

CHAPTER 5

The Adler Society

IN THE EARLY 1920s psychoanalysis made its first impact on British intellectual circles. Orage and his associates around *The New Age* were amongst the first to acclaim the discoveries of Freud. Orage described this new psychology as 'the hopeful science of the dawning era,' acclaiming it as the new form of 'the gnosis of man', the only sure basis for morality.¹

Under his initiative a group was formed to discuss the relevance of this new body of knowledge to religion and morality. The group included Rowland Kenney, Dr. E. M. Eder an associate of Freud's, Dr. Maurice Nicoll an associate of Jung's, and Mitrinović. According to Mairet this group had, by the autumn of 1921, arrived at something of an impasse. They had failed to develop much further than gazing into the abyss of the unconscious and had been unable to develop a new morality, a new religion, a new guide for their life and studies. In October 1921 Orage discussed with members of the group the idea of forming a new group in association with P. D. Ouspensky who had just arrived in London from Constantinople. Ouspensky had met Orage in London in 1914 and had returned to renew their acquaintance after spending some years of intensive study and training with Gurdjieff. He came armed with a proposal to set up a school in London to teach the Gurdjieff system.

The new group was immediately convened and met at Lady Rothermere's studio in St. John's Wood. The wife of the wealthy newspaper proprietor had read Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum* and had been impressed. According to Orage, 'Ouspensky had found what he was looking for,' but Mitrinović was unimpressed by the

Russian and soon ceased to attend.² It is not too difficult to understand why Mitrinović felt the way he did, because there were clear signs that Ouspensky was replacing Mitrinović as the latest ‘teacher’ sought by Orage. Thus, a fortnight after Ouspensky’s arrival in London Mitrinović’s last and shortest article in the pages of *The New Age* was published. Then, in February 1922 Gurdjieff visited London. Shortly afterwards Orage resigned from the editorship of the weekly and left for France where he joined Gurdjieff’s recently founded Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at the Château du Prieuré near Fontainebleau. He had found the ‘master’ he had been seeking. As he was to recall later: ‘After Gurdjieff’s first visit to Ouspensky’s group I knew that Gurdjieff was the teacher.’³ Like others before him Orage was to find that his new-found master inflicted a difficult and demanding regime on his followers.

My first weeks at the Prieuré were weeks of real suffering. I was told to dig, and as I had had no real exercise for years I suffered so much physically that I would go back to my room, a sort of cell, and literally cry with fatigue. No one, not even Gurdjieff, came near me. I asked myself, ‘Is this what I have given up my whole life for?’⁴

The loss of Orage was undoubtedly a deep disappointment to Mitrinović. Not only had he lost a personal friend and intimate associate, but an important and influential patron. He also claimed that he was disappointed in Orage himself, particularly in the way his friend was prepared to submit himself to the will of another, apparently without question. When he heard that Orage had been set to work as a garden labourer he is reported to have remarked: ‘If he had said “no”, he would not have needed a master ... He could have been one himself.’⁵

For Mitrinović the age of world leaders, rulers, masters and gurus belonged to the past. The key process of the age was the assumption by individuals of responsibility for their own lives in alliance with others. Through his involvement with the *Blut-bund* initiative, he had become disillusioned by the proven inability of the great personages of science, philosophy and the arts to co-operate together for the sake of world peace. He therefore determined that in future he would work with any individual who would join him as a co-worker in sowing the seeds of a new order of humanity. Just as any organism grows from a small seed, so he believed that the movement towards his vision of Universal Humanity must

start with individuals who were prepared to commit themselves to one another in open and equal alliance. Philip Mairet and Helen Soden had been amongst his first recruits. Valerie Cooper was another. She was later to record the first occasion on which she believed she managed to grasp something that Mitrinović had said:

It was this, 'It is no use attempting to reform anything in the world. Everything is too wrong. What should happen is that a body of thought should arise between the artists, priests and scientists, which could in time take its place beside the world power. And then, as this body of thought grew stronger, it could reach over the seas and join with similar bodies in other countries.' Later I knew that was his way of describing to me the Senate conception.⁶

This was to become the major theme of Mitrinović's life and work: the preparation of a group of individuals for a new world-transforming initiative, to which he gave the name Senate. The function of senators would be that of working in and through all levels of society, helping people and groups to relate to each other cooperatively as constituent members of a common humanity. Senates would be groupings and networks of individuals capable of contextualising all human problems within the overarching framework of the world as a single whole. According to Mitrinović's conception, such senators would not rule in any conventional sense, nor would they be committed to any particularistic cause. Rather they would have the capacity and the authority to speak for the whole of humanity. Alliances of individuals, extending throughout the world at all levels, committed to humanity and to one another as individuals, they would work to integrate the different parts, interests, and groupings into a genuine world community. This was the vision.

