

FORGOTTEN ADLERIANS

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Ever since being attracted by Adlerian ideas I have been curious about the people who made up the movement around Adler. Did they just make up the numbers? Just form attentive audiences at public meetings? Did they just accept the ideas from above and distribute them like postmen?

Adlerians recognise the deep need of every human being to belong to humanity and to feel recognised for their independent contributions. It was therefore not surprising to me that those Adlerians whose stories I was able to trace were the very model of the independent, creative mind, inspired to change the world. These people were not mere distributors of another man's ideas. They made these ideas their own in deep discussion and argument. They also had a hand in forming and developing those ideas, extending their reach into every area of society, where discouraged people needed help.

As time went on I began to feel that viewing the Adlerian Movement in its first generation as a stage, Adler standing alone in a spotlight, and a chorus behind and an audience in front *in darkness* obscured the truth. If it irks us as Adlerians that Adler has been largely forgotten outside our ranks, then it ought to make us feel uncomfortable about significant contributors, who have been left in the darkness.

The Adlerians I discuss below, it must be stressed, are a small, almost random sample. They are not *all* the forgotten Adlerians, just some of them.

When I gave a talk on this subject at a recent London meeting, I asked how many of the audience could complete the phrase: *the courage to be ...* Of course all the Adlerians present had no difficulty supplying the word *imperfect*. But when asked who said or wrote that phrase, many were certain that they knew but not a single Adlerian present was able to supply the true author's name.

The author was Sofie Lazarsfeld. The phrase, the courage to be imperfect, is one of the most well-known and pregnant phrases of our movement, and it ought to make us curious about its source.

Who was Sofie Lazarsfeld? She was born in 1882 and was already an ardent activist socialist and feminist when she heard Adler's lectures at the age of 38. From that time on she became an active Adlerian. Around 1925 in Vienna she opened a marriage guidance clinic and soon after began to write a column in a newspaper on marriage problems. On the basis of this experience, and drawing on the newspaper's correspondence, she wrote a book *Wie die Frau den Mann erlebt* (later translated as *Woman's Experience of the Male*). In this book the light of Individual Psychology was shone onto women's experiences and their problems in marriage. This clear call for the equality of the sexes merits reading still today.

Lazarsfeld fled Austria as many others did to the USA, where she was a major figure in Individual Psychology. She also contributed in another way: her son, Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, was himself a major figure in sociology and social research.

It is useful to take a birds-eye view of the period under discussion. Individual Psychology (not yet under this name) emerges with Adler and a handful of fellow travellers, expelled from the psychoanalytical society in Vienna in 1911. By 1913 the name had crystallised and there were 68 adherents in Vienna. The 1914-18 war disrupted development, Adler and others were conscripted, and Adler lost some of his supporters when he introduced *social interest* into the theory of Individual Psychology. It was after the war, with the defeat of Austria and Germany, the end of empire, and social collapse, that Individual Psychology flourished. This flourishing continued until Germany and Austria fell into the hands of the National Socialists, a period of about 15 years!

Before the name Individual Psychology had been thought of in 1912 a young doctor, Alexander Neuer, joined Adler's small group. Sources are very elusive about this psychiatrist and philosopher, and he was one of those who disappeared into Hitler's killing machine. There seems very little to go on when we try to identify what his contribution was to IP. But from the clues that I have been able to find it seems likely that Adler established the philosophical underpinnings of his theory in discussion with Alexander Neuer. In other words Neuer had a hand in forging Individual Psychology itself. Later we find a book from another Adlerian that expressly based its philosophic argument on an unpublished manuscript by Neuer and on his public lectures.

Adlerians have long been conscious that their founder was better at live discussion and demonstration than at systematic presentation in writing. They knew that back then too! The main person to take it upon himself to publish a cogent and systematic explanation of Individual Psychology was Erwin Wexberg with his *Individualpsychologie: eine systematische Darstellung* which appeared in 1928. This was later translated into English. All of his works are worthwhile contributions that Adlerians can read today with profit. Wexberg later escaped to the USA and contributed to our movement there.

