

Adler's Birthday: ERs of Adler, Freud, Jung
 "What's the Story?" meeting summary (2/7/21)

Thank you, all, who zoomed into

Celebrate Adler's Birthday:

The Early Recollections of Adler, Freud, and Jung

"What's the Story?": *Life Style Narratives Study Group* sponsored on Sunday, February 7, 2021
 – Adler's actual birthday.

What's the Story? considers an individual's Early Recollections or perceived important memories as if, "strung together," they compose a short story. We then interpret that "story" (our "reading") by applying critical thinking methods adapted from literary and educational institutions, such as The Great Books Foundation, which promote a deeper comprehension of a text.

We're a book club with a twist

Check out our website:

<https://www.whatsthestory.online/>

(we're an affiliate of the North American Society of Adlerian Psychology)

Test your Knowledge *



One (or more) of these figures figure are prominently in an Early Recollection of

Adler

Freud

Jung

* For the answer, read the **Summary**, next page:

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Summary – February 7, 2021 Meeting – ERs of Adler, Freud, Jung

From Canada to Georgia, from New Jersey and South Carolina to Kentucky, Illinois, Arizona, and California, participants made the discussion – the interpretations – flow. It was a lot of fun. Two years ago, for our inaugural meeting, we read and interpreted Adler's Family Constellation and Early Recollections (if the Early Recollections, strung together, can be read and interpreted as a story or work of fiction, a Family Constellation offers a kind of Cast of Characters to give us a guide or "fast read" on those who tend to populate the recollections).

For our second anniversary, we revisited Adler's recollections and compared them with those of the other "Big 3" pioneers of personality development and psychotherapy, Freud and Jung (remember, all three were once colleagues though little appears to be written about the relationship between Adler and Jung). As in all our meetings, we reviewed the major Adlerian concepts as this helps generate questions with which to approach the readings (for example, holism; movement within a recollection and throughout the whole of them; goals, purpose, influences, and choice; solutions to common issues such as work/school, friendship, gender and sex; and the extent of one's Social Interest or community feelings). However, because of the length and/or details of the recollections (one participant called Jung particularly "prolific"), we were a little more free-wheeling: jumping here and there, but also backing our opinions with "evidence" from the texts. Whatever interpretations one has at the beginning is bound to change at the end!

Though we may have been partial to Adler (being an Adlerian-based group), all three earned our respect – and perhaps greater respect given our partiality. The recollections were as much in their own words as we could find (well, translations, given that the native language of all three was German, or a dialect of – though the recollections that Adler gave in the 1930s to Phyllis Bottome, his chosen biographer, could have been in English since she was ... English, and he had already been lecturing in the U.S. and Great Britain). For our reading/s, we considered two "sets" of Adler's Early Recollections, which had been "collected" and published more than twenty years apart, as well as two other recollections that Bottome termed his "characteristic memories" (from their many chats together?); Freud's recollections came from his *Interpretation of Dreams* (first published in 1899; we used an English translation from 1911); Jung's recollections came from his *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, which were first published in the early 1960s.

The recollections of all three pioneers showed obvious patterns and movements (toward goals), helping us learn what was important to them, including how their experiences shaped their ideas regarding the conducting of psychotherapy, analysis, and supervision (that is, for Adler the solving of problems; for Freud and Jung, the importance of delving "beneath the surface" for "hidden" meanings or associations). The recollections of all three were vivid and visual, reflecting themes of death and religion (but not taxes). And what about their views on women?! Adler – trust only movement!, action over words – admitted to misinterpreting his mother's facial expression. One participant noted that Adler almost had a "contempt" toward her, though this might have played a part in his seeking companionship outside the home, which led to his viewing males and females (well, at least playmates) as "equals." Freud described his mother as

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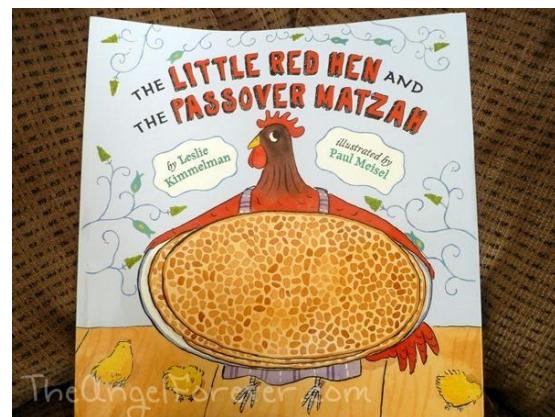
"beloved" (hmm, she does show up in a couple of his recollections in the bedroom – or being laid down in bed. Read on to find out who – or what– lay her down! And, whoa, did little Sigmund get "pissed off" in that bedroom! Calling Dr. Oedipus! Or the Sphinx). Jung described his mother and other female relatives in terms that contrasted with how he described women outside the home.

