

Striving for Authenticity

Sophia J. de Vries

Abstract

Sophia J. de Vries (1901–1999), who studied with Alfred Adler, Lydia Sicher, and Alexander Mueller, wrote this introduction in 1990 to a series of journal articles by Adler that she had translated. At the time she was living in Oakland, California, and was a consultant and senior training analyst for the Alfred Adler Institute of San Francisco. Her work served as an incentive to carry on the translation of Adler's clinical works and as reference documents for later translations.

Keywords: Individual Psychology, Alfred Adler, Alfred Adler Institute of San Francisco

The repeated rendering of an oral tradition over many generations inevitably leads to errors in transmission and the gradual loss of the original content, a degradation of information that occurs more slowly with the successive reprinting of written accounts.

—Carl Sagan (1978, pp. 234–235)

To those of us who have had the privilege of learning Individual Psychology from Alfred Adler himself, before his death on May 28th, 1937 in Aberdeen, Scotland, and who have worked together with his closest followers afterwards, it is very satisfying that Individual Psychology has become known as an important discipline in psychology. However, there is also a concern that certain aspects of what goes under the name of Individual Psychology would not readily be recognized by their originator.

When I introduced Adler for the last lecture to his audience in Holland before he left for England, his topic was "responsibility." To this day I recall his penetrating look, when he finished his talk with: "Those of you who really understand Individual Psychology and have learned to apply it, carry a heavy responsibility." In the following years we experienced this and still do. For that reason I have presented Adler's original Individual Psychology the way he taught it himself, and have added translations of some lectures and articles by Adler as published in the *Internationale Zeitschrift für Individualpsychologie*.

Some composers have used another composer's theme, calling it "variations on a theme" by the other's name. Others just used the theme and published the composition under their own name. Painters have copied

great masters and called it a copy, while some have copied the style of the master, putting the master's name on the fraud. Art and science can be interpreted in different ways, except when the originator has been explicit in his interpretation. Toscanini interpreted Beethoven the way Beethoven had written his music. Alfred Adler was an originator who was outspoken in his interpretations, if one only listened and made an effort to comprehend.

The reader should not forget that Adler still got a "lot of flak" from the existing (early) group of Freudians. In some articles he clearly denounces his opponents. In others he warns his own followers who did not understand him or thought they could do better. Most of these passages have been included, because they will always remain valid.

During World War II Individual Psychology was dormant. Hitler had decreed that Adler's and Freud's theories should not be learned, as both men were born Jewish. Only Jung's psychology could openly be practiced. Practicing Adlerians had to be extremely cautious. Many got out of Austria, Germany, and the occupied countries.

In Holland Individual Psychology owes its rebirth in a large part to Dr. Alexander Mueller, who had been a close coworker of Adler, Dr. Ronge, and others. Later Mueller established himself in Zürich, Switzerland, where his name is still mentioned in the Individual Psychology group he helped to form. During his years in Holland, we had worked closely together and later I visited him in Zürich. On my last visit, before his death in July 1960, we discussed the inroads Individual Psychology had made. Mueller's conclusion was: "Adler has not yet been fully understood. He will have to be rediscovered from the roots up, by a future generation."

Author's Note

A previous, longer version of this paper appeared in *A clinician's guide to the collected clinical works of Alfred Adler: A unified system of depth psychotherapy, philosophy & pedagogy*, edited by H. T. Stein and L. J. Stein, 2012 (Bellingham, WA: Classical Adlerian Translation Project), pp. vi-vii.

Reference

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Sophia J. de Vries, PhD (1901–1999), a psychologist who practiced in Oakland California, was trained by Alfred Adler, Alexander Mueller, and Lydia Sicher. She also studied with Ida Loewy, Martha Holub, Fritz Künkel, Charlotte Buhler, Karl Buhler, Carl Jung, August Eichorn, Ludwig Klages, Ernst Kretschmer, and Maria Montessori. From 1945–1948 she taught Adlerian courses with Dr. Mueller in Amsterdam, Holland. For twenty years she served as mentor to the Alfred Adler Institute of San Francisco and as a consultant to the Classical Adlerian Translation Project, as well as to the development of the training program for Classical Adlerian Depth Psychotherapy.

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