Wexberg also edited a massive two-volume handbook of Individual Psychology in 1926. This handbook has a forward by Adler and contributions by 29 Adlerians covering a wide range of themes. The book offers a panoramic view of Adlerians working across all of society in Germany and Austria. General themes include organ inferiority, understanding character, the problem of talent, and psychotherapeutic technique. Child-related themes include psychological development, educational difficulties, youth criminality and the justice system, errors in bringing up children, the child and the school. Pathological conditions dealt with include neurosis, hysteria, neurasthenia, schizophrenia, compulsion neurosis, speech and sexual problems. There are also articles on the humanities, society, crime, religion and ethics. This landmark handbook marks a highpoint and reveals Individual Psychology as a broad and active movement working for change at every level.

If you have learned to play the piano, perhaps you have already come across my next forgotten Adlerian, Leonhard Deutsch. His book *Piano: Guided Sight-Reading* is still in print. Beginning from a criticism of existing authoritarian and pedantic musical and instrumental education, which were discouraging the learner, Deutsch applied Individual Psychology to the field and

published a book in 1931, *Individualpsychologie im Musikunterricht und in der Musikerziehung*. As far as I know no other Adlerian has ventured into this field.

My next figure is a man who figures also in the history of Freudian Psychoanalysis: Leonhard Seif. He was a psychiatrist in Munich, who began as a Jung-oriented psychoanalyst but moved over to Individual Psychology in the early twenties. He was probably the mainstay of the Munich Adlerians and helped re-establish IP in Germany after 1945. Most of his work appeared as articles in journals but I have managed to get hold of a copy of a book he edited and contributed to, which shows the standing he was in within the movement. It was published in 1930 and dedicated to Adler on his 60th birthday: *Die Selbsterziehung des Charakters*. Literally translated into English this would be *The Self-Education of the Character*; in it 28 Adlerians illuminate the field from as many angles.

On the face of it there is something paradoxical about Alfred Adler. According to his son Kurt he was most definitely an atheist yet his movement attracted religious adherents. It would be out of place here to expand on this but I will just quote a passage from Manès Sperber's memoir of Adler, a 16-year old's impression of the man teaching.

... a stocky man standing at a blackboard draws a neat white line from bottom to top. Firmly, as though this line provided incontrovertible evidence, he remarks: *You see that is the life of the soul. Everything soul is movement and must be understood as a movement from below to above.*

In restoring to psychology the *soul*, self-creating and actively forming the world, Adler offered a congenial space for those repelled by Freud's mechanical materialism. Two of those who occupied that space were Rudolf Allers and Fritz Künkel.

Rudolf Allers was, despite Jewish origins, a Roman Catholic. He was a doctor and surgeon and had already made his mark publishing a key text on bullet wounds to the brain, based on his experiences in the First World War, when he attended the last university lectures given by Freud in Vienna. He was moving after the war into psychiatry but rejected Freud in favour of Adler. He was, however, always his own man and his acceptance of Individual Psychology was tempered by his attachment to Thomist philosophy and his church. Many of his books on psychology, education and character remain in print in Catholic circles and Adlerians could read them to this day with great profit. In particular, though, there is one book which puts its finger directly on the spot where Freud from our point of view went wrong: *The Successful Error*. Allers, together with his friend Oswald Schwartz, were driven out from the IP movement as some became less tolerant of deviation and more cultish in their devotion to Adler. This probably precipitated the loss to the movement of the gifted psychotherapist Viktor Frankl, and expressed a weakening in the *broad church* and tolerant tenor of the movement.

Fritz Künkel, a major figure in Individual psychology in Berlin, was a Lutheran adherent of Adler and produced many books on character development. In particular he noted that every human being who has developed rigid defences and egocentrism is forced by life itself to undergo a *crisis*; the person is painfully divested of his proud self-protective shell. In this process the person learns that his identity was a false self and finds his true centre in a modest and objective world-view. In the thirties Künkel gradually withdrew from IP, representing himself as an independent. You would not know this from his books. He continued to represent the same ideas and was a good populariser and explainer.