The practical training of people to perform this integrative senate function was to reach its greatest intensity in the 1930s, but the origins of the group that gathered around Mitrinović at that time could be discerned in the 1920s. Given his depiction of the whole of humanity – past, present and future – as a single developing organism, it followed that a change in consciousness anywhere, if of sufficient significance, could affect the whole. The important task was to make that initial break-through in human nature, to plant the seed, to achieve that change in human consciousness and action. No matter how small or insignificant in number the original bearers of the new consciousness of world

responsibility might be, the effect would be felt in the course of time.

How to develop this new consciousness for the sake of the world? This was the problem that Mitrinović seriously began to confront in the early 1920s with the group of intimate friends and acquaintances who gathered together at Valerie Cooper's studio in Fitzroy Street. Amongst their number was Lilian Slade, a sister of the artist Frank Slade with whom Valerie Cooper shared the studio. Lilian's house in Golders Green, North London, became another venue for Mitrinović's discussion groups and classes – these attended by a younger age group than those held at Fitzroy Street. The subjects on which he spoke were wide-ranging: philosophy, religion, psychology, sociology and the arts in general. He also led discussions of ancient religions and 'occultism.' He had a tremendous regard for Madame Blavatsky. He called her 'the first woman genius', acknowledging her role in spreading knowledge about the religions of the orient in the west.

His own interest in the ancient religions and the 'esoteric wisdom' of other cultures and times stemmed from the conviction that they provided a deep insight into the nature of the world as a single, inter-connected whole. He believed that in their depiction of the world and the related notion of the divine thread that linked all things together, ancient belief systems and their western variants such as Theosophy and Anthroposophy enabled people to grasp the image of the world as a single, developing organism made up of a variety of different yet inter-related parts. Of course, if one looked forward towards a world where people would become aware of their shared and complementary interests, then it was vital that all those who sought to play a part in bringing about such an age should have developed to the fullest their own awareness of both the world as an organic whole and of their own place within it. Therefore, in the meetings and discussions that he addressed Mitrinović focused very much on the need for people to develop their own self-awareness, and thereby their self-control and self-direction. In pursuing this goal Mitrinović drew increasingly upon the work of Alfred Adler. Of all the new schools of psychology and psychoanalysis that came out of Europe during this post-war period, he considered Adler's Individual Psychology to be 'the one most humanly creative and least destructive.'⁷

Alfred Adler was born near Vienna in 1870. After studying medicine he was invited to join Freud's circle in Vienna. In 1907 he published his 'Study of Organ Inferiority and its Psychological Compensation.' After breaking with Freud in 1910 he worked as a doctor during the First World War. The horror of war and the social unrest that followed made a deep impression on him. He began to lecture on Individual Psychology, not only to doctors but also to teachers and lay people. He was instrumental in establishing a number of child-guidance centres in Vienna and whilst continuing with his clinical practice he became increasingly committed to communicating his social vision to as wide a public as possible.

Like Mitrinović, Adler adopted an holistic approach to the understanding of phenomena. Just as Mitrinović attempted to locate groups, nations and other collectivities in the context of the world as a whole, so Adler emphasised the 'wholeness' of the individual and the personality. For Adler the individual was an indivisible unity and could only be understood as such: one of his basic axioms was 'You must never divide the individual.' Moreover, just as the individual's neuroses could not be understood except in the context of the whole individual, so the individual could only be understood in the context of his or her environment and social relationships. He called his system 'Individual Psychology' because for him each unique individual was the central figure in their own environment. Only by establishing a proper relationship with these surroundings could the individual achieve health and sanity. Consequently, Adler was particularly concerned with exploring the relationship between the individual and the community – the relationship that was the focus of so much of Mitrinović's attention.

