

A RESPONSE TO CRANDALL'S "REPLY" AND "ALTERNATIVE FORMULATION"

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Crandall's (1978) reply to Bickhard and Ford (1976) is in two main parts: (a) a sequence of rebuttals to a number of points raised in Bickhard and Ford (1976) concerning the Adlerian concept of social interest; and (b) a presentation of an alternative conceptualization of social interest. The primary thrust of my response to Crandall is simply that, with two or three important exceptions, Crandall's conclusions and proposals are in complete concordance with those reached in Bickhard and Ford (1976): the purported differences are, in fact, a product of Crandall's misconstrual of what we wrote. Correspondingly, my reply will be in three parts: (a) Crandall's misconstruals, (b) the genuine disagreements, and (c) Crandall's alternative conceptualizations.

Misconstruals

The basic theme is well illustrated with the first topic that Crandall deals with: social interest as motive. Our point was that it is inappropriate to interpret social interest as necessarily involving conscious motives. Crandall agrees. But Crandall goes on to assume that Bickhard and Ford (1976) contend that "Adler was referring to a conscious motive" (p. 29), and then to argue against that position. Nowhere do we make that claim. Instead, we state that "It is easy to derive implications in these and other discussions that social interest is . . . [a] . . . conscious . . . motive structure . . ." (Bickhard & Ford, 1976, p. 29), and we conclude that those implications are inappropriate. Crandall's point that social interest can and does involve unconscious motivation is undoubtedly true.

The issue with respect to social interest as effect is essentially the same. Crandall claims that social interest as effect is an inappropriate interpretation, and that is exactly what we claimed.

In both cases, however, Crandall's claims of inappropriateness are in terms of what Adler 'obviously' meant if one only understood him

better, while our claims of inappropriateness are based on analysis of what *must* be true about the concept in order for it to do what it is supposed to do in Adlerian theory. Our concern is to do an internal analysis of Adlerian theory; Crandall's seems to be to defend Adler against purported criticisms. For us, consideration of what Adler actually meant in any particular quoted passage is secondary: "Note that it is not crucial to the preceding arguments that Adler actually intended the interpretations presented. It is sufficient that he may be construed as supporting these interpretations to require their consideration and rebuttal" (Bickhard & Ford, 1976, p. 32). For Crandall, Adler's intentions are all important: he pervasively interprets us as writing about Adler's underlying intentions rather than his writings, and then rebuts that a more careful or extensive understanding of Adler would show that he could not possibly have intended the positions we discuss. The facts are that Adler *did* write the quoted passages; that those passages and others *can* be interpreted in the manners discussed; that some people *do* so interpret social interest; and, therefore, that those interpretations require "consideration and rebuttal."

This pattern persists. As Crandall says, "It seems unlikely that Adler would have considered someone to be mentally healthy solely on the basis of one or a few contributions to mankind." Undoubtedly true, but again totally irrelevant to the task of the logical analysis of positions that we were engaged in. "This insistence does not reflect Adler's view." Undoubtedly true, but we weren't discussing Adler's view; we were discussing some logical implications of a position that Adler's writings might be interpreted as supporting. And so on.

Genuine Disagreements

Crandall turns next to our discussion of the functions that the concept of social interest serves in Adlerian theory. In this discussion, Crandall's rebuttals come closer to being rebuttals of positions we actually took, though again the confusion between what Adler intended and how Adlerian theory might be interpreted persists. In large part, in fact, Crandall is more on target with regard to this discussion than to earlier ones because the possible interpretations that we discuss in this section *do*, in most cases, appear to us to be the ones that Adler intended, or at least logically committed himself to. Therefore, we wrote about them that way, and, thus, Crandall's

objections about Adler's intent are somewhat more relevant to what we wrote.

Crandall first objects to our strategy of exploring possible objects of social interest on the grounds that there is more than one object and that there may be more than one activity associated with any particular object. Both points would seem to be true, but I do not know of any part of our reasoning that presumes otherwise, so it is not clear what Crandall is arguing against here.

Crandall next suggests that in differentiating man-as-socius and man-as-human as potential objects of social interest, we "seem to be suggesting that there are human values that have little, if anything, to do with man's social nature or relations." Actually, we suggest nothing of the kind. Our point is that there are some issues in living that are not *subsumed* under social issues. He also suggests that the man-as-socius and man-as-human possibilities which we considered do not constitute genuine alternatives between which there is a "need to make a choice." "It might instead be argued that the distinction between these two possible referents for social interest artificially separates continually interacting aspects of the person." I would wholeheartedly agree that those aspects are continually interacting, but that already presumes the point Crandall is arguing against: that they do constitute two different aspects. "Capacities to choose and to find meaning may be non-social in some sense, but the functioning of these capacities is certainly influenced by one's history of social interactions." Very true, but such social *influence* does not speak against the point of there being human capacities and concerns that are not themselves social, that are, for example, "socially neutral" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 133).

