

ALFRED ADLER IN AMERICAN PSYCHOTHERAPY

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If one reads the evaluation Alfred Adler has received from the present more or less official historians of American psychiatry, one hardly could believe that Adler was for many years professor of psychiatry in a prominent American medical college. He is so little acknowledged in these sources as to rate only two unimportant mentions in the centenary volume of the American Psychiatric Association *One hundred Years of American Psychiatry* (1). One is a slight reminder that "such men as Meyer, White, and their followers were liberally supplemented by principles of Freudian psychoanalysis or modifications of it, and the methods of Adler, Jung, and others." And the second is a belittling passage which informed us that in the entire anthropological literature there were "but three incidental references to Adler."

Although Nolan D. C. Lewis (2) in his *Short History of Psychiatric Achievements* grants Alfred Adler twenty-nine lines, we must still realize that the most influential group in American psychiatry today is largely composed of Freudians who have generally been unwilling to give Adler just credit for his work.

Adler first attracted attention in this country through the publication of two of his original contributions to psychopathology and psychotherapy which appeared almost simultaneously in 1917. The first was a translation, by Bernard Glueck, of *The Neurotic Constitution* (3). It was dated 1916; the introduction by William A. White bore the month of October of the same year. This makes it certain that the book did not come out before 1917. In 1917, also, his study on Inferiority of Organs was issued by Jelliffe and White in their series of *Nervous and Mental Diseases Monographs* (4). A mention of the Inferiority Concept appeared in the second edition of the voluminous textbook *Diseases of the Nervous System* (5) by the same authors. This was the initial mention of an Adlerian concept in American psychiatric literature.

Acceptance of his views by the more sincere workers followed quickly. Major academic works, published shortly after, gave prominence to his theories. Hinsie (6) discussed them in his *Treatment of Schizophrenia* of 1920. Buckley (7) in his *Basis of Psychiatry* (1920) emphasized many of Adler's ideas, as did George Henry (8) and Healy (9) in their books published a few years later.

The increasing interest in the concepts of Individual Psychology in psychiatric literature was marked, not only in the first decade that followed the publication of *The Neurotic Constitution*, but up to this day. It was a constant flow in which, of course, the Inferiority Concept and that of the Neurotic Constitution ranked highest in significance.

Adlerian ideas, as has been pointed out, met with considerable resistance by adherents of Freudian principles. Freud had a ten years' start in the matter of the introduction of his precepts in the United States. His followers, thus, were in a position to exert formidable opposition to the views of Adler and succeeded in confusing the picture of Adler's contributions.

The more aggressive of Freud's followers, such as Franz Alexander (10) and Karen Horney (11), talked Adler down. Malamud (12) in his book, *Outlines of General Psychopathology*, published in 1935, devoted a page to Adler, whom he did not seem fully to understand. There were, of course, other Freudians, like Schilder (13), Fenichel (14), and David Levy (15), who did report objectively on Adler, and discussed his concepts with some intelligence.

The expanding influence of Alfred Adler's major concepts in the field of American medical psychology could, however, not be stemmed. An examination of recently published textbooks will bring out that not only is his work quoted and frequently used as a footnote, but many chapters are devoted to his theories. The discussions in these books, it will be noted, are not concerned with his more notable Inferiority Concepts alone, but with a wider and wider range of his studies. Here are mentioned only a few of recent textbooks in which Adler is importantly mentioned; Hunt (16): *Personality and Behavior Disorders*; Kanner (17): *Child Psychiatry*; Levine (18): *Psychotherapy in Medical Practice*; Sadler (19): *Modern Psychiatry*; Campbell (20): *Everyday Psychiatry*; and Lowrey (21): *Psychiatry for Social Workers*.

A glance over the literature on Mental Hygiene and Guidance will confirm that here, too, the ideas of Alfred Adler have taken firm root.

Let us turn from the medical sciences to the humanities. One sampling will suffice: In the imposing work on Human Genetics issued a few weeks ago by Gates (22), we find Adler reviewed in a manner that comports with his stature. Here is another case in point demonstrating that the obscurity to which Adler was relegated by the previously mentioned anniversary volumes was undeserved.

We know that, aside from psychotherapy, Adler's most representative contributions can be found in the field of education. Adler's entire body of concepts is of a therapeutic educational pattern. The education of the child, as we know, has always been a special interest of Adler.

The impact of Adler's thought upon educational literature in America was not felt as early as that in the psychiatric sphere. After 1925 occasional references to him were noted. But by 1930 his authority in the educational field was already broadly established. The acceptance of his concepts here was even more complete than had been achieved in the therapeutic field. This has been the case especially in the last ten years. Scarcely a textbook on child psychology and education has omitted a consideration of his principles. To emphasize this point, we select at random a list of the most popular texts of the present, all of which, through mention, discussion, and evaluation, recognize the importance of his contributions: Morgan (23): *Child Psychology*; Arlitt (24): *Psychology of Infancy and Early Childhood*; Carmichel (25): *Manual of*

Child Psychology; Skinner (26): *Child Psychology and Elementary Educational Psychology*; Nagge (27): *Psychology of the Child*; Cruze (28): *Educational Psychology*; and Thorpe (29) *Child Psychology and Development*.

To complete the survey of the Alfred Adler influence in this country we must step from the more academic literature to that of adult education in psychotherapy. In regard to the psychology of living and adult education one is struck by the truth of Wendell Johnson's words in his book, *People in Quandaries* (30), that certain Adlerian terms have become "part of our common vocabulary." Not only do we see Adler's name frequently quoted in this popular literature, but his terms, theories, and concepts applied everywhere.

Alfred Adler nourished two great hopes in his lifetime: the first was that his theories would be widely known and applied by technical workers; the second that his books, which he insisted be published in the most inexpensive forms, would be within the reach of the common man. These hopes are being more fully realized as years go by.

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