

THANKS TO ALFRED ADLER*

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Five years have gone by since Alfred Adler left this world, almost in time to be spared the experiences of a planet on fire. He died at peace with himself and in a world at peace.

Twofold is the deep sorrow over his death, which his followers commemorate today: the loss of a friend who was needed in their lives and the loss of the man who is so badly needed in this world of confusion and struggle, a world which he understood, for which he thought and taught and which he loved with the desperate love of one who knows the disease consuming mankind and the remedy to cure it.

Never before was Adler so badly needed, never before could he have found a stronger proof of the truth and the value of his ideas, never before did his pupils want and miss his guidance with such intensity as right now.

The task Adler left his friends--to carry on his work after his death, to lead people on the way to social consciousness and their own self-realization, hard enough a task even before this holocaust--is becoming increasingly difficult. A small group of people whom he has loaded with the obligation to hold themselves up under any circumstances, to face life courageously whatever may happen, and whom he has burdened with the knowledge not only of their own responsibility but also of their co-responsibility for the actions of their fellowmen, has now to carry on his ideas, meant to create the community of human beings.

In times like these, too many people are apt to reach their "limits of tolerance," to give in to discouragement, to let the weak flame of social interest die in themselves; too many are

only too willing to break the fragile ties that existed heretofore between themselves and other people, resorting to neurotic attempts at keeping up an imaginary security in a world which never before has proved so clearly that there is no security for the individual but in the welfare of all. Looking for an anchor to hold them firm against the waves of the high-going ocean of the present life, many are trying to take refuge in idealistic optimism or idealistic pessimism; they shirk their responsibilities by retreating into a world of wishes, desires, dreams, into their paradise of non-cooperation as against a reality that needs contribution, social interest and courage. Tossed around in the maelstrom of neurotic sufferings they prefer honor to be lost if vanity could be saved by blaming one and all for their unfortunate situation. Many are breaking down, now, whose unrealistic ideals of personal security--power, money, position--have been swept away by the torrent of this "war of survival."

If these people are using the present time to convince themselves that they are victims of circumstances and therefore entitled to greater sympathy and leniency for their non-cooperative value-blindness, there are others to be found, too, people who have trained themselves to a courageous outlook on life, for whom the difficulties are new incentives to doing more and doing better than before. Having found themselves and understanding their personal value as embedded in the value of the whole human race, they are willing to take the burden of their responsibilities toward the world upon themselves. Conscious of their role and duty as human beings, these people represent not only the bearers of the present but also the molders of the future. Understanding where they failed in the past, living their obligations in the present, they are concerned with the future which has to be prepared now.

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It seems as if the whole human race were now living through the third act of an ancient Greek tragedy. The tragic guilt of all the people and peoples--not to have thought in terms of "wholeness" but of "singleness," the not understood, yet not really unintended crime of all of us, not to have cared for the world but for ourselves--may well be looked upon from the Sophoclean viewpoint of the tragic purpose: to arouse pity and fear. Pity because of the human imperfection which so often makes for striving after unreachable aims, and fear of the consequences resulting from the misvaluation of one's own personality.

The world today seems to have reached the climax of the tragic development. What we are experiencing, full of horror, are the consequences of our former doings. No doubt mankind as a whole is culpable of the tragic guilt of having failed in their function as human beings, capable of understanding, capable of choosing the way of social interconnection, yet preferring to strive after solely personal safety and superiority. With deadened souls they have eyes and don't see, and they have ears and don't hear what is going on in the world; and even the roaring noise of guns and bombs is drowned in the deafening scream: "I."

The downfall of mankind as a result of our guilt, however, is but the climax of the human tragedy which has to be brought to the solution: the purification of the individual.

Here is the door to which Individual Psychology offers the key: to prepare men now for the fourth and, eventually, for the fifth act of the world-drama. Leading and guiding people now to recognize where they fell short of obligations, to realize that there is a duty to be performed through our lives, toward ourselves and toward others, to grow in the one idea that makes life livable: that we are what we give--and to develop the courage to face reality and ourselves in it. In-

dividual Psychology shows the way to self-realization: helping, encouraging, and gladdening--the three obligations that Adler once named as his goal in life.

The coming fourth act, "the world after the war" is but a stepping-stone to the fifth and last act: the world at peace. People have to be educated this time not to be satisfied with the semblance of an achievement. This time the fourth act that was, unfortunately, left without a solution after World War I, will have to be lived through and the guilt expiated in a final effort: real peace in a world of people with understanding for each other, with social interest, creating the true values: freedom and justice for all.

Only then will there be hope for mankind if more and more individuals have learned to face themselves, to strive after improvement, not after perfection, and if they have learned that there is only one way to live in peace: the recognition of human dignity for oneself and for all the others.

It was entrusted to us, Adler's friends, to keep the light of his ideas brightly shining, by trying to achieve understanding for our own problems and for those of our fellowmen. He wanted us to work the harder at this task the more difficult it became. His thoughts endow us with a tool to help shape a world of people detached from themselves, attached to one common goal: the freedom of mankind.

Whoever works at his own purification will fulfill his task as a member of the great community of men; and following the path Adler showed us we shall learn to live with the conviction that we are contributing our share to the welfare of all.

May we, his pupils and friends, be able to say with deepest gratitude and faith:

He rests in peace who taught us to live in peace with ourselves.