

*'The position in the family leaves an indelible stamp upon the individual's life style.'*¹

ADLER, THE SECOND SON



Birth Order and the Family Atmosphere

Individual psychology

Alfred Adler's contribution to psychology is often lost between the giants of Freud and Jung. Adler saw a more visible horizon to the psyche than his contemporaries. His psychology was an Individual Psychology that placed the individual at the centre of his own life, responsible for his own choices. True to his Aquarian nature, Adler forged a fulfilling life out of social interest, feeling for humanity and contributing to society. Society's foundation rests on the structures forged out of our first experiences within the microcosm of a social system – the family.

The divergent orientation to psyche's horizon that Freud, Jung and Adler saw can be accounted for, in Adlerian theory, by their different birth order positions. Each position in the family has its own environment that influences one's attitudes and goals in life. Both Freud and Jung were the eldest. As an eldest child, the parental relationship dominates the horizon. It is the child's only primary familial relationship at birth. Adler, as the second child, entered the family where another sibling was already part of the family constellation. The sibling relationship is already innate to the experience of the later-born child who has to share his parents from birth. Adler implies that Freud's view of the domination of the parental imprint on the psyche is an eldest child's view. This superior and only position of the eldest child could contribute to the regressive urge to return to that once favoured

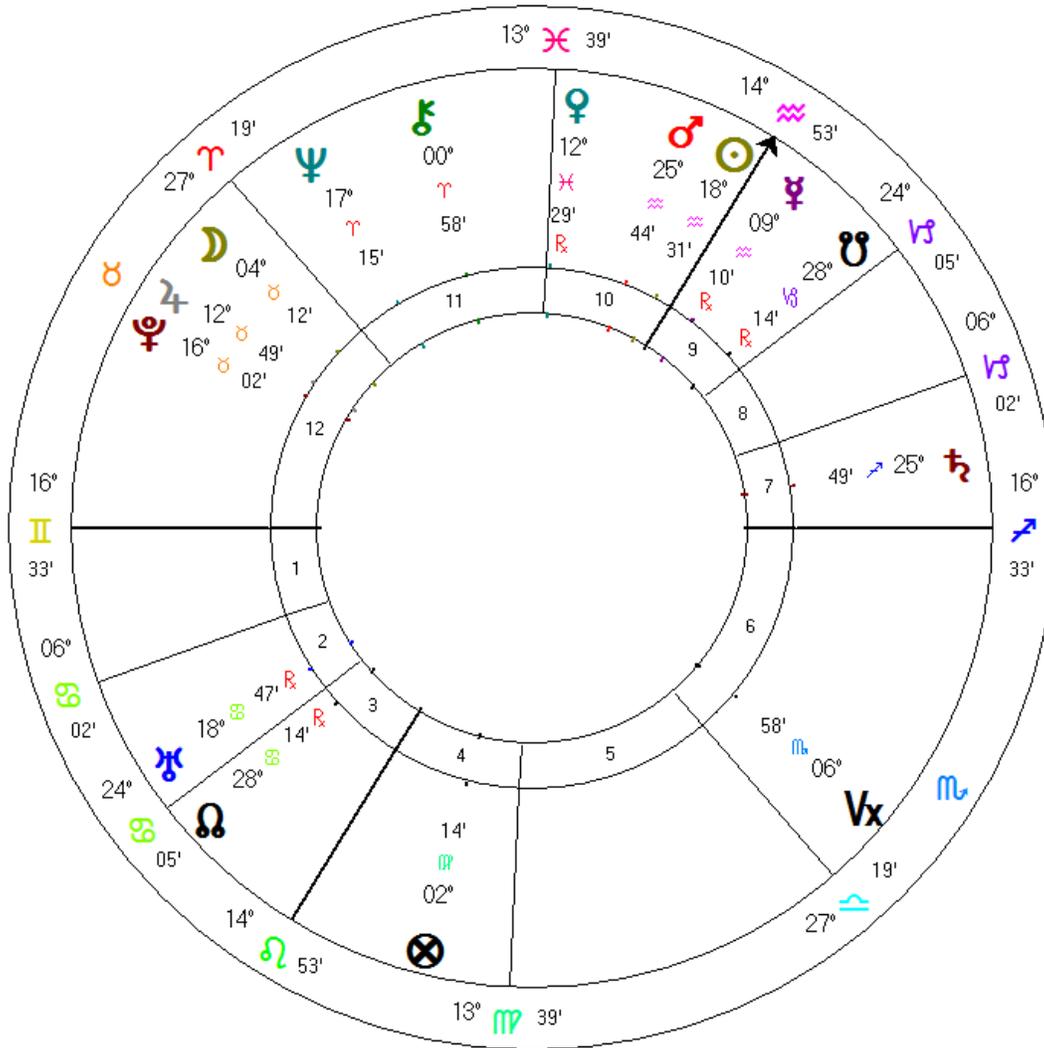
position before the advent of the sibling intruder. One of Adlerian psychology's main tenets is the striving from a position of inferiority to superiority, a view from his position in second place. Later-borns learn to interrelate and share with a peer from the beginning. Whereas first-positioned Freud's Oedipal complex put the eldest son in the shadow of father, Adler as the second son was in the shadow of brother.