In contrast with Freud and Jung, Adler focused less on the depths of the unconscious but turned his attention to things that lay within people's conscious power to change and remedy. His emphasis upon individual responsibility and freedom corresponded to Mitrinović's stress upon the need for people to take upon themselves the responsibility for recreating the world. According to Adler the personality was the centre of the individual where they were free and, since free, responsible for their actions and feelings. He taught his patients that whatever they did, their activities and life-style belonged to them. He asserted that at all times individuals

followed their own chosen path in life and therefore had no one to blame for their troubles but themselves. The neurotic were those who sought to avoid the responsibility of their individual freedom in various ways and, as such, they were the creators of their own disease.

In developing his ideas Adler, like Mitrinović, found *Vaihinger's* theory of fictions of considerable value. According to *Vaihinger*, in any sphere of life and knowledge, we need to base our thinking in the first instance on fictitious assumptions. These may be self-contradictory or have no corresponding objective reality, but they are indispensable as a starting off point, as 'scaffolding' from which to proceed with the building of knowledge. One of Adler's fictions was the 'law of social interest': that individuals had an innate disposition for spontaneous social effort.

The high degree of cooperation and social culture which man needs for his very existence demands spontaneous social effort, and the dominant purpose of education is to evoke it. Social interest is not inborn (as a full-fledged entity), but it is an innate potentiality which has to be consciously developed.⁸

The capacity to identify with another was the basis of social interest for Adler: 'To see with the eyes of another, to hear with the ears of another, to feel with the heart of another.'⁹ All the main problems of individual life were related to the problems of human cooperation. In essence neurosis was anti-social behaviour arising from the fact that the neurotic do not feel part of the society in which they live – they lack community feeling. Individuals must be helped and educated so that they might learn to transcend their selfish, egocentric life goals, or destruction would follow. The central problem of society was the individual. If there was to be social change, there must first be a change of attitude on the part of individuals. Thus, if the first part of Adler's programme as an Individual Psychologist was to help create self-reliant individuals who were willing and able to take responsibility for their own lives, the complement to this was to help these self-reliant individuals to cooperate with their fellows and neighbours for the welfare of society as a whole. For Adler the meaning or purpose of life was cooperation. He wrote: 'Our functions and feelings are developed rightly if a person is concerned about the whole of mankind and feels the need for cooperation.'¹⁰ He firmly believed, along with *Dostoyevsky*, that 'each is responsible to all for all.'

On the question of how to proceed, Adler adopted an essentially pragmatic approach which resonated with the views of Mitrinović that no-one possessed the absolute truth. 'There are,' he wrote, 'as many meanings to life as there are human beings ... True means true for mankind, true for the purposes and aims of human beings.'¹¹ According to Mitrinović the real significance of Adler lay in the fact that he emphasised in modern and scientific terms what religions had always known, that humanity was the source of all meaning and value, that 'man, with his free will, can produce every vision, can draw every power from himself.'¹²

For Mitrinović the world was out of joint, a world in which individuals, groups and nations were struggling against each other for their self-aggrandisement rather than for the sake of the common good. Moreover, people had lost confidence in their individual and collective ability to shape the world according to their ideals.

We have lost the notion that the whole is more important than the parts ... We, as a race, especially in the Western civilization, are losing confidence in our whole being. We doubt the whole concept of free will, and the possibility of arranging the human household and the organic order of mankind according to our human intuition and needs, although we are the sovereign beings and the world is for our needs, where we can realise our own ends.¹³

Humanity itself was the only saviour of the world. A key responsibility therefore fell upon those who realised this fact.

Only that which is really best, only that which is self-conscious, and only that which believes in mankind, has the supreme value; that alone can govern and save the world. The true ruling principle, the true self-imposing superior caste, the best man, the best characters, the best hearts can save the world by imposing upon it that spiritual aristocracy which is the aristocratic expression of the belief that the best is immanent in mankind, and that mankind must not worship any higher power than itself.¹⁴

It was in the work of Adler that he found a rich source of practical advice and theoretical insight upon which to draw in pursuit of the 'best' that was immanent in those around him.

