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# SIEGFRIED BERNFELD IN SAN FRANCISCO:

## A CONVERSATION WITH NATHAN ADLER

CONVERSATIONS WITH CLINICIANS
Nathan Adler, Ph.D.
In Conversation with Daniel Benveniste, Ph.D.

Nathan Adler, Ph.D., one of the founding fathers of the San Francisco psychoanalytic community, was born February 11, 1911. In honor of his centennial, I present the following conversation: with Dr. Adler based on a tape-recorded interview conducted at his office in San Francisco, California, in September of 1990.

In our conversation, Dr. Adler spoke of his training under the illustrious Siegfried Bernfeld (1892-1953). Bernfeld, a brilliant psychoanalyst, teacher, and writer, was Freud's only student to come to San Francisco to practice and teach. Yet the biographical sketches of Bernfeld typically say little about his work in San Francisco. This article is intended to address this gap in the history. I begin with a brief statement about Nathan Adler, followed by a biographical sketch of Siegfried Bernfeld, and then the conversation with Adler on Bernfeld. This conversation was originally published in a German translation for a 1992 volume in honor of Siegfried Bernfeld's centennial. It was entitled, "Siegfried Bernfeld in San Francisco: Ein Gesprach mit Nathan Adler", and published in "Siegfried Bernfeld oder Die Grenzen der Psychoanalyse" (Eds. K. Fallend and J. Reichmayr).

#### Nathan Adler

Nathan Adler was born in New York, in 1911, the son of Jewish immigrant parents from Eastern Europe. Between the ages of six and nine Adler followed Fiorello La Guardia through the streets as he delivered his political soapbox oratories. It was from La Guardia's polemical style that Adler said he developed his own characteristic narrative.

At the tender age of 10, Adler went with his mother to Wards Island Mental Hospital every week to take chicken soup to a neighbor who had become psychotic. This was his first exposure to the field. Adler skipped three grades and then dropped out of high school. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, he became a poet, intellectual, and a leftist. He was an editor at the *New Masses* and *Partisan Review* as well as a union organizer.

As an outgrowth of his politics, he began as a social worker in 1934 in New York and continued this social work in 1936, in California, working on behalf of the Jewish community in state hospitals for the mentally ill and in state prisons. He studied with Siegfried Bernfeld from 1938 until Bernfeld's death in 1953. Bernfeld trained Adler to conduct psychoanalyses within the classical Freudian tradition but outside the formal institute training program of the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute. Adler was analyzed first by Suzanne Bernfeld (Bernfeld's wife) and later by Siegfried Bernfeld himself.

Without a high school diploma, Adler attended UC Berkeley, where he earned his undergraduate and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology studying under Edward Chase Tolman, Egon Brunswik, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, R. Nevitt Sanford, Theodore Sarbin, and others. Adler was a concerned critic of the Beat and Hippie generations and offered his leftist social and psychological critiques in numerous articles and his book *The Underground Stream: New Life Styles and the Antinomian Personality* (1972). He was a lecturer in Criminology and Psychology at UC Berkeley and a stellar professor of clinical psychology at the California School of Professional Psychology at Berkeley/Alameda. He was a practicing psychoanalyst for 50 years, and an inspiring supervisor and professor until his death in 1994.



Nathan Adler

## Siegfried Bernfeld

Siegfried Bernfeld was born on May 7, 1892, into a Jewish home in Lemberg (Lvov), Galicia. He grew up in Vienna and read *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1907 while still at the Gymnasium. In 1910, he entered the University of Vienna to study plant physiology and pursue his interests in psychology. While at the University he was active in both the socialist and Zionist youth movements and worked for a time as secretary to Martin Buber (Ekstein, 1966).

Bernfeld published his first article in 1912. The following year, when Bernfeld was only 21 years old, the *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* published his second article. He married Anne Salomon in 1914. Both were active in left-wing politics and the Zionist movement. They had two daughters, Rosemarie and Ruth. During the First World War, Bernfeld was in the army, stationed most of the time in Vienna, where he continued his

studies. At the University he changed his major from botany to pedagogy and psychology and completed his Ph.D. in 1915. That same year he joined the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society as a "guest" and became a full member in 1919 at the age of 27 (Fallend and Reichmayr, 1992).

