

INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY AND PASTORAL PSYCHOLOGY: SOME COMMON CONCERNS¹

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In the wake of a wide reassessment of Alfred Adler's influence on the therapeutic professions, it is appropriate to explore the common concerns of Individual Psychology and pastoral psychology. I am using the term pastoral psychology to refer broadly to the integration of pastoral caretaking (and the theology that undergirds it) with the insights of personality sciences and psychotherapeutic technique. Thus, pastoral psychology refers to the conceptualization of what happens when theology and psychology meet, and also to the pastoral or religious counseling by chaplains in mental or medical hospital settings as well as the pastoral caretaking that a religious leader conducts within his particular religious community.

It is generally agreed that the clinical aspect of pastoral psychology had its beginning with Anton Boisen in the 1930's. Despite his rather broad-gauged approach, the clinical training of ministers has, until recently, been influenced primarily by psychoanalysis. The net effect of this has been that pastoral psychology rather narrowly followed the medical model in order to establish itself as a respectable therapeutic discipline (6). Since mimicking is an ultimately futile exercise, I am increasingly of the conviction that pastoral psychology must come clean about its own uniqueness. Adler's non-technical language and common-sense approach to counseling provide a perspective in which the pastoral psychologist could demonstrate therapeutic competence without losing sight of the more intuitive aspects of human understanding that characterize pastoral caretaking relationships.

The theoretical reflection of pastoral functioning has a longer history. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) wrote a treatise on "practical theology" in which he argued that theological formulation and practical understanding should go together. He examined all acts and operations of the church under the umbrella of "practical theology." More recently, the functions considered a part of pastoral

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psychology have excluded preaching and organizing in favor of pastoral counseling and more general pastoral caretaking (5). Increasing attention needs to be given to theological reflection on the clinical data which emerge as a result of pastoral psychological practice. Adler's unashamed metaphysical bent would not conflict with such theologizing. While he was not a religious man in any theistic sense, he was a humanist with a deep concern for social justice and had a positive attitude toward socially relevant aspects of religion. Religious faith for Adler functions as an interim sort of thing until it can be replaced by such profound insight that will dispell error and teach virtue to everyone. Until that utopian state is achieved, Adler contends it is very natural for people to concretize and/or contemplate God as the highest idea of perfection. Adler describes his understanding of the correspondence between salvation and health by suggesting that the truly religious person would also be mentally healthy.

Until the advent of social action and subsequent interest in ministry to structures, the emphasis in pastoral psychology has primarily been on one-to-one relationships modeled after the psychotherapeutic contract. But human hurt very rarely occurs in isolation. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to institutions and structures that crush the human spirit. Adler's emphasis on the uniqueness of the individual and his creative power, while recognizing the necessary priorities of the social order might be one perspective that would encourage greater rapprochement between the social action movement and pastoral psychology.

Beyond the technical sophistication, it is clear that the process of healing requires genuine hopeful understanding and concern. Obviously this caring cannot be restricted to the professional clergy any more than trained clinical psychologists are the only ones who can be therapeutic. Pastoral caretaking is the responsibility of the entire religious community. The minister has a unique opportunity and responsibility to train laymen (i.e., paraprofessionals) for caretaking tasks. Adler's concern for teaching teachers to be sensitive to human need was much ahead of his time.

Despite these indications of common concerns and such early religious advocates as Ernst Jahn, Rudolf Allers, and Fritz Künkel, Individual Psychology has had very little direct influence on pastoral care and counseling in the United States. This is not surprising. During the time when pastoral psychology was self-consciously

about the task of gaining recognition and respect from the psychoanalytic tradition which was considered scientifically oriented, it would presumably have been disadvantageous to identify with Adler's non-technical, humanistic, "common sense" approach to the human psyche. Furthermore, his optimism about human nature was certainly contrary to the existentialist and neo-orthodox pessimism that dominated the theological scene during Adler's time.

