

ADLER AND EXISTENCE ANALYSIS

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Diversification of psychological theory is productive and stimulating, except where it leads to sectarian defensiveness and needless warfare of theories. An attempt will be made here to relate Adler's Individual Psychology and existential analysis so that in at least one part of the field there will be a pathway between two separate camps.

Being human a certain bias will enter this comparison. Since my background is more in existentialism than Individual Psychology, I am most likely to err against Adler. Recently Stern (28) competently compared Jean-Paul Sartre to Adler and found many detailed, close relationships. In the present paper I would like to compare existential analysis and Individual Psychology in a more general way and use details to illustrate points of comparison.

EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS — STUDY OF WHAT EXISTS

A little introduction to existential analysis may help as a general orientation. Existentialism is an ancient mode of appreciating the world, though only in this century has it been so named. Its emphasis is on what exists as against analyzing the world into essences. Its philosophical roots have been traced by Tillich (29); its main philosophers described by Collins (14). Two contemporary philosophers, Marcel (21, 22, 23) and Heidegger (15, 16, 17, 18) have been studying the ground or foundation of what exists in man, and primarily Heidegger's work has fed existential psychoanalysis. Sartre is a relatively incidental figure here.

Within the Freudian camp in Europe a number of psychoanalysts have learned from Heidegger and related philosophers to see man in a new light and with a new emphasis, e. g., Ludwig Binswanger (6), Medard Boss, (7, 8, 9), Eugene Minkowski (25), Victor von Gebattel, (36). Viktor Frankl, although he describes his work as existential analysis, philosophically does not belong (3, 32). The new features of this approach are outlined elsewhere (24, 31, 35). I can only capture its general tenor here.

The ground of man is being, which transcends the world and yet through him manifests in the world. Phenomenologically, being is awareness or the heart of self-identity. This being is thrown into the world and manifests in each individual as a unique way of being-in-

the-world (style of life). If man can exist authentically, his being-in-the-world will be a full realization of his potentialities. More likely his being-in-the-world is inauthentic, fake, or artificial in some way. In symptoms, it both founders in the world and partially and inauthentically realizes its aim. In authentic existence, man resolves to be himself in the face of a world which is alien to him. Existential analysis is the study of an individual's mode of being-in-the-world, to discover his foundering and the way back to his authentic ground. As I commented elsewhere (33), existential analysis represents a fundamental change in the European Freudians. It is a quiet revolution from within, which might not have been as imperative if Europe had followed Adler. This new movement has marked similarities to Adlerian and neo-Adlerian (1) psychologies, while it is clearly against the tradition of Freud. It is Freud's mechanism of parts that the revolutionaries are destroying.

FIRST COMPARISON OF ADLER AND THE EXISTENTIAL

An immediate difference, and one that may turn out to be critical in the long view of history, is that Individual Psychology is primarily the work of one man, Alfred Adler, whereas existentialism has spread into so many areas and is related to so many names that it is hard to find out who belongs and who does not. Existentialism is a major force in philosophy, literature, the arts, and in psychological analysis. Its historical roots are difficult to trace. One cannot even localize it in any one continent since it appears to have ancient forerunners in Chinese Taoism and Japanese Zen (34). In fact it appears to be one of two general currents underlying all thought, as these are described by Tillich (30). One is the philosophy of consciousness (to study things as an interaction of parts), traceable through Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Galileo, Calvin, Descartes, and Hegel to modern exact science; the other is the philosophy of the beyond consciousness (to study existence as a whole fabric), traceable through the pre-Socratics, Duns Scotus, Paracelsus, Luther, Jacob Boehme, Pascal, and Kierkegaard to modern existentialism.

What we have to compare is then an ancient and widespread current of thought, to the original psychology of one man who is probably part of this current. Even when the discussion is narrowed to existential analysis, which is the application of existentialism to psychotherapy, we still have a psychology which is not so easily linked to specific names nor so clear in its scope and development.

There are advantages and disadvantages both ways. If one wants to learn a school, then Adler is much to be preferred, since existential analysis really requires a divergent background of philosophers such as Heidegger, Marcel, Kierkegaard (10), Sartre (27), Buber (11, 13), and Jaspers (19); and then one has to trace a scattered literature of the analysts. There are no schools, curricula or diplomas.