In October 1919, Bernfeld opened the doors to his *Kinderheim Baumgarten* (Baumgarten Children's Home) for Jewish war orphans in the aftermath of the First World War. It was a school and demonstration center for progressive education infused with psychoanalytic principles. Working with Willi Hoffer and a sizable staff, he took on 240 children between the ages of 3 and 16. Some had disabilities, all were hungry, undisciplined, and traumatized. The *Kinderheim Baumgarten* was open for only six months before it shut its doors due to a number of complications. As an institution it failed, but as an experiment it created a model of psychoanalytically informed residential care and treatment that would be replicated throughout Europe, North America, and beyond (Ekstein, 1966).

In 1922 Bernfeld opened his practice as a psychoanalyst and began teaching at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute. In *Sigmund Freud: His Life in Pictures and Words* (Freud, E., Freud, I., Grubrich-Simitis, I., 1978) some of Freud's doodles drawn during a psychoanalytic society meeting are reproduced. In the upper-right corner Freud wrote the names of some of those in attendance: Hitchmann, Reich, Deutsch, Federn, Friedjung, and Bernfeld. (Incidentally, one of Freud's doodles on that page subsequently became the logo for the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis.)

Bernfeld was recognized from the beginning as an inspiring and eloquent lecturer and an advocate for progressive education. He wrote many articles and books on alternative education, children, and adolescence. In 1925 he published a major volume entitled *Psychology of the Infant* (1925 in German; 1929 in English), a pioneering study in the psychoanalytic interpretation of infancy. In another book, *Sisyphus or the Limits of Education* (1925 in German; 1973 in English), Bernfeld melded his socialist political views with his psychoanalytic perspective and described the limits of education as the limits of the political system as well as the psychological limits of the child and the teacher.

While Bernfeld remained a socialist, his wife became a communist, which was among other reasons for their divorce in 1926. She moved to Russia and left their two children with him. He moved to Berlin, married actress Liesl Neumann, and re-established his analytic practice. In 1930, eight years after he began practicing and teaching psychoanalysis, Bernfeld entered his first and only analysis with Hanns Sachs. Bernfeld taught at the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute where he was, once again, acknowledged as a brilliant and dedicated teacher. In a letter of recommendation, written in 1931, Freud said of Bernfeld: "He is an outstanding expert of psychoanalysis. I consider him perhaps the strongest head among my students and followers. In addition he is of superior knowledge, an overwhelming speaker and an extremely powerful teacher. Thus I can say all in all only the very best about him and we deeply regretted it when he left for Berlin" (Ekstein, 1966, p. 425).

Within the emerging positivist culture there was an effort to anchor psychoanalysis in the hard sciences, and this led Bernfeld to collaborate with Sergei Feitelberg in scientific studies proposing to measure libido. Of course, this did not work (N. Adler, personal communication, November 1990; R. Goldberg, personal communication, August 23, 1992).

In 1932 when Hitler was receiving overwhelming popular support, Bernfeld and his second wife divorced, and he returned to Vienna to practice and teach. His cohort included Anna Freud, August Aichhorn, and Willi Hoffer. They led a study group on Psychoanalytic Pedagogy, open to candidates in training, schoolteachers, and social workers. Bernfeld stayed in Vienna only a short while. He married Suzanne Cassirer Paret, who had studied some philosophy and medicine and was analyzed by Hanns Sachs and Sigmund Freud. At the end of 1934 Bernfeld moved to France with Suzanne, his two daughters, and Suzanne's two children from a previous marriage (P. Paret, personal communication, July 11, 1992).

In France Bernfeld saw only a few patients, pursued his work on the relationship of biology to psychoanalytic theory, and obtained visas to the United States via England. The family was in England from January to the beginning of August 1937, when they moved on to United States. Bernfeld arrived in San Francisco in September of 1937 (P. Paret, personal communication, July 11, 1992). Soon after his arrival in San Francisco, Bernfeld formed a psychoanalytic study group that included Suzanne Bernfeld, Bernhard Berliner, Anna Maenchen, Emanuel Windholz, Erik Erikson, Jean and Donald Macfarlane, Josephine and Ernest Hilgard, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Egon Brunswik, Edward Chace Tolman, Harold Jones, Olga Bridgman, Alfred L. Kroeber (anthropologist), Robert Lowie (anthropologist), Ernst Wolff (pediatrician), and J. Robert Oppenheimer (a theoretical physicist and the father of the atomic bomb). In addition to his practice and teaching, Bernfeld also participated in research at the Institute for Child Welfare at UC Berkeley, where he studied the methods used by asthmatic children in dealing with psychological problems (Berliner, 1975; H. Berliner, personal communication, May 21, 1991; Benveniste, 2006).

