

# RELIGION AND INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY: INTRODUCTION

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By way of introducing the following six papers on religion and Individual Psychology we wish briefly to give a history of the relationship of Adler and his psychology to religion as a generally human and social phenomenon. At the same time we shall show that the papers represent distinct aspects of this development.

## HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY AND RELIGION

By stressing man's creative power and all-pervasive goal orientation, together with his social embeddedness, Adler was an original humanistic psychologist (4). Thus humanism is affirmed also among present-day Adlerians; e.g., one, the present writer, is a founding sponsor of the Association of Humanistic Psychology and on the board of editors of their journal, while another, Rudolf Dreikurs, is an associate member of the publication committee of the *Humanist*, journal of the American Humanist Association and the American Ethical Union, to which he has contributed several papers (especially, 6).

Adler's philosophy of religion has much similarity with that of Ludwig Feuerbach, "the philosopher of Germany's aborted democratic revolution" (17, p. 14), who after years of neglect has of late been recognized "as a harbinger of secular and religious humanism of today" (11, p. 71). Though Feuerbach regards God as a projection of man's aspirations, his view of religion is positive, includes the social aspect, and is "committed to the optimistic naturalism of the Enlightenment" (17, p. 15n) — like Adler's later conceptions. To give some quotations from Feuerbach:

God is the highest subjectivity of man abstracted from himself (8, p. 31). God as a morally perfect being is nothing else than the realized idea, the fulfilled law of morality, the moral nature of man posited as an absolute being (8, p. 46). The essence of man is contained only in the community and unity of man with man. . . . Solitude is finiteness and limitation; community is freedom and infinity. Man for himself is man (in the ordinary sense); man with man—the unity of I and thou—is God (9, p. 71).

It is altogether likely that Adler was familiar with Feuerbach's views, at least indirectly. Adler knew the writings of Marx and

Engels (10, pp. 316-317). These include extensive critiques of Feuerbach (18, pp. 195-245), while at the same time Marx had actually been strongly influenced by him (17, pp. 38-40).

Granted such influences on Adler, Professor Hall, a philosopher, shows in the first paper below, "Adler's Concept of God," that Adler developed a distinct philosophy of religion of his own in which he "offers a unique blend of a pragmatic outlook on a metaphysical foundation."

#### EARLY RELIGIOUS COLLEAGUES

With his positive regard for the human principles of religion, Adler's psychology attracted from the start colleagues who tended toward a theistic religion. Similarly it also was attractive to political socialists. But Adler was concerned to keep his psychology unencumbered by either, independent even of religious or political movements with which he might be in sympathy. Thus Adler disengaged himself from a socialistic group within his circle. And several of his early co-workers separated as they became more religiously oriented in their psychology.

The earliest of these was Rudolf Allers (1883-1963) whose first book in English translation introduced him to the reader as a "Catholic Adlerian" who achieved a "satisfying synthesis between Catholic thought and all that is most valuable in Individual Psychology" (2, p. vii). But from this viewpoint Allers considered that "Adler's teaching requires to be carefully freed from non-essentials which are foreign to its general nature" (2, p. xi). It is such modifications which Adler believed damaging to his systematic structure.

A counterpart on the Protestant side was Fritz Künkel (1889-1956). While he considered his characterology to have "emerged from Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology," he also believed it to have gained greater depth and clarity "from the wisdom of Christianity" (16, p. iv).

#### APPRECIATION BY THE CLERGY

The next historical phase may be described as the recognition on the part of clergy of the intrinsic concordance of Adler's conception of man with the aims of present-day religion. On his first visit to the United States during the Winter 1926-1927 Adler was invited by the liberal and very prominent clergyman John Haynes Holmes (1879-1964) to lecture at the Community Church, New York, of which he

was the minister. In retrospect he wrote in a letter to his colleague, the Rev. H. P. Marley: "Alfred Adler not only spoke once in our church, but delivered the first address he ever gave in America, which was one of a series of ten lectures . . . delivered to packed houses of well over a thousand people a night" (14).

But Adler was also invited to speak at synagogues. In the Fall of 1929 he gave a series of nine lectures at Temple Emanu-El. The first of these was reported as having attracted an audience of 2800 persons. He considered the greatest contribution of Individual Psychology to be "a right understanding of the demand for cooperation . . . For us life means a necessity of cooperation . . . There is no virtue in the world which does not come from cooperation" (20). In February of the following year Adler actually spoke from the pulpit, at the American Synagogue in New York, advocating educational counseling in every school (23). A great affinity between Adler's psychology in general and the Jewish tradition was shown by the Jewish scholar and editor, Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, several years later (26).

The protestant clergyman Ernst Jahn who participated with Adler in a written dialogue on religion and Individual Psychology (15) stated, also many years later, "Today I am convinced that Adler was not an atheist" (7, p. 625). A Catholic priest who had been a patient of Adler's is reported to have told him at the end of the treatment: "You have more than kept your promise about respecting my religion; in fact I have found you to be the most really religious person that I have ever met" (5, p. 102).

The Rev. Holmes expressed himself most completely in a sermon stating what he found objectionable in the modern psychology of his day, and that he found in Adler the necessary emphasis on self-transcendence and social concern. The second paper in the present series, "Three Evils of Present-Day Psychology," gives a condensed version of this sermon.

Adler, in turn, shortly before his sudden death, is quoted by Phyllis Bottome as predicting: "It seems to me that it will probably be the clergy—of all denominations—who will do most to spread my psychology in the future. . . . The clergy *are* the chief practitioners of social interest already by profession" (5, p. 257).

