

BOOK REVIEW

Ansbacher, H. L. and R. Ansbacher (eds). *Superiority and social interest* by Alfred Adler Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois: 1964. Pp 432. \$8.95.

The Ansbachers deserve enthusiastic applause from personologists, particularly from Adlerians, for their devoted efforts to collect the writings of Alfred Adler and to present his theories in a systematized fashion. They began with their first book, by now well known and used routinely, entitled *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*. The purpose of the earlier volume was to present selections of Adler's writings in an organized form to make them available as a textbook. The present volume is perceived by the editors as a supplement to their first book. Here, the Ansbachers present a collection of Adler's later writings which have not heretofore appeared in book form. A secondary purpose as stated in the preface is to demonstrate that Adler, perhaps more than any other man in his field, experienced deeply the social responsibility that men have to each other, and that he, himself, embodied laudably in his life in practice the theories that he formulated.

The present book is divided into eight parts. The introduction which represents a general overview of the relationship between Individual Psychology and other socio-psychological systems, is followed by the first part entitled *General Assumptions and Principles*. The first two sections are of particular interest and may perhaps come as a surprise to those of us who may not have had a chance to read these papers previously. In "The Progress of Mankind" Adler develops the thesis that human progress is a function of social interest. However, his definition of social interest is based in part on the acceptance of our traditions which have been transmitted by our forebears. Thus, he states that what parents have contributed to their children, even if only in the apparent interest of their own family, is irrevocably for the benefit of the whole of mankind. These useful contributions will be transmitted further to groups outside the family circle and contribute to compensation process which by necessity arises from the human existential condition and the finiteness of life. In the second section "On the Origin of the Striving for Superiority and of Social Interest", Adler elaborates further. Social interest is a necessity — the establishment of favorable relations between the individual and the surrounding, this social process of adaptation is tantamount to LIVING. It follows, therefore, that striving for perfection and ideals is perfectly in accord with social interest as long as it is embedded in the social context and does not seek to subjugate fellowmen. Perhaps, states Adler, the final elevation of mankind to perfection is reflected by the belief in God. The concept of God embodies man's "dark longing" to reach perfection. In his discussion of Adler's concept of social interest, Alfred Farau (New York) has frequently pointed out that Adler had established a metaphysical concept. And, indeed, Adler states "I must admit that those who find a piece of metaphysics in Individual Psychology are right. Some praise this, others criticize it. Unfortunately, there are many who have an erroneous view of metaphysics, who would like to see every-

thing eliminated from the life of mankind which they cannot comprehend immediately. But by doing so we would interfere with the possibilities of development, prevent every new thought." For Adler's view on the importance of family life in the development of social interest, the reader is also referred to a critical evaluation of the ontogenesis of the concept in an earlier issue of *This Journal* ("Social Interest-Task and Challenge", 1963, 2, 5-12).

The second part of the book entitled *Theory of the Neuroses* deals with such clinical contributions as "The Structure of the Neuroses" and "Compulsion Neurosis". The third section presents papers on case interpretations and treatment techniques. The fourth part, entitled *Various Topics* concerns itself with a variety of papers from "The Difference between Individual Psychology and Psychoanalysis" to "The Structure and Prevention of Delinquency". Two of the most interesting papers by Adler for this reviewer were his views on psychoanalysis and sexuality. Discussing techniques of dream interpretation, Adler contrasts Freud's analysis from "above to below" to his interpretations. He correctly points out three most important elements in dream work (1) attempted solution of a task by (2) the creation of an emotional mood (3) and self-deception and disguise of what the dreamer wishes to express. The analysis of the dream in the context of the present and the future consequently stresses a phenomenological analysis of dream elements. In part, such technique has been incorporated by present day clinicians like Walter Bonime (*The Clinical Use of Dreams*, 1962) and Montague Ullman (*J. Indiv. Psychol.*, 1962, 18, 18-25). It is paradoxical, however, that Adler disregarded the concept of the unconscious while stressing self-deception and symbolization in dream work. In the paper on "The Sexual Function", Adler perceived sex as social adaptation and social cooperation. He distinguishes between a "primary sexual phase" and a subsequent socio-sexual integrated activity. The beginning of the primary phase is seen in the tickling sensation — this stage is tantamount to pure autoeroticism. Adler felt that autoeroticism is socially negatively conditioned and thus gives the impetus to the later socio-sexual phase. Acute masturbatory activity is interpreted as inherent in the style of life of the pampered child.

The fifth part of this volume contains letters and comments by Adler and Lutheran minister Ernst Jahn on religion and mental health. These exchanges make fascinating reading and reflect the efforts of the minister and the psychologist to find common footing. I should think that today more dichotomies have been bridged than at that time, and that pastors and therapists are working more closely together than ever before. Part six consists of a biographical essay on Adler by Carl Furtmüller, an educator and friend of Adler's. This section is of particular interest to readers of the Orgler book (reviewed in *This Journal*). It supplements, elaborates and gives a more complete and objective picture of Adler. The last and most valuable part of the Ansbachers' new volume contains a bibliography of Adler's writings.