Adler made his first visit to England in 1923 to attend a conference at Oxford. In 1926 he returned to deliver some lectures in London. Lilian Slade attended one of these presentations and arranged a meeting between Mitrinović and the psychologist. The

two men got on extremely well together and had a number of long and intimate talks at Valerie Cooper's studio. At Mitrinović's invitation Adler also gave a lecture at the studio on the subject of Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche, and later he entrusted Mitrinović with the formation of the British branch of the International Society for Individual Psychology. The first recorded meeting of this group took place on March 27th 1927 at the studio. On Sunday April 24th of that year, after a meeting addressed by W. H. Sampson on Astrology, people transferred to 55 Gower Street where premises for what was to become known as the Adler Society had been found. At midnight a lecture on Individual Psychology was delivered by Alan Porter to mark the formal opening of the rooms which, for the next five years, served as a centre for public lectures and private discussions covering a whole range of subjects. The Society took over the basement and ground floor of the property in Gower Street. To the left of the entrance hall and passageway was the lecture room which could hold up to 75 people. It also housed the books of the society's lending library. Downstairs in the basement the original kitchen area was turned into a private study for Mitrinović. In a way the two levels of the property reflected the different 'levels' of his activities: the public and the private, the exoteric and the more esoteric, the formal and the informal.

The ground floor was where the more public and formal activities of the Adler Society took place – the lectures and open meetings. The study was used for smaller private meetings and discussions amongst intimate friends and co-workers. It was the inner sanctum where one entered only by invitation – a dark and cluttered room lined with books, paintings and works of art. The ground floor lecture room was open to the public most days from about 2 p.m. onwards. Each evening saw some activity or other taking place there. An idea of the range of lectures and courses presented can be obtained from the programme for the last quarter of 1927. On Monday evenings between 6.45 and 7.45 there was a 'speaking class' led by Rex Campbell. At 8.30 a meeting of the Sociological Section of the society was held, organised by the treasurer of the society, W. T. Symons. Tuesday evenings were devoted to an open meeting for the benefit of newcomers at which Mitrinović attempted to provide an introduction to the work and significance of Adler and Individual Psychology. A School of Philosophy and Psychology also met on Tuesday evenings, led by

Alan Porter. Wednesday evenings during the winter months of 1927 were devoted to a series of talks on astrology by W. H. Sampson. An 'education group' met on Thursday evenings at Gower Street, whilst a course on psychoanalysis was also held on Thursday evenings, led by a Mr. Rabineck. Fridays were set aside for a series of lectures on Adlerian subjects given by Mitrinović and Alan Porter. At weekends music and drama evenings were held.

Administratively the Adler Society was organised into different sections or schools: education, sociology, philosophy, arts and crafts, music, eurhythmics. In addition there was a Medical Group whose members were all medical practitioners. There was also a Men's Group and a Women's Group. Each school or section had its own programme of meetings, courses and lectures. The programme for February 1929 gives some idea of the range of activities taking place. On Monday evenings the Educational Section were scheduled to meet for a series of discussions on experiences of childhood. Tuesday evenings were devoted to a series of presentations by Mitrinović on Individual Psychology. Titles included 'Husserl and phenomenology in relation to Adler' on February 5th, 'The As If philosophy of Vaihinger in relation to Adler' on the 12th, 'Gestalt psychology in relation to Adler' the following week, and 'Hans Driesch and the philosophy of the organic in relation to Adler' on February 26th. The Philosophical Section also met on Tuesday evenings at Valerie Cooper's studio in Fitzroy Street under the direction of Alan Porter. They were engaged in a series of discussions of Nietzsche and his relationship to Individual Psychology. On Wednesday evenings the Sociological Section met to study 'Political synthesis and organic social order in the light of Individual Psychology.' Speakers for February included Philip Mairet on Bhagavan Das, Major J. V. Delahaye on 'Modern Europe,' and Rev. E. Egerton Swann on 'Pax Christiana.'¹⁶ The Medical Society met on Thursday evenings. The Friday evenings of February 1929 were devoted to a series of lectures on Individual Psychology: Dr. Cuthbert Dukes on 'Organ inferiority,' Philip Mairet on 'Life goal and life plan,' Alan Porter on 'Self-valuation' and Dr. O. H. Woodcock on 'The nervous child.' Saturday February 16th was the occasion of a viola recital by a Miss Dorothy Barker.

