WHOLISM OR HOLISM IN INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOLOGY AND THEOLOGY


Abstract

Psychologists and theologians use the notions of wholism and holism in discussing the individual in a secular and/or religious context. The works of certain Adlerian psychologists show that the terms are neither used nor understood in any conventional manner by these authors. A conventional use of these terms by Adlerian psychologists and phenomenologically-minded theologians could assist in establishing a collaborative approach to understanding the individual in context.

In today's post-modem context, it is necessary to distinguish between speculative and qualitative language. Speculative language belongs to classical philosophy, whereas qualitative language belongs to phenomenological philosophy. The suffixes “-ism” and “-ity” reflect this distinction. Funk and Wagnall’s Canadian College Dictionary (1989) defines “-ism” as a suffix attached to nouns to mean “a distinctive theory, doctrine, or system: usually used disparagingly;” and “-ity” is a suffix attached to nouns to mean a “state, condition, or quality.” The following pairs of terms, often used in discussions in philosophy, theology and psychology illustrate this distinction: *personalism* versus *personality*, *humanism* versus *humanity*, *nationalism* versus *nationality*, *historicism* versus *historicity*, *Catholicism* versus *catholicity*, *individualism* versus *individuality*, *spiritualism* versus *spirituality*, *modernism* versus *modernity*, *dualism* versus *duality*, *rationalism* versus *rationality*, *moralism* versus *morality* and *Deism* versus *Deity*. Words ending in “-ity” reflect a phenomenological language, whereas “-ism” words reflect a speculative philosophical language.

The notions of *wholism* and *holism* provide a focal point to ponder a relationship between Individual Psychology and theology. To ask whether
the terms wholism and holism, although both ending in “-ism,” can be distinguished in the same fashion as many other words ending in “-ism” and “-ity” helps to focus on the understanding and meaning of the words in Individual Psychology and theology. Frost (1997) thinks the terms can be differentiated and distinguishes between wholism (a unit) and holism (a unity). He suggests we would do well not to confuse wholism with holism. Wholism emphasises the importance of the whole in the study of its parts. Whatever exists is part of a greater whole that influences the nature of the part. This is a scientific concern.... Holism, it seems, is less into scientific methodologies. It is more an awareness about monistic aspects of existence, contrary to dualistic views. (p.68) Holism, Frost feels, being more concerned with monistic aspects, the state or quality of entities, belongs more properly to the “-ity” list of words, whereas, wholism belongs to the “-ism” list of words.

This distinction, however, is not supported by Corsini (1999). In the Dictionary of Psychology, he notes that the term “holism” derives from the thinking of I. C. Smuts and that “wholism” is but an “infrequent spelling of holism.” To Corsini, the terms mean the same. In this essay, I examine the understanding and usage of the terms, not the correctness of the conclusions drawn from their usage.

Smuts and Holism

Smuts (1927) discusses the nature of what he describes as the Supreme Whole in Holism and Evolution. He discusses the nature of the Supreme Whole [holism] as his way of exploring philosophically the notion of that which is divine in human consciousness. In other words, the Supreme Whole is Smuts’s phenomenological vocabulary for what the speculative theologians discuss as Deism. Smuts is discussing Deity. Smuts (1927) poses this question: “In other words, is there a Whole, a Supreme Whole, of which all lesser wholes are but parts or organs?” (p. 347). Here, Smuts is struggling to express relationships that are open to the transcendent. The fundamental phenomenological task is to express the relationship among wholes and the Supreme Whole such that the expression overcomes the dichotomy of speculative thinking between the knower and the known, creature and creator. To his mind, we must consider this question because his argument for a Supreme Whole “implies clearly something more to complete it” (p.
A speculative theologian, however, would ask: “Who created God?” Further, Smuts (1927) says “nature is holistic without being a real whole” (p. 349). In saying this, to me it seems that Smuts is trying to say that there is nothing greater outside nature. Nature itself is all-encompassing. This notion challenges theologians and psychologists schooled in a speculative way of thinking. McCool offers a phenomenological (non-speculative) perspective by which to ponder the notion of Smuts' Supreme Whole. He says: "In post-Kantian philosophy...the Infinite Absolute ‘went out of itself through its finite self-manifestation in the dynamic universe of nature and spirit.... In the same way, each natural human community in the spiritual universe had its own specific communal idea that achieved the perfection of its realisation through the free activity of individual members. And, since spiritual realities were also self-conscious, the community's formative idea manifested itself on the level of consciousness as the communal spirit or Geist” (p. 12).

