THE LIVING SYMBOL

Contribution to the **Remembering the Adlers** evening Feb 2nd 2010

Antonia Boll

I join my colleagues in welcoming visitors from across the Jungian spectrum tonight. We also welcome members of Hella and Gerhard's own family, among them Professor Michael Adler, their son, whose Last Words Obituary of Hella appeared in the Guardian and is reprinted with his permission on our website, along with a lovely photograph of Hella taken by her grand-daughter Coriander. I am sorry that Miriam, their daughter, was not able to join us tonight as she is away this week, perhaps visiting the new great grand-child in Spain, Coriander's baby, whom Hella met just before she died last August ? Coriander has sent her apologies too. A more formal obituary of Hella, compiled by Damien Doorley, with assistance from colleagues and family, can also be found on the AJA and IAAP websites.

My psychological awakening came about through the works of RD Laing and the encounter movement. Those were heady days, exciting and revolutionary, but something was missing. So when I came across Gerhard's book ***The Living Symbol***, it was a Eureka moment. Learning about the adventures of plain Mr Prentice-Jones with his briefcase and his maps, gave me hope that I too could take the inner journey that my soul longed for and that there would be a companion, like Virgil to my Dante, who would accompany me along the way.

Hella Adler was to be that companion and after 12 years of travelling together, I acknowledged her, with eternal gratitude, as my Master…

But as we can see now, many masters and gurus of that heady period had feet of clay. Hella and Gerhard were no exception. As soon as we graduated, we were roped in to teach on the new training. I was "volunteered", to run the Library and serve as Hon. Sec to the Association. In my innocence and gullibility, and through a strong Positive Transference, I agreed to do all these things.

Hella and Gerhard rightly valued and respected Jung but they went further and turned him into a cult hero. With a paranoia, bred perhaps from the Nazi persecution, we were encouraged to regard fellow Jungians from the other groups with suspicion. I deeply regret this.

Gerhard welcomed graduates from Zurich to join AJA but power struggles developed and a group of them left. These people later formed IGAP.

These rifts left behind much bitterness. Gerhard saw the splits as creative, like the amoeba which splits to create new entities. In today's terms, I think, their rule would be seen as autocratic.

Hans Diekmann banged our London heads together at the Berlin Conference in '87 and the Umbrella was formed from the 4 Jungian groups, but it was a stiff and stand-offish affair. Memories of the original rifts still colour our relations with other groups, as when funding for a pan-Jungian Centre was offered. Not enough of us could agree to risk co-habitation again. Similarly, when AJA planned to give birth to a new kind of training programme, doubts and suspicions were expressed and ill-will threatened to stifle the new embryo before it was hatched.

Sometimes now, while enjoying good fellowship with friends from across the Jungian spectrum, we fantasize about what fun it would have been to all train together. How stimulating and enriching ! How grand to have exchanged ideas in shared seminars rather than waiting to read each others books and articles years later. In retrospect we can see how good that would have been. At least we are good companions now.
As Mara Sidoli put it : *"The parents have quarrelled but the children can play together."*
This evening's event was conceived as part of that process of honouring the dead, acknowledging the richness and the short-comings of the Adler legacy, and moving forward into a more tolerant and forgiving environment. I have just heard that today is Candlemas, an earlier pagan festival adopted by the church which became a time of blessing and lighting candles, a thin time like Halloween and All Souls in November

when we find ourselves on the interface between darkness and light. This is a fitting time to consider these things.

That is my hope : that with goodwill and consciousness, the seed the Adlers planted can come to good. That with awareness and humility we can rise above the old rivalries and suspicions of the past and come to value the good things that we have in common with fellow Jungians. That we can work towards strengthening the common ground that exists between all of us in the "helping professions" while continuing to value the gifts and talents of our particular and immediate Ancestors : Jung, Hella and Gerhard Adler and the many distinguished colleagues who have bequeathed to us the wisdom of their practice and the legacy of their creative thinking and published research.