

ADLER'S AND FREUD'S CONCEPTS OF MAN:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL COMPARISON¹

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The views of Freud and Adler have often been compared. Either they are described more or less superficially side by side, or certain concepts are confronted with each other polemically. Concepts such as striving for significance, repression, defeat, or libido are treated as abstractions, almost without content and without reference to the rich experience from which the concept was originally coined.

The phenomenological method attempts to bring the content of the concepts to the foreground, by spending more time with the phenomena in their context; it does not go from a certain separate phenomenon directly back to "explanatory" abstraction. All too quickly a certain symptom is often reduced, e.g., to a guilt feeling or an inferiority feeling which is inferred as being "behind" the phenomenon and "causing" the visible symptom from there, either causally or finalistically.

The phenomenological method aims first of all to understand the symptom, both healthy and neurotic, in the context of other symptoms. One means to this end is to use the wealth of our everyday language referring to psychological phenomena along with the technical psychological expressions.

Another aspect of this procedure makes visible the "image of man" which is at the basis of the interpretations of psychological phenomena. All psychological schools are based on an image of man even when they claim to observe only isolated phenomena and to "explain" them with the aid of hypotheses. These hypotheses and interpretations are much more determined by this image than one is often aware. Everything is more or less assumed as self-understood, perhaps even repressed from consciousness, because one considers it unscientific, philosophical or prejudiced to have such an image.

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The following is an attempt to describe the image of man in psychoanalysis and Individual Psychology—at least in some aspects. Through this perhaps quite a bit of the theory and practice of both schools may become more understandable.

TWO DIRECTIONS OF HUMAN STRIVING

During the last century the psychology of consciousness was developed. It was concerned with sense perception, concepts, and thinking. In retrospect, what strikes us in this psychology is the attempt to investigate how man comes to know the world and attains the contents of his waking consciousness. It is occupied, so to speak, with the “brain man.” The body thereby is considered only insofar as it pertains to the nervous system, as a medium for consciousness. The background for this seems to be that the philosophers of the 19th century, especially in Germany, were so passionately tied up with the question of human knowledge. During the middle of the century, when the regard for science overtook that for philosophy, one could hope that empirical psychology would solve this question.

In depth psychology the approach is completely different. The concern is usually with the “unconscious,” an abstract concept telling only what it is not. What actually interests the depth psychologist, is always motives in the widest sense: drives, desires, needs, wishes, motives, intentions, goals, etc., what causes man to behave, to act in a certain manner, primarily pathological, abnormal behavior. The originators were physicians who sought an understanding of psychological dynamics as the basis for therapy. All important concepts of depth psychology refer to the realm of striving, the will in the broadest sense.

All wanting originates in a need and strives toward a result. Two kinds of striving can be differentiated: toward a result *in the person himself*, or *in the environment*. The striving from hunger is clearly an example of the first. Here the motive ceases when the person has taken in enough food. Such needs exist also on the spiritual and mental planes. In the second kind of striving man is oriented toward accomplishing something in the world. The result lies in the environment. From this distinction we can develop the following list of opposites.

striving toward oneself (centripetal)	striving toward the world (centrifugal) ²
self-preservation	self-development
feeling of deficiency: an empty space which wants to be filled	feeling of surplus: a potency, ability, which wants to express itself, to live fully, to work
craving, demanding, wishing, wanting	striving for, aiming at, intending to, wanting to do
object oriented	goal oriented
to reach, to get, "to incorporate"	to succeed in, to achieve, "to work"
fulfilment, enrichment	achievement, success
feeling of satiation	feeling of satisfaction
feeling of pleasure	feeling of power, experience of ability and control
gratification	recognition
contentment	self-esteem

Thus both directions of wanting can be described in corresponding concepts. It is not difficult to add to these the names of Freud and of Adler, respectively. This becomes even clearer when we consider what happens in case of resistance.

the wish is not fulfilled	the intention is not reached
frustration, followed by:	failure, defeat, followed by:
feeling of deprivation	feeling of disappointment
displeasure, dissatisfaction	feeling powerless, lack of recognition
or—frustration tolerance	or—courage (optimism)

If a person can tolerate dissatisfaction or lack of recognition, so that at a more favorable opportunity he can try again to have his wish fulfilled or to reach his goal, the corresponding concepts of Freud and Adler would be frustration tolerance and courage. What happens when he does not have this endurance?