A critical disadvantage for Adler's psychology is its very fixity. It seems that whenever a movement is identified with one man, his followers feel constrained to gauge themselves by how closely they follow the work of the great man. The movement acquires a certain rigidity and a consequently heightened need to defend itself against new ideas. This is apparent in the fights that have occurred within the Freudian psychoanalytic institutes, which has resulted in some splitting between orthodox and liberal faiths. The only way to bring about real change is to break away. It is a brave and rare man who can be part of a master-disciple school and accept new discoveries or really new formulations without seeing it as some variation of what the master implied somewhere in his works. I have seen this in Freudian and in Jungian analysis, in Moreno's role playing group, and now it seems to be beginning among the followers of H. S. Sullivan. Toynbee indicates it is a feature of all history: The really creative man arises and blazes new trails; then his followers say this is the one way. It will be rare if Individual Psychology can continue to develop.

On the Adlerian side there are clarity, consistency and delimited boundaries with the consequent drawback of likely resistance to real change. On the side of existentialism there are a booming-buzzing confusion of changes and shifting boundaries with room for change, but failing in clarity and delimitation.

In many respects Individual Psychology and existential analysis share the same ground. Both take their departure from the unique world of the individual. Existential analysis is based on an attempt to discover and understand the phenomenology of the other person, his unique way of being-in-the-world. This parallels Adler's attempt to discover the style of life of the individual. This brings both psychologies into the subjective sphere as contrasted with the objective psychology of Freud (2, p. 4f.). Both reject a picture of man as divided into interacting parts—id, ego and superego.

It is curious and in some respects sad that both Individual Psychology and existential analysis have tended to build a theoretical structure on this ground before the ground was fully explored. There

is some need to bring home the full implications of this, and out of them a criticism of both schools. As long as one bears in mind fixed concepts (i.e., inferiority, superiority, etc.) and tends to look for phenomenal data to fit these categories, one is departing from this phenomenological ground in the direction of objectifying psychology. To keep to the basic approach of discovering the individual, one should stumble anew each time upon categories which fit the individual. In case it seems the criticism is heavy against the Adlerians, it works the other way too. There has been much discussion among existentialists regarding theistic versus atheistic existentialism. Tillich (30) makes the cogent statement that existentialism can be neither. Existentialism can argue what is palpable in man—the anxieties about God, the feelings of His presence, the quality of a Godless world of the atheist, but it cannot go beyond its data and assert *in actus* there is or isn't a God. When it does, it has left the ground of human experience.

The criticism can be carried a step further. When one really searches out the tremendous complexity and uniqueness of individual lives and then looks at the world's relatively scant phenomenological literature (20), it becomes crushingly apparent we are building theories of people in general before we even have an adequate sample of individuals. How often in the literature does one see a really searching and detailed examination of an individual style of life or mode of being-in-the-world? Very rarely. When one examines the strange and difficult-to-approach world of the chronic schizophrenic, the paucity of our knowledge of individual worlds becomes strikingly evident. So I would criticize both schools for moving too fast from the ground of individual experience into the upper stories of theory with a subsequent need to defend vested interests in theory.

Existential analysis has a slight edge over Adlerian psychology in this matter because there is enough confusion of existential theory to permit individual choice. It would also appear the existence schools are somewhat more aware of their dependence on phenomenology with some tendency to do longer individual studies. Binswanger's long case of Ellen West (24, p. 237-364) is an example.

Another difference between the schools is illustrated by the simple difference between the straightforward and understandable term "style of life" and the term "mode of being-in-the-world." The former has a direct, pragmatic American quality while the latter is more obscure, heavy and crammed with German philosophical erudition. The existentialists felt forced to coin new words to match fresh ex-

periences. The language of Adler is simple and direct, while that of the existentialists is fancied up. Even though it makes Adler far more easily understood, it may have worked to his disadvantage. People tend to respect and give credence to terms which are just beyond their grasp as more truly explanatory of people than near-to-hand familiar terms. Note the popularity of Freud's mythological pantheon: Oedipus, id, Eros, etc.

PSYCHOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY

There is an inner reason for the obscurity in much of the language of existentialism. It points to the most fundamental difference between existential analysis and Adler's psychology. Many of the existentialist terms, such as foundering, facticity, Being of being, came largely out of the ontological searching of Heidegger. As he put it, if metaphysics is the roots of the tree of philosophy, and physics its trunk, and all the other sciences its branches; then what is the ground in which the tree is rooted (17)? He wanted to go back into the ground of metaphysics. At the same time he was going back into the ground of man. This is the kind of philosophy which has fed existential analysis. *Existential analysis is an exploration of the ontological ground of man.* These odd terms reflect discoveries in this ontological ground. In a way Heidegger would not use old terms because people would not understand that he sees things in a new light. If one must have existentialism in plain language, then Marcel will show the way or, better yet, oriental Zen. Except in Zen, when the words are clear the meaning slips out of one's grasp. It comes down to this.

Entering the phenomenological door and studying the ontological house of man, existentialism as a philosophy, and the analysis as a practice are still questioning: What is man? The answer is not known yet. They are even questioning why the questioning, or why anything exists. The answers are fragmentary pointers which are radically changing how man is seen.

Can Individual Psychology also be said to be an exploration of the ontological source which is man? The answer seems to be both yes and no. The style of life and the striving for superiority are ontologically grounded. They arise out of the nature of man himself. They are irreducible though they may be described in other terms. The innate capacity for social interest is also so grounded. In many respects Adler's clear and detailed handling of these is definitely superior to the way the same matters are handled in existential analysis. The existen-

tial analysts are laboriously rediscovering what Adler has already set forth. For instance, the dynamics of social interest are not nearly so clear in Binswanger or Buber (12) as in Adler. Yet did Adler know he was dealing with metaphysics? My impression is that Adler's metaphysics is embedded in his major constructs. For instance, there is an ontological reality behind the superiority-inferiority dichotomy. Adler, by isolating ontologically fundamental aspects of man and showing their dynamics, has done a considerable service. Yet the ontology of these aspects remains embedded in Adler. The existentialists are still digging it out.

Take the existential being-in-the-world as compared to style of life. The style of life is the individuality expressing itself and molding itself in an environment, including the individual's unique way of striving for his goal. Whereas mode of being-in-the-world is the individual's unique way of encountering and dealing with the world. The two are similar. But existentialism goes on to study this being which is in the world. It is the heart of our experiencing which supports but is not entirely contained in any particular experience. It would resist all attempts at analysis into component parts. Like the soul, it is like an intelligent, understanding spirit with free will. It is kin to Jung's archetype of the self. It is not fully understood yet, for even though it is here now, in my experience, it transcends any particulars of my experience. Binswanger (5) states, the main problem of man is precisely that this transcendent being is entering the world of particular things.

Now perhaps the ontological difference between existential analysis and Adler's Individual Psychology can be seen. Style of life is a simple, useful and straightforward concept. Yet when translated into mode of being-in-the-world one discovers one has the task of unearthing the being that manifests a style of life. Then one runs into the borderlands of mystery. What is simple in Adler, on close examination opens out into something quite mysterious and almost beyond us. Marcel describes a mystery as a problem which transcends its own data. *The nature of our being is a problem which transcends its own data since the data are the particulars of ourselves and our lives.* Whereas style of life is a relatively simple and delimited matter, the related being-in-the-world of existential analysis opens out into immense problems. The whole intent and expectation of existential analysis is that we can and will continue to explore this very ground of our experience. Adler would say ultimately *we* choose our style of life (2, pp. 177-178, 361).

Yet this ultimate *we* is the being which existential philosophers and analysts continue to discover. This is a fundamental difference.

THE ONTOLOGY OF STRIVING

One may wonder how ontology enters the psychological scene. One of the earliest approaches to man was to isolate out of his varied experience the play of intellect, and to make intellect the master with certain bestial drives under his control. The faculty psychologists isolated a host of faculties and instincts. Freud's id-ego-superego was a psychologically sophisticated reification. Yet it still had traces of machinery in it. We still speak of defense mechanisms as if they were some kin to machines. The notion of conscious-unconscious is a bit of machinery so subtle that it almost looks like man.