In 1941 Bernfeld published an article, "The Facts of Observation in Psychoanalysis," in which he schematized the psychoanalytic process in a way that helps the analyst attend to the resistance rather than the content. The *International Review of Psycho-Analysis* republished this article in 1985 with an introduction by Victor Calef and Edward Weinshel. It remains to this day an important article in psychoanalytic training. In 1944 Siegfried and Suzanne Bernfeld began researching and writing biographical articles about Freud's early development. The findings were incorporated into Jones's massive biography of Sigmund Freud (Trosman and Wolf, 1973).

In 1942 the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Society was accepted as a member of the American Psychoanalytic Association. Though Bernfeld was the recognized leader of the psychoanalytic movement in San Francisco, a founding member of the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Society and Institute (now the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis) and its foremost teacher, he was permitted only an honorary membership, as the American did not grant full membership to analysts without medical degrees. Though frustrated with the Institute's policies regarding lay analysts, its hierarchies, and other typical pitfalls of bureaucratization, Bernfeld maintained his affiliation with the Institute and continued to teach there. In 1944, however, he started his own informal training program at his home. This unauthorized training, clearly in violation of the rules of the American, began with a small group that included Suzanne Bernfeld, Nathan Adler, Agnes Ain, Steven Pepper, Marian Russell, and a couple of others (N. Adler, personal communication, November 1990).

In November 1952, six months before his death at age 61, Bernfeld delivered a lecture, *On Psychoanalytic Training*, before the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Society and Institute. It was a challenge to some of the consequences of Institute training that he had encountered. As

an inspired teacher, an eloquent lecturer, and a passionate idealist, Bernfeld remained committed to the primary prerogatives of students and their freedom to grow despite the encroachments of bureaucratic institutions. He was concerned about his students and was caring toward them. He had the passion of a political reformer, the discipline of a mathematician, and the temperament of an artist. He abhorred authoritarian administration-centered institutions that stifled students and their creativity. He had flourished in the Vienna and Berlin Institutes primarily because they were new, unstructured, and he was free to teach as he saw fit. With the establishment of the American institutes, psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic training became formalized, and Bernfeld felt these institutions as a constriction of the psychoanalytic ethos. In his lecture, posthumously published in 1962, he raised his concerns with the then-current teaching practices, and presented a vision of another kind of psychoanalytic institute.

He described an institute that would be student-centered and progressive in its teaching approach. There would be few formal requirements for admission other than a passionate interest and talent for psychoanalysis. Potential students would be followed in an informal way and, if they showed further promise, would be invited to meetings of the Psychoanalytic Society. Study would take place in small groups and the focus would largely be on the interests of the individual students. At some point a student would be taken into a training analysis, begin work with a control analyst, and, after a time, be confirmed as a member and analyst. The focus would not be on the fulfillment of prescribed educational tasks but on the interests and talents of the student, the relationship with a teacher, and the pursuit of creative psychoanalytic work (Bernfeld, 1962). This vision of a new kind of psychoanalytic institute was quite similar to Bernfeld's own psychoanalytic training and his mentorship under Freud. It was also the model he used in recruiting and supervising practitioners outside of the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute. Nathan Adler was one of those students (Benveniste, 2006).

## Conversation with Nathan Adler on Siegfried Bernfeld

**DB:** In the published biographical material on Siegfried Bernfeld (Ekstein, 1966; Ekstein, Fallend, and Reichmayr 1990; Hoffer, 1955; Zilboorg, 1953) very little is written about his 15 years in San Francisco, and in Bernfeld's obituary, written by Hedwig Hoffer (1955), she describes his arrival in the United States as "too late to start life afresh." Yet, that's not the impression you've given me when you've spoken of Bernfeld in the past.

