



One Framing of the Issue: Adlerian Psychology Within Pastoral Counseling

Erik Mansager

There is a high level of agreement within modern psychological thought (Allport, 1950; Erikson, 1963; Frankl, 1955; Fromm, 1950; May, 1953) that religion can play a part in the healthy development of the human personality. Fundamental-biblicist religion in the United States, however, has generally taken a strong stand of condemnation toward psychology as libertine and ultimately destructive of the human soul (Bobgan and Bobgan, 1978; Conn, 1982; Kilpatrick, 1983; Vitz, 1977). It would therefore be premature to portray the psychology/religion dialogue as having emerged into a position of one having ascended over the other, let alone as them having emerged onto a common ground of mutual acceptance.

The present article seeks to illustrate that the attitude of Individual Psychology toward religion is one of good will and cooperation and that its own fundamental propositions are kin and "heir to" the wealth of Christianity. It is also the author's intention to demonstrate how the historical critical method of studying scripture, as responsibly carried out by Christian theologian Hans Küng,¹ has been able to vindicate the original Christian message from criticism aimed primarily at the varied abuses of Christianity. Christianity can be seen not as "illusion" but again as the paramount movement "whose aim is the welfare of mankind" (Adler, 1979, p. 308). This article further seeks to demonstrate how Adler's concept of social interest is intimately connected to the Christian understanding of God's will, and it offers this as a fertile milieu from which to conduct pastoral counseling.

Religion as Illusion

The continually developing relationship between psychology and religion is a relationship fraught with ironies. Not least among them is the fact that Freud, a professed atheist, by attempting to settle definitively the problem of God's existence (Freud, 1961), instead engendered a debate that still rages today (Küng, 1979). Freud's particular framing of the issue has had the effect—not unlike Descartes's *cogito* for philosophers (Küng, 1980)—of forcing psychologists and theologians ever after to comment on the proposition that belief in God is an illusion.

In Freud's (1961) own words:

The psychical origin of religious ideas . . . are illusions, fulfillments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind. The secret of their strength lies in the strength of those wishes. The terrifying impression of helplessness in childhood aroused the need for protection . . . which was provided by the father; and the recognition that this helplessness lasts throughout the life made it necessary to cling to the existence of a father, but this time a more powerful one. . . . Thus we call a belief an illusion when a wish-fulfillment is a prominent factor in its motivation, and in so doing we disregard its relation to reality, just as the illusion itself sets no store by verification. (pp. 30–31)

Psychology since Freud has traveled long distances in regard to religion. The first decades of writing might be misunderstood as solely negative toward religion due to psychoanalysis having been the prevailing psychology of the day. It saw itself as replacing the evolutive step of religion, even as religion, Freud posited, had replaced the initial realm of magic or sorcery (Freud, 1961). While this dubious schema was not generally accepted even in Freud's day (Küng, 1979, pp. 40, 66–75), nonetheless, religious orientation had been consigned by psychoanalysis to the workings of the "subconscious" and characterized as an obsessional neurosis (Freud, 1961). What response there was from the clergy and the theological community—who recognized within psychoanalysis a tool with pastoral dimensions—was one of applying parts of the theory to the care of souls while omitting much of the disparaging theoretical basis.

The Recognition of Social Interest

Alfred Adler offered an alternative psychosocial model of the human person as creatively goal-oriented (Adler, 1956). Originally conceiving personality development as mere compensatory action brought about in response to a person's felt inferiority amidst the surrounding world (Adler,

1983), Adler's theory later developed the idea of striving as an effort to gain equal footing *among* one's fellows. The striving to elevate oneself *above* others or to treat others as *below* oneself was understood as the basis of neurosis. Thus, for Adler, to join others as equal partners in the tasks with which life challenges is the path to mental well-being. The feeling of interconnectedness with others—past, present and future—Adler termed *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*, commonly translated as "social interest."

Adler's Views on Religion Contrasted with Freud's

The discussions of religion by Freud and Adler serve as well as any other to expose the frequently disparate views of the two men. Küng points out, "as late as 1930 . . . Freud had described the Christian commandment of love of neighbor as 'not reasonable'" (Küng, 1979, p. 121). Adler, on the other hand, was developing his ideas about social interest and the "iron logic of communal life" (Adler, 1956, p. 127) as he served as a physician during World War I (Christensen, 1978).

In 1933 when Adler was summarizing in a co-authored work his view of the basic compatibility between Individual Psychology and religion, especially in their mutual contribution to the common weal (Adler, 1979, p. 279), Freud wrote to Albert Einstein and "called for a love 'without a sexual aim' as an indirect way of opposing war: 'There is no need for psychoanalysis to be ashamed to speak of love in this connection, for religion itself uses the same words: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself'" (Küng, 1979, pp. 121–122).

