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Would Alfred Adler Have Liked NLP?

Suppose we make a correlation between the theory and methods of Adlerian Psychology and the model and technology of NLP. Suppose further that we explore the psychological jargon of “Individual Psychology” of the 1920s and translate it into the NLP jargon of the 1990s. Would we find the systems compatible, or conflictual? Would Alfred Adler have liked NLP? Would he have become a practitioner? I propose the following comparison for your consideration.

Although packaged in different language, Adlerian psychology and the NLP model contain an impressive number of similarities. Many of the factors, presuppositions, and orientations within each system correlate closely. Obviously, the Adlerian model represents a much older theory of personality (ca.1920), whose roots lie in Freudian psychoanalysis. NLP (1975) traces its immediate roots to Gestalt psychology, Information Processing theories, and Family Systems. It expresses an outgrowth of Phenomenology, Constructivism, and Humanistic Psychology.

ADLERIAN PSYCHOLOGY

The following features and characteristics (after Gilliland, James and Bowman, 1989) provide an overview of the general personality theory to which Adlerian psychology gave birth:

- Humanistic—it values the well-being of the individual and society over that of organizations.
- Holistic—it views the person as an indivisible entity.
- Phenomenological—it sees each person’s world from his or her viewpoint.
- Teleological—it views the person as pulled by the subjective future rather than pushed by the objective past, as creatively striving for goal attainment rather than reacting automatically to external events.