

## ADLER AND SARTRE: COMMENT

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I was very much interested in the article by Rom and Ansbacher entitled "An Adlerian Case or a Character by Sartre?" (4) not only because of its intrinsic value but also because I had myself analyzed the hero of Sartre's story "Erostratus" (5, pp. 41-58) and others of this author's characters from the angle of Adler's Individual Psychology some 15 years ago (6, 7).

Before quoting from this analysis I have to mention that the French existentialist distinguishes three modes of being which he designates by the terms "being-in-itself," "being-for-itself" and "being-for-others." The being-in-itself is that of the inanimate objects, while the being-for-itself is that of human self-consciousness. Now, as Hegel tried to show, our self-consciousness exists only because it exists for another person. Thus self-consciousness is basically "acknowledgment" by another person (*ein Anerkanntes*), and our being-for-others is a necessary condition for the development of our self-consciousness, our being-for-ourselves. According to Sartre, our being-for-others (*l'être-pour-autrui*) is revealed to us by the other person's "gaze" (*le regard*). The gaze of the other person reveals to me not only that I am an object to him, but also that he is a subject.

In my book on Sartre I tried to show that being-for-others is closely related to Adler's concept of vanity, by writing the following:

Sartre's . . . Existentialist psychoanalysis has called our attention to the fact that many persons—among them even a genius like Baudelaire—have a tendency to see themselves as they are seen by other people. To be sure, sometimes we need another person to see through his eyes how we are, who we are.<sup>1</sup> But we already know that, according to Sartre, under the gaze of other people the self changes from a subject, which is in the making, into an object, which *is* what it is, which coincides with itself and is petrified. And in this Sartre certainly is right. As long as he lives, every coward is a coward *en sursis*, on reprieve, who can become a hero. But under the gaze of other people the coward is no longer on reprieve, he is definitely a coward, his essence has been fixed and pinned down by the other person's gaze as though he were dead . . .

He cannot change. And if he cannot change, why should he make any moral effort to try? A person who sees himself through the eyes of other people exists no longer for himself, but only for others. He transposes the center of gravity of his existence from himself into the consciousness of other people, he ceases to a certain extent to be an ego. . . .

I think that from this deep insight of Sartre's Existentialist psychoanalysis a bridge leads across to Adler's *Individual Psychology* with its superiority goal. In the latter we can discern a lack of being-for-itself. An individual possessed by the

<sup>1</sup>This second sentence would correspond to Adler's important concept of "common sense" (1, pp. 149, 253-254).—Ed. note.

goal of [personal] superiority always looks at himself in the mirror of other people's consciousness, where he appears as a petrified thing (7, pp. 219-220).

There follows an analysis of Lucien Fleurier, a Fascist in the making in Sartre's story "The Childhood of a Leader" (5, pp. 81-159). Then I continue writing:

On the other hand we have Herostratus in Sartre's short story "*Erostrate*," whose basic project is not, as Robert Campbell (3) believes, only hatred, but that of being exclusively for others and not for himself. He wants to have a permanent place in other people's consciousness; and because he sees himself only through the eyes of others he lives entirely under the gazes of other people. Therefore his only obsession is to amaze them, be it by a crime. . . .

Now it seems to me that Adler's "vanity" or "will to superiority" is closely related to the tendency of certain of Sartre's individuals to exist only for others, to see themselves only through the eyes of other people. We designate a person as conceited when he is concerned only with the image he offers to the gaze of other people. He has his center of gravity outside himself and is half a man and half a thing, the half which is looked on. Only weak personalities need to exist in the consciousness of other people in order to exist for themselves. Vanity, certainly, is a form of Adler's inferiority complex (7, p. 221).

In his *Understanding Human Nature* (2, pp. 155-176) and in others of his works Adler insisted strongly on the psychic, moral and social dangers of vanity. The conceited person who always thinks of the impression he makes on others loses all relationship with reality and necessarily neglects the interests of his fellowmen. With this he comes into conflict with society, and this conflict reflects on his character, on his moral well-being and on his mental equilibrium. This vain dependency on the opinion of others is not to be mistaken for a true social feeling or social interest which is the criterion for mental health. In condemning the attitude of those who always live consciously under the gaze of other people Sartre's existential psychoanalysis offers one of its many confirmations of Adler's Individual Psychology.

#### REFERENCES

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