#### CHURCH AFFILIATED GUIDANCE CLINIC

The next step is the affiliation of an Adlerian guidance clinic with a church, the Community Church in New York. During the Winter

1929-1930, Adler conducted a psychological clinic at the Vanderbilt Clinic, a part of the Medical Center at 167th Street and Broadway, New York, where Dr. Frederick Tilney was head of the Neurological Institute. Quite unexpectedly Adler closed the clinic on February 5, and no completely satisfactory explanation was given (21). But if we combine a mention of this event by Phyllis Bottome (5, pp. 210-211) with other accounts, the following picture emerges. While Adler was away from New York, Tilney, without previous consultation with Adler, proposed his appointment as professor at Columbia University on a permanent basis. But Tilney's proposal was not accepted. When Adler returned and learned what had happened he apparently felt deeply hurt and resigned at once. At the same time there was a confirmed report that members of the Psychoanalytic Society of America lectured at the Medical Center and that the Society did not want Adler's clinic there (22).

Six weeks later the Reverend Holmes announced that Adler's "Advisory Council of Individual Psychology," as the clinic was apparently called, "had been taken over by the Community Church as a regular part of its community service work" (24). The above mentioned sermon was delivered soon after this announcement. The clinic started functioning the end of October, 1930. It was conducted by W. Beran Wolfe, M.D., a student of Adler who had written several books and also had translated Adler's *Understanding Human Nature*. The clinic met twice a week, on Wednesday afternoons and Thursday mornings (12). When Dr. Wolfe died in an automobile accident in Switzerland in 1935, Dr. Frederic Feichtinger and Dr. G. Margery Allen succeeded him. The clinic was continued until about 1960 when its activities were transferred to the Alfred Adler Mental Hygiene Clinic.

Holmes considered the clinic "our claim in this church to pioneering work in the psychological field" (14). He liked "to think of the clinic as the Catholic confessional brought up to date. In its essential character the confessional was always sound in principle as often it was and is beneficent in practice" (12). Yet, when Holmes' autobiography (13) appeared, there was no mention of the clinic nor of Adler. When questioned about this he wrote to Reverend Marley: "I am sorry that it is not mentioned in my book, for it would constitute one of its proudest pages. But it was one of the things that disappeared from my manuscript when it had to be cut down by something like one hundred pages. That task, by the way, was one of the most melan-

choly experiences of my life" (14). A recent search of Holmes' papers for this material has remained quite unsuccessful.

Ever since this beginning there has been the tendency for Adlerian counseling centers to be church affiliated, as presently in Bethesda, Maryland; Honolulu, Hawaii; Houston, Texas; Minneapolis, Minnesota (25); and Morgantown, West Virginia.

#### PASTORAL COUNSELING

Around 1930 also, an interest in the application of individual-psychological psychotherapy by ministers developed, in Germany. Johannes Neumann edited a series on psychology of religion, the first volume of which was an *Introduction to Psychotherapy for Ministers* (19) which had seven contributors. After the events in Germany in 1933 this development disappeared, with so many others.

There follows a considerable gap in time during which the concept of pastoral psychology emerged in this country, that is, the old function of the clergy, pastoral care, augmented by whatever psychology might be able to offer. This took place in the United States during the period in which Freudian psychology dominated the scene.

Only in recent years has the clergy in general started to become aware of Adlerian psychology and its potential helpfulness in their work. The article by Reverend Herbert Anderson, "Individual Psychology and Pastoral Psychology: some Common Concerns" is an expression of this development for our readers, and is an adaptation of a previous paper by the same author directed at his colleagues with different psychological training (3).

This is followed by the paper of Father Joseph L. Hart on "Pastoral Counseling and Individual Psychology." This paper is of particular significance in that it is probably the first such contribution by a clergyman who has received formal training in Adlerian counseling. It is so to speak a first-hand account from personal experience by a representative of this most recent development. The author notes among other advantages that Individual Psychology is helpful to the counselor himself in meeting and contributing constructively to the changing parochial scene.

#### ETHICAL BELIEF

When Reverend Jahn and Adler collaborated on their book, Jahn considered it correct "that psychology is not capable of being a substitute for faith" (15, p. 33). "Faith is a gift of God" (15, p. 55). Adler

held that Individual Psychology could "further the sacred good of all-embracing humaneness" where religion had lost its influence (1, p. 281). It "has at its disposal sufficient consolation, encouragement, and redeeming power . . ." And just as in a religion "a man must know himself to be before God in order to become a member of society in the highest sense, so in Individual Psychology the erring human being stands before the 'right' ideal of an ultimate society" (1, p. 284).

The fifth paper of the present series is a report of what is probably the first instance where Adlerian psychology, or any psychology for that matter, has been officially recognized in Adler's sense as a faith, an ethical belief, taking the place of a religion.

#### RESEARCH

The sixth paper, "The Concept of God and Feelings toward Parents," describes a research study testing the Adlerian versus the Freudian concept of God. With an ingenious application of the Q-sort technique, Marvin O. Nelson found the conception of God among students to be more in agreement with Adlerian an hypothesis than with a Freudian hypothesis.

#### ORIGIN OF THE PRESENT SERIES

The fact that relatively many members of the clergy have become interested in Adlerian psychology, especially in recent years, suggested to Dr. Harold H. Mosak a special series of papers in this Journal concerned with the topic of Religion and Individual Psychology. We favored this suggestion and Dr. Mosak invited potential contributors. Although numerous abstracts were received, very few authors followed through with papers when asked for them. Yet, it will be seen, that the papers which did materialize from the project, interestingly cover each a quite distinct phase in the development of Individual Psychology in relation to religion, Thus the papers as a whole give a quite complete sampling of the topic.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to Dr. Donald Szantho Harrington, present Minister of the Community Church of New York, and to the Reverend Harold P. Marley who became affiliated with Adlerian psychology through the Chicago group, for their great help in making essential information available to us.

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