

## **Remembering the Adlers**

### **Gerhard Adler - the Person, the Analyst and the Politician**

Gerhard Adler was a person of intellect and energy, remembered here today with his wife Hella for founding AJA with a small group of analysts they gathered around them. He was highly intelligent, determined, single-minded and charismatic, and these qualities shone through his writings and the ideas expressed in them, and in his personal and political life.

Gerhard is best known and remembered as a joint editor of Jung's Collected Works in English, and together with Aniela Jaffé for personally selecting and editing two volumes of Jung's letters. He wrote extensively, presenting his ideas in lectures and papers to colleagues and the public.

Gerhard's theoretical approach, like that of Hella, was one of total commitment to Jung's ideas and theories, but he was not dogmatic, and in no way fundamentalist. Although he eschewed the developmental views Fordham expressed as Kleinian or Freudian, he always valued the analysis of childhood, as well as the archetypal views of Hillman and others. AJA has always tried to hold this central position between the developmental and the archetypal, valuing above all the symbolic. It is through attention to this that in his view, real transformation takes place.

Throughout his writings, and repeated in his 'Statement about AJA' in 1983, he states clearly that the numinosum and symbolic approach are at the heart of his work and what define him as a Jungian. He quotes Jung's 1945 letter that the, 'approach to the numinous is the real therapy', not, 'the treatment of neuroses'.

This fundamental attitude led not just to a belief, but to a strong subjective experience of the objective psyche, by which he was guided in his work. Dream analysis, which included attention to transference and countertransference dynamics, leads to a better understanding of the ego-Self relationship, and so to healing neurotic wounds. This was more important than technique or attention to childhood or past experience, or analysis of the transference. But he did not ignore these, and would pay particular attention to the negative transference.

Neurosis arises from the ego's attempts to resolve or avoid unbearable conflict, and can be understood as expressing a loss of meaning and purpose in an individual's life. In *Methods of Treatment in Analytical Psychology* (p 352) he writes: 'Every conflict can, of course, be regarded as having its cause in the past, but [it may be] more fruitful to try to understand and interpret the pathogenic conflict as expressing the present'.

When meaning and purpose are restored, suffering becomes tolerable and life can be lived fully and without fear of death. The principle of 'telos' is present in much of Gerhard's writing, in his interpretation of dreams, active imagination (which he and Hella practised regularly in reflecting on their dreams), and in his interest in synchronicity. He would regularly consult the I Ching to clarify and reflect on difficult situations and decisions, and he introduced me to it. His paper 'Reflections on "Chance, "Fate and Synchronicity', (revised from the paper written for Joe Henderson's 75th birthday festschrift) is a wonderful personal account of what this meant for him. This interest in Jung's metapsychology and the numinous is at the core of all his writing: 'Depth Psychology and the Principle of Complementarity', 'Remembering and Forgetting', 'On the Question of Meaning in Psychotherapy', 'Personal Encounters with Jung and his work'. But what makes his writing different from much psychoanalytic or Jungian writing is its combination of theory with passion and personal warmth. This applies not only to the more personal essays mentioned, but also to his other three important theoretical papers: 'Basic Concepts', 'Methods of Treatment', and 'Studies in Analytical Psychology', and to his long case study 'The Living Symbol'.

Hella's theoretical position was broadly similar to Gerhard's, but by no means identical, and she was always independent-minded and forthright in her views. She was more interested in the effects of childhood and infancy on later development, no doubt reflecting her own difficult childhood. She had a particular interest in the body-mind split, and in working with this with cancer patients. She never published despite being frequently pressed to do so, but she taught and supervised regularly until towards the end of her life.

Gerhard was a founding member of the IAAP and he served as president for two consecutive terms from 1971 to 1977. He and Hella were also founding members of the SAP immediately after the war, along with Michael Fordham, amongst others. During Fordham's presidency of the SAP, the theoretical outlook became increasingly focused on childhood development, and analysis of the transference.