G. H. Fenchel

Gekoski, N. *Psychological testing*. Charles C. Thomas, 1964. Pp 300 \$8.50

The author, describing himself as an academician and practitioner in psychological testing, wrote this book “. . . to communicate rather than impress.” Apparently, he feels strongly misuse of tests and test results and wishes to impart some basic elementary information. The content is divided into five major parts with emphasis on interest and aptitude testing. It is a useful beginner’s book introducing psychology students to non-projective testing.

G. H. Fenchel

Kanner, Leo. *A history of the care and study of the mentally retarded*. Charles C. Thomas, 1964. Pp 150. \$6.50

Prof. Kanner is well known in the field of child psychiatry. This little monograph is a labor of love. His style of writing, the historical anecdotes and illustrations, the facsimilies of early publications — they all lend this volume charm and fascination. How many of us knew, for example, that Martin Luther recommended drowning a mentally defective boy because he believed that he had no soul? The book is highly recommended not only for an historical survey of the field of mental retardation but also for a provocative description of socio-cultural views.

G. H. Fenchel

Levine, M. & G. Spivack. *The Rorschach index of repressive style*. Charles C. Thomas, 1964. Pp. 180. \$7.50

The RRS is a research instrument which incorporates the various aspects of Rorschach responses in a single scoring system. The term repression is used to denote a series of cognitive acts which predispose one towards a response style under conditions of defensiveness. Such cognitive style is seen as gross limitation of the thought process. While this work is of interest to psychologists interested in projective techniques, it has failed so far to provide a valuable tool for the practitioner. Research in cognitive styles take their impetus from the works by Klein and Witkin. Adlerians may prefer a more teleological approach and look for instruments measuring life styles rather than defensive security operations.

G. H. Fenchel

Orgler, Hertha. *Alfred Adler — the man and his work*. Liveright Publ. Co., New York: 1963. Pp 266. \$5.95

This well known author’s book is divided into three parts. The first part is a brief biography of Adler interspersed with vignettes of his life, emphasizing Adler’s own handicaps which he overcame. We learn, for example, that Adler was the second of six children, that he was delicate, had rickets and suffered from spasms of the glottis. The physical danger of suffocation and the death of his younger brother (Adler was only three years old) seemed to have impressed him deeply; particularly after a subsequent bout

with pneumonia, he decided to become a physician. We are also given to understand that his mother pampered him until his younger brother was born, and that his father expected great accomplishments of him. During his school years he remained a mediocre pupil until he decided to overcome his scholastic difficulties by diligent and studious application.

During the mature years, Adler started to practice as an eye specialist and later became a general practitioner. He was especially interested in incurable diseases and had an idea of curing cancer by applying heavy metals. The helplessness he experienced in facing death seems to have led him to the practice of neurology and psychiatry. In the midst of his varied and rich professional activities, he maintained close ties to his family and friends. In 1902, he joined the Freudian Wednesday night discussion group and subsequently became one of the editors of the psychoanalytic journal. In 1911, he resigned with seven others from the circle in protest against Freud's sexual theories. In 1912, he founded the Society for Individual Psychology. We are gratified to read the author's comments in this section that Adler owed much to Freud and in turn enriched psychoanalysis with his own contributions.

The second part of the book is devoted to the basic principles of Individual Psychology. Chapters deal with teleology, life-style, ordinal position in the family, childhood recollections, dreams and the inferiority complex. A special chapter is devoted to neurotic life solutions such as homosexuality, prostitution and sado-masochism. In the first two chapters of the third section, the author addresses herself to the application of Adlerian principles to childhood education and treatment methods. The third chapter provides the reader with a description of how Individual Psychology was disseminated during the early period, the national and international organizations and congresses, and Adler's last activities prior to his death in Scotland. The vignettes of Adler in this chapter are especially interesting. For example, his views of the equality of the sexes deserve special mention. It is doubtful, however, that we can agree with his opinion that such equality has been achieved in the United States. The subsequent chapter is another attempt by Mrs. Orgler to relate the formulation of Individual Psychology principles to Adler's personality. The last chapter, entitled "Adlerian Psychology Today" is the most diversified portion of the book. The author skips from brief statements concerning the application of Adler's teachings to the physical handicapped and cigarette smokers to a description of Adlerian publications, organizations and institutes throughout the world. We regret that Mrs. Orgler was unable to mention this journal in her listings, and anticipate that a revised edition might update the information she has provided.

I would recommend Mrs. Orgler's book to all members of ASAP. In spite of its flaws, such as the loose organization of material throughout and the absence of any mentioning of scientific studies in the present day literature which support some Adlerian assumptions, it provides the interested reader with fascinating glimpses into Alfred Adler's life and the early beginnings of Individual Psychology.

G. H. Fenchel