

ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY AND PRAGMATISM

EDITORIAL

The relationship of Adler to pragmatism dates from the beginning of his psychology. It was in a German form of pragmatism, the philosophy of Hans Vaihinger, that Adler saw his philosophical foundation, and he repeatedly acknowledged this debt (2, pp. 76-87). Vaihinger's main work (10) has been reviewed at length by the English pragmatist F.C.S. Schiller (9) who pointed out as some of its particularly pragmatic aspects the biological conception of knowledge and its function as a means to action; thought conceived as instrumental; emphasis on purposiveness; understanding the selection of ideas as decided by their value.

Several years later Adler began one of his books with a reference to William James. It is *The Science of Living* which opens with the words: "Only a science which is directly related to life, said the great philosopher William James, is really a science. It might also be said that in a science which is directly related to life, theory and practice become almost inseparable" (1, p. 31).

As to Dewey, Adler considered him so significant for Individual Psychology that he published in his German journal a translation of one of Dewey's papers (3, 4) which was later incorporated in the closing chapter of *Individualism Old and New* (5). The translator of the paper, Dr. Olga Knopf, New York, in her introductory comment noted especially the similarity between Dewey's and Adler's views on education. Soon after, an Adlerian review of the German translation of Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct* pointed out that Dewey, like Adler, "sees the individual as a whole in his social relatedness" (8). In more recent years Loren Grey published a comparison of the educational philosophies of Dewey and Adler (7). Furthermore, Adler was actually acquainted with Dewey personally.¹ In this connection it should be remembered that beginning with the winter 1926-1927 Adler visited the United States regularly and also lectured at Columbia University.

Regarding the operational aspect of pragmatism in general, Rudolf Dreikurs keeps reminding us that today, "In a sense, Adlerians are reviving the American pragmatism of Peirce and James, according

¹Dr. Olga Knopf, personal communication, March 5, 1968.

to which every action gets its meaning from its consequences" (6, p. 241).

Thus there have been numerous indications and mentions of the kinship between Adler and pragmatism. Yet up to now the subject has not been treated comprehensively. We are therefore greatly gratified to be able to present below a paper devoted to just this problem, by Professor Kenneth Winetrou, one particularly well qualified. His field is philosophy of education where he has specialized in pragmatism and recently published a book on F.C.S. Schiller (11). Reuben Abel, in his foreword to this book, states as the great insight of Winetrou's position that pragmatism, when understood and appreciated in its completeness, may well bridge the gap which presently exists in philosophy. On the one side are the analytic philosophers, the logical positivists whose concern it is to introduce precision and clarity; on the other side those who can be found under "that capacious umbrella called existentialism" (11, p. vii).

Similarly, in our opinion, Adlerian psychology in its close parallelism with pragmatism may serve as liaison between the sophisticated methodologies of the "behavioral sciences" on the one hand; and the organismic conception of man shared by the numerous emerging trends of "humanistic psychology," on the other hand.

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