Where Freud attempted to disprove God's existence from within his psychoanalytic framework, Adler neither affirmed nor denied God's existence, but admitted that the question of proof resides outside the realm of science (Adler, 1979), for while "God cannot be proven scientifically" (p. 277), "Individual Psychology cannot banish God from the world" (p. 306).

While Freud validly criticized the abuses of organized religion, Adler's critique seems to have avoided precisely that which Küng sees all historical religious criticism to have mistakenly in common: "rejection of religion as a whole is connected with rejection of institutionalized religion, rejection of Christianity with rejection of Christendom, rejection of God with rejection of the Church" (Küng, 1980, p. 324). Rather, writes Adler:

The fact that an increasingly large part of mankind resists religion does not arise from its essential nature. This resistance rather originates from the contradictions which have resulted between the work of the power ap-

paratus of the religions and their essential nature, and probably also from the not infrequent abuses of religion (Adler, 1979, p. 279).

Adler and the Science of Right Living

While leaving the discussion of Christian guidance "to those more qualified for it" (Adler, 1979, p. 306), Adler nonetheless believed his science was as qualified as religion to deal with the earth-human relationship. He believed it could assist "through scientific illumination" in the "active recognition of the unavoidable necessity for brotherly love and the common weal." At the same time he accepted that the "spiritual and psychological clarification" that Individual Psychology also offers "leads to the most profound recognition of interconnectedness . . . and proves that virtue is teachable" but "has not as yet become realized by many" (p. 279). Indeed, "the self-bound individual always forgets that his self would be safe-guarded the better and more automatically, the more he would prepare himself for the welfare of mankind" (p. 301). Adler sees "the whole person as a part of the community . . . but . . . also as striving—once he knows the right way—for an ideal community, a striving movement coming to him as an earth-born creature through intuitive [religious] or scientific [psychological] knowledge" (p. 283).

This concept of social interest can, thus, be described as Adler's most enduring contribution to the science of psychology. In his discussions of this topic one can perceive an almost religious conviction, which is all the more convincing because he insisted on treating the subject scientifically, that is, free from metaphorical expression. He viewed metaphorical expression, except in art, as "a dangerous means to deceive oneself and others regarding reality" (p. 300).

As beings in the world, Adler understood humans to strive for preservation and ascendancy. And humans found the way of fulfillment pointed to in the concept of God. Such a final and highest goal, Adler contended, provided direction and assurance in overcoming the all-too-obvious feelings of inferiority experienced by all. Yet, as alluded to above, a communal feeling of security could not be assured if the individual, too, could not feel secure. The idea of the all-powerful had to include the caring for the individual and the group—not one at the expense of the other. Adler believed it to have taken "an unthinkable long time . . . to experience the revelation of this supreme being to whom leads the way of hope and belief in protection and security for the species and for the individual" (p. 278).

Adler's personality theory, therefore, indicates that psychology could cooperatively join religion in the challenge of social living.

Religious Integration of Social Interest²

The psychological recognition of social interest also has its religious dimensions. The organizing of the World Council of Churches and the event of Vatican Council II both expressed renewed concern for the quality of human life and the status of human rights. Indeed, KÜNG (1985) offers as a general ethical criterion in which all religions must participate in order to be considered participants in the truth, the traditional concept of *humanum*: the truly humane, "such as freedom, equality, fraternity and 'human dignity' . . . and not in any case a reduction to the 'merely human'" (p. 19).

In his challenging and widely read treatise on the historical Jesus, KÜNG (1976) painstakingly reawakens the reader to this truth: Jesus preached "the kingdom of God" with apocalyptic urgency. The absolute future, the consummation, the definitive reign of God was dawning even as Jesus preached its coming. He did not preach impending doom but an immanent end of the world as we know it and the arrival of "that most real reality." Thus Jesus preached the coming of God's kingdom as the cause and will of God.³

KÜNG insists there is no room here in Jesus' original message for the criticism that He calls for putting off what needs to be done now and patiently awaiting the hereafter. In Jesus, action and motive are one, and we witness the unambiguous example of how hope and faith in God's future impacts the here and now. Jesus' call to conversion and holiness is a call for God's action of the consummation—which, in kind, "includes man's action in the individual and social sphere, here and now" (KÜNG, 1976, p. 223). God's cause is preached by Jesus for the peoples' sake. For Jesus, announcing the coming kingdom, was acting on behalf of humanity:

Jesus, who is generally completely faithful to the law, does not hesitate to act in a manner contrary to it [Mark 7:14–23]; He repudiates ritual rectitude and taboos and demands purity of heart instead of external, legal purity [Matthew 5–7]; He rejects an asceticism of fasting and, as a man among men, prefers to be called a glutton and a drunkard [Matthew 11:19]; He is not scrupulous about Sabbath observance, but declares that man himself is the measure of the law [Mark 2:27] (KÜNG, 1976, p. 252).

