

A NEW CHAPTER ON ADLER

"When studying Adler, the reader must temporarily put aside all that he learned about psychoanalysis and adjust to a quite different way of thinking" (p. 571). With these words Henri F. Ellenberger introduces the reader to the chapter on "Alfred Adler and Individual Psychology" in his monumental work on the history of dynamic psychiatry (2, pp. 571-656). The book is the outcome of years of original research of a painstaking scholar who indefatigably traced original sources, retained from previous accounts only what held up against such scrutiny, and introduced a wealth of new data and thoughts.

Appearing in the centennial year of Adler's birth, in a work of such caliber, we believe the above judgment would have given Adler the greatest satisfaction of any of the centennial events. In view of his association with Freud, Adler's new ideas were regarded as aspects or modifications of psychoanalysis. When Adler confronted Freud with, "Do you think it is much pleasure for me to stand all my life long in your shadow?" (3, p. 339), Freud cited this as evidence of Adler's sheer personal ambition, his "craving for a place in the sun" (3, p. 339), an accusation which received the widest circulation. When Adler replied later that by standing in Freud's shadow he meant that he was continuously being made "an accomplice to all the absurdities of Freudianism" (1, p. 126), this hardly became known. Adler failed "to destroy the formation of a legend," as he had intended (1, p. 126). Now, with Ellenberger's authoritative conclusion, supported by the advancement of general theoretical understanding, there is a better chance for the legend to be destroyed than ever before. This is why Adler would have been so pleased with Ellenberger's vindication of his independence from Freud.

ENLIGHTENMENT VERSUS ROMANTICISM

Ellenberger offers a new, very broad and apt conceptualization of the difference between Adler and Freud—Adler representing the tradition of the Enlightenment, Freud that of philosophical Romanticism.

The pertinent characteristics of Romanticism are described

earlier in the book (pp. 199-223) as: emphasis on the irrational, instincts, and the unconscious; a belief in seminal principles and a spontaneous process of unfolding; interest in folklore and animal psychology; proclivity to dualistic ideas; and anthropological pessimism—all characteristics to be found in Freud. Adler is the psychologist of the Enlightenment through common emphasis on: reason, man as a social being, society as created for man; belief in moral progress, implying social reform; faith in education; preoccupation with aid to the underprivileged to the point even of using lay personnel in psychiatry; and altogether a practical and optimistic outlook (pp. 193-199).

Of the other two main figures of his book, Ellenberger places Janet also with the Enlightenment, while Jung is placed with Freud on the side of Romanticism (p. 888). The two groups are seen as distinct also with regard to the basis of their conceptions. Those of Janet and Adler are based on objective clinical observations, while with Freud and Jung "the basic tenets originated from within" (p. 890).

Although "Adler definitely belongs to . . . the Enlightenment," Ellenberger also finds several concepts in harmony with Romanticism (p. 629). The first of these is "the absolute uniqueness of the individual" (p. 629). While this is true, there still is a difference. As an early writer on "The Romantic man in the light of Individual Psychology" pointed out, in Romanticism this uniqueness is more a "demand for unlimited individualism . . . [which] for Individual Psychology, however, is exactly the sign of the neurotic" (4, p. 449). We should like to add, for the Romantic, uniqueness and individuality are a goal to be attained, such as Jung's individuation (the desirable unification of the personality), and the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson's identity formation (a wholeness to be achieved). For Adler on the other hand, the uniqueness and wholeness of the individual are givens, they are presuppositions. The goal to be attained is an individual functioning on the socially useful side.

OPTIMISM AND COMMUNITY FEELING

As to the actual contents in the Adler chapter, there are eight pages of family background, practically all new material, brought together by Ellenberger with the aid of the late Dr. Hans Beckh-Widmanstetter. Again the differences from Freud, despite "superficial analogies" (p. 572), are pointed out. This is followed by an

eleven-page account of life events plus eight pages on Adler's personality, ending with the observation:

Adler, an optimist . . . saw the neurotic as a pitiful individual who made use of transparent tricks in order to escape his life duties. . . . The drive toward self-perfection was the essence of man. The difference between Adler and Freud can be seen in the organization of their respective movements . . . Adler's Individual Psychology Society was loosely constituted. Sessions were attended by numerous patients because Adler expected each one of them to join the movement and become his flag-bearer. With an almost messianic attitude, Adler expected his movement to conquer and transform the world through education, teaching, and psychotherapy (p. 596).