**NA:** These papers have a melancholy theme that distorts the zest of Bernfeld's life in Marin County, his delight with the political times of FDR and the New Deal, and his genetic experiments and play in breeding Siamese cats and supplying them to his friends. The Bernfeld that I knew had zest, humor, playfulness, and wit.

**DB:** The published biographical material says Bernfeld fled Germany, Austria, France, and England to escape the threat of the Nazis. How did he make his way to San Francisco?

**NA:** When he arrived in London, Ernest Jones said, "Go west. Don't settle here." There was a pressure to get out of London. Bettina Warburg, in New York, encouraged him to go to San Francisco. I suppose San Francisco was one of the places where there weren't any psychoanalysts. The only person doing analysis in San Francisco, at that time, was a retired doctor, a lieutenant commander in the Navy by the name of Thompson. There was no

Institute and Thompson was not a joiner or an organization man, but he had been practicing in San Francisco for some time and had developed a small group of people who carried on within his tradition. He was a Zen Buddhist and had this cohort around him that he had analyzed and was training. The group around him was a Buddhist group. Among them was Jacques Schnier, who later became a professor of sculpture at in the UC Berkeley art department and also did therapy — the well-known letter of Freud's regarding lay analysis was written to Schnier. There were also some other people who were autodidacts with no formal schooling whom he also trained. That was the only community of analysts here in San Francisco in 1936.



Siegfried Bernfeld

Bernfeld and Berliner were the first two trained analysts to arrive — [Bernhard] Berliner, a physician, arrived in 1936 and Bernfeld in 1937. Bernfeld immediately began workshops for social workers and that's how I met him. I was a social worker then and involved in the social work community. Dr. Ernst Wolff, chief of pediatrics at Mt. Zion, also played a role in developing these study groups. Wolff was a patient of Bernfeld's. He facilitated Bernfeld's involvement with Mt. Zion and the social work community and stimulated the development of the Mental Hygiene Society in the Bay Area.

Ernst Wolff and a key group of social workers, including Irma Weil and Barbara Mayer Kirk, organized the Mental Hygiene Society of Northern California. My wife [Elizabeth Hall] became the executive secretary and I, because of my work in the state prisons and its corrections committee, got on the board. We published a bulletin called *Beacon: The Bulletin* 

of the Mental Hygiene Society of Northern California and sponsored many public lectures introducing and creating a platform for psychoanalysis. I was editor of the Beacon. I saw myself as a publicist and promoter for analysis, developing a public among teachers and social workers and physicians. We organized institutes at Asilomar [in Pacific Grove, near Monterey], held public meetings, and offered mental health education. I pushed the careers of young analysts in training, publishing their papers, referring patients, and helping to build their practices. The mental health movement was one popular base. The other was the organization of study groups. Psychoanalysis in San Francisco won its first support among the intellectuals, the social workers, teachers, and physicians.

Then Anna Maenchen arrived around 1940 and Windholz came over at about that time too. I sent Windholz his very first two patients in this country and then brought him in as a consultant to the Jewish Committee for Personal Service for my San Quentin work. When Windholz arrived, Bernfeld advised him to get an American M.D. license. Windholz, with an M.D. from Prague, became an intern at Mt. Zion Hospital to get his license. [Otto Fenichel had to do the same at Mt. Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles.] So there they were, working with their analytic patients and meanwhile doing medical internships at the hospitals too.

Beginning as study circles they affiliated with Topeka and became a branch of the Topeka Institute. Bernfeld was a lecturer, teacher, and training analyst, as were the others, and then Bernfeld was made an "honorary" member! Bernfeld taught, and was a training analyst for that first generation of people and, I don't know the facts, but at one point his wife was denied membership at the Institute. His wife, who had been analyzed by Freud and Sachs, had never completed her training in Austria because as an émigré she had to flee the Nazis. Not only did they deny her membership but said, "If Bernfeld gets sick or dies, the Institute will supply a pension for her." He resented that.

[Mrs. Bernfeld was eventually given the title "Accredited Member" along with Dr. Bernfeld, but neither of them was ever granted "Active Member" status.]