My intent in this essay is to indicate those aspects of Adler's thought that readily suggest similar concerns in pastoral psychology. The themes selected from Adler reflect some of my biases regarding the future direction of pastoral caretaking and are not intended to give an overview of Individual Psychology.

THE SOCIAL EMBEDDEDNESS OF BEING HUMAN

One of the most significant features of Adler's thought is his idea of *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* which has generally been translated as "social interest." Such connotations of "social" as conformity or gregariousness coupled with the innocuous quality of "interest" do not, however, reflect Adler's conviction that human beings have a trainable aptitude for community feeling. "Every human being brings the disposition for social interest with him; but then it must be *developed* through *upbringing*, especially through correct guidance of the *creative power* of the individual" (2, p. 40). The "iron logic of communal life" means for Adler that the individual is embedded in the social situation, either contributing to its improvement, making demands on it, or trying to escape it. Because the ideal goal of mankind as a cooperating community is the responsibility of everyone, community feeling is both a normative goal as well as a direction-giving goal.

Throughout, Adler works hard at preserving the idiosyncratic quality of personhood while at the same time insisting on the communal nature of human life. The individual gains his uniqueness through his willingness to act as a functional unit of the community. "If the community needs the unique individual for the purpose of its own enrichment, the individual also needs the community to give him his uniqueness" (8, p. 197). Such interactional mutuality is, according to Adler, the best guarantee for the continued existence of human beings. Traditional religion has maintained this same tenet in theory, though seldom in practice.

Self-boundedness, by contrast, is an artifact which the child

creates during his education within the social structure. The traditional theological and psychoanalytic notion that man is somehow by nature *incurvatus in se* or narcissistic is, according to Adler, an erroneous conclusion. While it is not an instinct, the willingness to cooperate with other persons is a natural aptitude of life that is developed in social interaction. Lack of cooperation is seen as the basis of all failures in life of which neurosis is one. Adler's practical remedy is to give up self-centeredness and to develop the potential for cooperation.

It should be noted that Adler's emphasis on cooperation and community feeling does not necessitate an attitude of acquiescence or unconditional accommodation to the present social order, or to the wishes of others. Concern for modifying the present social order does not contradict the principle of social usefulness. In fact, a true social feeling would impell the person to eliminate existing social evil. Passive conformity is no more appropriate to community feeling than private logic.

On the other hand, Adler places a high priority on social usefulness. "In our view, a man of genius is primarily a man of supreme usefulness . . . The origin of genius lies neither in the inherited organism nor in the environmental influences, but in that third sphere of individual reaction, which includes the possibility of socially affirmative action" (1, p. 153). Criminals, neurotics, problem children, and psychotics all operate in different ways on the socially useless side of life. Such persons lack the necessary courage and feeling of interdependence that would enable them to make a useful contribution to the community. Meaning in life is found by contributing to the achievement of human goals.

The challenge of the future is whether mankind can learn to live together in proximity without destroying itself. Whatever psychological and theological theories might undergird our efforts on behalf of humanity, they must begin with the assumption that man is inextricably bound to being in community. Even though from the Christian perspective, I would quibble with the etiology of this fellowship (*Mitmenschlichkeit*), Adler's communal emphasis is a helpful corrective to the individualism that has frequently dominated Christian theology and the pastoral care movement. Increasingly, religious counselors of all faiths are recognizing that it is not enough to bind up the wounds of those who have been brutalized by structures without attempting to humanize social systems or at least seeking to provide a network of support for individuals.

Gemeinschaftsgefühl is also a welcome word at a time when anti-social or at least asocial behavior patterns are too common to be automatically considered pathological. Adler's dream of mankind progressing toward greater cooperation and universal *Mitmenslichkeit* has not yet materialized. Perhaps it is an illusion, but I doubt it; we have not explored all the possibilities open to man for humanizing his existence. Yet there is theological justification for the conviction that self-boundedness, social isolation, or the absence of the community feeling are inevitable, and thus ultimately self-destructive both for the individual and his society. From my perspective, education and retraining are not enough to rectify man's plight. Adler's optimism about human potential should not however, be allowed to obscure his cogent observations on the social quality of existence and the necessity for community. What this means for pastoral caretaking is an increased attention to the social embeddedness of every human dilemma.

