

## EXISTENTIAL TRENDS TOWARD INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

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Several attempts have been made to compare Adler's Individual Psychology to existentialism or existential analysis (e. g., 22, 28). Dreikurs (9) isolates several tenets from Adlerian psychology and finds a model that includes all the characteristic assumptions of existential analysis which made their impact felt in America. Van Dusen (27) reports fundamental similarities in Individual Psychology and existence analysis in their mutual emphasis on phenomenological, holistic, and idiographic concepts. Stern (15) views the existentialists as siding with Adlerian psychologists on the basic issues of values, man's freedom to choose, his responsibility and ability to discharge this freedom, and the need for a subjective understanding of behavior.

These writers and others have underlined points of affinity and overlap, as well as differences. The problem of such a comparison is inherent in existentialism's contradictory nature, and in the differences among the men themselves who are generally regarded as belonging to this philosophy. One phase that especially needs clarification centers around the question of individualism versus social involvement (11, 21). Existential themes of identity, selfhood, and subjectivity expressed through arbitrary choices seem to oppose the Adlerian position. The latter is well known for its emphasis on the relationship between men, man's aptitude for social interest, compassion, generosity, and concern for others. Adler's reference to society as against the existential quest for the personal "I" bring back an old issue in psychology that certainly has been restated a number of times in recent literature.

The purpose of the present paper is to show that while it is true that the original existential concepts are largely contrary to Adlerian ideas, the more recent existential trends are becoming congruent to them, especially those trends which are making their way into psy-

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chiatry and psychology. The statement here shows how existentialist ideas have evolved toward the Adlerian thesis in their newer emphasis on social responsibility, commitment, involvement, and social relations.

#### ORIGINAL EMPHASIS ON THE INDIVIDUAL

Existentialism was conceived in impoverished individuality, and seems to have revolted against systems or groups which limit freedom of choice. It was a warning against compulsions toward conventionality and depersonalization in a modern world. The movement was often viewed as a last desperate attempt to establish man as a distinct being, separate from his environment, and differentiated from the other beings or "herds." Mass society was seen as the fertile ground for alienation and depersonalization in every form, and mass production was viewed as making man like his machines. The conventional man, who attempted to find guides for his conduct in sources outside himself was doomed to the inauthentic existence of the "crowd." Thus, existentialism was originally a quest for identity and selfhood, the approach was subjective, and man's responsibility was to himself to actualize his potential.

Selfhood was one and the same with the individual's choices; the person made himself through his decisions. These choices could not be based upon facts, nor could they be made within a moral framework. True choices were regarded as *free* choices—instrumented not by accumulated knowledge, society, or mores, but by the individual. This recognition of the individual as the sole possessor of all true human values was transmitted to the whole existential movement by Kierkegaard (17).

In opposition to Hegel, Kierkegaard emphasized the concrete, the unique, and the personal elements of life. Hegel dealt with generalities and universals, which gained acceptance in a century which contained traces of the industrial revolution, mass production and communication. For Kierkegaard, the crowd was untruth—even if every member of the crowd was in possession of the truth (16, p. 92). Any decision by the crowd, and any judgment arrived at by vote would be characterized by untruth (17). The crowd also weakens the individual's responsibility by reducing it to a fraction. The crowd, the mass, and the universal meant suicide for spirituality.

In the thinking of Kierkegaard, and later in that of Nietzsche, the individual is significant *apart* from others. Adler viewed individuality

as existing *within* the social context. Kierkegaard implies that others take something away, or conceal something about the unique person. Adler implied that others fulfill and enhance the individual. Adler seemed to consider the individual as a complete and integrated unit within the larger social context, while Kierkegaard viewed the individual as becoming more complete as he freed himself from the tyranny of the group.