More classical subjects like archetypes, complexes and active imagination were given less weight in teaching, analysis of trainees and supervision. Gerhard and Michael Fordham had cooperated in editing Jung's Collected Works, where there was mutual respect but little personal warmth or connection. Tension between the two grew when Gerhard and Hella felt that the SAP was giving greater validity to Freudian, Kleinian and other object relations' views. Jungian ideas, and the topics closest to their hearts, the numinous, the fundamentally religious nature of humans, and the importance of meaning and the symbolic approach to the psyche, were being ignored. This extended to the SAP trainees, and when Gerhard and Hella found their analysands were being turned down for training, they and a number of others decided they would have to leave and form their own association. A power struggle followed, with public discussion and argument, focusing on theoretical differences between these 'schools': the relative importance of developmental and archetypal theory; the use of transference and counter-transference; amplification of dreams and active imagination; symbolic transformation, the place of the Self and the value of the numinous; reductive and teleological approaches to the psyche. Various attempts were made to form a 'middle group' of the SAP, along the lines achieved by the psychoanalysts, but the theoretical and personal differences were too great to bridge. Gerhard told me the final straw which made him determined to go ahead with the formation of AJA, was when Michael Fordham publicly disparaged his use of the word 'numinous', at an IAAP Congress.

At the time Gerhard was president of the IAAP, and he was able to use his position to facilitate the formation of AJA in 1977, with the SAP's blessing. A small number of SAP analysts joined Gerhard and Hella, and a new well-subscribed training had started. More members joined from Zurich during the next few years to add to the more recently qualified members, and by 1982 AJA was a thriving association with over 30 members. This idyllic existence didn't last, as differences erupted between the Adlers and their newly trained members, on one hand, and those who had joined from Zurich, on the other. When a long-standing member's application to become a training analyst was turned down, and another member feared the same fate, civil war broke out. Gerhard and Hella didn't want their 'child' taken over by Zurich-trained analysts who (in their view) questioned the value of clinical supervision, dismissed work in the transference, ignored personal infantile and childhood experiences, and gave only archetypal interpretations to their patients' dreams. New fracture lines were emerging that were similar to those within the SAP before it split, between a more developmental 'London' school, and a more archetypal 'Zurich' school, with the Adlers and their followers struggling to hold the middle ground.

Accusations were made on one hand that the Adlers were controlling and manipulative, and would only allow those approved by them to have any power in AJA; and on the other that some members were psychopathic, puer aeterni, wishing to flood AJA with poorly trained, ungrounded, even mad, analysts from abroad. Members from these two extremes refused to speak to each other. Negotiations ensued between the two sides to try and find a way of remaining together, as there was a large body of people in the middle who felt divided within themselves by the split between the members at each extreme.

The centre could not hold the ends together, and in 1983 half the members left AJA to form their own Independent Group of Analytical Psychologists (IGAP). AJA was temporarily suspended from the IAAP until the following Congress in 1986, when IGAP joined the BAP in becoming members of the IAAP along with SAP and AJA.

Politically, Hella supported Gerhard in his ambitions and struggles over the years, as they fought for what they believed within the IAAP, SAP and AJA. Together they made a formidable and highly effective couple, with many loyal friends, but inevitably enemies too, in their political battles. But they were always guided by their determination to make Jung's ideas more widely known, to train new analysts, and foremost, to work in this way to understand and facilitate healing in their patients.

I would like to end by saying something personal about Gerhard and Hella. Gerhard had warmth, energy, charisma and a great sense of humour. When asked what were the qualities an analyst needed, apart from self-awareness, he would say 'humanity, humility and humour', and would add that these are the qualities we all need to live as full human beings in the world. He was very hardworking, but would say that work was neurotic. He once said to me, 'I need long holidays to be able to work with my patients; and I need to work with patients to pay for my holidays!' He would tell me the latest jokes he heard from patients, and repeat ones he had told them.

There was of course another side to Gerhard too. He could be awkward, obstinate, and bloody-minded at times, and these qualities made him and Hella cling on to power longer than was healthy or helpful, in pursuit of their ideals and ambitions.

Art and music were central to his life, and for many years he devoted a day a week to painting, where he would unwind, struggle with the frustration of learning new

techniques, but would emerge rested and renewed. Hella was equally interested in art, music, theatre and travel, although she didn't paint. They would go to all the latest exhibitions, galleries, theatre and concerts, as well as cultivating their love of food and wine - not just at home and in restaurants, but in AJA too. This is how the tradition of good food in AJA started. They were always stimulating company, for each other and for their friends and family.

When Gerhard died at the end of 1988, aged 84, Hella was sure she would soon follow him, although she was in good health. I think this reflected the closeness and attachment she felt for Gerhard. But we do not choose our own fate, we can only accept it, and she had more work to do. It was over 20 years before she joined him last August at the age of 102.

## **Key**

IAAP            International Association for Analytical Psychology, Zurich

London Jungian training societies:

AJA            Association of Jungian Analysts

BAP            British Association of Psychotherapists

IGAP          Independent Group of Analytical Psychologists

SAP            Society of Analytical Psychology

## **Martin Stone**

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