By abandoning speculative thinking, McCool conceives the transcendent and the immanent as co-terminus, that is, they form a unity, distinguishable but not separable with respect to their internal relationships. Phenomenological understanding presents some challenges for speculative thinkers about relationships. This is the forum in which Adler’s thinking operates. The authors represented below, like McCool, whose Infinite Absolute “went out of itself,” conceive of wholism and holism without taking into account the classical concept of revelation. As a result, they can only discuss God as “a God of the philosophers,” that is, a God of reasoned thought and not as the God of revelation. Smuts (1927) suggests that a God, not revealed, but one that is a product of the natural process of human understanding is not the object of worship. He writes: The belief in the Divine Being rests, and necessarily must rest, on quite different grounds, as a God whose concept is deduced from natural process is not a being whom the human soul can worship (p.350).

According to Smuts, the psychologist’s notion of Deity, not the speculative philosopher’s concept of Deism, is more acceptable to contemporary thought. He continues: "The holistic nисus which rises like a living fountain from the very depths of the universe is the guarantee that failure does not await us, that the ideals of Well-being, of Truth, Beauty and Goodness are firmly grounded in the nature of things, and will not eventually be endangered or lost.... The rise and self-perfection of wholes in the Whole is
the slow but unerring process and goal of this Holistic universe "(p. 353). His thinking seems to be influenced by that of the English metaphysician Samuel Alexander (1859-1938). Alexander apparently "conceives the deity as the next highest level to be emerged out of any given level. Thus, for beings on the level of life mind is deity, but for beings possessing minds there is a nisus or urge toward a still higher quality. To such beings that dimly felt quality is deity. The quality next above any given level is deity to the beings on that level. For men deity has not yet emerged, but there is a nisus towards its emergence" (Runes, 1963, p. 8).

Smuts uses the term holistic and conceptualizes his thinking phenomenologically thus distinguishing it from speculative philosophical conceptualizations. We must this leave distinction to be developed further by phenomenological philosophers and theologians exploring human relationships.

Recent Adlerian Thinking

Adlerian psychologists use notions of wholism and holism, or they discuss notions in terms of the social field that incorporates an understanding of wholism or holism. In this essay, I ponder how some psychologists seem to understand these terms. Judging by the way in which the terms wholism and holism are used there seems to be no standardised acceptance of the terms according to either Frost’s understanding or Corsini’s definition.

Vande Kemp (2000), for example, does not mention wholism or holism in her article. The title of her article, however, “Wholeness, holiness, and the care of souls: The Adler-Jahn debate in historical perspective” invites consideration from a wholistic versus holistic perspective. Soul care, which involves “the acquisition of a strong, God-focused sense of destiny” in a person’s life, is more satisfactorily articulated in terms of a phenomenological understanding of wholism and holism than in the speculative view of Christian/secular anthropologies which she discusses (p. 243). A phenomenological (wholistic/holistic) understanding of the question would remove the dichotomy between, or dissociation of, Christian soul care and secular soul care of the person that Vande Kemp has identified between the thinking of Adler and Jahn.
It is worth taking note of her understanding of this relationship. From a collaborative perspective, I asked her to respond to the following: Rather than think in terms of two compatible disciplines being integrated with respect to anthropological and ontological assumptions, we would do well to make unified anthropological and ontological assumptions about the individual and subsequently understand the person from a psychological and theological aspect of being. In other words, the focus is on the person, not the disciplines.

In her reply, she indicated that she prefers to remain focussed on the disciplines, not the person, which she seems to understand as not existing outside a social field. Her thinking would, I suspect, fall into the camp that recognises wholism as the preferred context of understanding the person. She answered: “I would say an adequate psychology can only be focussed on Persons-in-Relation, to borrow a phrase from the British philosopher John Macmurray.” A focus on the person, she seems to suggest, would be a focus on what is only a hypothetical situation, a whole. Her thinking seems to be somewhat parallel to Noda’s (2000) approach discussed elsewhere in this essay.