Several psychologies have rejected the find-the-pieces-and-the-mechanism-of-the-pieces approach. Prominent among these are Adler's Individual Psychology, existential analysis, and Gestalt psychology. By examining man as a relational whole, we are forced into several changes. Since we cannot play with bits of mechanisms, we have to see an individual as a whole embedded in a social world. In this the two schools in question are similar. In existential analysis there is no fundamental distinction between the inner and the outer; they are both the world of the individual. Since one is not permitted to reify drives or instincts such as sex, for instance, then one must look at sex in its total meaning to the individual. The whole is not only the individual of this moment but includes the individual's history and future. The whole is the whole life. What is sexual desire in view of man's whole life? By this sort of questioning one moves into an ontological examination of what is man, what moves him, what is he moved toward. To some it will seem we thereby abandon science (seen as dealing with specific relations between specific parts) and become philosophers. The attitude of existentialism is that it does not matter what we are called as long as we are dealing with what exists and what is of vital concern to us. Without frail man to observe, correlate and experiment there would be no vaunted science at all. In working to understand man as a whole, we are then working at the very source and foundation of science. Even to scientists this should be reason enough for such an approach.

How can one grapple with a relational whole without parts? Both Adler and the existential analysts answer by discovering the self-consistencies in an individual. What is his world like, and how does he

interact with it? What is his style of living? But a self-consistent pattern, operating throughout a lifetime, maintaining itself in the face of changing circumstances, suggests an end or goal. To what end is the style or mode of being-in-the-world? Adler says, towards a fictional goal, and by fictional he means an expedient psychological construct. To the existentialists the end is still being examined. Perhaps it is that something which is the light within man, which transcends any particulars of his acts, must manifest; it must move towards goals which are unique for the individual. When Adler says there is one basic dynamic force behind all human activity, a striving for superiority or perfection, he is referring to the same thing. It is this force itself and its way of manifesting that existential philosophers and analysts are studying. The study is not abstract speculation but rather an analysis of human situations. For this reason we have here a fruitful union of philosophy and analysis. The existentialists would object to calling the aim of the being-that-manifests a fiction, even fiction as a subjective ideal (2, p. 77f.). They would accept this as a first approximation, but it reflects the idea that the aim of being is conceptual, when phenomenologically it may have some other quality altogether.

Similar to Adler, the existentialists would tend to see the objective facts of our worlds as not really determiners in the development of man but rather as subordinate aspects of his *Dasein*, his way of being-in-the-world. Like Adler, the existentialists would see man as an amazing, internally consistent, unified whole. They would agree that the goal of his striving is only dimly envisioned, but would add, this dim envisioning is due to the fact that being has not fully manifested in the individual's world. This dim envisioning is what others call the unconscious, though in both Adler and existentialism there is no "unconscious." There are simply aspects of ourselves which are more difficult to verbalize or actualize. All of Adler's work on the inferiority feeling, and the exaggerated goal of personal superiority in psychopathology would be accepted. In short, the heart of Adler's work can be accepted by the existential analysts. The difference is that what Adler has treated as a lifelong dynamic striving for superiority, is in existentialism the mysterious movement of being which both analysts and philosophers, such as Marcel and Heidegger, are still uncovering in human experience. What seems to be a closed and understood matter in Adler's striving for superiority is still very much an open but approachable mystery in existential analysis. I believe that were Adler alive now, he too would be exploring in this area as he did

most of his life. The ontological orientation of existential analysis is then a phenomenological exploration of the ground of man which Adler first pointed to as this mysterious striving.

PSYCHOTHERAPY — STUDY OF INDIVIDUAL EXISTENCE

For me the acid test of any theory is what it leads to in actual practice. As a parallel, one judges a person more by his actions than his words. Adler gives specific directions for the practice of psychotherapy which is in marked contrast to the relative confusion among existential analysts. As mentioned before, many of them are operating within a Freudian tradition. Some, like Benedetti (4), are experimenting with encounters with patients, similar to Rosen's direct analysis (26). This is appropriate since an encounter is more existential than a conversation. Other than some central elements, the existential analysts have not yet developed a dogma of practice. The key central elements which unite them in practice would be the phenomenological method, a centering in the critical here and now, and a *Weltanschauung* which sees a being here and now struggling to manifest more perfectly.