Just before the Second World War broke out Künkel managed to arrange a lecture tour for himself in the USA. He remained in the USA for the rest of his life, where he added some Jungian and object-related colouring to his writings. His US biographer seemed convinced that He was a Jungian but no Adlerian would have any difficulty in identifying the IP source of his ideas.

A popular (and slim) book by Künkel is still easy to find, *My Dear Ego*, and is a good introduction to his works. Christians may be interested in *Creation Continues*, a psychological reading of the Matthew gospel.

Just as religionists were attracted to Individual Psychology so were Marxists. It may be remembered that Adler himself had been immersed in the Austro-Marxist Social Democracy that inherited the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This was a very different Marxism to that of the Bolshevik faction of Russian Social Democracy, learned, politely intellectual, liberal, tolerant and above all *not revolutionary*. Although Adler knew the Russian revolutionary Trotsky, even treating a comrade of his, Joffe, he found no difficulty in condemning the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. Nevertheless Marxists could see in Individual Psychology the lineaments of the dialectic and its potential as socially revolutionary.

By the late twenties the social cohesion of Germany and Austria was beginning to fracture. Society became increasingly polarised. Two strands of Marxism were noticeable within IP, that of the independent-minded Otto Rühle and his wife Alice Rühle-Gerstl, and that of someone like Manès Sperber, who joined the Communist Party at a time when it had become just an instrument of Stalin's foreign policy. They had in common that they wanted IP to be a part of *their* movement for social change. These three are also forgotten Adlerians and there is much to be gained for us in reading their works. Rühle and his wife were tireless propagators of IP, self-help and mutual aid within the German working class, and ran a publishing house *Am Anderen Ufer* that was a platform for Adlerian writers. Sperber eventually rejected the Stalinist cause, devoting himself to the analysis of political power and tyranny, becoming a renowned novelist, and eventually producing in *The Masks of Loneliness* a touching acknowledgement of Adler's great contribution.

My next forgotten Adlerian is a problem for me, since I have very little in the way of direct evidence. What do we say about the contributions of one who writes little but is reported by others to be an indefatigable worker, a supporter and encourager of others? So she must be listed here to remind us that great contributions may sometimes be almost anonymous. This was Asya Kadis, who may briefly have worked in Vienna before the fall of IP there, possibly arriving from some other country of Mitteleuropa, but who emerged in America as a leading pioneer of the new field of Group Psychotherapy.

Individual Psychology with its core emphasis on social feeling always bore within it the seeds of group psychotherapy. This was seen in its use of demonstrations of psychotherapy and counselling in public settings but it was in America that Adlerians found an opportunity to practice group psychotherapy. Asya Kadis made a deep impression on this field and many non-Adlerian colleagues give glowing testimony of her work. She participated in the establishment of this new field with Foulkes, who was active in the UK. Like him she shares the distinction

of dying during a group psychotherapy session. They and many others contributed selflessly to the development of the new field. They knew they were producing something new, something socially useful, and put aside dogma in order to cooperate. There is one book in particular that we should read: *A Practicum of Group Psychotherapy*. She was one of its authors, and it is significant that no clue is given as to who wrote what part. It simply was not significant.

My next forgotten Adlerian is someone we have read many times in fact. He was the translator of many Adlerian texts of the late twenties and early thirties, Walter Béran Wolfe. He was an American with Austrian roots, born in 1900 and became a doctor and an adherent of Adler, seeing the need for original works in German to be made available to the English-speaking world. When one sees how much he did it is hard to grasp that he died in a motorcycle accident at the age of 35! But he was not only a doctor, a psychotherapist and translator, he was also an author in his own right. One of his books is *How to be Happy Though Human*. This appeared in 1935 and was republished several times right up to the mid-sixties. I give you below a sample of some of its wisdom.

Nearly every human being is looking for happiness but very few know what happiness is.

Nevertheless if you observe a really happy man you will find him building a boat, writing a symphony, educating his son, growing double dahlias in his garden, or looking for dinosaur eggs in the Gobi desert. He will not be searching for happiness, as if it were a collar stud that has rolled under the dressing table. He will not be striving for it as goal in itself... He will have become aware that he is happy in the course of living life twenty-four crowded hours of the day.