In their article, “Spirituality: Life task or life process,” Gold and Mansager (2000) write that the German root word “Geistig, can be legitimately translated ‘spiritual’ but has the restricted sense of ‘mental’ or ‘intellectual.’ To convey ‘spiritual’ in the sense of ‘religious’ or ‘sacred’ Germans use the word geistlich. The term geistlich does not appear in Adler’s German text” (p. 274) They beg the question of distinguishing between wholism and holism in their understanding of Individual Psychology and theology. They seem to understand the term geistig in the wholistic sense and geistlich in the holistic sense. To illustrate, I insert these terms in square brackets into Mansager’s reply to my question: “Is it correct, based on your explanation of the terms geistig/geistlich, to draw the conclusion that they can be considered more as theological terms than psychological terms?” In reply, Mansager says: “maybe we need to distinguish clearly between the terms theological and psychological. I think they weren’t so separate once upon a time…. And the split developed into geistig as the intellectual freedom of humanity [wholism] and geistlich as the sacred [holism]—both get at the ‘principle of life.’ The first from the psychological or mental/intellectual and the second
from the religious. Need these be at odds?.... Does one have a greater reality than the other? I answer in the negative."

I agree with his position. Both theology and psychology are interpretative tools and it is of no benefit to think in terms of one being greater than the other. Mansager continues: "I contend that we can approach this secular world and understand it...as sacred from any number of perspectives (Catholic richness having much to offer), but the secular basis is what we are commenting on [wholism]. It is this basis that the Buddhist and Muslim can also comment on."

To my mind, thinking as a theologian, I would accept the human (personal) basis, before the secular basis, as the focus the Buddhist and Muslim to comment on. The human being in a holistic social field is what ought to capture our attention. The person, constructed within a holistic social field, admits of no qualitative distinction or preferential consideration. Theologically we say that “all persons are equal in the eyes of God.” The means or the tools to understand the person are, however, a secondary consideration and do admit of distinction and preference.

The distinction between psychology and theology, as tools, arises only after the scientific age is upon us as Mansager has correctly noted in his correspondence. But, I contend, for Western thinking at least, no possibility exists of returning to an earlier way of thinking when both disciplines were effectively seen as one. The scientific method, a product of the Western intellect, will effectively prevent this from happening. With respect to philosophical collaboration in accidental and Oriental thinking, Ross (1912) writes: “Equipped with that incomparable instrument, the scientific method [author's emphasis], the Western intellect will probably go on its way with little heed to what the East offers it” (p. 356). The scientific method is the Western contribution to the world and we cannot turn back the clock. In the order of personal consciousness within the social field, first arises psychology (a catholic human science), then theology develops (a catholic sacred science). These are able to collaborate with each other. Collaboration leads to an understanding of the "principle of life" that transcends human nature. Tyrrell (1963/1909) conceives of Christianity "as the highest spontaneous development of the religious Idea and, therefore, the religion most capable of reflective development, in the light of
a science of religion gleaned from historical and psychological investigation, i.e. most capable of becoming as catholic and perpetual as that science" (p. 2). Psychology is talking about the order of nature and Christian theology is talking about the order of grace. This distinction between psychology (wholistic thinking) and theology (holistic thinking) is within the evolution of human understanding and, as a result, is not reversible. Rather than go backwards, our understanding of psychology and theology must evolve collaboratively and distinctively converging on an understanding of the person. Frost’s understanding seems to be reflected in Gold and Mansager’s article.

Ellis (2000) offers another perspective. He is an acknowledged secular humanist. His thinking about wholistic versus holistic perspectives in therapeutic treatment is revealed in his statement: “Even if the therapist is, as I am, a secular humanist and doses not personally believe in anything supernatural, transcendental, or higher-than-human, such beliefs can sometimes be used” (p.282). I understand Ellis as writing within Corsini’s definition that makes no distinction between wholism and holism. In a similar vein, Brinton (1876), a medical doctor who earlier studied “the religions of the native race of America, a field selected as most favourable by reason of the simplicity of many of its cults, and the absence of theories respecting them” (p. iii), has this to say regarding the distinction to be made between human and non-human life, "The distinction between the animal and vegetable worlds, between the reasoning and unreasoning animals, is one of degree only. Whether, in a somewhat different sense, we should not go yet further, and say that the mind is co-extensive with motion, and hence with phenomena, is a speculative inquiry which may have to be answered in the affirmative, but it does not concern us here" (p. 8).

He develops his thinking along a psychological understanding that is particular to humans. Brinton might agree with Ellis who states, "having a profound belief that all beings, animate and inanimate, are holistically interconnected and integrated is realistic to some degree--because humans depend on other animals and on an inanimate environment and could not remain alive without them. If people believe, however, that plants and trees are as alive as they are--as some followers of Lao-Tsu believe--they are probably quite unrealistic, will refuse to use animals and objects for their healthy purposes, and will hardly survive" (p. 280).
To those with a spiritual sensitivity or compassionate religious outlook, Ellis' conclusion might seem to be harsh. However, there is a Biblical theological interpretation that does help with Ellis's pragmatic understanding. In Genesis, the world order before the flood is contrasted with the world order after the flood. *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (1969) reads: “God recognises as the status quo fallen man in a disordered world that has replaced the paradisiacal peace of the first creation. Therefore, permission is given for the eating of flesh, provided that the sanctity of life is still recognised” (p. 187).

