

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ADLERIAN ORIENTATION IN PSYCHOTHERAPY¹

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This short paper, which appeared originally as the foreword to The Importance of Feeling Inferior by Marie Beynon Ray, reviewed in the last issue, is by the late originator of insulin shock therapy for schizophrenia, who has sometimes been referred to as the Pasteur of psychiatry. In his obituary, the New York Times, December 3, 1957, observed, "The thirtieth anniversary of Dr. Sakel's earliest experiments was commemorated at a brilliant international symposium in Vienna last September. . . . The psychiatrists attending the symposium paid tribute to Dr. Sakel as the first man in history to show that the worst and most prevalent form of insanity could be treated by physiological methods."

Dr. Sakel in the present paper, does not do justice to the theories of either Adler or Freud. Still it is reprinted here as a noteworthy document. In it the pioneer in the successful application of physiological methods to mental disorders takes sides against Freud, the more physiologically and biologically oriented psychologist, and sides with Adler, who was more psychologically and socially oriented. Dr. Sakel holds that man's perpetual desire for intangible values is among the "ultimate causes."

What makes this book on the inferiority complex particularly timely, is that the public is beginning to recover from its long enslavement to the fascination of Freudian theories and from domination by the overwhelming personality of Freud himself as well as from the hypnotic attraction of the psychoanalytic couch. The Freudian doctrine is compounded of a few *facts* and much fancy.

The world is also beginning to recover from the pessimism of Freud and to turn toward the more optimistic view of man and his possibilities taken by Adler, the advocate of the inferiority complex. Adler's Individual Psychology, more oriented toward social and spiritual values, is more in line with our thinking today than is Freud's one-sided animal-instinct-based, purely earthy psychology of disillusionment. It holds out hope of the possibility of self-betterment. Adler's emphasis on the inferiority complex is an indispensable counterweight to the outworn and never valid Freudian theory of pansexuality, the theory that in the last analysis sex is the sole motivation of man. The drive to survive is a more fundamental and much more potent force in human nature than the sexual drive. Adler's insistence that *self-*

¹Reprinted from the foreword to the book *The Importance of Feeling Inferior*, copyright (C) 1957 by Marie Beynon Ray, published by Harper & Brothers. Two paragraphs have been omitted.

preservation precedes and supersedes the preservation of the species, the premise on which he based his "drive to power," is incontrovertible.

Finally Freud overlooked, as Adler did not, too many of what I call the "ultimate causes," neglecting completely man's inherent and perpetual desire and quest for intangible values, such absolutes as justice, co-operation, self-sacrifice, compassion, etc.

It is not a question of one school superseding the other, of the Adlerians finally winning out over the long-dominant Freudians, but rather of the two interpenetrating. Thus psychotherapy becomes, as it should, more eclectic, taking the best from both schools as well as from later practitioners who recognize the social and environmental forces, such as Stekel, Fromm, Horney. In this new psychotherapy the Adlerian orientation is assuming a deservedly greater importance. Freudian psychoanalysis has had the disadvantage of being a ritualistic routine, varying little to suit the needs of a given individual. Adler's Individual Psychology, or the psychology of the individual, is far more flexible. To the classic Freudian ritual many psychoanalysts have now added another ritualistic practice, that of giving tranquilizing drugs, which too many doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists are administering perfunctorily today to keep their patients quiet while they try to think what to do for them. Some even quite erroneously hope to cure their patients with these tranquilizers.

The Importance of Feeling Inferior, lucidly and interestingly written, with many convincing examples of the stimulation to achievement sparked by feelings of inferiority—such outstanding cases as those of Lincoln and Alexander the Great, the despised Macedonian, Agnes de Mille and Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, and its many case histories of less-known individuals—can enormously assist the normal person to understand himself and others and to order his life more happily. It seems to me that it could be read with some profit by specialists in these fields.