This level of activity was sustained by the Society up until 1932. One of the leading members was Alan Porter who, according to

Mairet, 'was a marvel ... by the time he had done, there was probably as much "head-knowledge" of Individual Psychology about the quarter of Bloomsbury as in half Vienna!'¹⁷ Other prominent members included Philip Mairet himself and medical practitioners such as Cuthbert Dukes, O. H. Woodcock and Dr. Crookshank, who was described by Adler's biographer as 'the most intellectually convinced of all Adler's English adherents.'¹⁸ Much of the day-to-day administrative work fell on the shoulders of the Honorary Secretary Rose Graham (the wife of Stephen Graham), Lilian Slade, and the treasurer W. T. Symons. Whilst they provided their services voluntarily, the expenses of maintaining the premises amounted to something like £250 per annum. To meet such necessary costs a minimum subscription of a guinea (just over a pound sterling) was required of members, but larger contributions were expected from those who could afford it. Subscriptions and donations for the period April to November 1927, for example, amounted to £220.6s., of which £100 was donated by Valerie Cooper.

The central figure and driving force behind all the activities was Mitrinović. As Phyllis Bottome remarked in her biography of Adler: 'It was the eloquence, personal magnetism and tremendous intellectual brilliance of Mitrinović that turned Alfred Adler into a sort of "movement" in London.'¹⁹ In the summer of 1927 he attended the fourth International Congress for Individual Psychology held in Vienna. In the years 1927 through to 1932 he delivered over fifty lectures at Gower Street, in addition to speaking engagements elsewhere, as well as chairing the general meeting for newcomers that was a regular Tuesday evening event. He was, moreover, a regular attender of other people's presentations, occupying an armchair by one of the fireplaces. Watson Thomson, who was to become a close associate of Mitrinović, vividly recalled their first encounter at one of the Gower Street lectures.

The lecture room was a transformed drawing room and still contained the original fireplace and other such fixtures. It also had one or two armchairs in addition to the straight rows of hard chairs. In one of these, between the fireplace and the lecturer's table, sat this remarkable figure: a large man dressed in frock-coat, pearl-grey vest – far from immaculate – and an old-fashioned stock tie. His most striking feature was the shape of his head, enormously high-domed yet flat at the back, all clean shaven like a billiard ball. The eyebrows were jet-black and full, the eyes dark and magnetically compelling.²⁰

Following the lectures on the ground floor of the Gower Street premises Mitrinović would retreat to his basement study to talk with friends and associates until the early hours of the morning. He would then retire to his rented rooms, a short walk away in Bloomsbury Street, to read and sleep, rarely stirring from his bed until mid-day. After lunching at one of the small restaurants in the vicinity, his afternoons were often spent wandering around the bookshops and art galleries. There is also some evidence that he devoted some time during this period to acting as unpaid psychotherapist and counsellor to various individuals who sought his assistance.

Meantime Adler was becoming increasingly committed to spreading the doctrine of 'social interest' to an ever wider public. As a consequence the late 1920s and early 1930s was a period of increasing tension and suspicion between Adler, his lay-followers, and members of the established medical professions. Some of his working assumptions were seen as fundamentally threatening by certain medical professionals. His conviction, for instance, that the ordinary difficulties of human life lay well within the scope and capabilities of trained lay psychotherapists, coupled with his belief that each individual was responsible for their own well-being, could be perceived as questioning the status of professional medical practitioners. As a counter, it was alleged that Adler was more of a preacher than a scientist. His methods were criticised: he despised statistics and tended to illustrate his theories by means of case-studies; he abandoned the use of standard control measures in his practice and research, arguing that each individual was unique. Consequently it was claimed that his approach to psychology was speculative rather than truly scientific.

This tension between the Individual Psychology movement and the established medical and scientific communities was reflected within the London branch of the International Society. Under the influence of Mitrinović the Gower Street society had attracted to its ranks not only members of the medical profession but also substantial numbers of young, idealistic folk: teachers, artists, students, journalists. For them the society had the character of a new movement for social change and renewal guided by the insights and principles of Individual Psychology. As such, they made uneasy bedfellows with those members who were medical practitioners and

who were primarily committed to Individual Psychology as a new body of knowledge and practice upon which they could draw in the pursuit of their professional activities.