-A typical second child is very easy to recognise: he behaves as if he were in a race, as if someone were a step or two in front and he had to hurry to get ahead of him. He is going full steam ahead all the time. He trains continually to surpass his older brother and conquer him.²

An eldest child may be engaged in trying to regress to an exclusive relationship with the primary parent by removing the obstacle of the rival, the other parent. However the second born is engaged more in acts of striving forward to surpass the older sibling. From this different perspective, rival psychologies were forged. Freud, as the eldest, developed the Oedipal complex suggesting the child's inherent urge to kill off the father to marry the mother, as the mythical Oedipus had unwittingly done. Adler, from the experience as the second son, developed the 'inferiority complex'

Alfred Adler was born in the Vienna suburb, Rudolfsheim, on 7 February 1870. Unlike Freud or Jung, there is no record of his birth time although various astrological books and periodicals have presented differing times.³ The lack of recorded birth time is also consistent with the dearth of biographical details on Adler. There are no volumes of his letters, unlike Freud or Jung, no archives dedicated to his research and few photographs, voice or film recordings. Adler's work has been disseminated most effectively through education rather than writing. In order to refer to Adler's horoscope I shall use the local midday on the day of his birth to present the chart. With the grace of serendipity, Gemini is appropriately ascending in the horoscope.

Ironically, the psychological pioneer who talked mostly of the sibling influence is also the one who is ignored in mainstream psychology, like the theme of siblings itself. Adler's overshadowing may be due, in part, to the focus on the parental pair by psychoanalysis, where the engagement with parental transference is at the heart of the work. With the first born's concentration so focused on the hierarchy of parental authority, the horizon of the sibling is overlooked. As we move beyond this focus on the parents as the key to psychological health, a wider vista of familial interrelationships opens up, including those with our siblings.



Alfred Adler, February 7, 1870 , 12 Noon (no birth time found), Vienna, Austria

Adler and his siblings

Adler's sibling constellation included his older brother Sigmund who was born on 11 August 1868. Family tradition also suggested there was another brother, Albert, born before Sigmund, who had died in infancy, although there are no civil records of this birth.⁴ Hence Adler is in the second sibling position, but is the third-born son, complicating his own place within the system. It is interesting that his older brother's name was the same as his rival colleague, Sigmund Freud – a name that seemed fated always to overshadow him. The eldest brother, Sigmund, was described as a gifted and intelligent individual. Phyllis Bottome notes Adler's perception of his position in second place:

–Alfred Adler felt himself put in the shade of a model eldest brother, a true –first born– who always seemed to Alfred to be soaring far beyond him in a sphere which Alfred –for all his efforts– could never attain. Even at the end of his life, Alfred had not wholly got over this feeling.⁵

Like both Freud and Jung, the next surviving sibling was a sister, Hermine; but unlike his two colleagues, Adler and the sister next in line formed a close bond. The next sibling, Rudolf, died of diphtheria at eight months old. The death of his younger brother was one of his childhood benchmarks that contributed to his urge to be a healer. His destiny as a healer/physician was also influenced by his own illness as a child.