Thus, Jesus' concern for others, indeed, each one's friendliness for another—as Jesus definitively illustrates it—"is based on God's friendship for man." And "that is why the universal and final criterion must be: God wills man's well-being" (KÜNG, 1976, p. 252). "From the concrete requirements of Jesus himself," it should be clear that "God wills nothing for himself, nothing for his own advantage, for his greater glory. God

wills nothing but man's advantage, man's true greatness and his ultimate dignity' (p. 251). Stated succinctly then, this is God's will and the primary characteristic of the kingdom: the well-being of humanity.

It would be deceiving not to mention, however inadequately, the historical fact of Jesus' crucifixion and the Christian belief in his resurrection. And it is precisely here that we see the absolute future most dramatically impact the here and now. As Jesus taught, so did he live and die. He preached the inherent dignity of the least prominent: the sick, the orphan, the widow, the despised and expendable. Ultimately he, himself, was despised, forsaken and expendable; for, according to one Gospel account (John 11:50), he was crucified rather than risk Roman retaliation on the whole Israelite people. In the light of this ultimate act of self-giving, the resurrection is seen as the final and absolute affirmation of Jesus' cause, the will of God.

A Rapprochement

Given the theoretical basis and practical application of Adler's Individual Psychology and the freshly rediscovered Gospel made possible by historical-critical exegesis, it is becoming more evident that the distance is diminishing between psychology and religion. Küng observes that "psychologists and theologians, 'doctors of souls' and pastors, have every reason today to enter into close cooperation" (Küng, 1979, p. 100). As religion has realigned itself with a concern for others (Küng, 1976, pp. 25-56), so too has psychology increasingly developed its recognition of the human person as socially, humanistically interconnected (Allport, 1950). Religion and psychology should and do intersect in a dialogue about care of the psyche/soul. And as this interchange continues, both disciplines find themselves on ground common to the other: concern for humanity. It is in light of this common ground, however surprisingly or tenuously shared, that the opportunity presents itself anew for an amicable relationship between the disciplines.

Thomas Kuhn (1970) encourages those of differing disciplines to learn the "language" of the other, carefully and respectfully so as to allow for the possibility of entering into each other's paradigm and thus benefitting each field from the other's perspective.

What would aid in this as a process would be a responsible demythologization, not only of scripture but of psychology as well. By avoiding symbolic language whenever possible, more precise definitions of the phenomenon one wishes to speak about become possible. The greater the precision, the less likely an error in "translation" will be made (Kuhn, 1970, pp. 198-204).

What Küng is calling for in his recent work on Freud (Küng, 1979, p. 107), Adler recommended in 1912 (Adler, 1983, p. 76): the benefit of "demythologizing" Freud. Adler then proceeded to accomplish this. His theory reveals the psychic movements of the individual with a far less elaborate explanation without diminishing the ability to predict behaviors and the ultimate outcome of the therapeutic process.

Free of symbolism, the neurosis is no longer seen as being caused by unresolved conflicts of whatever nature, but rather is seen as arising from inadequate preparation for the challenges presented by social living. And the "cure" of the neurotic is not seen in conflict resolution, but in increasing the innate ability to face courageously the challenges of life: an increase in one's social interest. It is in this explanation that "lies behind the symbolism" (Adler, 1983) that Adler's psychology and Küng's theology find mutual expression and benefit.

In regard to the ideal community, Adler stated, "Whether one calls the highest effective goal deity, or socialism, or as we do, the pure idea of social interest . . . it always reflects the same ruling, perfection-promising, grace-giving goal of overcoming" (Adler, 1979, pp. 278-279). Küng believes "The hope of a different future is one which unites not only Israel and the Christian Churches, but also Christians and Marxists" (Küng, 1976, p. 224). According to Adler, "Individual Psychology educates for a real community for which one must work and strive"; not "for our present-day community or for any one of the present day communities. This would mean the end to a higher development of human society. Among the present-day community efforts, it will give recognition only to those which lie in the direction of an ideal community" (Adler, 1919, p. 305). Küng further states, "This kingdom for which it is worth giving up everything . . . is always the kingdom of the future" (p. 217). "This future is something qualitatively new which at the same time stimulates a fundamental transformation of present conditions" (p. 224).