One third of the chapter is given to a description of Adler's work, and here the most interesting part for many will be the initial section dealing with the time before Adler joined Freud. While it has been known previously that Adler was interested in issues of social medicine before he was interested in problems of neurosis, this aspect is now brought into clear view, with ample quotations from Adler's early writings. Ellenberger demonstrates that when Adler became one of the four original members of Freud's small group, "he had definite ideas on social medicine, education, the role of organ inferiorities, and educational errors in the genesis of emotional disturbances" (p. 603).

The presentation of Adler's psychological work is in five sections centering around the *Study of Organ Inferiority*; *The Neurotic Constitution*; *Understanding Human Nature* and *Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology*; a section on psychotherapy and education; and a fifth section based on *Social Interest* and *Superiority and Social Interest*. Ellenberger notes that in these later writings Adler attributed increased importance to the creative power and the degree of activity of the individual, and to a striving for superiority which "is no longer seen as antagonistic to community feeling . . . a normative ideal that gives direction to the striving for superiority . . . He now understands feelings of inferiority as being secondary to the striving for superiority. The opposite of community feeling is now 'private intelligence' " (p. 623).

Among Adler's sources, Ellenberger accepts Freud as "having influenced Adler negatively. Adler seems to have used Freud largely as an antagonist who helped him to find his own path by inspiring him in opposite ways of thought" (p. 627). Among positive sources are named: stoicism, Leibniz and Kant, Darwin and Marx, Nietzsche, and especially, of course, Vaihinger, the German pragmatist, and finally the holistic philosophy of Smuts.

Specific concepts are traced as follows: inferiority feeling to Stendhal and Emerson, the striving for superiority to Hobbes, Nietzsche and others. Forerunners of "neurotic fiction" are to be found in the characters of Cervantes, Flaubert, Ibsen and others. Adler's approach to personality diagnosis was anticipated by Goethe and Gall. For the idea of social interest or community feeling, Ellenberger sees possible influences from Popper-Lynkeus, Kropotkin, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Gorki.

ADLER'S INFLUENCE

The part most welcome to his friends will be the concluding section on Adler's influence. Here Ellenberger makes far-reaching statements which, coming from a most thoughtful and careful scholar, should carry great weight: Adler had, paradoxically, his greatest impact on psychoanalysis, while the neopsychoanalysts, such as Sullivan, Karen Horney, Fromm Clara Thompson, Schultz-Henke, replaced some of Freud's basic ideas with others "strikingly similar to those of Adler (without, however, mentioning his name)" (p. 638). Existential psychiatry as well, as represented by Frankl and Binswanger, has obviously been influenced by Adler (p. 641). "How could Sartre be unaware that this method already existed and had Alfred Adler for its author?" (p. 642). This is followed by the description of the use of Adlerian ideas by various other authors without mentioning his name.

Finally Ellenberger addresses himself to "the puzzling phenomenon of a collective denial of Adler's work and the systematic attribution of anything coined by him to other authors . . . It would not be easy to find another author from whom so much has been borrowed from all sides without acknowledgment than Alfred Adler" (p. 645). Ellenberger attempts to answer "this perplexing question of the discrepancy between greatness of achievement, massive rejection of person and work and wide-scale, quiet plagiarism" (p. 646) by offering several possible explanations. We hope that Ellenberger's ruthless confrontation of the professional world with the symptom, may be the beginning of a therapeutic change. Such re-evaluation of Adler would be of benefit to the profession, no less than to the image of Adler in the history of our field.

In the haste of current-day book production with emphasis on the latest and the newest, the work, of which the present chapter is a part, is a pleasure to behold as evidence that leisurely persevering

scholarship still exists and can have the greatest impact on the reader.

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