

RECOGNITION OF THE TREND TOWARD ADLERIAN PSYCHOTHERAPY

EDITORIAL

A trend toward Adlerian principles and practices has been implicit in much of recent literature. But now the article on psychotherapy in the *Annual Review of Psychology* for 1960 has become very explicit in recognizing this trend, and goes further to make a point of the omission of acknowledgment and proper labeling of that which is Adlerian. The article is by Julian B. Rotter, professor of psychology and director of the psychological clinic at Ohio State University, and covers the literature from April, 1958 to April, 1959, giving 120 references (6).

Regarding psychoanalysis, Rotter notes at the outset that the meaning of the term is becoming less precise with each year.

One individual attacks psychoanalysis from a stand which he refers to as rational therapy, while his position is being assailed by someone else who refers to it as psychoanalytic. A modern theorist who refers to himself as psychoanalytic is referred to by others as neo-Freudian, neo-Adlerian, and, sometimes, as an independent thinker (6, p. 381).

As to recent progress in psychoanalysis, Rotter examines a list of ten "outstanding advances" by L. J. Saul, a Freudian psychoanalyst. Rotter finds that "all of these have in general an Adlerian flavor" (6, p. 383) and he singles out the following as especially clearly Adlerian in origin.

. . . Even indisputable sexual material and symbols are often seen to have ego meanings. —Cognizance of the ego and of the realities of a freely competitive civilization make obvious the importance in life of strivings for status and prestige and show the pain of inferiority feelings and loneliness.—. . . There should be included increasing recognition of the vital importance of the mother-child relationship and also, in many cases, of the relationship with siblings (7, pp. 37-38).

Such change in theory in the direction of Adler is paralleled by similar changes in treatment, the most significant of which is in the content of discussion and interpretation. Also, a more active role on the part of the therapist and less frequent visits are advocated.

And yet, Rotter points out, Saul does not make a single reference to Adler. But Rotter is not surprised by this since "theorists for the last 20 years have been writing books re-expressing many of Adler's concepts without referenc to Adler, although sometimes twisting and turning considerably in order to prove that these ideas were accepted by Freud" (6, p. 383).

As a particular example of such "twisting and turning" Rotter mentions a paper by G. H. Frank (3) in which the author wishes to place much more emphasis on the concept of dependency, basically

an Adlerian contribution. But instead of going to Adler, Frank "finds it necessary to treat this (infantile dependency) as 'an extension of libido theory,' again invoking 'neglected aspects' of Freud's writing" (6, p. 384).

Under other approaches to psychotherapy Rotter discusses A. Ellis' rational psychotherapy (2), in which the patient learns to think rationally by the therapist's active interpretation. "Apparently without being aware of it, Ellis is reformulating Adler's notion of 'common sense'" (6, p. 388). But here we would like to add that Ellis, for one, has elsewhere indeed acknowledged the similarity of his position with that of Adler (1).

Towards the end Rotter formulates five over-all trends. One refers to research, one to a general willingness to challenge old beliefs and try new methods, and a third to greater flexibility in psychotherapy. A fourth trend is the increasing importance attributed to values; this, we may point out, is another area where Adler pioneered by defining mental health as behavior which contributes to the common weal. In this connection Rotter cites two papers by Helene Papenek (4, 5), an Adlerian, discussing the role of ethical values in group psychotherapy. For the fifth trend, actually Rotter's second, we quote in full:

The current literature suggests that even the most conservative Freudian analysts are paying greater attention to what is referred to as ego psychology, feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, impossible life goals, sibling rivalry, and, particularly, the problem of dependency. More and more the patient is seen in the dependent role of the child rather than fixated at some highly specific early stage of sexual development, or caught in an unresolved Oedipus complex. The obvious Adlerian source of these ideas continues to be curiously unrecognized (6, p. 406).

The "curiously unrecognized" state of Adlerian theory and practice continues to be a frustrating puzzle. In view of this, we are all the more heartened by Rotter's penetrating observation of the situation, and by the ever growing—albeit unwitting—corroboration of Adlerian principles by clinicians and theoreticians from all shades of backgrounds.

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