

Reply to Note on the Psychology of Proper Names

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The foregoing "Note on the Psychology of Proper Names" by H. L. Ansbacher is indeed very interesting. As surmised by Ansbacher, I had no knowledge of Günther's paper. Regarding the similarity in the opening paragraphs of this paper and my own, I think there is a great probability that a number of people, educated in the Weimar Republic and having learned by heart, and never having ceased to love their *Faust*, would give Goethe's "Schall und Rauch" quotation when setting out to speak or to write about proper names. They may also remember that the young Goethe laughed about the funny name of the poet Klopstock.

My paper originated in my writing a report on the case of "Lucy," whom I studied in 1944, and it was completed in April, 1945, after I had talked on "Does your name influence your behavior?" at AFHQ Educational Center, Caserta, Italy. It was there that an American soldier gave me the example of Franklin D. Roosevelt Jones and George Washington Carver, to include in my MS.

It seems little astonishing that one should come to study the importance of proper names from the Adlerian view-point; but it is perhaps interesting to note that there is a pertinent observation even in the writings of Stendhal who, as an intuitional psychologist, was a French forerunner of Adler. He conceived before 1830 the dynamic power of the "sentiment d'infériorité" of which he speaks in Chapter VIII of his profound psychological novel, "Le Rouge et le Noir." In Chapter XXXIV of the same novel he writes the following concerning the psychology of proper names: "Ah, here comes the outstanding man of wit, Baron Stick," said Mlle. de la Mole, imitating somewhat the voice of the servant who just announced him. 'I believe that even your people make fun of him.' 'What a name, Baron Stick!' said M. de Caylus. 'What difference does the name make, he told us the other day,' replied Mathilde. 'Imagine the Duc de Bouillon (Duke of Beefbroth) being announced for the first time; in my opinion the public lacks only a little familiarity. . . .'"

Freud gives the following illustration in "The Interpretation of Dreams."* He speaks about a "stranger" who had appeared in one of his dreams:

"His name was *Popovic* (Popo means backside in German nursery language), a suspicious name, which gave even the humorist Stettenheim a pretext for a suggestive remark; he told me his name and blushing shook my hand. For the rest, I find the same misuse of names . . . in the

case of Pelagie, Knoedl, Bruecke, Fleischl. No one will deny that such playing with names is a childish trick; if I indulge in it the practice amounts to an *act of retribution, for my own name has often enough been the subject of such feeble attempts at wit.*** This might also be expressed as a tendency to depreciate for the purpose of abolishing a feeling of inferiority.

*FREUD, SIGMUND: The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud. Modern Library, 1938, p. 268.

** (Italics by author).