The unease experienced by the medical practitioners at being associated with lay-persons with such 'unprofessional' interests was heightened towards the end of 1928 when a group of socially concerned individuals who had become known as the 'Chandos Group' resolved to ally itself with the Adler Society. On September 16th 1926 Mitrinović, Maurice Reckitt and W. T. Symons had met for dinner at the Chandos Hotel 'to plan work together and regular meetings for the furtherance of their common objectives.'²¹ This was the beginning of a group which met regularly at the Chandos, from which it took the name. They had come together in response to the social crisis that faced Britain after the failure of the General Strike, which Mitrinović in particular believed had been a marvellous opportunity to reorganise British society and industry – a chance which had been missed. It would appear that it was disappointment with the outcome of the Strike that led to the new initiative: fortnightly meetings of a group of like-minded men – and it would appear as if the members were all men – who shared a commitment to the principles of guild socialism and the Douglas social credit scheme and who believed that the crises that confronted society could only be addressed by means of a radical re-orientation of individual and collective life. The members of the group included Philip Mairet, the Reverend V. A. Demant, Alan Porter, W. T. Symons, Egerton Swann, Albert Newsome and Maurice Reckitt. Most of them had known each other in the days of Orage's editorship of *The New Age*. In his autobiography Reckitt recalled that the initiative to form the group came from those centred 'round the powerful, if somewhat elusive, personality of a Yugoslav sage, Mr. D. Mitrinović, who had not been without some influence on Orage himself.'²²

Although instrumental in founding the group, Mitrinović was an infrequent participant in their meetings. However, through Porter, Mairet and Symons in particular, his presence was felt. At one of their early meetings on October 12th 1926 the group resolved to publish a pamphlet on the crisis in the mining industry. The minutes record that it:

... should be framed by Mr. Newsome, the quickest writer among us, with the collaboration of Mr. Porter. With each member of the circle contributing his own amplification and his own direction. For instance Mr. Demant should write upon the crisis as a failure of will, Mr. Symons should criticise it in its implicit economic assumptions, Mr. Mairet's contribution should deal with the constitutional issue raised by the crisis.²³

Coal: A Challenge to the National Conscience was published by the Hogarth Press in 1927. Specific recommendations were made for the establishment of a national economic council which would unite trade unionists and employers in the management of the economy, whilst demands were also made for a reform of the financial system in the direction of social credit. However, the main thrust of the book, as its title suggested, was an attack against what was interpreted as a failure of will and vision on the part of all sections of society. People were evading the fact that 'history is the accumulated result of the impact of the human will on the environment',²⁴ and were leaving the management of the nation's affairs to leaders who were themselves 'muddled, characterless, and incapable of vision'.²⁵ To avoid 'the ominous possibility of a revolution in blood', the authors made their plea:

We wish men to realise that civilisation is the work of men. We wish a synthesis of the aims and interests of the whole community to be found, to be declared, and to be put into practice ... It is our faith that this age, this mean and miserable twentieth century, can be a heroic age, an age of great culture, of a great prosperity, of a great peace, if only we choose to make it great.²⁶

They advocated the formation of 'national inquiries' to study the interrelated economic, social and political problems of the age, and urged their readers to form 'self-appointed councils' as study groups which should work 'to bring the new social synthesis into consciousness, using every means to persuade the nation to act upon it'.²⁷

Following the publication of *Coal* the links between the Chandos Group and the Sociological section of the Adler Society were strengthened. In January 1928 it was resolved to devote alternate meetings of the Sociological group to a consideration of *Coal* 'as a basis for an examination of the present condition of national life.' Reckitt, Egerton Swann, Mairet, Newsome and Porter regularly lectured to the group on such topics as 'National guilds'; 'The

position and prospects of Christian sociology' (Reckitt); 'Party politics today', 'The meaning of revolution', (Newsome); 'Leisure', 'Aristocracy and the politics of today' (Mairet); 'Internationalism and finance' (Egerton Swann); 'The principles of politics' and 'Methods of reform' (Porter).