**DB:** How did you come to meet Bernfeld?

**NA:** Well, Bernfeld came here in 1937. I was in analysis first with Mrs. Bernfeld, to whom he had referred me, from 1938 to 1940, then continued in study groups and seminars with both Bernfelds and did additional analytic work with him. In 1944, when the local Institute insisted on his "Honorary" role and denied membership to his wife, he gathered some of his students together, began to refer patients to us, and provided supervision. And there, but for the grace of God, I would have remained a social worker!

Both Bernfelds began referring cases to me in 1944. I could see people from Sacramento, from Carmel, and from the East Bay. We were drawing from all of California because there were no other therapists around. Windholz was present at that initial organizing meeting and said, "Well, I'll be glad to come as an observer to your study group, but, of course, I cannot join since I'm president of the Society and Institute." Bernfeld wanted to organize a new society with a new name, but administration was not his forte and nothing ever came of it. There were three of us to whom Bernfeld began to send cases. One, a former analysand, a nursing supervisor and educator, was not able to hold or keep the patient referred to her. She moved east, where she began teaching in a university school of nursing. The second was a psychiatric social worker. She and I began practicing in 1944 and it was the two of us who

came out of those original study groups.



Suzanne Bernfeld

**DB:** Did Bernfeld speak of his political interests with you?

**NA:** Yes. Bernfeld was a Jew who had lived in Vienna before World War I in the culture of the *Wandervogel*, in a Vienna traditionally anti-Semitic and yet with a strong social democratic presence. He began as a committed Zionist. At the age of 24 or 25 he became secretary to Martin Buber. After World War I his concern with educational philosophy led him to set up children's camps and schools. They were convalescent and rehabilitation centers like Anna Freud's projects in World War II London, supporting and feeding children and studying them too. His initial training and experience was with children and adolescents. He was politically active first, as a Zionist working with Buber, then in the children's movement, and then in the socialist movement.

He was a knowledgeable Marxist, critical of the communist left but certainly a Social Democrat. Once when I challenged him, he remarked in his customary quiet and ironic manner, "Interesting! Do you know Marx's letters to Kugelman?" He knew the Marxist literature very well. His first wife was a left-winger who left for Moscow and never returned. I believe she disappeared during the purges in the 1930s.

[In a personal communication, July 11, 1992, Peter Paret, a professor of European History and Bernfeld's stepson, explained that Bernfeld's first wife's second husband was killed in Stalin's purges and that she later committed suicide.]

Many of the émigrés who settled in the United States were left of center but found the USA, during those New Deal days, a far more open and responsive society than the political world to which they had been accustomed. Bernfeld wasn't in this country more than a month or so when one of his first patients, a friend of mine, was arrested for distributing union leaflets in front of the Home Relief Bureau office. Bernfeld, anticipating government persecution, wondered how she could cope. Leave town? Go to Stockton? Change her name? Start all over again elsewhere? With his European notion of arrest, he anticipated that her career was over and that she had best change her name and start all over again in another town. He had no sense then of what America was like. This patient, meanwhile, says, "So I've been arrested. In a week they'll appoint me supervisor within the agency anyhow!"

One needs to know that story to understand Russell Jacobi's book, Social Amnesia (1975). Jacobi says that the leftist psychoanalysts in Europe sold out when they came to America. That's nonsense! In Europe these psychoanalysts had been radicals [Paret clarified for me that Bernfeld was a socialist, not a communist and not a "radical" in the more modern sense of the term.] The most right wing might be Social Democrats but many, like Fenichel and Reich, were further to the left. Jacobi argues that this group, involved in political and social action in Europe, in America sold out. He's being naïve. They didn't desert their principles when they came to America. Fenichel, Bernfeld, Fromm, Horney, and the rest had all been radicals and left-wingers. When they came to the USA they just fell in love with America and were delighted with FDR. They'd been accustomed to a culture of violent confrontations and encroaching fascism, where arrest meant flight into the underground. They arrive here and Roosevelt makes a speech about "My dog Falla," and the Bernfelds purred about that story again and again! In the New Deal world they found a responsiveness that made it unnecessary to have to move further left. In the U.S. they found room to move, to criticize, and to adjust. There was enough openness in the country to change policy, to have influence. What happened to this group was not that they sold out to America but rather that they fell into a great love affair with the America of the New Deal.

