

WAS ADLER A DISCIPLE OF FREUD? A FREUDIAN VIEW

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Although I do not think comparing or even reconciling the works of Freud and Adler can ever lead to a fruitful solution, due to a lack of a common scientific basis, I do feel that the question whether Adler was a disciple of Freud or rather a follower on an equal basis (5, 7) could be settled if we look at the facts from a correct historical standpoint. I see it as basically a historical question, and it should be dealt with as such.

There can be no doubt that the relationship between these two men began with Adler at first supporting and then joining Freud. That it was on the latter's invitation, matters little for the essential question. This all the more so as Freud in 1907 dissolved the Psychological Wednesday Society with a formal letter allowing explicitly everyone the way out not to continue (8, pp. 202-203). Adler continued as a member, second only to Freud himself. No-one ever claimed the opposite development, that Freud had joined Adler.

Whether Adler felt himself being a disciple in the strict sense of the word as did all the others, including Jung, or rather as a co-worker on an equal footing is hard to determine today. Only private letters of Adler could throw some light on his private feelings at that time. But in the public utterances of all concerned Adler was considered as among the circle around Freud and in highest esteem as such. This is proven beyond any doubt by the publication of the *Minutes* (8).

That this fact became later the subject of heated and passionate controversy should not surprise anyone. The men who fathered modern dynamic psychology could not have been anything but passionately involved in the new creation. They were not objective witnesses for later historians. However, the utterances of both Freud and Adler and the other members of the Society prior to the split should be of value. To wit:

1. Adler's paper in the first volume of the *Zentralblatt* (4) followed immediately that of Freud and, in spite of the clearly Adlerian arguments, is written as if still by a follower of Freud, and this was very close to the final split.

2. In the first volume of the *Yearbook*, Karl Abraham (1) has

synopsized two papers by Adler (2, 3), written in 1905. Abraham does not indicate any idea which would show Adler as anything but a "Freudian."

3. According to a personal communication by Dr. Ludwig Jekels to me about the split between Adler and Freud, a last effort was made towards reconciliation, and Paul Federn, Eduard Hitschmann, and Jekels met Adler in a coffee house. My father cut the negotiations quite short by opening the talks with saying: "Adler, admit you are a Judas." Since my father did not deny the story it may well be correct. It shows us the prevalent spirit of the group, which Adler may not have shared or even not have found to his liking. But the psychoanalytic movement in its first beginning was a "cause." Freud felt himself to be its father and was looked upon by the majority of the others as their "master." Those who left him had left a "cause" and Freud dealt with them in his *History of the Psychoanalytic Movement* (6) in exactly this kind of spirit. (He treated Otto Rank very differently later on.) From a historical point of view this is not surprising at all since a very similar attitude prevailed in other movements, most conspicuously in the Socialist one.

We may, or may not, feel superior to such an emotional attitude of scientists, but the first task of the historian is to put himself in the mind of the people he is dealing with.

I find that both Adler and Freud reacted to each other after the split very emotionally. Who distorted the truth in the later accounts I leave unanswered being myself strictly partisan in this subject. One element, however, should not be left unnoticed: As far as strength of personality among the three dissenters, Adler, Jung, and Stekel, was concerned, Adler alone showed the quality for leadership of anything similar to a movement or scientific school. It is rare indeed where a great movement was lead by two people for the whole period of their lives. Only Marx and Engels come to my mind.

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REPLY

We should like to point out that in his last paragraph the author of the preceding ascribes the rift between Freud and Adler to the fact that both were strong personalities, and that with one exception, two such persons have never been able to share for a longer period the leadership of one movement. In his first paragraph, however, the author doubts that "even reconciling the works of Freud and Adler can ever lead to a fruitful solution, due to a *lack of a common scientific basis*" (italics ours). We would hold that these second, objective grounds outweigh by far the personal ones and that it was these objective grounds which prepared the rift. From the start, the various slight changes which Adler made on Freud's approach were in the direction of what we understand today as the holistic, organismic, and humanistic approach to human nature, whereas Freud's approach was more analytical, mechanistic, and deterministic. These two possible approaches apparently are inherent in the subject matter, and divide psychology in general. Granted this basic scientific divergence, it would be an interesting speculation to imagine in which other ways than it did, the relationship between Freud and Adler could have developed.—H. L. ANSBACHER.

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