrelate himself with society. His striving for social adjustment leads necessarily to the purposiveness of all his actions; and indeterminism,

recognized by Adler, is a necessary conclusion.

Many scientists try to integrate Individual Psychology with other existing psychological theories. They believe they can take one part of Adler's ideas and link it with some part of another school. What they actually establish thereby is not eclecticism which prides itself on taking the good parts of each school and discarding the bad. They create only new theories often with more shortcomings and one-sidedness than they attributed to the original schools.

However, the development of various sciences shows a definite trend toward Adler's conception, thereby substantiating its correctness. Indeterminism, long ridiculed as "unscientific," appears in the discussions of the most revered "science," which for a long time was considered the typical example of "real" and true objective science: namely physics. The idea of relativity, as expressed in Adler's "tendentious apprehension" of the world, caused by the differences in attitudes and positions of each observer, corresponds closely to the diversity of observation and judgment recognized by physicists and sociologists. We find increasing signs of "Neo-Adlerian" ideas in many sciences, expressed by persons who know little of Individual Psychology. Sociologists see human beings in their social interaction and often show more psychological insight than many professional psychologists.--The new field of group-work recognizes the interrelation of human traits and qualities in the group situation. Many therapeutic suggestions made by group-workers are surprisingly close to our own ideas.--Education,

some time ago very strongly influenced by Psychoanalysis, moves clearly in our direction. It is still open for new psychological influences. The unfortunate condition of current psychology, hampers progress in education.

Psychology is divided into three main sections: first, the "Testing Psychology," which actually is emotional and mental physiology. It examines human reactions as separate mechanisms: intelligence, emotions, adaptations, preferences, abilities, and traits. This type of psychology, which imitates physics without any one of the profound conceptions characterizing modern physical science, can maintain its position only on account of the confusion in the other sections. The second is the "Interpreting Psychology," which tries to understand human beings instead of measuring isolated qualities. Behaviorism was once the leading school in America in this section. Now it is officially abandoned but still forms the fundamental although concealed basis for many psychological and educational conceptions. It looks as if Gestalt Psychology has gained steadily in momentum. That brings the ideas of entity and of "indivisibility" much into the foreground. Semantics, for its part, emphasizes the subjective in any verbal statement and expression, which coincides with Alfred Adler's "private sense." The influence of "Medical Psychology," the third section, upon genuine psychology adds to the general confusion, driving many "psychologies" into opposition to new ideas. Medical psychology, as part of psychiatry, labors under the conflict between several schools of thought, some of which conform neither with common sense nor with the general trend of modern science. Jung's Psy-

chology has gained little influence in America. There is no doubt that Freud's Psychoanalysis, which, on one side, maintains mechanistic conceptions more and more abandoned in other fields of science, and which, on the other hand, often transgresses the license of subjective interpretation, occupies the first place among medical psychologies. One contributing factor is the previous lack of any other technique for a deep analysis of human problems and misbehavior.

But the influence of Psychoanalysis is apparently on the decline. It has already lost, almost completely, authority among group-workers and sociologists. Its grasp on modern education is loosening, its influence negligible in comparison with what it was ten years ago. The strongholds of Psychoanalysis are at present psychiatry and psychiatric social work, especially in some parts of this country. In Mental Hygiene, however, it encounters the growing opposition of the general public, which loses faith in psychoanalytic suggestions and statements. The necessity for a better adjustment to reality has produced an interesting new development of Psychoanalysis by the so-called "Neo-Freudians." One of the driving elements for reorientation among psychoanalysts is not only the lost ground, but more the necessity for "brief psychotherapy." Orthodox psychoanalytic treatment takes more time and money than the needy population can afford. This probably accounts primarily for the obvious approach to Adlerian conceptions on the part of many Freudians.

It seems to be no overstatement to express the opinion that Adler's Individual Psychology is steadily gain-

ing ground in the Americas. The advantage of Adlerian concepts in treating nervous and mental disorders, lies, first of all, in the direct and immediate approach to the vital problems of the patient. There seems to be no reason to call this approach "superficial" merely because it maintains the common sense which in other psychotherapeutic methods has first to be destroyed in order to break the patient's resistance. The direct psychiatric approach to the "inner constitution" and to the acute problems makes a shorter treatment possible. Especially in the field of child psychology the advantages of Individual Psychology become apparent, as it enables practical suggestions and instantaneous understanding, which other schools do not even attempt.

The influence of Individual Psychology upon education is increasingly recognized, as it offers a dynamic understanding of the educational processes by interpreting the child's tendencies and behavior patterns. Psychiatric child guidance will become a practical addition to the school curriculum if we can train enough persons for this necessary work. Until now any attempt to establish child guidance clinics in public schools has been frustrated by the lack of properly trained psychiatrists and psychologists. In group-work our training and approach could be of almost unique value. Adlerians, more than any others, combine in one person the aspects of case studies and of group situations. In the struggle to overcome the unfortunate antagonism between case- and group-workers, Individual Psychology has an important word to say. The same is true in sociology, where Individual Psychology offers an understanding of

intra-personal problems, not in controversy, but definitely in agreement with the larger social aspect.

Besides all those practical activities, we living Individual Psychologists have the duty of teaching Adlerian Psychology in order to contribute to the development of all sciences. Our therapy does not intend to gain adherents but to help individuals and through them to promote a general understanding of human nature among laymen. Psychotherapeutic success certainly is reflected in literature and general cultural conceptions. The principal methods of contributing to science, however, are papers, books, classes, and lectures. Do we intend to produce thereby new Adlerians, or can we be satisfied if more and more people understand better our interpretation of human problems? We cannot expect that everybody who studies Individual Psychology will accept entirely what we teach. That is neither possible nor necessary. If our pupils become aware of the basic structure of human nature, as Adler has revealed it, if their social interest and courage is strengthened, our work is highly successful. However, we should not forget that we need new disciples. Not everybody has to accept Adlerian conceptions fully in order to render our work worth while; but some must. Otherwise, nobody will be able to understand correctly or to teach what Adler has contributed and still is contributing to the progress of science and of mankind.

We must maintain Adlerians in every field of science to integrate all aspects and directions into one cooperating whole. Today cooperation between different and contradictory