As the second sibling, he was also a middle child contending with younger siblings. A sister, Irma, was born just ten months after the death of his brother, Rudolf, and then another brother, Max, was born on 17 March 1877. While Adler was fond of Max, this feeling was not always reciprocated. Bottome reports that Max was highly envious and jealous of the popular Alfred⁶ Richard was born fourteen years after Alfred and the role in the family of mother's favourite⁶ was transferred from Sigmund, the eldest, to Richard, the youngest. Alfred felt rejected by his mother, yet formed a powerful relationship to his father whom he saw as protective, becoming his father's favourite. Parental favouritism fuels rivalry. The supportive Solar quality of Alfred's father found its way into the Solar-orientated Adlerian psychology.

One of Alfred's earliest memories was when he was four years old. His father would take him for a daily walk to encourage a sense of recovery from the rickets that had kept him immobile for a long time. During these walks his father would repeat an invocation that became important to Adler: "Alfred ó never believe anything anyone tells you!"⁷ This axiom was important to Individual Psychology as conduct and actions, the striving towards a goal, are more authentic than words. Action and motivation resonates with Adler's Sun-Mars conjunction and as a four year old, who had just lost a brother, action was an effective replacement for mourning.

In his book, *Individual Psychology*, Adler reiterates the imprint that childhood marks upon the individual:

"Every marked attitude of a man can be traced back to an origin in childhood. In the nursery are formed and prepared all of man's future attitudes. Fundamental changes are produced only by means of an exceedingly high degree of introspection or among neurotics by means of the physician's individual psychological analysis."⁸

Adler's psychology grew from the premise that the individual was responsible for his own transformation and motivation. While we are influenced by the society about us, none the less we are

the chief protagonist in our own story. His Aquarian Sun is quincunx Uranus, fortifying the importance of the individual and his conscious direction in life. The goal of forward striving and the responsibility for forging an identity was shaped by Adler's childhood experiences as he himself implies.

Adlerian theory suggests that the influence of the child's position in the sibling system on his personality development is even more important than the child's relationship to his parents. The goals of equality, social interest and the identification with society are first seeded in the sibling system. These goals are born out of the primary experiences with our sibling-peers in the family system, our first micro society. Bottome portrays Sigmund's role throughout Alfred's life as his "open rival." Even Adler commented that although his brother Sigmund was a good man, "all his life [he was] a trouble to me ó as I believe I was to him"⁹ Like Freud, Adler experienced sibling rivalry but from a differing vantage point. Freud's rivalry was born out of his dethronement as the only and favoured one, while Adler's emerged out of the competitive urge to surpass his rival. The image of the older brother became an important psychic symbol for Adler. This image was forged out of his experience of weakness and immobility due to his early illness while his older brother was healthy and active.

Alfred and Sigmund: sibling synastry

The personal masculine planets, the Sun and Mars, may be constellated by both the elder brother and father. Father is the most likely candidate for the transference of the Solar energy, but if the father is weakened, unavailable, or unable to carry the Solar projection, the elder brother becomes the next choice. When father is available, then the individual's Sun-Mars aspects could symbolize the relationship between father and brother, and how the dynamic flow of masculine energy between the two is experienced. Mars could easily be captured by an older brother, especially if he was vibrant, energetic or a passionate warrior. From the younger brother's view, the older brother seems paces ahead, more physically capable and a formidable rival, all magnets that attract the projection of Mars. Alfred, as the younger brother and sickly child, may easily have shaped his Mars through the experience of his elder brother.

Sigmund Adler had the Sun in Leo at the exact opposite degree to Alfred's Sun in Aquarius. Since Alfred also had the Sun-Mars conjunction, Sigmund's Sun was also opposite Alfred's Mars. This Solar opposition helped stimulate a sense of mirroring and an identification of opposites. Alfred's Mars was also conjunct Sigmund's South Node; Alfred may have displaced his Mars on to his brother, recognizing Sigmund as "soaring far beyond him." What he saw as innate in his elder brother had to be consciously developed in himself through effort and striving.