Some of Adler's constructs, i.e., striving, becoming and goal seeking, are similar to those formulated by the originators of existentialism. When these concepts are viewed as a movement from inferiority to superiority, or as compensations for deficiencies, they would oppose the concept of "authenticity;" which usually means, in the existential sense, acting on one's own authority (21, p. 10). Such terms as "inferiority" imply comparison, and comparison involves other people. For Kierkegaard, becoming authentic is assuming the responsibility for your own self, without regarding or comparing yourself with others.

It must be clarified that Adler does not view all strivings as caused by something, but emphasizes the point that they are also for the purpose of something (3, p. 343). Lower level strivings may be caused, while higher level strivings are teleological. Here Adler's thinking coincides with that of the existentialists even if there would be some differences on what the ultimate goals would be. Adler's ideal goals are expressed in terms of social interest, perfection, and humanism. The existentialists' goals, on the other hand, seem farther away, more vague, and for the most part represent a direction toward creating meaning, toward becoming a Christian, toward becoming an individual independent of the masses, and finally toward becoming infinite.

Individual Psychology and existentialism come together in places but then disperse. Farau reflects this by showing how the two positions are connected by their mutual recognition of the human requirement to make decisions (11, p. 3). For Kierkegaard, the decision per se is essential; regardless of its morality. But while Adler accepts the necessity for making decisions, "he would never have deemed it irrelevant whether that decision is useful or harmful for the community as a whole; and similarly the attitude of Adler's courage is—in contrast to Nietzsche—not superhuman and anti-social, but it is human and democratic" (11, p. 3). Here again the two quite divergent theoretical tunes coincide in a harmonic beat which disappears quickly in discordant melodies.

## THE INDIVIDUAL IN-THE-WORLD

While existence for sake of "myself" describes the point of departure of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and other founding figures of existentialism, more recent trends in the philosophy direct attention back to man-to-man relationships (see 21, p. 20). Heidegger's own concept, being-in-the-world, may have initiated this trend. This subject-object unification had the ultimate result of cementing the subject with other persons. Being-with-others, which is a form of being-in-the-world, does not refer to a subject who perceives other people, but who is involved completely and totally within them (6).

A synthesis of phenomenological and existential tributaries was evident in Heidegger's work (13). Kierkegaard's extreme self-awareness was incorporated into the phenomenological stream, which attempted to unify physical and psychical (ideal) phenomena and resolve the subject-object dichotomy. In the thought of Husserl and Brentano, the *intentional* principle was used, and became a unifying construct which showed that in "the idea, *something* is conceived, in the judgement *something* is recognized or discovered, in loving loved, in hating hated, in desiring desired, and so on" (26, p. 83). When the subject and object merged in these conceptions, the individual could no longer be treated as being completely alone, apart and separated from the objects of his world. The conclusion is expressed by Ruggerio: "The connective tissue had been provided by Husserl's *Phenomenology* with its analysis of the contents of consciousness and its account of spiritual 'regions,' constituted by interconnected psychical elements and thus abstracted from the arbitrary fluctuations of the individual life" (23, p. 21).

Heidegger's *Sorge*, or care, described an existence which is not only characterized by consciousness about the world, but one in which there is concern for the world of things and people. The person deals with the world, he is involved in it. But even so, in Heidegger, the subject appears to be the most powerful element in his existence. The individual is dominant over his existence, he guides his concerns and chooses his particular mode of being-in-the-world. While Heidegger may place existence over subjectivity, the person remains at the center of his personal solar system. Being-in-the-world may absorb both subject and object in unity but subject still reigns. Lyons states that Heidegger's type of being is subjective and individual, and even his concept of being-with-others "does not at all mean being with

others, but refers to a condition in which others may show their presence" (18, p. 158).

Heidegger, then, attempts to ignore the modes of existence which cannot be analyzed through the individual. Binswanger recognizes this omission and proceeds to correct it by emphasizing "being-with-others" and introducing the concept of "being-in-love" (5). Kahn states that Binswanger "felt chilly when he was faced with Heidegger's existential experience, with the cold nothingness and what not; hence he added love to the picture total (15, p. 239).