Ellis writes from a perspective that seems, at first, to reduce the possibility of theological and psychological collaboration: "Having a meaning or purpose in life that is outstanding or greater than oneself—what Tillich called ultimate concern and Frankl called purposeful meaning—may be good for most people most of the time, but it may not be good for all people all of the time" (p. 280). Ellis’s critique of meaning and purpose has a parallel in George Tyrrell’s (1861-1909) theological thinking, who also believed that “too much religion is not a good thing,” as it were. Regretfully, the controversy surrounding him in his day obscured the originality and insight of his theological thought. Within a theological, not psychological, understanding Tyrrell came to the same conclusions as Ellis concerning a purposeful meaning in life. When meaning in life is inhibited by church structure, Tyrrell (1906) writes: "For, after all, the visible church (unlike the invisible) is but a means, a way, a creature, to be used where it helps, to be left where it hinders.... [I speak of] the immense variety of means which [the Church] offers for our help – some for the use of all; all for the use of none" (p. 86/100).

In another point of view, Noda’s interpretation of Adler, who is a Teutonic thinker, incorporates Buddhist philosophical thinking. In the abstract to Noda’s article, “The concept of holism in Individual Psychology and Buddhism” we read: “While Buddhism applies holism to understanding the structure of the universe, Individual Psychology recognises conflicts between the individual and the world” (p. 285). Further, Noda understands absolute holism to be equivalent to Adler’s notion of Social Interest. He accepts that there is a distinction, but not a separation, to be made between
wholism and holism. His perspective is in keeping with Frost’s understanding, not Corsini’s definition.

It is worth noting that Wenfeng and Shaojie (1991) offer explanation and support for Noda’s distinction of wholism and holism. They write: "Chinese philosophers’ mental structures are integrated ones, unsophisticated and comprehensive. They underline the unity of the self and the indivisibility of the internal spiritual structure of the subject. In reality human life, knowledge, feeling and will are organically unified. There is neither isolated, pure speculation nor isolated feelings and will. People may divide them through abstraction in their minds. But they cannot do so in reality" (p. 152).

In Eastern philosophy, there is no basis, or underlying equivalent reality to the Western notion of ego or “I,” in understanding the person. There is, however, some variation in how the individual is understood within Eastern philosophical thought. On the subject of an “I” in the Western sense, Wenfeng and Shaojie (1991) write: "Most Chinese philosophers affirm the identity of the subject and object. But their differences become evident if they are asked whether their identity is differential or non-differential. These differences may be found in and between Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Confucianists from the Lu-Wang school and Buddhists from the Chan school are for non-differential identity. Among Confucianists, those from the Lu-Wang school are for non-differential identity while those from the Cheng-Zhu school are for differential identity" (p. 161).

Upon noting Noda’s diagrams depicting the concepts of Pluralism, Monism and Holism, I inquired of him about Frost’s distinction between wholism and holism. He replied: "I use the word ‘holism’ exactly in the same meaning to the quotation. Last year, I discussed with Dorothy Peven in Chicago about this problem. She insisted that the Adlerian ‘holism’ just meant that there was no conflict between parts of the mind. I objected to her and told her that it was an ‘organismic’ or ‘systematic’ view of the individual, which denied the concept of the ‘self’ as a main part of the mind. This October, Bernard Shulman came to Japan, and I discussed with him. He often used the word ‘self,’ but we were able to agree with each other. He accepted my idea that the ‘self’ was a fiction. Referring to the constructivism, he said to me, ‘I would like to say that we behave ‘as if the self actually exists.’”
Noda (2000) distinguishes between “relative holism” and “absolute holism” and writes “there is no conflict between the individual and the world” (p. 292) in absolute holism. I would suggest, however, from a Western theological point of view that not an “absence of conflict” notion, but a “greater than the sum of its parts” notion is more appropriate in distinguishing relative holism from absolute holism, or distinguishing wholism from holism. Since Noda’s conclusion does not include the “greater than the sum of its parts” notion which characterizes holism, he has, in effect, understood absolute holism as mere wholism.