TELEOLOGY: THE HUMAN GOAL ORIENTATION

Adler holds that the psychic life of man is determined by his goal. This goal is a fiction or creation of the individual, most often unconscious. It functions to provide a unity to the personality and a schema by which the individual finds his way; it enables one to deal with reality effectively. It has the essential flavor of "as if."

The highest goal is to aspire ultimately to be like God or to be perfect. The idea of God functions as the harmonic complementation for all groping and erring movements in life. "Whether one calls the highest effective goal deity, or socialism or as we do, the pure idea of social interest, or as others call it in obvious connection with social interest, ego ideal, it always reflects the same ruling, perfection-promising grace-giving goal of overcoming (2, pp. 277-278)." Whatever it is called, it is the same "mysterious creative power of life" (1, p. 92) that expresses itself in the striving after a goal. The meaning one gives to life depends on the goal toward which one strives. It also enables the individual to transcend present difficulties.

The key image for me is mystery. Every man's goal is his own creation even though it is influenced by the impressions from his physical and social environment. The individual's future is shaped by the goal that was formed very early in life. Hence, there are self-imposed as well as external limits to human freedom. Since community feeling is both a norm and a goal, a striving can be

judged abnormal when it does not contribute to the general welfare. For Adler, the goal which the individual mysteriously creates is, in effect, thrown into the future and thus becomes that which compels one from ahead to strive toward it. Therefore, Adler's future, contrary to some futurologists, is not radically open but determined by the individual's own mysteriously created goal.

COMMON CARETAKING CONCERNS

The self-consistent movement toward a goal is what Adler called the style of life, which not only includes the goal but also the individual's perception of himself and the world as well as his unique way of attempting to achieve his goal. Because he sees a unity and self-consistency to every individual's style of life, it is important for Adler to consider the person in a holistic way.

Since all failures in life ultimately result from a lack of community feeling, the task of therapy in Individual Psychology is to change the patient's goal by making him see that it runs counter to the larger order of the world, and by developing increased interest on the useful side of life. This can be enhanced by the development of courage, which Adler equates with social interest and common sense together. Resistance is only a lack of courage to turn to the useful side of life. "The task of the physician or psychologist is to give the patient the experience of contact with a fellow man, and then to enable him to transfer this awakened social interest to others" (1, p. 341). Within the friendly atmosphere of the counseling relationship, it is hoped that the individual might experience a small success which in turn might enlarge the scope of his activity and further the training toward purposeful, useful behavior. Thus treatment, according to Adler, can be conceived as involving the following three stages which apply also to pastoral counseling.

Understanding

In the first stage Adler focuses on understanding the patient's unique, self-consistent life style, including how his symptoms are in the service of striving for his goal. Although the terminology is different, the pastoral psychologist seeks first of all to understand the person through listening. Some pastors have effective intuitions but do not trust them. Adler suggests guessing as a part of the diagnostic process, that is, the formulation of small heuristic hy-

potheses, which then, however, must be immediately validated against the person's reactions (2, p. 141).

Each human being can be understood only as a whole, self-consistent unity striving for a plus situation within a definite context. The bifurcation of man is no longer theologically acceptable. Therefore, the pastoral psychologist would agree with the Adlerian focus on the total person in principle, although in practice he is apt to narrow his focus out of lack of skill or personal bias. The individual must be understood within a particular field of forces. There is an inseparable balance between *Eigenwelt* und *Mitwelt*. While Adler's psychology deals with unique individuals he also stresses how they affect others within the limited and the larger social contexts.