Adler

Adler's recollections were deemed the most straight-forward and solution-oriented of the three. They reflected how he overcame perceived inferiorities (physical and cognitive) by devising cognitive-behavioral-like self-treatments: for example, becoming aware that just as "(I) felt the desire to cry, I gave myself a shove, (and) restrained my weeping; to overcome his fears of death (he had physical issues as a child; when he was three his younger brother died), he ran across a cemetery over and over, exposure therapy-like, until the fear subsided. This Scientific Method-like approach to the collection of evidence is further reflected in the experiment-of- sorts he devises to test his hypothesis exposing religious hypocrisy: substituting regular leavened bread for unleavened bread (matzoh), he waits up all night to observe its effect on the Angel of Passover who, of course, never appears.

Well, Adler did "say" in his recollections that he would become a "real doctor!" (As opposed to ...? And that gave us even more to discuss! Given all the references to doctors in his recollections, what could Adler have meant by emphasizing "real?")

(Though we didn't discuss it above, one of Adler's recollections focuses on a song about a woman who "couldn't eat chicken because she was so hurt by the killing of her little hen...[but] how can she have such a soft heart, when she thinks nothing of throwing a flowerpot at her husband's head?" If you're wondering what this is about, think of what Adler's father often told him: "never believe what anyone tells you" – in other words, "trust only movement" [action over words].)



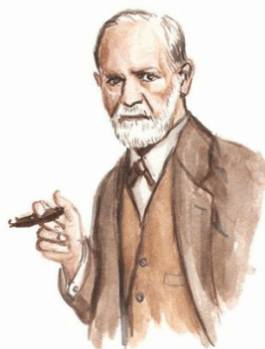
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Freud

Freud's recollections definitely showed movement and patterns! From his "blissfully" tearing a pictorial book of a voyage through Persia "like an artichoke" (shades of psychoanalysis), the last one he related in *Interpretations of Dreams* finds him describing an intense "anxiety-dream" in which "peculiarly draped, excessively tall figures with (bird) beaks (that) I had taken from the illustrations of a (Jewish) Bible" (and which his father had given him) lay Mama on the bed (which bed? In his room, in his parents' room?). We didn't have much interpretation to do as Freud made the associations for us, further describing the scene by using words like "death" and "sleep" and, as symbolized by the bird beaks and the particular name of this Bible (let's not go there) "coitus." This prompted one participant to wake us into the present by making the association between Freud's figures and those creepy, sinister looking huge bird beak masks and long drapery coats that doctors wore hundreds of years ago to protect themselves from the plague (shades of today's pandemic...FYI: those long beaks were stuffed with sweet smelling spices and flowers).

From a recollection of a prophesy-of-sorts in which an entertainer tells Freud which kind of career he would have when he grew up (a respected government ministerial position, apparently newly available to Jews), one of his later recollections has his father remarking that "that boy will never amount to anything!"

From Freud's "astonishment" describing his mother rubbing her hands together to show "the blackish scales of epidermis" – What really lies beneath the surface?; What dirt or dust are we really made of – to a recollection later (actually, two that are similar) in which "(I) satisfied my needs in my parents' bedroom, and in their presence"... well, nothing magical there, aside from dirtying up the situation and showing what you are really made of! (And, as written earlier, being pissed off about something – to give credence to Adler's concept of how we express ourselves through "organ jargon." [Freud urinated].) (Interestingly, according to Adler's biographer Bottome [1939, p. 63]: "the Oedipal Complex was – as Adler was fond of relating – Jung's contribution" to Freudian theory – yet, we can argue that years before Freud even met Jung, some version of that little drama was already playing out in his Early Recollections!)



