

INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY AS ETHICAL BELIEF: RECOGNITION BY A SELECTIVE SERVICE BOARD

Conscientious objection to combatant military service, which was formerly recognized only when "by reason of religious belief," may now also be based merely on deeply held "moral or ethical beliefs," even though these are not "religious" in the traditional sense. This new criterion is based on a ruling of the Supreme Court of the United States and was announced in *Selective Service System, Local Board Memorandum*, No. 107, July 6, 1970.

One case in which a Local Selective Service Board acted in favor of conscientious objection on the basis of the new ruling is of interest to psychologists because in his document of ten typewritten pages to meet "the test of sincerity and depth of his conviction," the claimant referred also to his psychological training. The case is of particular interest to Individual Psychologists because the claimant referred specifically to the writings of Alfred Adler.

The document was written in response to the Special Form For Conscientious Objectors which requests first a description of the nature of one's belief. The claimant's statement amounted to a kind of pantheism, beginning with, "Nature, the force of life, the universal and all-encompassing energy which is existence itself, is what could be called my God." The claimant ended the statement of "my own personal 'religion,' so to speak," with an extended quotation from Adler, as follows:

Should, or could, man have waited until he recognized through scientific illumination the necessity for brotherly love and the common weal, for the proper relationship of mother and child, the social lawfulness in the cooperation of the sexes, and interest in the labor of one's fellow man? Such an intellectual clarification, which leads to the most profound recognition of interconnectedness, which closes all doors to error, and proves that virtue is teachable, has not yet become realized by many. Religious faith is alive and will continue to live until it is replaced by this most profound insight and the religious feeling which stems from it. It will not be enough for man to taste of this insight; he will have to devour and digest it completely [*The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*. Basic Books, 1956, p. 462].

The Form requests in second place an explanation of the sources of "religious" training, including "experiences at school and college; . . . books . . . ; association with teachers." Here the claimant re-

ferred as follows to Adler and Individual Psychology: "The most significant aspect of my education has been my study in psychology, a course in Personality in particular. The course is taught at the University of Vermont by Dr. Heinz Ansbacher, and is based on the work of Dr. Alfred Adler and others. This course has provided perhaps the most significant substantive contribution to my beliefs. . . . Basically it stresses love, cooperation, and empathy with others as the underlying prerequisite for healthy, natural human development. The teachings of Adler's Individual Psychology have had great meaning and relevance for me, forming a solid basis for, and adding the finishing touches to, my belief."

When Adler wrote his dialogue with the Rev. Jahn on religion, he put religion and Individual Psychology in many ways on the same plane. Thus he wrote, "Individual Psychology will be satisfied in the practical application of its science to protect and further the sacred good of all-embracing humaneness where the religions have lost their influence" (*Superiority and Social Interest*, Northwest. Univer. Press, 1964, pp. 280-281). The presently described case provides a concrete example where such an equivalence has now been experienced and been publicly recognized.

—H.L.A.