Explaining

The second phase is for the counselor to communicate his understanding of the client to the client so that he will accept this interpretation despite his predictable initial negativism and lack of cooperation. This is, in terms more common in theological circles, a hermeneutical task. There is a subtle but significant difference between the two approaches at this point that is worth noting. Pastoral psychology has avoided interpretation in favor of the reflective model. The focus has been on the counselor's empathetic understanding of what the client is presenting. No doubt, persons have felt understood by their pastoral counselor, but they may not have understood the style of life they presented to others. The present emphasis on 'feed-back' has influenced pastoral psychology in the direction of Adler's emphasis on explanation rather than reflection. There is a danger in this shift, however, that may be peculiar to clergymen who, for one reason or another, seem to have some "natural" disposition to preach. Furthermore, most clergymen in their desire to help people, *do* more than they should.

The emphasis on listening and empathetic understanding was necessary for pastoral psychology to break century-old patterns of the relationship between pastor and parishioner. But not every clergyman has the time or the skill for the long-term, insight-oriented approach nor does he always have acceptable counselees for such a contract. In many instances, what may be required is a conscious process of rethinking and retraining, behavior modification, or some other kind of learning experience that acknowledges the effectiveness

of conscious education as a means of altering a selfish or otherwise unsatisfactory style of life.

The emphasis from Adler is on *holding up* for the counselee what he is in fact doing rather than exhorting him on what he ought to do. The work and success of the client's cure is still his own responsibility. The therapeutic contract is a relationship of equals in which the client is treated as a co-worker. Thus, Adler's approach would be very helpful for the pastoral caretaker, as long as he explains and does not exhort, as long as the counselee does not become compliant, as long as whatever explanations are made are so clear that he knows and feels his own experience instantly, and as long as the pastor refrains from doing more work for the counselee than he should.

There is no doubt that for Adler the ultimate norm for striving is toward the solution of life problems in a socially useful way. Although every individual devises a goal that fits personally for him, community feeling is, as always, the established norm. Anything short of that represents an unhealthy effort at escaping responsibility. The pastoral caretaking person frequently encounters persons who have false assumptions about life. Perfectionism and the fear of failure often emerge within a person to necessitate a retreat into some private view of the world which his religion may reinforce. I have found Adler's neurotic "either-or" schema particularly helpful with people who are reluctant to acknowledge that their perception of themselves and their world is biased and faulty and for whom all of life is a battleground of triumph or defeat.

Adler's emphasis on the individual as an actor in creating his own goal or style of life supports the theological notion of responsibility. Man is not a hapless pawn. He can and does determine the movement of his life. Although an individual's goal or style of life is rooted in a period when, as a child, he is incapable of conceptualizing and reflecting on his experience, it is still *his* own goal for which *he* is responsible. This is the practical significance of Adler's shifting his explanations from causes to purposes. If it can be understood that every individual is an active contributor to his own life style, then questions of responsibility, ethics, and sin can be dealt with in a more open way in pastoral caring situations than they have been dealt with in the past. Although a moralistic or judgmental approach is to be avoided, ethical neutrality is a luxury which the pastoral caring person cannot afford.

Encouragement

The third phase of the treatment process is to strengthen the patient's social interest by giving him a continued experience of fellowmanship through the therapeutic relationship. Where the mother has failed to give her child the most complete possible experience of human fellowmanship and to develop a feeling for community, it is necessary for the counselor to function analogously to the mother by creating an atmosphere of love in which the counselee is encouraged to cooperate and to develop a socially useful goal. Adler is correct in stressing that his goal-oriented therapeutic approach requires a feeling of courage, along with hope, in order to counteract the feelings of entrapment that may obstruct one's movement toward the future. Hoping takes courage because hoping thrusts one into a future that is uncertain.

Very often the pastoral caring person is in a unique position to support someone through a period of distress. Whether this is a situation of bereavement or personal pain or global apprehension or interpersonal tension, it often requires courage for persons to seek help and still more courage to act on their new understanding of the situation.