DON'T BE
 A FREUD OF LOVE

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Jung

Jung's recollections were the most detailed (and longest). His story's "arc" took him from being beholden by the beauty of nature and the world, to his (often) being prevented by others from exploring it. Nevertheless, he is able to do so through acute observation and revealing or uncovering that appearances are not what they seem, that beneath the surfaces, or buried below, or coming washed up are fascinating mysteries ... of life and death and the otherworldly! His sense of awe and wonderment leads to a feeling of "uncertainty" and he enacts a ritual – or as he calls it, "a solemn ceremonial act" – which finds him carving a small manikin from a ruler, clothing it, and making a bed for it in a pencil case. By safeguarding it in the "forbidden" attic, and keeping a special stone with it, and by often adding little scrolls of his writing to its case, his knowing that it is there – his looking at it from time to time – makes him feel safe and protected.

**Please appreciate why we need our group! Interpretation by the individual is hard!
 Others help us build upon a myriad of ideas and appreciate different perspectives.**

Though Adler's theoretical concepts and method of therapy, as reflected in his recollections, were deemed the most "practical" of the three (Freud's were deemed the least solution-oriented), the question was raised as to which therapy would be better suited to which kind of client – and/or when (one participant noted that European Adlerians, working under different health care systems, often engage in longer therapies in which they and their clients can delve more into emotions and dreams and associations and hence, not be so strictly wham-bam goal-oriented). For example, would an artist prefer seeing a Dr. Jung? Jung's recollections were almost "painterly," of landscapes that turned surreal, with emphasis on the senses and colors (particularly green, black, gold, and red). Associations and transformations, discoveries from one room to the next that lead to even more mysteries (like those statues covered with fig leaves) ... well, the participant who had made the association between Freud's tall figures topped with phallic-like bird beaks with the long bird beak masks doctors wore to protect themselves from the plague had us all laughing when he commented, in an exaggerated fearful voice, that he did not know if he wanted to think anymore of Jung's recollection of a dream, reportedly had when he was three or four, in which he peers down a hole, then descends a staircase to push aside a heavy brocade green curtain to reveal a chamber in which a red carpet leads to a fairy tale-like golden throne on which stands a fleshy one-eyed "huge thing" (a "man-eater" his mother's voice calls out). Obviously, Dr. Jung would not be his choice for a therapist.

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A drawing by Jung

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However, Jung's recollection of protecting himself or calming himself down through a ritual or ceremonial reenactment prompted another participant to compare how meaningful rituals can be or could be used in today's pandemic-times, even if Jung's was a ritual he performed by himself as opposed to the collective ceremonies many of us now miss and crave.

When a participant asked us to consider whether a purpose of therapy is to increase our self-esteem ("Ah ha!" many of us said), we declared that a perfect coda to our meeting.

But at the very end, a 97-year-old participant – his first time zooming in with us! – who had been raised as an orthodox Jew in the region where Freud was from, was asked if he had ever heard of the illustrated Jewish Bible (a Phillipson Bible) that Freud had alluded to in his recollection. No, he said, but he described the almost irresistible draw of Vienna in those days to any Jew – or, really, anyone – who wanted to study secular topics. He also commented on Adler's will-power-like solutions to overcome his coughing or crying fits and fears: they reminded him of similar stories or solutions to common problems in the Talmud and/or Jewish Bible. For example, if you have a problem drinking, don't go near a vineyard.

How apropos in a pandemic!

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Watch this space for further information about *What's the Story?* We tend to meet every few months (past meetings have had us interpreting, for example, the Early Recollections of couples, twins, a person diagnosed with bipolar disorder, even those of some of our U.S. Presidents – including Trump (His was prophetic!))

We're discussing conducting a "live" Life Style over zoom for our next meeting and, with the availability of on-command computer transcription services, providing participants with the text right then and there!

Stay tuned.

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Did you know that the Gershwin brothers wrote a (1933) song about Adler, Freud, and Jung? It was called *The Viennese Sextet*. Don't know George and Ira Gershwin? They wrote, separately or together or with others, such American classics as *Rhapsody in Blue*, *An American in Paris*, *Summertime*, *I Got Rhythm*, and *The Man That Got Away* (<http://www.adlerian.us/lyrics2.htm> -- Alfred Adler Institutes of San Francisco and Northwestern Washington):

His mind is in confusion;
 There's only one conclusion:
 He's oversexed,
 He's undersexed,
 He hasn't any sex at all!
 It's father love!
 It's mother love!
 We're sure it isn't love at all!
 His thought they should be purty,
 But they are probably dirty!
 It's father love!
 It's mother love!
 It happened when he was that small!
 If you've any mental problem that perplexes –
 If there's anything that's wrong with your reflexes –
 If you're really not certain as to which your sex is –
 We are positive that you had better see
 Doctor Freud and Jung and Adler
 Adler and Jung and Freud

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