²The terms centripetal and centrifugal have been used once before in the literature of Individual Psychology, although in a somewhat different sense. In what was for many years a standard text in Adlerian psychology, Wexberg states in one place: "Individual Psychology attempts to classify the manifoldness of life from the finalistic view according to a schema of two, so to speak antithetic, tendencies: a centripetal, personal finality (safeguarding, striving for significance, egocentrism, individualism), and a centrifugal, biological finality (social feeling, objectivity, readiness for devotion)" (Wexberg, E. *Individual Psychology*. Translated by W. B. Wolfe. New York: Cosmopolitan Book, 1929, pp. 106-107. Translation modified from *Individualpsychologie*. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1928, p. 82).—Ed. note.

increased feeling of deficiency with attempts to remove it desire for gratification, meaning: additional pleasure premium pseudo-gratification, e.g., day- dreaming, masturbation	attempts to secure the "feeling of success" striving for recognition, meaning: additional success premium invalid, fictitious, substitute goal, e.g., bragging, engaging in side issues
object displacement, substitute gratification	refinalization, ³ compensation
escape into work, seeking suc- cess, or increased pleasure striving	escape into pleasure, alcohol, etc., or increased striving for sig- nificance

The two kinds of escape just listed indicate that compensation for frustration or failure, respectively, may be sought in the alternative domain: the frustrated pleasure seeker may seek success as an escape, the disappointed seeker of success may escape into pleasure.

Since in increased striving for either pleasure or significance only pseudo-gratifications and substitute goals, respectively, are attained, the repeated dissatisfactions and disappointments lead to corresponding doubts of one's morality or abilities. The connection between pleasure striving and morals, in any event an important aspect of traditional morals, was not discovered by Freud but can be traced far back into cultural history, e.g., the Old Testament and asceticism of religious orders. Desire going beyond needs, means egotism, and thus calls forth morality as a counter-force. In my opinion, neurosis sets in when guilt and inferiority feelings appear, through the unresolved tension between pleasure striving and morality, and between striving for significance and discouragement, respectively.

guilt feelings "condemned egotism," leading to: fear of punishment repression, displacement self-love, narcissism accusation tendency, moral- izing, scape-goating, perse- cution of evil, etc.	inferiority feelings "discouraged ambition," lead- ing to: fear of defeat safeguarding tendency striving for power over others depreciation tendency, negative criticism, belittling, ridiculing, etc.
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Other neurotic symptoms could probably be described in corresponding terms; but we shall let it go at this.

³The German original is *Umfinalisierung*, meaning, to turn toward another goal, a term also found in Wexberg and translated there as "conative reconstellation" (*op. cit.*, e.g., p. 30).—Ed. note.

The above analysis does not quite correspond with the respective theories. While Freud considered the striving for pleasure (libido) as primary, I believe that the primary, natural process is simply that of desiring, aimed at self-preservation and growth. Man could not accomplish any performance, could not give anything to the world, if he had not first taken from the world. If desire did not have a drive-like character at first, human existence would not be possible.

Striving for pleasure is, therefore, a secondary phenomenon. The experience of this relationship is, in my opinion, represented in the symbolism of the "fall of man." Desire separates itself from the original tie to biological necessities and directs itself to the enjoyment of what appears in the sensory experience. This could be the first precondition for the fact that man acquires self-awareness and knowledge, from which culture arises.

Regarding Individual Psychology, I consider the striving for significance as the precondition for the inferiority feeling. Inferiority feeling (in the neurotic sense) cannot arise from the mere experience of "not yet being able" or of failure, unless this refers to invalid (fictitious) goals. Thus I also do not believe in the so-called "natural" inferiority feeling of the child arising from comparison with the grown-ups. But a full exposition regarding this important point would take us too far.

Adler denied that striving for significance was a primary process as the libido was with Freud. It is not regarded as primary here either. For the striving for significance is already a product of the "fall of man," that is to say of the striving to reach a goal one has posited. The goal is then the precondition for the arising of the inferiority feeling which thus is also always based on an error since it rests on a value comparison with a fictitious "wanting to be like this."

COMMON MIDDLE GROUND

Thinking-through such a comparison may help (*a*) to give existing psychological concepts more content, possibly to coin new concepts (e.g., success premium, accusation tendency); (*b*) to describe more clearly the transition from the healthy to the disturbed; (*c*) to gain a less dogmatic attitude which could end the controversy between schools and be of value in treating the patient through less obvious and one-sided interpretations.

