

Book Review

An Adlerian Lexicon for Newcomers and Old Hats

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Griffith, J., & Powers, R. L. (2007). *The Lexicon of Adlerian Psychology: 106 Terms Associated with the Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler* (2nd ed.). Port Townsend, WA: Adlerian Psychology Associates, Ltd.

Jane Griffith and Robert Powers have been successful purveyors of Individual Psychology for the past two decades. This lexicon is a scholarly resource that has been sorely needed by those of us who are concerned with theory formation and the philosophy that lies behind it. Powers is a master of the English language and gives clear explanations of the terms and how they are used. The authors also often refer to Heinz and Ruth Ansbacher's book, *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*, which is very helpful. Griffin and Powers have provided a historical and sociocultural context of Adler's work. This permits the reader/student a far richer and more complete understanding of the philosophical and political atmosphere of the era in which Adler developed his ideas.

In this publication, the authors explain terms, give their sources, and discuss apparent differences between scholars and the linguistic problems associated with the translation from the German. This book provides us with an opportunity to reexamine the way we have used these terms, and decide which of them may be thought of as obsolete and not currently useful, which ought to be changed, and which ought to be retranslated. A good example of this can be seen in the way the authors prefer the term "community feeling" to the term "social interest." Actually, "community feeling" is an exact translation of *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, the German squeezed-together-into-one-word which is not the English word style. The French *sense de commune* is the same thing. The German suffix *-schaft* becomes "-ship" in English, which suggests that a common English word "fellowship" may perhaps carry the nuance that Adler intended.

Heinz Ansbacher once told me (Shulman) that Adler's ideas had certainly developed over the years, but he had never rewritten or openly stated that his views had altered. The authors show the development from "will to power"

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to "inferiority feeling/complex" to "striving for superiority/perfection." This whole concept still needs further clarification. The term "inferiority feeling" has its own difficulties. Inferior to what? The German word for "inferiority feeling" is *Minderwertigkeit*, which translates into English as "being of lesser worth." To add to this sophistry, Kurt Adler was once asked how his father used the word "striving." Kurt answered that he only heard him use the word *Geltungstrebung*. *Geltung* in our English-German dictionary means "value" as a noun and "valid" as an adjective. Did he mean "striving to have value," or "striving for validation"? One of Adler's phrases was "striving to move from a felt minus to a felt plus." This is a broad enough concept to explain what Adler was thinking, but it is still tricky because it is so broad, making it difficult to pin down what Adler was thinking and how his own unfamiliarity with the English language led him to accept what his translators and interpreters offered him.

The Lexicon is thus a dictionary with commentary. The explanation of terms is clear and easy to read and comprehend. Students and newcomers will find it very useful; old hands will find it entertaining and thought provoking. A most valuable part of the book is the Introduction by Powers, who reviews the whole history of how Adler's Individual Psychology seeped into the mainstream of psychology without being recognized as Adler's. In addition to Powers' examples of the *New York Times* and *Die Zeit*, two newspapers that got it all wrong when discussing Adler, we can add the name of the French existentialist philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, who mixed up Freud and Adler and gave each credit for the other's work.

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