**DB:** You'd mentioned earlier that in addition to his teaching at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute, he also organized his own group. How large was that group?

**NA:** Originally there were five or six people involved in a study group and a reading circle. After Bernfeld died, I remained in close touch with Mrs. Bernfeld. We exchanged referrals and saw each other frequently. I was also a friend of his daughter Rose Marie, a biochemist and professor in the School of Nutrition at UC Berkeley.

**DB:** So who was in this first group that he formed?

**NA:** Bernfeld; his wife Suzanne; Marion Russell, who later left to become a supervisor of nursing at Yale; Agnes Ain, a psychiatric social worker; Steven Pepper, a professor of philosophy at Berkeley; myself and one or two others in social work and radio. Bernfeld was not an organizer or an administrator. He was an elegant teacher, a disciplined training analyst, but a poor administrator. At our first organizing meeting he said, "When Jung organized an Institute he chose a distinguishing name. Adler, too, had a differentiating name for his Institute. What name shall we choose?" We wasted time that evening looking for our variations of Individual Psychology and Analytic Psychology.

He lectured. We'd have reading groups and talk about cases. Sometimes I brought along guests from the San Quentin Prison psychology and treatment staff — the Deputy Warden in charge of treatment and Daniel Levinson, who was Nevitt Sanford's student at Berkeley and an intern at Berkeley — and we discussed cases. Later, after Bernfeld became ill, we continued to meet with Mrs. Bernfeld.

**DB:** What sort of teacher was he? What was his teaching style?

**NA:** Bernfeld was one of the most eloquent speakers I've ever heard. He identified with Freud so he smoked too much, and also, like Freud, he lectured without notes. His extemporaneous lectures, though not in his native language, would be in the most precise, elegant, and exquisite prose! I sat at the edge of my seat listening not only to what he said, but to the way he spoke. It was an aesthetic experience.

**DB:** What was the nature of your training?

NA: My training was, of course, totally unofficial and unaccredited. I had no status. I had the experience of my casework in the state hospitals and prisons of California, my reading, and my earlier experience as a caseworker in the state welfare and relief system. I was in a reading group with Bernfeld for a couple of years, and all that time I was also a social worker in prison work. I would bring in my prison cases. I would bring in Danny Levinson — now the "midlife crisis" psychologist at Yale — and Douglas Rigg, the Deputy Warden of Care and Treatment, and we'd review literature with the Bernfelds and talk about prison cases. Windholz was a consultant for my prison work, and I'd bring him with me to the county jail.

Every Friday he appeared at the Jewish Committee for Personal Services to review cases and explore the case dynamics with our staff. There would be the Mt. Zion grand rounds under Kasanin, before Reider showed up. [Jacob Kasanin, M.D., was the first Chief of Psychiatry at Mt. Zion Hospital. After his early death, Norman Reider, M.D., took over the role.] So Berliner and Bernfeld, the residents, and the visiting social workers sat around the table as cases were discussed. Edith Jacobson, Frieda Fromm-Reichman [distinguished émigré analysts from the pre-war Berlin Psychoanalytic Society], and others came through and one witnessed the trend toward the Americanization of analysis by these nouveau ego psychologists and the introduction of object relations and developmental formulae. One could also witness the opposition to the Americanization of analysis and see the tensions move between the old and the new group as part of the changing socio-political scene. Bernfeld, for example, was quite critical of Edith Jacobson and Frieda Fromm-Reichman. Reider was quite critical of Berliner.

There was a psychiatry resident at Mt. Zion, an analysand of Bernfeld's and an acquaintance of mine. I helped promote her through the *Beacon* and the activities of the Mental Hygiene Society. She was part of a group who had been analyzed by Bernfeld and who later became part of the official Institute. She was a candidate in training at the Institute, and when she heard that I had started a practice she protested to Bernfeld that I was not an M.D. but a mere social worker.

Anyhow, that was the climate in which we worked — non-M.D.s weren't allowed in the Institute, this candidate protested to Bernfeld, and he continuing to refer patients to me regularly and supervised my work.