My final figure is Ernst Papanek, born in Vienna in 1900. Papanek was a teacher and political activist for the Austrian Social Democracy. His outstanding contribution is as an educationist. The story, recounted in his book *Out of the Fire*, shows both how Individual Psychology's progress was halted by the fascist disaster in Europe, and how one Adlerian responded courageously to events. He went on in the USA to continue his educational mission, notably at the Wyltwick school for the rehabilitation of delinquent youth of New York.

Austria had plunged in the direction of fascism even before the Nazi annexation of 1938. From 1936 the socialists and other democratic parties were banned and their officials pushed or driven underground. Papanek, then a local councillor in Vienna, was one of those who had to flee to Prague, leaving his wife and two young sons. His wife, Helene Papanek, was a doctor working in the family's prestigious private clinic and remained for a while insulated from danger but by 1938 the property of jews, including that clinic, was being confiscated and no jew was safe. It was urgent to escape and the family succeeded in getting to Paris. They lived there huddling together in one room, cooking over a spirit stove. Then they moved to the coast to await passage on a ship to the USA, earning a living by working in children's summer camps.

At this point the family should be waiting patiently waiting for a boat but the family needed money. Ernst Papanek knew that he would be unable to work in the USA until his English was improved and they were practically penniless. So when an offer of work in Paris came along he was tempted. The offer came from the OSE, a jewish charitable society, originally founded in Russia. The OSE wanted him to run a children's convalescence home in Montmorency in the outskirts of Paris. He was appalled at the conditions there but accepted when the OSE gave

him a free hand to make all necessary changes. As the Nazi menace rolled over more of Europe the OSE had to shelter more and more refugee children, both Jewish and Gentile, and benefactors like the Rothschilds were pressed to provide more and more homes to house them. Eventually in 1940 the Nazi threat overtook France itself and entire homes full of children had to be evacuated deeper and deeper into the territory of Vichy France.

Many children were saved from the death camps. Remarkably, Papanek never lost sight of his educational and guiding role, constantly encouraging. His memory must be preserved as the very model of Individual Psychology in action.

Papanek kept in touch with the children-survivors of that time after the Second World War. One wrote some time in the sixties to Papanek:

One story at least I can write down for you, so that you don't call me an ingrate. On August 26, 1942, the gendarmes came to Montintin. The eighteen-year olds had been warned and had spent the night in the woods; we who were a bit younger stayed in bed. Two fat gendarmes — like in Schweik! — accompanied me solemnly to the Klo [toilet] which was outside the house. I saw no way out. Just before we were taken away, our new *educateur* — Fisér — a Hungarian who spoke only French so that we little chauvinists didn't like him — rushed into the room. He was a thin, energetic man, said to be a student of Bergson. "Oskar, *jette-toi sous le lit!*" He ordered ["Oskar, get under the bed!"]. I obeyed his wild look. He pulled down the cover. The gendarmes tore open the door and then disappeared. I heard them thudding down the stairs. After a long while the door opened, Fisér silently handed me my rucksack, all packed, and took me to the fire escape leading out back into the woods. "*Allez!*" — and I was already jumping. So they took poor Emil Geisler, who was lying in the sickroom. I didn't hear that until later on. Weeks after that a couple of us who had come from there met Fisér in Limoges. He handed us forged papers. Not one unnecessary word but some kind of courage was communicated to us. I was to be called Louis Caber. "*Ça te va?*" ["Is that all right?"] he asked. I was delighted both by the new turn of events, and by the shy tenderness of his voice. He was later shot in Lyon. ... Such people I have met in many places. No, no, I am not running away from them. But sometimes you are nearer to them at a distance. And I am beginning to repeat myself — which I should like to avoid. I raise my glass and drink a toast to your health, and to you all. We should be in a sad way, dear Ernst, if there were no people like you.

CONCLUSION

What do we have memory for? To enable us to learn and to be better equipped for our present lives. Why should we remember these people? Because they have so much to teach us.