

APA Outline

A Christian view in Counseling and Therapy: Horney's Triad of Neurotic Trends and Their Application to Christian Religious Behavior.

Karen Horney's (1945) well-known triad of neurotic attitudes--moving toward, away, and against others--has proved a valuable rubric for explaining various human behavior and relationships. The theory lends itself to a strong theory of the self; it thus encourages the pastoral counselor who cooperates with the inherent strengths of the person in their drive toward health Creagh, G. T. (1988). Horney's triad of neurotic trends provides a functional and straightforward practice for assessing religious behavior. It will prove an effective yet easy-to-use diagnostic tool for Christian counseling and therapy. For Horney (1945), people employ these various ways of relating to coping with the sense of being isolated and helpless in a hostile environment, and these three solutions work as a flexible interrelated system with each other, with no one style of coping being used compulsively or indiscriminately when relating to God and others.

This literature review examines the research on Karen Horney's Personality theory and how it is applied to the worldview of Christian and secular counseling.

Karen Horney, in addressing "the neurotic process," presents three ways in which neurotic people attempt to cope with conflicts that keep them in bondage. They are: "expansive solutions," "self-effacing solutions," and "resignation." These states of life have been similarly described as "a move towards people, against them, or away from them"; also, as "clinging,"

"rebellion," and "withdrawal" (Creagh, G. T. 1988)." The Christian counselor's identification of Karen Horney's "neurotic trends" is referred to moving towards God, moving against God and moving away from God (et al., Parker 2009).

I will provide in my review those who view Horney's theory as a beneficial approach to Christian counseling and the views of those who feel indifferent towards it.

Horney's theory of neurosis warns of "a process of abandoning the real self for an idealized one of trying to actualize this pseudo self instead of our given human potentials, of a destructive warfare between the two selves." Then she sounds the note of hope: ". . . finally, through having our constructive forces mobilized by life or by therapy, . . . finding our real selves." Christians might set alongside this statement the eternal words of Jesus as they are recorded in the New English Bible: "If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind, but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self (Creagh, G. T. 1988).

"In terms of one's relationship with God, this type of flexibility would suggest that a healthy relationship would be one in which all three movements have the potential to be present. These three solutions work as a flexible interrelated system with each other, with no one style of coping being used compulsively or indiscriminately when relating to God. Perhaps one moves toward God in seeking to understand and accept God's providence; at other times, one might move against God by testing the limits of the relationship through questioning, while at other times, one may move away from God to find detachment necessary to separate God from one's projections about God (et al. Parker)."

In Grisez's perspective, she draws upon the rich Christian tradition of living a fulfilled, good life. The psychologically healthy person proceeds in a fulfilled life by living according to the good. Karen Horney did not develop a coherent plan for how a healthy person should engage in life; she did not advocate an articulated ethical system. This omission appears to leave her system incomplete. I hope that grafting Grisez's understanding of motivation and vocation can flesh out and expand upon her theory. A psychologist who understands the guiding principles behind living the good life can conduct therapy with an implicit teleology that it would not otherwise have. In combining the two systems, vocational fulfillment, as understood by Grisez, supersedes Horney's self-fulfillment (Gudan 2008).

Although Horney's language of neurotic trends belongs to an earlier time and a particular theoretical perspective, current therapists may benefit from her insights by considering these trends as interpersonal or relational patterns. They might be seen as coping styles or ways of viewing self, others, and the world. Those interested in attachment theory may find her categories a useful adjunct to the various attachment styles (The Free Library, 2014).