### I-THOU RELATIONSHIP

When the older, more individualistic tributary of existentialism merged with phenomenology, the new philosophy was psychological in nature. Anxiety, dread, and psychic suffering from the existential wing combined with sensory perception, and the problem of consciousness from the phenomenological side. The new psychological elements were to catch the attention of psychiatrists. Thus, Jaspers and Binswanger extended the concepts of existence into psychopathology, and in doing so, helped to propel the whole movement into the limelight.

Although existential gleanings were reflected in the publications of Jaspers and Binswanger before Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (24, p. 489), this work appears to have given impetus to their endeavors. Jaspers' *Philosophie* appeared five years later in 1932, and Binswanger's (4) developing Daseinsanalyse is based on Heidegger's analysis of existence. Because of the concurrent and reciprocal nature of all three men's works it is difficult to determine lines of influence.

However, Jaspers was closer than Heidegger to the Adlerian theme. Naturally, Jaspers became concerned with the relationship between doctor and patient in therapy. This sort of relationship implied an intersubjectivity which Jaspers described as existential communication. According to Earle, existential communication is distinguished from non-existential relationship in that the latter is not essential, but impersonal and pragmatic, such as the exchange of technical information, or the accomplishment of some definite common task. In this relationship the members are merely useful to one another, and bonds between them are broken when common goals are accomplished (10, p. 171).

Existential communication has nothing to do with literal intercourse, but here two human existences expose themselves to one

another without reserve. "But what existential communication is ultimately and always indirectly *about* is precisely the total subjective existences involved; it is always about me and you, and we cannot be directly expressed; as soon as we are, the authentic content vanishes" (10, p. 171). While Jaspers (14) views existence (*Existenz*) as remaining in solitude, it is out of solitude that a communication with another solitude takes place. As Earle expresses it: "In all this, what Jaspers has in mind, of course, is love, conceived not as the merging and identification of two existences, but something more paradoxical, communication out of mutual solitude, independence within dependence" (10, p. 172).

Human relationships and communication have been emphasized in more recent existential writings. Concepts of the "encounter," and the "I-Thou" relationship, under the influences of Buber (7, 8) and Marcel (20), have added a new facet to existentialism which makes the movement similar in many respects to interpersonal theories and social psychologies. The movement has, therefore, made almost a complete turn from pure individuality to a type of authenticity which is expressed in joint relationships. However, these newer conceptions do not capture individuality and engulf the person in dialogical meetings, but provide the media for a better expression of individuality. Individuality is not viewed in terms of nomadistic existence, but is measured in terms of participation, interaction, and the specific way the person responds to the encounter. The individual reveals himself through the I-Thou relationships.

Adler speaks of the importance of identification with others to make "us capable of friendship, humane love, pity, vocation, and love" (2, p. 102). He, in a manner similar to the dialogical and "relationship" existentialists, sees a mutual interaction between man and others in a man-cosmos relation which makes a person a creature and creator of society. Style of life represents a form of individuality which is derived from the social base, and which is fashioned as a prototype out of early strategies and successes in the social framework. In contrast, the dialogical existential approaches put subjectivity and individuality first, and view its expression in significant relationships between people.

#### EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS AND THE INTERHUMAN DIMENSION

In the more recent writings of Binswanger the turn away from "rugged individuality" is complete. Binswanger's position appears

to be a synthesis of Heidegger's existence analysis and Buber's dialogical approach, but has been developed independently within the discipline of psychiatry. Binswanger speaks of human existence in general which is the existence of mankind, rather than the individual's existence which marked the point of departure for the existential philosophies. Kahn translates the following from Binswanger's writings: "Body and soul are abstractions from the inseparable unity of Being-human, seen from the anthropological viewpoint" (15, p. 207). Kahn further states that Binswanger views plurality, duality, and singularity as fundamental modes of Being-human: "Only in these modes and their special modifications and interweavings ('complexions'), is human existence really by itself. Where one cannot speak of an I, a thou, a dual we, a he or she nor of a plural we or they, there human existence is no longer 'by itself' but 'beside itself'" (15, p. 207).