It was therefore not too surprising that on December 20th 1928 it was resolved 'that the Chandos Group find its vehicle of expression in the Sociological Group of the Adler Society, and while continuing to meet as a separate body, it do so as the Senate of the Gower Street Society.' In so doing, the members emphasised the importance of study, to discover the 'absolute and eternal principles of true sociology'; but they laid equal stress on the necessity for action to 'incarnate' such principles 'on the plane of modern industrial life'. The specific reforms that they sought to promote embraced constitutional changes in the form of political devolution, social change in the form of guild socialism, and economic and financial reform in the guise of social credit. They observed that such a programme 'must be regarded as partaking of the nature of a revolution.'

This formal acknowledgment of the links that existed between the Chandos Group and the Adler Society undoubtedly increased the sense of unease experienced by the members of the Medical Group within the Society. It could have left them in no doubt that the Society was clearly taking upon itself the characteristics of a movement for social change rather than those of a professional association. Indeed, the coming together of the Chandos Group and the Sociological Section marked the beginning of an increased involvement of the members of the Adler Society in the sphere of practical politics, a trend which was reflected in the greater emphasis placed upon non-medical issues in the lectures and discussions. Consequently, on July 1st 1930 the secretary of the medical group, Thomas Lawson, wrote to Rose Graham, in her capacity as secretary to the Society, to inform her that the medical practitioners had decided that 'whilst desirous of maintaining the friendliest relations, it has been decided to make separate arrangements for meeting and subscriptions.'²⁸

Following the formal withdrawal of the medical section, the activities of the Society became more clearly centred on the educational, philosophical and sociological sections. Instructional

courses on orthodox Individual Psychology were still held, but it was clear to many that the prime focus of the Society had shifted towards a concern with social and political issues. Thus it was that at the annual general meeting of June 18th 1931 a decision was taken to reorganise the Society. In a confidential memorandum issued by Philip Mairet in his capacity as Chairman, prior to the meeting, he outlined the reasons for the proposed change.

The Society was founded by a small group of persons who, before their contact with IP, were already hoping to initiate a movement of a human value and of psychological classification. They brought with them therefore certain studies in sociology and philosophy which were not to be found in IP as such with its practical concentration on the problems of therapy. This was reflected in the organisation of the English society which from the first had sections for the study of philosophy and sociology as well as for psychotherapy and psychology. The group of friends who founded the English section had already gained some systematic approach to these studies under the guidance of Mr. Mitrinović. Now their work in these fields became coloured by the ideas of IP. Naturally also, their studies of IP were influenced by their philosophy and sociology but to a much smaller extent. Orthodox IP of the straightest sect of Adlerians has been well and truly taught at no. 55 Gower Street, sometimes enriched by other ideas but not falsified by them. Dr. Adler himself has recently circulated a paper on the importance of correlative studies and it is his policy to encourage them. Nevertheless it has been possible for persons who did not happen to like us to pretend that there was some absolute difference of aim or incompatibility of method between IP and the work of the groups which with Mr. Mitrinović as its leading spirit introduced IP into England. What is much more unfortunate – some of our associates have lent an ear to this option. The view which I hold and which is, I believe, shared by some or most of you is that the cooperation between Dr. Adler and Mr. Mitrinović is both more loyal in spirit and productive in effect than that which we see between its detractors. The respective teachings of these leaders are individual and complementary, but in no important respect irreconcilable. In their appeal to the public however we must recognise a certain difference and it would be, I think, advisable to express this difference in our reorganisation.²⁹

The decision was taken to restrict the activities of the Adler Society to 'psychology proper,' leaving the philosophical and sociological sections to organise an independent programme. It was

further agreed that the new society thus formed would rent the Gower Street rooms for its own use for three evenings a week.

Despite this further erosion of the activities and formal scope of the parent society, the report on the activities of 1932 was hopeful and buoyant. The Society boasted of more than 70 active members; a full programme of lectures and meetings had been sustained; and two of Adler's colleagues, Dr. Erwin Wexberg and Dr. Leonhard Seif, had delivered lectures to the Society, strengthening the links between the London branch and the international network of individual psychologists. The report concluded that it merely required 'but a little more spirit' by just 'a very few more' to 'make the next year's work the most successful we have ever known.'³⁰