Concerning our first discussion of the function of the concept of social interest in Adlerian theory, social interest and morality, Crandall first raises a question of whether we contradicted ourselves in, on the one hand, questioning the role of moral evaluations in a theory of personality, and, on the other hand, pointing out that the task remains of deriving an ethic based on the existence of choice and within the framework of human nature. Crandall asks, "Should we try to establish a base for morality or not?" The answer, of course, is "of course we should," but it is still questionable what its role would be in a theory of personality.

Crandall next suggests that "Adler proffered social interest as a substitute for moralistic considerations, not as a definition or expla-

nation.” He suggests, therefore, that Adler “must be absolved” of the errors which we find in Adler’s writings. However, to assume that such a “pragmatic approach to evaluating behavior, based on scientific knowledge” can “substitute for moralistic considerations” is precisely what opens Adler to the charge of having made a category error, the error that is often characterized as deriving “ought” from “is.” Thus, Crandall does not address the reasoning that we offer.

Concerning social interest and the meaning of life, Crandall suggests that it “would be a most unusual error” for Adler to have considered meaning to exist in some external form. Perhaps so, but an error nevertheless. He then notes “that Adler introduced the offending portion [of a quote from Adler] with ‘It is as though.’ He did not say the meaning actually is out there.” The quote, however, is “It is as though the questioning cosmos had given the command . . .”: clearly, Adler did not intend a literal interpretation of the cosmos commanding, and, though it is true that Adler did not say that “the meaning is out there,” our point was that “Adler might seem to imply” a position which logically presupposes such an externality of meaning. Crandall ignores other offered quotes which might seem to support such a position. He ends up with a version of Adler’s conceptualization of meaning which is strikingly similar to one which we develop and point out to be “a much more subtle and acceptable position, and probably truer to the basic spirit of Adler, though it contradicts some of his statements” (Bickhard & Ford, 1976, p. 43). Crandall ignores our discussion of this position. He also ignores the basic reason for considering the two possible interpretations of Adler in the first place: if meaning is external in the particular manner of the first interpretation, then man-as-human is subsumed under man-as-socius, and there is nothing to choose between; while if “meaning is a human construction” (as Crandall states) as in the second interpretation, then there are aspects of man-as-human that are not subsumable under man-as-socius, and the choice remains. Both Bickhard and Ford (1976) and Crandall’s reply conclude that the first interpretation is not sustainable.

Crandall’s last point of discussion concerning our paper is that of the relationship of social interest to mental health. It is here that we have the clearest possibility of a genuine disagreement. We point out that “social interest is [an] explication of mental health, a definition. It describes what mental health is, not why it develops nor where it

comes from" (Bickhard & Ford, 1976, p. 49). Crandall explicitly disagrees, "This conclusion is hard to accept in view of the amount of Adler's writings devoted to analyzing the causal role that social interest plays in adjustment." Crandall also states that "if social interest was also regarded as the *sole* criterion of mental health, we would be tangled in a tautology." The key word is "also," for if social interest were both the cause and the explication of mental health, then we would be involved in a tautology, but if it were the sole criterion but not the cause, then we have "an explication, a definition." The question, then is whether social interest should be interpreted as the cause or as the explication of mental health; it cannot be both.

First, I would like to point out that Adler's causally flavored discussions concerning the consequences of a lack of social interest for mental health do not necessarily yield any problems for the view that social interest explicates mental health: if social interest explicates mental health, then analyses of consequences of social interest on mental health are simply analyses of the ways in which psychopathology (or mental health) tends to perpetuate itself. This is surely an unexceptionable topic. But the question of why it (social interest or psychopathology) develops in the first place remains.

Crandall claims that social interest is one important criterion for mental health, but not the only one, and thus could not be an explication of mental health. "Certainly Adler listed many other criteria for assessing mental health. . . . The criteria, or symptoms, mainly involve variations on the theme of difficulty in mastering the problems of life." Certainly Crandall's reasoning is valid; the question is whether or not these "other criteria for assessing mental health" are in fact *alternatives* to social interest, or whether they are instead *specifications* of social interest with respect to "the problems of life."

Note that if Crandall is correct and social interest is not an explication of mental health, then Adlerian theory would seem not to contain an explication or a definition of mental health: a collection of assessment criteria does not constitute an explication. This would make Crandall's interpretation distinctly implausible and undesirable.

It might appear that psychopathology could be defined as inappropriately intense inferiority feelings, and, thus, that Adlerian theory would nevertheless contain an explication of mental health

and pathology based on inferiority feelings. But inferiority feelings are responses to particular situations, not character traits. Inappropriately intense inferiority feelings may manifest an underlying pathology, but they do not constitute it. It might then appear that inappropriate inferiority feelings are grounded on mistaken goals and is and world view might explicate psychopathology. That is correct, but "the mistake consists in being self-centered rather than taking the human interrelatedness into account" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 239, editors' comment). That is, the mistake is a lack of social interest.

In fact, it seems rather clear that social interest does explicate mental health in Adlerian theory, and, correspondingly, that a lack of social interest explicates psychopathology.