While Binswanger's analysis may be on a deeper philosophical level than Adler's, the parallel between the two positions is obvious. Binswanger's is concerned with existence; Adler's apparently accepts existence and is more concerned with society which culminates from existence. Binswanger develops the concept of love to hold together human existence, and Adler develops the principle of "social feeling" or "cooperation" to preserve the human community and to guide the individual toward positive mental health. Binswanger views the neuroses and psychoses as particular disturbances in human existence, and Adler sees all nervous symptoms as lack of proper degree of social feeling.

The interhuman dimension, unified in "I-Thou" relationships of human existence, embraces the Adlerian thesis and the more recent existential conceptions which are invading psychology and psychiatry. Individuality, often viewed as being reduced by such membership, is now viewed as being enhanced in expressions of love, or in *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*. In a similar vein, alienation, described in original existentialist philosophies as being rooted in conformity and conventionality, is redefined in terms of isolation and estrangement from proper human relationships in newer existential positions.

Authenticity does not imply that the individual must exist by himself, in newer interpretations of the term, any more than it implies that he hide himself in the crowd. Neither is he who lines up with other men to restore authentic values a "coward" or "stinker." Nor is he who regards his fellow as authentic, as "Thou" instead of "It"

any less authentic himself. As Neufeld, an Adlerian, stated it, "Authentic existence could be expressed as life style integrated by social concern and social commitment. Inauthentic existence could be expressed as a life style integrated by one's private, idio-syncratic logic, lacking adequate . . . commitment" (21, p. 16).

#### SUMMARY-SYNTHESIS

Existentialism is interpreted as an evolving movement which is becoming more important in understanding the modern individual. In its development the emphasis on pure individuality has given way to man-to-man participation. This participation is characterized by cooperation, communication, and love. A progressive trend toward humanistic, anthropological, and social doctrines began with the phenomenological impact on existentialism. Phenomenological concepts connect the individual with his environment and other people. When existentialism is applied to psychology and psychiatry, the interhuman dimension appears even more crucial.

The present stage in the evolution of existentialism is closely related to Individual Psychology. Not only have those elements which were originally related to Adler's remained, but new dialogical constructs have been added. Therefore, while Adler's theory is fleetingly related to even the backgrounds of existentialism, its relationship to the thinking of Buber and Binswanger is now more basic. Both Adler and the contemporary existentialists have been able to preserve the individual as an integrated whole and master of his fate while being embedded in the social context.

The development of Adler's own theory is not unlike the existential progression reflected herein. Hall and Lindzey state that Adler's early theorizing was criticized for emphasizing the selfish, power-hungry nature of man. "Striving for superiority sounded like the war cry of the Nietzschean superman, a fitting comparison for the Darwinian slogan of survival of the fittest" (p. 12, 122). Later Adler developed the concept of *social interest* (1) which incorporated interpersonal and social relations, identification with the group, empathy, and ultimately the attainment of a perfect society (12, p. 122). "The image of the perfect man living in a perfect society blotted out the picture of the strong, aggressive man dominating and exploiting society" (12, p. 123). Hence, mature thinking in both Individual Psychology and existentialism reflect the same conclusion, "that man can exist only as a social being" (11, p. 3).



If the affinity of recent existential thought and Individual Psychology can be recognized, a greater unity among psychological theory will be achieved. Individual Psychology is grouped with several modern personality theories to make up the third force (19, p. vi) in psychology, and is also classified with the social psychological theories (12). Individual Psychology is steeped in Gestaltist, holistic, and organismic trends (3, p. 342; 12, p. 297), and supports such modern developments as Maslow's hierarchy of motives, Allport's becoming, and Murphy's treatise on human potentialities (3, pp. 343-344). At present, members of this whole complex of theories are vigorously investigating existentialism and phenomenology for solid philosophical grounds. If a new synthesis can be achieved, these theories and philosophies might well become the major force in psychology.

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