**DB:** How often did your group meet?

NA: There were large group meetings of social workers, teachers, and psychologists in a large basement room at 1020 Francisco Street in San Francisco. A smaller group met weekly upstairs. His supervisory style was not directive or intrusive. He was not an active supervisor, and as the progressive educator, he tended to be supportive and tolerant in encouraging me to find my own way. After the study group was discontinued I'd just go to Bernfeld and say, "I got a problem." And he'd listen. There would be that kind of personal exchange. Socially, we were often together. I became more of a guest and once he was gone, I remained a close friend of Suzanne Bernfeld. My wife was analyzed by her.

**DB:** What about Suzanne Bernfeld? Why wasn't she a member of the Institute?

**NA:** She left medical school in Europe when Hitler came into power and had not completed her training in Vienna. But she was in practice in San Francisco, and after Bernfeld died in 1953, Mrs. Bernfeld was the main source of my referrals.

**DB:** With Suzanne Bernfeld as Freud's former patient and Siegfried Bernfeld as one of Freud's finest students, was there any continuing correspondence between the Bernfelds and Sigmund Freud once they arrived in San Francisco?

**NA:** There was an ongoing correspondence, but it went through Anna Freud, as [Sigmund] Freud was quite ill at that time. When the Bernfelds left Europe, Suzanne Bernfeld owed Freud some money and they were meticulous in paying off the debt. I was aware of the correspondence going back and forth with Anna Freud.

I don't know which birthday it was, whether it was Freud's last, 83rd birthday or his 82nd, but I remember seeing a Han Dynasty ceramic bowl that they bought for him at Gumps. It was a fine old piece that they sent. At one point Suzanne Bernfeld was asked to do a paper as part of the Freud biography series. She was already dying. Her cancer had metastasized. With this paper she had the most absolute kind of writer's block. One day, after spending some time with her, she said, "Thank you for the hour of psychotherapy." The way that hour ended was with her saying, "I can't say what I need to say because so long as Anna Freud is alive, I can't say it." Having acknowledged that, she was able to take an oblique angle and complete that paper.

This raises another issue. In the late 1930s there was a sense that when Freud dies, we would be surprised at the papers that would come out of the bottom of desks and be published, with all kinds of modifications and deviations within the psychoanalytic tradition! I'm saying this not to suggest that there was any intimidation but to imply that one can say of psychoanalysis what Jefferson said of liberty, "Liberty has to be re-won in each generation." And I'm convinced that psychoanalysis has to be re-won in every generation. What I mean by this is that the kinds of resistances around the notion of what psychoanalysis is are the same old resistances that have been around for years. Only the names and the titles change. With these changing names and changing titles over and over again what we face is the lurching away from a psychology that is essentially critical and that sets up only one commitment, to expose the secret of the emperor's new clothes, and to be willing to facilitate a radical confrontation with the established normative system. "New" psychologies develop and people fall away

from the analytic movement because of their need to come to terms with established societies and the illusion of the emperor's clothes.

**DB:** Did Bernfeld talk about his own clinical work?

**NA:** He related that Freud had sent him his first patient and said, "He's an obsessional case. Sit down. Keep your mouth shut. Don't open your mouth for two years and keep a walking stick beside you in case you have to protect yourself." That was his total induction into becoming an analyst. There wasn't any formal training, and later he became one of the major teachers in the first Institute in Vienna.

Then there was the story of the urinary stream and the cyclotron. Bernfeld told the story of a patient who played a central role in the design of the cyclotron. He never named the patient. This physicist, as an infant, lying in bed, had a fantasy that he could direct a stream of urine through the keyhole into his parent's bedroom. Bernfeld said this nuclear scientist fantasy of the urinary stream through the keyhole into the bedroom was a subtext for the origins of the cyclotron!

**DB:** Did Bernfeld talk much about his relationship with Freud?

NA: Bernfeld was not likely to do much talking. A resident and psychoanalytic candidate speaking of Bernfeld said, "That son of a bitch, all he loved was the unconscious!" What he meant by this is that Bernfeld offered no gratification. He stayed silent. He didn't talk much. If Bernfeld wanted to say, "This is a piece of nonsense. You're not making sense," he'd never say it that way. He was always quiet, ironic, gentle. You knew that you'd blown it when he'd say calmly, "Well, that's an interesting idea."