Just the same one could ask which viewpoint would be "more correct" or more suitable for therapy. In their analogous structures, both viewpoints seem to point to a common lawfulness of structure which goes beyond the theories of Freud and Adler. Perhaps in every neurosis both roots are mixed; perhaps one must search for a deeper common root which makes both spheres of phenomena intelligible.

It seems likely that the problems dealt with by Freud come at an earlier stage of development (morality of prohibition against pleasure striving and egotism). On the other hand, with the increasing independence of the individual in our time, society makes increased demands on achievement, as dealt with by Adler. Advancement and achievement requirements in school and occupation, with their manifold effects on the lives of children and adults, have increased, while restrictive morality regarding cravings has largely diminished. Think of the sexual freedom and the abundance of consumption. Wanting to possess is today largely permitted, is even continuously encouraged through literature, movies, and advertising. Thus "Individual Psychological neuroses" should become more frequent all the time and thus also the application of the therapeutic methods of Individual Psychology. And this is actually the case—even if frequently under other names.

Regarding the concept of man, the above could perhaps be summarized as follows: Freud sees man as a *desiring being* who needs something or wants it. Normal and pathological psychological phenomena are interpreted on this basis insofar as possible. Adler sees man as an *acting being* who must, should, or wants to accomplish something. On this, society and the world of work are erected.

Up to now two concepts have not yet been mentioned which may be regarded as the most characteristic for the two views, namely *sexuality* and *community*. A presently widespread view sees man on the one hand as a biological being, on the other hand as a social being, and explains the entirety of human existence from these two roots. This is expressed briefly and strikingly in the phrase, "man is a social animal."

It seems obvious that the left side of our list of opposites (self-preservation) goes back to the biological root, and the right side to the social root. Sexuality would then belong to the left side, and community to the right.

Another consideration, however, is possible. Fundamentally

Freud was concerned all his life with the problem of *love*. But he wanted to yield to it only in the form of scientific knowledge. Having grown up in a generation of scientists who were oriented toward purely biological research, and confronted by patients from the middle-class of the Victorian era disturbed in the sexual realm, his "scientific conscience" forced him to regard love as a primary force which was nothing but a drive, aimed at self-preservation and pleasure.

It has always been said of love that it awakens in man the need to unite with the loved one; thus it is a form of "craving." Love of the good, the divine, love of beauty, and love of truth (expressions unfortunately too often used superficially and poetically to be quite plausible today) lead to interiorization, the acquisition of culture. All learning is based on this. As man brings these results in turn into his actions, religion, art and science arise in the human community, i.e., culture.

On the other hand, one has always said of love that it brings man to devote himself to a cause, to commit himself to something, to transpose into a deed what he has understood as or considers valuable. In other words, love is the driving force of action.

Love of fellow man and the other sex, the actually community-creating force, stands between the love that leads to appropriation to oneself and the love that leads to giving. In other words, love and community are a middle ground between the two above described directions of will and striving and extend into both realms. Into this center one may also place inner security (meaning courage, confidence in oneself and in the world in the sense of Adler).

After all, in the end psychotherapy wants the inner security of the patient and an increase in his ability to relate to his fellow man. Thus it tends toward this center.

I should now like to assert that Freud as well as Adler considered the readiness and ability for love the actually curative force for a disturbed psychological life. The image they have formed of love is then in the case of Freud displaced toward the left. Such love intends the appropriation of the loved object and is, furthermore, interpreted biologically. Adler, on the other hand, is inclined to emphasize social feeling in the sphere of achievement, responsibility, and working together. He is an extrovert in his manner, and experiences with his patients their lack of preparation to meet the demands of external life.

Courage means for Adler primarily readiness to commit oneself and to overcome difficulties. For Freud courage means frustration tolerance and acceptance of a depressing concept of man without illusions when this is scientifically unavoidable. Freud's patient is expected to learn to accept the reality principle, Adler's patient, to help mold reality. Both are expected to gain through insight a new relationship to reality.

The question arises whether insight into one's motives and modes of behavior can become effective if it does not lead to an experience of meaning. Can one gain inner security without experiencing a meaning of one's own existence? The person who is psychologically balanced will strive toward inner enrichment (left) as well as toward outer achievement (right). But can he remain in this balance if he does not see any meaning in it? Here is the point of departure of Frankl.

How do the psychologies of Jung and others—insofar as they are original formulations and not mere mixtures or restatements—fit into the above analysis? This should be further investigated. It would probably require a more comprehensive concept of man to integrate the valuable but one-sided findings of the various schools into a total concept.