

Remembering the Adlers

Without contraries there is no progression....

William Blake, Marriage of Heaven and Hell

We all remember the Adlers in different, personal ways and in this regard I want to share some of my experiences of Hella who I got to know through our encounters in the consulting room. In those days, when I was analysing with her, everyone seemed to be coming to the house on Burgess Hill. I say everyone, because to me, Hella seemed to prosper in the sensation of people around her. There was a sort of ritual which I assume was shared by all of her patients. For instance, I recall how on Tuesdays and Thursdays, just before my hour at ten past eleven, the same tall, fair haired man would look into the front room where I sat waiting, and say “next” as he left the house to climb into his white station wagon which was always parked outside in more or less the same place. Perhaps he had children because there were toys in the back of the car, or maybe he had a toy business, which, I assume, like his analysis, must have prospered because at some point, he changed the car he drove from a Ford to a Mercedes.

When my session came to an end, I’d similarly let the BAP trainee know her hour was about to begin as I left the house. Her car was also parked just out front, and perhaps she noticed my presence as well by the bicycle always chained to the tree nearby. I never knew her name though I saw her from time to time at conferences; but now our encounters arise only as memories. On Fridays, there was another man who rarely spoke; all he did was to look at me as he made his way to the front door. There was usually something about the other person’s life that lingered for a few moments and made me aware that I was not alone.

Hella and I got on well together in the consulting room and I found my place either on the couch, where there was a sheet of newspaper placed at the bottom on which one was meant to put one's feet; or on a therapeutic rocking stool Hella acquired at some point which made comfortable seating for people with back pain. Of course, I thought it was provided just for me. Feeling special in the company of wise old women had been a complex I got stuck with over the years, and I reckon Hella endeavoured to considerably tame this mother thing for me. We worked on it together with sweat and tears; "Tschack, stand up to zhesse vimen," I can still recall her saying. But then I had to laugh as well, when for example, on the last day before vacation, she and Gerhard would have large suitcase standing at the top of the stairs, heavily packed with summer reading for consumption in an Austrian forest. "Tschack, voot you mind taking zhat heavy zuitcase downstairs for me."

There were three women, all displaced people, who were significant mother figures for me. My own mother, naturally, a Swiss, who, together with my father emigrated from Europe to America during the Great Depression to find a better life; Edith Geheeb, who like Hella, also stemmed from Berlin, and who together with her husband Paulus, founder of the liberal and open-minded Odernwaldschule, had to flee Nazi Germany on foot to neighbouring Switzerland with a handful of orphaned children; and Hella, whose story has been recently touched on in the obituary written by Damien Doorley. One aspect that made these women particularly similar for me was the pronounced German accent and an uncanny tendency of pronouncing my name as either "Tschack" or even "Tschuck", depending on the mood of the day. In significant ways these three women were linked together in my mind, and Hella, being the one who represented them all, helped me to draw out the gold that would have otherwise been left neglected. One of her analytic gifts revealed to me over the years, was the way she could encourage the ego into becoming an organ that could collaborate with and

relate to the Self, and thereby accomplish a healing of the soul. The Self, as we believe, is the dynamic, regulating, and integrating principle. Healing is a form of its self-realization. Not infrequently do I recall Hella say, either in her own words, or as an object in my mind, how vital the role of the individual is as a participant in the development of one's people and culture. It is the individual who accepts the hard work of withdrawing projections and integrating the psyche, and when as an individual, I work towards healing the divided psyche in my self, do I not contribute to healing the "fragmented collective psyche" where one person finds themselves alienated from another due to the absence of meaning?

"A thousand fibres connect us to our fellow man" wrote Herman Melville a long time ago. Jung was later to say that a relationship with the Self is at one and the same time a relationship with one's fellow man (CW16 ¶ 455). Such observations describe the power and depth of those invisible connections between people which may promote healing. Connections sometimes arise through big events we would call numinous, or the little numinosities that one might observe in ordinary, daily life; and through synchronicities which sometimes deliver fate directly to one's door. It is always interesting to note how, when in analysis, one is often in a heightened state more receptive, for example, to dreams, to the "unseen dimension of consciousness" as Anne Baring has observed, and for example for me, to frequent synchronistic experiences.

I will mention two. The first took place as I was struggling with and working through some of my issues of separation and the search for my natural family in which, as I had then discovered, I had a brother and two sisters. Intrigued on the one hand, I can recall the frightening and anxiety provoking aspect of making the necessary psychological arrangements for incorporating these as yet unfamiliar people into my life. Hella gave me a paper she'd read on the subject, it was entitled: The Archetype of Abandonment, which she said, had made a great deal of sense

to her. But for me, it was a struggle to read, and frustrating on the concrete level as well, because it was a copy of a photocopy, and most of the words, like their counterparts in the psyche, were just fragments, flesh without bones. I had learnt at the time how Hella also experienced immense suffering of which she spoke at an AJA monthly meeting. The weeks wore on. One evening in the summer, there was a knock at the door of my house where a desperate looking Greek or Cypriote woman, who I'd never met before said: "Here is your brother." A strange and somewhat shabbily dressed man then stepped into my doorway. After a short while it transpired, that the people they were looking for lived a bit further down the street. They departed leaving me shocked and perplexed. The event would repeat itself in just a slightly different way when I did actually meet my missing brother later on that year.

On another occasion, another co-incident I experienced as synchronistic, happened before a Christmas break when there was snow on the ground. At the time I recall in my analysis, how celebrating this holiday was a joyful experience both in my childhood, when Santa Clause would actually visit laden with presents, or as a teenager in the Geheeb's school, now the Ecole d'Humanité, where we made fragile stars out of straw ironed flat with which to decorate the tree lit by candlelight. Some days later there was again a knock at that same front door, this time on a Saturday morning. An American woman said she was delivering our Christmas tree, and could I help get it off the roof of her car. I was perplexed about this and she seemed to think I was trying to get out of the deal. It all turned out to be a mistake. She got the street address right, but it was in the wrong part of London. I invited her in for coffee; we got talking. We discovered that we lived near each other when I was a student at the university, in Wisconsin. Then, when I said I was currently training as an analyst, the conversation went a bit flat; she eventually said she very much hated winter. Her father was an analyst and had a strict regime regarding play. When the snow was on the ground, she and her brothers could not play in it; if

they left any traces of foot prints or mucking about at the front of their house, they had to smooth this out with branches and soft brooms to make it look as-if-they-were-never-there.

A poignant lesson.

It's time for me to conclude.

At a celebration twelve years ago we published a Festchrift. In the Foreword, Hella wrote the following words which remain vibrant and relevant today.

On the 21st Anniversary of AJA I am sending you my very best wishes for a successful future. Once more recent events have convinced me that AJA is securely embedded in the principles and demands of the Self, as Jung taught us and followed himself.

I also want to express my heartfelt thanks to a close friend of Gerhard's and mine, Lord Charteris, who made it possible for AJA to secure our home at Eton Avenue.

My hope for AJA is that you stay close to the principles and demands of the Self. May AJA bring peace and fulfilment to the many people who are searching, who are relying on our example, our own commitment to the Self.

Hella helped me find new doorways and negotiate strange, unfamiliar thresholds. For this I remain forever grateful.

Jack Bierschenk