That may be one of the reasons Bernfeld died as early as he did. It was inappropriate to be aggressive in that culture. It was inappropriate to be manifestly hostile. At that time, when Bernfeld was probably experiencing resentment about the membership issues at the Institute, he had his stroke. Of course, he smoked three packs of Tareytons a day too! Following Freud, everybody was a smoker. If they didn't smoke cigars, they smoked three packs of cigarettes. So between the three packs a day and his inner resentment he ended with a stroke. His daughter, Rose Marie, was also a heavy smoker and also died young after a stroke. So there may have been constitutional factors at work as well.

**DB:** What do you remember most about Siegfried Bernfeld?

NA: Somewhere in his flight from Europe Bernfeld lost his dentures. He had also just come through a major bout with tuberculosis, his teeth were either bad or gone, and he looked like a gaunt Ichabod Crane — a Washington Irving character. He had this lantern face with a couple of tusks for teeth and no dentures. I remember seeing him walking down the street, this gaunt tall man, so tall that he wore a porkpie hat, not a Stetson or fedora, a felt hat with a flat bottom. Mrs. Bernfeld's father, Paul Cassirer, was the major art gallery impresario in Berlin who introduced Cezanne, Picasso, and represented Barlach, Schlevogt, and Lieberman. When the Bernfelds came to America, Suzanne had been badly beaten by the Nazis. She was hardly able to walk and their incredible art collection had been confiscated by the Nazis. She may have had two or three pieces remaining. What I remember is this gaunt, lean Ichabod Crane, with a porkpie hat, stalking down Montgomery Street, a Cezanne under his arm,

calling at the office of a prominent San Francisco art patron to sell the painting and support himself until his first patients came. [Peter Paret said Bernfeld might have had a painting to sell but by the time they got to San Francisco it certainly wasn't a Cezanne.]



Bernfeld with his porkpie hat

On another occasion, at his home in Fairfax [in Marin County] I saw Bernfeld lying flat on the ground. He was lying there on his belly, all six foot three or more of him, turning his head from left to right and in delight and self mockery saying, "I am master of all I survey!"

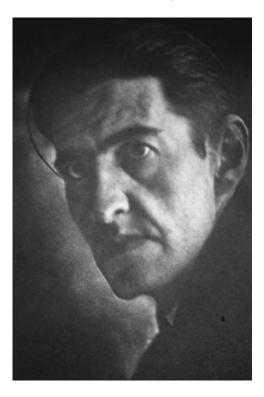
**DB:** Based on his biographical research and writing on Freud's life, Bernfeld appears to have been very interested in his relationship to Freud.

**NA:** Yes, the primary source of [Ernest] Jones's book is Bernfeld's research. What seems to have led Anna Freud to authorize Jones to write the official biography rather than the Bernfelds is an interesting question. I've wondered whether it is another instance of the same issue that led Freud to favor Jung as the non-Jewish façade behind whom psychoanalysis could safely advance. The traumas of anti-Semitism in Vienna, which still persist, are not easily overcome.

**DB:** Some people seem to have a distinct interest in their lineage to Freud while others don't. Bernfeld was one who seemed to be very interested in his relation to Freud.

NA: I suppose the closer you are to the first generation the more you feel the linkage. By the time you get some analyst in Podunk who isn't part of the begats, who's going to talk about the daisy chain? I have a friend, an analyst in Berkeley, who, when accepted as a candidate for training at the Institute, chose Anna Maenchen as his training analyst. She asked, "Why are you choosing me? Why are you seeking a woman analyst?" And he said, "Because you worked with Anna Freud and I want to be part of the chain." There's that sense of continuity. If I was with Anna Maenchen and Anna Maenchen was with Anna Freud and Anna Freud was at Berggasse, that's just three generations away.

**DB:** My sense is that this theme of one's place in the "daisy chain" is one that doesn't hold much of a fascination for you, or does it?



**NA:** Oh, of course it does! [Dr. Adler gets up, goes to the closet, and pulls out an unframed picture of Bernfeld on a piece of mat board.] This is Bernfeld. There's another version of this picture on the wall at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute. And that picture [He points to a picture of Sigmund Freud on the wall], Bernfeld gave me. It's a very late picture of Freud, when he was 82, a year before he died. Bernfeld gave me that!

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