

Individual Psychology Theory Displayed in Recent French Psychiatric Literature¹

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For several years now French psychiatric literature has shown distinctly greater attention toward Comparative Individual Psychology.² In the following, a few books will be surveyed which merit special mention in this regard:

After an historical overview, P. Guiraud, in his *General Psychiatry* (4), turns to more recent achievements in psychopathology, then points up certain guiding principles in psychiatric research and finally, studies the nosographic aspect.

In a chapter devoted to newer acquisitions in psychopathology (p. 219-225), the author examines the doctrine of Alfred Adler. Having shown the points common to all psychotherapy: dream analysis, recollections, importance of associations of ideas,—the author stresses the originality of Adler's work which he considers as "a structure, less shocking (*choquante*) than Freud's." Guiraud elaborates on the condition of organ inferiority and on its psychic (or mental) compensation; the false (*fictif*) goals of the neurotic; the antithetic (polar) attitudes of the mind; (femininity-virility, below-above, insecurity-assurance) and the exaggerated need of the neurotic for "affirmation" and "exaltation of self-feeling" which leads up to a power ideal which the individual wants to reach either by inspiring fear (bullying) or by complaining.

Manual of Psychiatry by H. Baruk (1) is a classical treatise intended for students and physicians. In a brief chapter devoted to Adlerian psychology, there are defined the concepts of the inferiority complex, the life plan of the human individual as well as the compensatory dynamisms.

The *Alphabetic Manual of Psychiatry* by A. Porot et al. (5), as its name shows, gives in alphabetical order definitions and explanations of psychiatric terms. On p. 221, J. Sutter defines inferiority, inferiority

¹ Translated from the French by Joseph Meiers, M.D., New York.

² Dr. Schaffer, as others in France, uses the term *psychologie individuelle comparée* for the Adlerian system (Translator).

feeling, and inferiority complex—all established by Alfred Adler. Brought about by organic (somatic) deficiencies and by the behavior of society (mainly the family) toward the child, the inferiority feeling can result in a faulty compensation, or in a “masculine protest,” or in a “will to power” (power striving)—at times, to an overcompensation. Sutter stresses the value of this doctrine not only in the psychiatric field but also in the fields of education, pedagogy and re-education of persons with “character defects.”

Delay's *Studies in Medical Psychology* (2) treats divers psychological and psychopathological problems. A subtle analysis delves into the question of the midbrain, clinical psychometry, “shock” and alarm reactions, and psycho-somatic medicine. In chapter VI, titled “Toward a Medical Characterology,” the author describes the following varieties: the descriptive clinical characterology; the constitutional one; and what he calls “the characterology of institutions” (family, occupational-professional, religious, national political and cultural groupings)—all of which give to the human personality his own particular “stamp.”

“Character,” says Jean Delay, “signifies, etymologically, ‘impression’ or ‘stamp,’ and the history of a person’s character is largely the history of his or her contacts.”

After investigating the Freudian theory and its developments, the author devotes a short discourse on the Adlerian theory. Here we read: “Adler describes, essentially, the situation of man placed within a civilization which is grounded in the competition of forces” (p. 159). Then, reviewing the minor schools, he writes: “Karen Horney has, in her work concerning the Neurotic Personality, maintained . . . theories rather close (*voisines*) to those of Adler.”

The conclusion of the chapter on Medical Characterology reads: “Character is not solely the meeting point of biological and social influences; character is also the fruit of *creative synthesis*, of the slow working of the *self upon itself*—a work which models us according to the ideal which we have conceived. A character analysis that would take into account only ‘retrospective’ factors and neglect the ‘forward-looking’ (*prospectifs*) factors would run the risk of failing to recognize the ‘aimfulness’ (*intentionnalité*) which often eventually is what gives a meaning to the assembly [of factors] . . . In the fields of Characterology, the study of aim-directedness and of the individual aims (*finalités*) is no less necessary than that of the beginnings. A character is never ‘finished.’”

H. Ey and co-workers, in their *Medico-surgical Encyclopedia* (3), present a monumental work devoting three volumes to psychiatry. The first of these treats of general subjects such as semeiology, diagnostic methods and acute and chronic psychoses. The second investigates the neuroses, psychosomatic medicine, mental disorders due to brain and other organic lesions, and the exogenic and endogenic factors in psychiatry.

The third volume is dedicated to socio-psychiatry and to the therapeutic methods and techniques. It is in this context that A. Meyer explains the theory of Alfred Adler from an historical, doctrinal and practical viewpoint. He reviews the concepts of organ inferiority, masculine protest, imagination, dream interpretation, "life style," cultural values, and the influence of "inherited aptitudes."

In the same part of the third volume, H. Ellenberger examines *Existential Analysis (Daseinsanalyse)*. He says: "The transition from human biology to psychology was first achieved by Alfred Adler in his Individual Psychology. . . . The Adlerian theory *pre-figures* Existential Analysis." Having shown the resemblances and divergences between Adlerian psychology and Existential Analysis, he terminates his chapter by asking himself whether Existential Analysis has the right to take its place as a therapeutic method, or whether it is not, rather, an exploratory method.

REFERENCES

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