Cheston, (2000) by introducing an ontological perspective into her argument favours Frost’s notion of wholism and holism. In “Spirituality of encouragement,” she roots her understanding of holism and wholism in Smuts’s thinking and writes, “Smuts’s holism is an ontology ‘to express the view that the ultimate reality of the universe is neither matter or spirit but wholes’ (p.117).” (p. 297) In a reply to my question about the distinction between the two, she answered: “I have always agreed that there is a difference between holism and wholism.” Her understanding of the term holism opens the way for a collaborative relationship between psychology and theology in that “encouragement is a bridge between the outer and inner worlds of an individual” (p. 298). She says: “I think that everyone wants to think of spirituality as a counselling issue but few want to acknowledge God in the middle of it so they gravitate to the word wholism.”

Further, she maintains the possibility of the on-going interpretation of an original thinker’s initial notions. Her article supports an Adlerian fifth life task. She writes: "The belief in a transcendent being or energy that causes a person to relate to the cosmos, God, or universal values was a fifth life task that Adler alluded to in his writings and that has been more clearly defined by Mosak and Dreikers (1967/2000)" (p. 301). Gold and Mansager (2000) suggest otherwise and retain only three Adlerian life tasks. (p. 275) My question to her was: "In light of Gold and Mansager’s article, ‘Spirituality: Life Task or Life Process,’ from your perspective, is there less reason to develop Adler’s thinking specifically with reference to a spiritual fifth life task?" She replied: "As far as [this] question is concerned, I do believe that we must keep exploring Adlerians’ notions of the fifth task and incorporate spirituality as the fifth life task. Jungians agree, too."
Theologians, like psychologists, face the same historical problem. Can the initial ideas or notions of a theologian sustain further development undertaken by their followers? Weaver cites the example of Thomas Aquinas (died 1274) and Suarez (1548-1617). Suarez interpreted scholastic thinking along lines on which St. Thomas himself would most likely not agree. In fact, Weaver (1981) notes that Suarez “departed from Aquinas on some issues and some scholars discern Suarism as a system of its own, even in competition with that of Aquinas” (p. 11). Psychologists are in the same position. Would the initiator of a psychological school of thought agree with current developments carried out by contemporary disciples? Only time will tell how contemporary thinkers will interpret innovative thinkers in theology and psychology.

Watts’ operational definition and characteristics of healthy Christian spirituality fit into Frost’s description of wholism and holism. In his article, “Biblically based spirituality,” Watts, (2000) reminds us of the role of revelation in theology. This perspective is problematic for Adlerians. The Adlerian view purports to be scientific but Watts connects Christian revelation (theology) and Individual Psychology such that “It appears that Jesus is stating that the focus of God’s revelation addresses how people are to be in relationship to God [holism] with their fellow human beings [wholism]” (p. 320). Watts' notions reflect a monistic, not scientific, understanding. He accurately understands Individual Psychology and biblical spirituality as able to “conceptualise humans as creative, holistic, socially oriented, and teleologically motivated (goal-directed)” (p. 319).

Individual Psychology and biblical theology can work collaboratively to the benefit of the believing client. “If they do indeed view the Bible as the Word of God, then facilitating a dialogue between the Bible and their maladaptive beliefs and behaviours often proves helpful” (p. 325). After reading Watts’ article I asked him the following question about the terms wholism and holism. "While you do not use the terms, it seems to me, unless I have misread your position, that in your thinking you intend to transcend those categories. The understanding of God in biblically based Christian spirituality is not equivalent to Adler’s idea of God, which is a social construction (a fiction). Holism/wholism is interpreted from an Adlerian point of view there is no admitting that a personal God (Spirit of God) exists outside one’s consciousness. Am I correct in my interpretation here with
His reply supports the thinking of Cheston discussed elsewhere in this article. "In terms of the Adlerian position on holism/wholism, it appears to me that the definition of spirituality set forth by Mosak and Dreikurs is sufficiently broad to allow Adlerians to espouse a personal God-centred holism or a pantheistic (or polytheistic) perspective on holism. Although the philosophical underpinnings of each contain significant differences, the focus on viewing humans as holistic or indivisible beings remains similar."

There is a possibility of a new understanding of the transcendent in the immanent within Adlerian psychology or because of Adlerian psychology. Rather than interpret the Deity pantheistically, we may understand the notion of the transcendent as being within the immanent. This requires a phenomenological understanding, not a speculative interpretation. A phenomenological understanding is required to realise a “God-centred holism.” Adler’s understanding can help us develop out of a pantheistic mind-set even though Adler conceived God only as a useful fiction.

