

What Life Could Mean To You

Alfred Adler

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This is one of Adler's most popular books. Although the original title was "What life should mean to you", the should was changed with could in later editions. In collaboration with Sigmund Freud and a small group of Freud's colleagues, Adler was among the co-founders of the psychoanalytic movement and a core member of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society: indeed, to Freud he was "the only personality there" On this book and the meaning of life, he begans: "Human beings live in the realm of meanings. We do not experience pure circumstances; we always experience circumstances in their significance for men. Even at its source our experience is qualified by our human purposes. " Wood " means " wood in its relation to mankind ", and " stone " means " stone as it can be a factor in human life." If a man should try to escape meanings and devote himself only to circumstances he would be very unfortunate: he would isolate himself from others: his actions would be useless to himself or to any one; in a word, they would be meaningless. But no human being can escape meanings. We experience reality always through the meaning we give it; not in itself, but as something interpreted. It will be natural to suppose, therefore, that this meaning is always more or less unfinished, incomplete; and even that it is never altogether right. The realm of meanings is the realm of mistakes. If we asked a man, " What is the meaning of life? ", he would perhaps be unable to answer. For the most part people do not bother themselves with the question or try to formulate replies. It is true that the question is as old as human history and that in our own time young people — and older people as well will often break out with the cry..." About the Author Colin Brett is an accredited Adlerian counselor and former Training Officer of the Adlerian Society of Great Britain. He is the translator of Adler's Understanding Human Nature and the editor of What Life Could Mean to You.



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Frank Farrow:

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