Despite Tillich's *Courage to Be* (7), which focused the attention of the theological world on the necessity of courage in the face of anxiety and despair, very little has been said by pastoral psychologists about courage in a caretaking context. Even those who, like Howard Clinebell (4), emphasize the supportive dimension of the pastoral relationship will use verbs like to stabilize, undergird, nurture—but seldom, to encourage. Admittedly, there is the danger of gratifying unhealthy dependency needs if the counselor becomes the source of courage. Adler's approach is both instructive and challenging to the pastoral psychologist because he encourages by directing the counselee's attention to his own actions and accomplishments and by enticing him "from one fruitful pasture to another" (1, p. 400), as well as by showing him social interest. The religious caring person assumes in addition, what Adler does not, namely, that God is the ultimate source of courage.

The process of hoping is a dominant theme in contemporary religious thought. Alongside the hoping process has been the re-discovery that the future is active in the present which Adler's understanding of the "final fiction" or goal has emphasized all along.

Hoping, as I understand it, is not the same as being optimistic except that both have a future time perspective which acknowledges the possibility of change. Human life, collective or individual, does not move toward a static future point but that future shapes the present and past. The psychoanalytic predilection to the past which has also characterized the pastoral care movement needs to be re-examined. If to intend a goal is a human characteristic then an individual's future perspective should be as important as his past memories for the pastoral caring process. Adler does not conceive of the future as entirely open, in view of the essential self-consistencies of the individual's style of life. He also seems to be aware of the danger that the goal may foreclose possible change in the future by being absolutized, but on the other hand he reminds us: Everything can be different. A positive future-time perspective undergirds any effective, change-producing helping relationship. Adler's major contribution in this regard may be a change in time direction. The human psyche needs to be understood prospectively as well as retrospectively.

CONCLUSION

The holistic approach to understanding persons that characterizes Adler's thought has become commonplace in pastoral psychology. The old dualistic battles are generally over. There is, however, still something alluring about the psychiatrist's ability to parse the psyche. In any relationship with a person in distress, there is something assuring about classifying or categorizing the experience rather than being compelled to discover the uniqueness of this or that particular person. One can finally understand a whole person only as a totality. *Individualism* means precisely that personality is an undivided, indivisible unity. Adler's phenomenology deserves serious attention. Egos are like souls. They may exist but we can't see them. What is evident, however, is a unique and self-consistent style of life which the individual has elected to achieve the goal he himself has chosen. Admittedly, this is not always a conscious process. His style of life is nonetheless the individual's own responsibility, despite whatever stimuli he has received from his environment. The goal of counseling is primarily a conscious redirection away from a privatized meaning of life toward one of community feeling and self-esteem. Adler's convictions seem to coincide with the limitations of pastoral care.

From Adler's perspective, pastoral ministry to the whole person would necessarily include an individual's own social context. Every action of the individual has to be understood within the field in which it takes place, and within the framework of the total personality. Adler's *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* describes the intimate relationship between the individual and his society as both an innate disposition and the goal for human life. The pastoral setting is ideally situated to work toward effecting such a mutuality without neglecting either the idiographic quality of the individual or the social embeddedness of human existence. One-to-one pastoral caring relationships are effective to the degree that they pay attention to the organic mutuality between the individual and his community. In this respect, Adler has much to contribute to the future of pastoral psychology.

Beyond this, recent shifts in both theology and psychotherapy should make Adler's position more acceptable to religious counselors. The emergence of a "theology of hope" presumes some kind of optimism about the human situation at the same time it directs our attention to the future. The emergence of community psychiatry and community mental health centers represents a radical departure from the traditional medical model. Therapeutic psychology continues to recognize the significance of phenomenology. Field theory generally and general systems theory in particular have refocused our interest in the individual's adaptation to his social context. Who has caught up with whom is immaterial. The point is that some of the new directions in the therapeutic disciplines make it more likely that Adler will have a long over-due hearing.

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