In regard to present activity, Adler consistently emphasized that mental health lies in responding appropriately to the task set before the individual at any given time (Griffith and Powers, 1984, p. 62; Adler, 1956, pp. 102, 240). Küng emphasized Jesus' uncompromising insistence on caring for one's neighbor, who is "anyone who needs me here and now" (Küng, 1976, p. 258).

In regard to the inviolability of the individual and the group, Adler asks, "How could it . . . have been the strongest endeavor of mankind to create an image of omnipotence . . . which would not include . . . the concern for the preservation of itself and the individual" (Adler, 1979, p. 278)? Küng propounds, "God wills life, joy, freedom, peace, salvation, the final, great happiness of man: both of the individual and of mankind as a whole" (p. 251).

Summary

Such examples are not intended to be comprehensive, but only to illustrate the possibility of psychology and theology speaking to one another in a language understandable to both and also to show that theological thought and concurrent pastoral counseling practice can be compatible with psychological theory and technique. Given the congruity of Adler's and Kūng's thought—Kūng's theology "from below" offering the path that allows Adler's complementary techniques to be practically applied—pastoral counselors have the foundation for understanding how they might increase their clients' social interest as actively pursuing the will of God: our completion, holiness, self-actualization, fulfillment; our salvation.

Reference Notes

¹In presenting this model of rapprochement, the writings of Hans Kūng are drawn from almost exclusively in regard to the presentation of the original Christian paradigm. This has been done for many reasons: (1) While the author shares Kūng's Catholic heritage, leading Protestant scholars (Bornkamm, 1975; Kee, Young, & Froehlich, 1973) arrive at similar conclusions. Indeed, Kūng is recognized internationally for his ability to represent the consensus of scholarly opinion in a wide variety of theological disciplines. Moreover, he is personally devoted to ecumenical dialogue, having participated in drawing up several official inter-faith documents. (2) Kūng's theological process "from below" is one more readily understood by the nontheological community. His facility in the historical-critical method allows the reader to use a "reasoned faith" to arrive at a decision for God. This is not to be considered in opposition to theology "from above" which, more traditionally starts from the revelation of God's existence. Rather, Kūng's method should be seen as a complement to traditional theology, one that seems in keeping with the original Christian community's experience: Confronted with Jesus of Nazareth having been crucified, they came to faith in him as the risen Christ. Kūng's particular application of historical-critical exegesis is gaining popularity and wide acceptance (Murphy, 1986), and is taught as a doctoral seminar in at least one major American university. (Temple University in Philadelphia offers "The Thought of Hans Kūng," which is taught by Professor Leonard Swidler.) (3) Kūng demonstrates his dedication to a pastoral approach in his theology by insisting that his writings be available and understandable to the educated Chris-

tian, and also by freely admitting his own shortcomings: he openly seeks honest criticism for errors he may make (Swidler, 1981). This "courage to be imperfect" seems a fitting quality for one whose writings are seen to complement those of Individual Psychology.

²Theology, especially that which utilizes the historical-critical method, has arrived through independent study at its conclusions and should not be construed as dependent on other disciplines (i.e. psychology) that arrive at similar conclusions. The term "integration" is therefore used cautiously, not to indicate a dependence, but a complementarity of the disciplines.

³In light of the much publicized disciplining of Küng in 1979 [in which Pope John Paul II rescinded Küng's commission to teach as a Roman Catholic theologian], the following excerpt from the Pope's weekly general audience of March 18, 1986 is significant. It offers ironic support to Küng's position that his theology is, indeed, "Catholic." The remarks were given in English, and the following is from the official Vatican text:

The kingdom of God is the central theme that Jesus spoke about in His preaching. He began His public ministry with the words: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel." The many parables that He used to teach the crowds were frequently concerned with the mystery of God's kingdom. And the Beatitudes which Jesus proclaimed and which formed the heart of His message could be called the "Magna Carta" of the kingdom.

It is clear from Christ's teaching that the full and complete realization of the kingdom of God will only take place in the future. That is why He taught us to pray, "Father, thy kingdom come." At the same time, however, what was foretold in the Old Testament was already begun to take place in the words and deeds of Jesus. Indeed, the kingdom of God is so intimately linked to the person of Christ that with His coming among us the kingdom has truly begun (from *The Pope Speaks*, 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington, IN 46750).

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Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
Hebrews 11:1

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