Like Cheston, Watts uses the potential of Adlerian thinking to develop the understanding of spirituality beyond the three stages to which Gold and Mansager limit Adler’s notions. Watts’ purpose is to show how Adlerian thinking is amenable to working with clients who subscribe to a Biblical understanding of spirituality. Slavik (2000) begs the question of wholism and holism from within an Adlerian understanding in his article, “The subject matter of Individual Psychology.” In his discussion he addresses the idea of persons conceived by Adler as units [wholes]. Slavik writes thus introducing the holistic aspect of Adler’s thought: “This defining formulation of unity, that the person is actively oriented to the future and acting within a social field, is of interest here.” Slavik suggests that it appears that Adler’s thinking is in agreement with Frost’s (1999) understanding rather than Corsini’s (1999) definition of wholism and holism. Slavik accepts Smuts’ understanding that a social field is a subjective reality limited to the inner area of a conscious individual. Slavik makes distinctions that can be understood to be referring to a conscious individual [wholistically understood] within a social field [holistically understood]. The person is "the active element in the social field, the entity that interacts meaningfully in the field with others, that is in motion, directed and purposive organized and with goals. The person does not exist outside of the field" (p. 39).
The relationship that exists between the person and the social field is such that one cannot exist without the other. In this context, the distinction between wholism and holism is problematic for the psychologist and theologian. Does a person’s social field comprise the sum total of reality? If so, ought it not be considered holistic, not wholistic? Also, if the social field determines the personality, what is determined by a collection of social fields?

Theologians are tempted to appeal to revelation, to something outside the social field, to complete the constitution of the person as a whole. Does a collection of wholes become a social field constituting an Absolute Whole? In this understanding some theologians may consider the notion of the “person” of God being co-terminus with the social field (an Adlerian notion). In the minds of most Christian theologians, however, this is pantheistic thinking and unacceptable. Could a holistic way of thinking include immanence and transcendence, in a non-dualistic way of understanding? In Christian theology, a strong existential argument resists the acceptance of God restricted to a social field. Being restricted to a social field is tantamount to a denial of revelation.

In reply to my question: “Does consciousness arise in the social field?” Slavik wrote: "consciousness requires a social field to come into being.... So the social field is necessary for consciousness to develop.” The consciously creative person selects values from the social field by which he or she is created. This situates Slavik’s thinking, theologically speaking, in the nineteenth-century German idealist’s perspective. Dulles (1969) writes that idealist philosophical and historical thinking has re-structured theological ways of thinking. "The nineteenth century presents an extremely rich development of the history of revelation under the stimulating impact of idealistic philosophy on the one hand and of historical thinking on the other. Idealist philosophy, rebelling against the narrowness of eighteenth-century Rationalism, discovered the Absolute in a new way. Historical thinking, on the contrary, made theologians conscious of the cultural relativity of their ideas about God” (p.62).

This restructuring of thinking opens the way for collaboration between psychology and theology.
Conclusion

Critical collaboration, a notion first suggested to me by Mansager (2001), requires that psychologists study theologians and that theologians study psychologists. Smuts lays a foundation for thinking phenomenologically, not speculatively, about wholism and holism. Through the notions of wholism and holism I presented a reflection on the thinking of various Adlerian psychologists. The following is a summary of my fledgling attempt at critical collaboration by a theologian.

Vande Kemp shows what the disciplines of psychology and theology can contribute holistically to a collaborative effort from their respective anthropologies. Gold and Mansager understand spirituality, holistically, and as a focal point for both disciplines, whereas Ellis offers a non-religious humanist, wholistic, perspective which takes no account of the transcendent. Noda, by introducing an Oriental perspective allows for the possibility of understanding the person wholistically and avoiding the dichotomy which is preserved in Western intellectual thinking. Cheston understands Adlerian thinking as opening the way to holistic development of the person that goes beyond Adler’s original thinking. Watts relates scripture to Individual Psychology and introduces the holistic notion revelation which is not in Adler’s original thinking. Slavik understands the person, not as a classical ideal concept, but as a dynamic unit formed holistically within a social field. The abiding aspect of the person, he understands, is a wholistic consciousness.

The potential to continue critical collaboration exists when psychologists and theologians study original thinkers reciprocally. The individual, not the disciplines, should be the focus; disciplines change (hence the possibility of collaboration) but the individual (principle of human and divine life) abides.

REFERENCES