It was not to be. Adler had insisted with increasing emphasis that Individual Psychology had nothing whatever to do with any form of politics. He had always refused to associate himself with any political party. Only a better individual could make a better system, and politics was an inadequate substitute for individual growth. He likened Individual Psychology to 'a basket of fruit, out of which any passer-by can take whatever agrees with him!'³¹ This concern to keep Individual Psychology untainted and unsullied by political associations or bias of any kind increased with the growth of European fascism and the threat posed by such regimes to the Individual Psychology movement. It was undoubtedly the fear that the activities and concerns of the London branch might provide sufficient evidence of the subversive nature of Individual Psychology to threaten the lives and activities of his followers in Germany and Austria that led Adler to the decision to disassociate himself from the London society. He wrote from New York on November 14th 1933:

In all friendship I want to tell you that because of the development of things in your society and *some new acquaintances abroad who cannot line up with Indps* I am proposing you to make yourself entirely independent. This would mean only that we shall mention no more your society as a neighbouring part of other Indps. societies.

In spite of this very earnest proposal which you probably understand and recognise, I send my best greetings to my old friends in your society if there are still any.

Awaiting your consent I am going to cancel the name of your society off the advertising page of my journal.³²

By 1933, however, the Adler Society was reduced to little more than a shadow of its former self. In a lecture given to the philosophical section of the Society on October 30th 1928 Mitrinović had maintained that 'our aim is to become live and sincere members of a centre of European Culture at Gower Street.' He became increasingly concerned with developments in Europe, and the focus of his attention and energy was redirected from the Adler Society to a variety of new organisations and public initiatives with which he was associated throughout the 1930s.

NOTES

1. Mairet (1966), p. xiii.
2. Quoted in C. S. Nott, *Teachings of Gurdjieff: The Journal of a Pupil*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961, p. 27.
3. Nott, p. 27.
4. Nott, pp. 27-8.
5. Maurice Nicoll, a Harley Street consultant and contemporary of Orage, was allocated to dish-washing for the first three months of his stay at the Château and was forbidden to read any books. Gurdjieff maintained that the growth of the individual required the development of all the 'centres' within a person. Hence the rationale for directing intellectuals to manual labour. Residents were also expected to do tasks they disliked without objecting to them, so that they might learn to operate without their efficiency being impaired by emotions. See B. Pogson, *Maurice Nicoll, A Portrait*, London: Vincent Stuart, 1961, pp. 80-1.
6. Personal recollections of Valerie Cooper in archives of New Atlantis Foundation.
7. Personal communication to author from member of New Atlantis Foundation.
8. H. & R. Ansbacher, eds., *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1958, p. 134.
9. Ansbacher, p. 135.
10. A. Adler, 'The meaning of life,' *The Lancet*, January 31st 1931, p. 6.
11. Quoted in V. MacDermot, *The Social Vision of Alfred Adler*, Ditchling: New Atlantis Foundation, 1981, p. 14.
12. D. Mitrinović, 'Marx and Nietzsche as the historic background of Adler,' *Purpose*, vol. I, no. 4, Oct.-Dec. 1929, p. 157.
13. Mitrinović (1929), pp. 9-10.
14. Mitrinović (1929), p. 12.

15. See Phyllis Bottome, *Alfred Adler*, London: Faber and Faber, 1939, p. 288.
16. Bhagavan Das was author of *The Science of Social Organisation*, Madras: Theosophical Society, 1910.
17. Quoted in Bottome, pp. 288-9.
18. Bottome, p. 290.
19. Bottome, p. 290.
20. Watson Thomson, *Turning into Tomorrow*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1966, p. 7.
21. Letter to Mitrović from W. T. Symons, September 14th 1926 (New Atlantis Foundation archives).
22. M. Reckitt, *As It Happened*, London: J. M. Dent, 1941, p. 190.
23. Minutes of Chandos Group meeting, October 12th 1926 (New Atlantis Foundation archives).
24. V. A. Demant et al, *Coal: A Challenge to the National Conscience*, London: Hogarth Press, 1927, p. 26.
25. *Coal*, p. 24.
26. *Coal*, pp. 8-9.
27. *Coal*, p. 10.
28. New Atlantis Foundation Archives.
29. New Atlantis Foundation Archives.
30. New Atlantis Foundation Archives.
31. Quoted in Bottome, p. 73.
32. Adler had taken up the post of Visiting Professor of Medical Psychology at Long Island College of Medicine. Emphasis added. Presumably a reference to the rise of the Nazis in Germany (New Atlantis Foundation archives).