Adler's therapy is in close accord with this. He begins with the first tentative discovery of the life style of the patient. In this he definitely uses the phenomenological method. For the phenomenologist he has perceptive comments on meaning in bodily movement, handshakes, and the problem of excluding the patient's words in order to see the rest of him (2, p. 330), etc. This corresponds to existential analysis in its phenomenological approach to understand an individual's mode of being-in-the-world. Adler always adds the injunction that one must adjudge things in relation to the individual. For instance, a leaning handshake does not always mean a dependent person. This is an important conjunction between the two schools. Both are idiographic in their approach and are reluctant to generalize to all individuals.

Adler next checks the first tentative understanding of the life style against every detail of the person. There should be internal consistency, or one must change the tentative hypothesis until there is the consistency. Although the two schools agree basically thus far, one cannot help but feel Adler has the marked advantage of a clear, consistent, and well delineated program.

With this understanding of the internally consistent life style, Adler undertakes to explain this knowledge to the patient. It is not a simple bit of teaching. Adler is very aware of any fluctuations in the

patient's self-esteem. He is a co-worker with the patient in a project in which the patient is the real boss. Therapy then is like helping the boss to understand what he is doing, without lowering his self-esteem and promoting resistance. Here there is some real difference between the two schools. Existential analysts differ so much that one can not generalize to all of them, but they probably would not be so inclined to see the center of therapy at this conscious level of explaining the patient to himself. Rather the center would more likely be a little behind this—in the emerging emotions (being), which show better in actions than words. Adler's position is closer to an ego psychology of consciousness, although certainly he is aware of emotions and their importance. But it is unlikely that the existential analyst would ever conceive the process as one of explaining the patient to himself. This is too wordy. Our existence is more like emotions and actions, and this is where he would center therapy.

This is not to say either position is better. What I have seen of Adlerian therapy can be amazingly clear and fast, because it comes rapidly to a formulation of what is wrong. The existential analyst is more likely to wait until the patient is gripped by an action (i.e., it exists) that can then be brought to full awareness. I seriously wonder if perhaps the Adlerians are not simply more direct verbally because they see the process more clearly. Theirs would seem to be the danger of falling into verbal traps and verbal cures, although clearly Adler himself avoids these. I can not choose between the two approaches here. I suspect they complement each other. Adler rises rapidly to the worded understanding, and the existentialists are grounded in emotions and actions.

The last major aspect of Adler's therapy is that he takes every pain to discover what there is of social interest in the patient, and to strengthen it. This is done primarily through the patient's non-threatening experience of the therapist in which every movement towards social interest can be encouraged. Again I think the Adlerians are simply clearer about what they are doing than the existence analysts. To the latter the sense of *Mitwelt* (the world of shared interests) arises as an aspect of living in a more genuine encounter with the world. It is not so consciously aimed at in itself. It is part of a larger self-unfolding.

The acid test of practice, then, shows a fundamental similarity between the two schools which rests in a phenomenological and idiographic approach. Almost all schools would claim this, but one which

reifies an Oedipus complex, for instance, is not really idiographic. Beyond this similarity in basic approach, the Adlerians have a marked advantage in practice by a very clear method and clear injunctions as to how one might deal with different situations. There is a difference in practice between an ego psychology of consciousness (Adler) and a school which centers in emotions and actions which are on the fringe of consciousness. Ultimately, I believe, the Adlerians could add a good deal of clarity to existential analysis and yet complement it as a psychology of consciousness, while existential analysis is a psychology of the near-conscious.

CONCLUSION

So we conclude not with a marriage, but a courtship between Adler's Individual Psychology and existential analysis. The two are fundamentally related in many ways, but especially so in their phenomenological, holistic, and idiographic approaches. Each has something to offer the other. Adler offers a greater clarity and conciseness, while existentialism offers a continuing exploration of the ground of man. In practice the two complement each other, since Adler's is an ego psychology and the other is a study of the near-conscious or, better yet, the source of consciousness.

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