

LETTER
INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY AND RESEARCH

To the Editor:

At the Tenth Annual Conference of the American Society of Adlerian Psychology, New York, November, 1961, Dr. Julian B. Rotter spoke on "An Analysis of Adlerian Psychology from a Research Orientation." (The paper is published in this issue.)

In the heated discussion that followed, one speaker indicated the difficulties involved in developing specific laws of predictability of human reactions. Another doubted the validity and reliability of psychological findings as presented in a recent report on delinquency. Others emphasized the value of procedures in contemporary academic psychology as a means of refining Adlerian concepts and interpretations. To this, let me add an experience with Dr. Alfred Adler.

In 1937 I completed a statistical study of the relationship between chronological position in the family and school achievement. Dr. Adler read this and asked permission to make one change to wit: where I used the word probability, to modify it with the term "statistical." He told me he was in favor of such studies and asked whether, on his return from Europe, he could present it for publication in the *International Journal of Individual Psychology*. In fact he was in favor of any studies, as long as they helped broaden our understanding.

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NAHUM E. SHOOPS

The above recollection by Mr. Shoobs brings to mind a little-known paper by Adler entitled "Individual Psychology and Experimental Psychology" (*Character and Personality*, 1933, 1, 265-267). It presents primarily four main questions which must be answered "whenever we pass judgment on an individual": (a) What direction does the evolutionary urge towards perfection take in this case? (b) What is the relation between his various traits and all his other forms of expression? (c) What is the error in his life style? (d) What barriers of a fundamental and of an accidental nature prevented the development of an adequate social feeling?

Experiments are briefly dealt with in the last paragraph. While Adler believes that they are not more scientific than naturalistic observation from real life, he also states that results obtained with them may be of potential value to his viewpoint. "It is possible to demonstrate that they agree with other forms of expression and with the individual personality, as well as to determine the unvarying distance from the ideal social feeling."

Regarding general quantitative research Adler comments in connection with the third question that in dealing with individual cases such findings can "throw light upon the sphere within which the personality for which we are looking may be found." They must "be treated as statistical probabilities." This then corroborates Mr. Shoobs' recollection.—EDITOR.