In a neurosis we are always confronted with a highly placed goal of personal superiority. . . . That such a . . . goal of personal superiority betokens a lack of the proper measure of social interest . . . is understandable. The striving for personal superiority and the non-development of social interest are both mistakes. However, they are not two mistakes which the individual has made; they are one and the same mistake. (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, pp. 240-241)

All failures—neurotics, psychotics, criminals, drunkards, problem children, suicides, perverts, and prostitutes—are failures because they are lacking in social interest. (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 156)

. . . All that constitutes a failure is so because it obstructs social feeling. (Adler, 1964, p. 283)

The only salvation from the continuously deriving inferiority feeling is the knowledge and feeling of being valuable which originate from the contribution to the common welfare. (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 155)

In this way [work] he acquires a sense of his worth to society—the only possible means of mitigating the universal human feeling of inferiority. (Adler, 1964, pp. 58-59)

Adler's theory of neurosis and other behavior disorders is in essence the following: . . . (4) The mistake consists in being self-centered rather than taking the human interrelatedness into account. (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956, p. 239, editors' comment)

When scrutinized, the neurotic will be found to be an individual placed in a test situation who is attempting to solve his problems in the interest of his own personal ambition rather than in the interest of the common welfare. This holds true of all neuroses. (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1973, p. 91, Adler's emphasis)

We thus come to the following conception of the structure of

neurosis: All neurotic symptoms are safeguards of persons who do not feel adequately equipped or prepared for the problems of life, who carry within themselves only a passive appreciation of social feeling and interest. (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1973, p. 95)

It seems eminently clear that social interest explicates mental health. It also seems clear that social interest is manifested in the individual's solutions to the problems of life, that a developed social interest provides the ground for its own further development in dealing with future instances of life's problems, and that the pathology of a lack of social interest is the ground for the further elaboration of pathological safeguards with respect to life's problems. To explicate mental health in terms of social interest, however, is not by itself an explication of social interest, nor an explanation of its origins.

Crandall's Alternative

Crandall next presents "an alternative view of social interest." Crandall's formulation is based on the concepts of value and valuing with respect to three categories of objects: subsocial objects, social objects, and suprasocial objects. I find Crandall's formulation to be interesting and valuable, but not to be an alternative to anything in Bickhard and Ford (1976). First of all, we did not present a formulation of social interest: there is nothing in Bickhard and Ford for Crandall's formulation to be an alternative to. Our concern was to clear away a great deal of underbrush that obscured the proper outlines of the concept, not to explicate the concept itself.

"Although the ontological outlines of social interest have been delineated, we are provided at best with a framework for an ultimate understanding of its ontological nature. We know that social interest involves an innate potential for the development of the capacity for cooperative fellowship, but we do not know of what that potential, or that development or that capacity consists. It was Adler's insight to recognize that social fellowship requires its own cognitive and motivational prerequisites; it remains for others to specify what those prerequisites are. (Bickhard & Ford, 1976, p. 48)

Second, I find Crandall's formulation to be for the most part quite consistent with the framework that we developed. We made no mention of valuing per se, but that step in the formulation of social interest would seem to be a reasonable, valuable, and consistent move in the understanding of "the capacity for cooperative fellowship." And Crandall's strategy of looking at categories of objects for social interest is very similar to that in Bickhard and Ford (1976).

Crandall, however, wants to contend that “Bickhard and Ford apparently . . . [construe social interest as having] . . . but one object.” It seems clear that we were discussing categories, not single entities, exactly like Crandall, though not exactly the same categories.

My only exception to Crandall’s formulation, aside from the simple point that it too is incomplete with respect to Adler’s conceptualizations, is that, in considering nonsocial objects (subsocial and suprasocial) as part of social interest, Crandall is, on the one hand, in keeping with many of Adler’s sensitivities and insights, but, on the other hand, “the extreme generality . . . would thus blur Adler’s primary focus . . . [on] . . . the particular issue of man’s capacity for fellowship and cooperation” (Bickhard & Ford, 1976, p. 46). Furthermore, it directly contradicts Adler’s repeated assertions that “All tasks which are put to the individual are social problems” (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1973, p. 52). It was precisely these considerations that lead Bickhard and Ford (1976) to accept man-as-socius as a more appropriate locus for social interest than the more inclusive man-as-human.

Conclusions

The major theme of Crandall’s reply to Bickhard and Ford (1976) is to defend Adler against imagined and actual criticisms. We were not concerned with criticizing Adler so much as with doing a logical analysis of the concept of social interest within Adlerian theory. Insofar as that analysis might involve or imply criticisms of Adler’s writings, then so be it. Adlerians want to have the courage to be mistaken, but often seem to have little courage for Adler to have been mistaken. The fact is that Adler did make mistakes. Adler did write imprecisely. At the same time, Adler did have valuable and fundamental insights into human nature and functioning. Adlerian theory deserves the most careful and exacting analysis and criticism that can be brought to it. Nothing less will allow his ideas to have their full impact. Anything less is a disservice to Adler, to ourselves, and to humanity.

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