Adler was plagued by rickets which left him immobile in the early years of his life. It was during this illness that he locates his first memory:

-One of my earliest recollections is of sitting on a bench, bandaged up on account of rickets, with my healthy elder brother sitting opposite me. He could run, jump, and move about quite effortlessly, while for me movement of any sort was a strain and an effort. Everyone went to great pains to help me, and my mother and father did all that was in their power to do. At the time of this recollection I must have been about two years old.¹⁰

This memory around the age of two, the Mars return, confirms the imprint of the image of the healthy brother, a polarity to Alfred's illness. The first Mars return near twenty-two months old¹¹ synchronizes with the child's accelerating consciousness of mobility and the urge to move farther afield. The image at the heart of Adler's psychology, that of the individual's striving for mobility and power, was first experienced with his brother, who was a catalyst for his future ideas. Brother, mother and father are all part of this first memory, but the main focus is on brother.

The urge for separateness and movement away from the early attachments is part of the first Mars return, a time when the aggressive, competitive and individualistic feelings begin to emerge. These feelings are often reflected in the relationships to our siblings at this time. Through this period, Adler's experience was one of being bound. Mars, as reflected in the healthy brother, stimulated the impetus to harness the frustration, to create goals of forward striving and the movement towards perfection. The elder brother served as the shadow image, carrying health and movement. Sigmund had Mars in Gemini which opposed Alfred's Saturn. While Alfred experienced a sense of restriction and being bound by the limitations of his illness (Saturn), his brother's vibrancy was even more evident. The reality of Sigmund's vitality was in stark contrast to Alfred's reality of being immobilized. This may have helped evoke authentic urges for health and movement that lay in himself. It would have also highlighted his sense of inferiority to brother, urging Alfred to strive for a sense of authority over this feeling. Later, Adler developed his theories of organ inferiority and the inferiority complex inspired by his own experience of illness.

-There came to light a remarkable relationship between somatic inferiority and psychic overcompensation, so that I gained a fundamental viewpoint, namely that the realisation of somatic inferiority by the individual becomes for him a permanent impelling force for the development of his psyche.¹²

During his first memory, Jupiter and Uranus were transiting his North Node ó an image of striving towards freedom, away from the restrictive image of his Capricorn South Node. The North Node was transiting Gemini and had previously transited the synastry aspect between the brothers ó the North Node conjoining Sigmund's Mars in Gemini (freedom and movement) while the South Node transited Alfred's Saturn (binding and restriction). Brother was a facilitating shadow figure, and therefore became a vital contributor to the dynamics that helped forge Adler's psychology.

In 1908 Adler formulated and presented his ideas on the aggressive instinct as an autonomous drive. Similar to his own experience, he postulated that a greater aggressive drive accompanies organ inferiority. But this aggressive drive may align with a higher principle-motivation. During this year Pluto in Gemini turned stationary retrograde at the exact degree and minute opposite Alfred's Saturn, and conjunct his brother's Mars in Gemini. Adler's authority over his own experience of the aggressive instinct (Mars), confronted earlier in his relationship to his brother, was ready to surface. Adler continued to develop his concepts regarding aggression, later aligning the aggressive drive with motivation and striving to succeed. When social interest was not developed in the individual, aggression became a destructive force. Freud, who originally did not accept the theory of the aggressive instinct when Adler first presented it, later called it the "destructive" or "death instinct". Sigmund Freud had his Saturn at the same degree of Gemini as Sigmund Adler's Mars. Sigmund's Mars was a mirror for his brother. Alfred came to know the principle of striving forward out of a sense of deprivation, a highlight of Adler's philosophy.

Alfred Adler	Sigmund Adler	Sigmund Freud
Sun ó 18° Aquarius	Sun ó 18° Leo	MC ó 19° Leo
Sun conjunct Mars		
<i>Alfred's Sun-Mars conjunction opposite brother's Sun and conjunct Freud's IC</i>		
Saturn ó 25° Sagittarius	Mars ó 28° Gemini	Saturn ó 27° Gemini
Mars 25° Aquarius	South Node ó 26° Aquarius	

The astrological web between the two brothers is a reminder of the powerful imprints the sibling marks on the formation of our world view. As Mercurial personifications, siblings help formulate, both consciously and unconsciously, our ideas, our attitudes and our modes of thinking and expression. Siblings are our first peers who encourage and criticize us. They are witnesses to our first attempts to walk, speak, draw, write and express. They inhabit the third house territory where we

first become conscious of ideas, the process of thinking, learning and speaking. The sibling may be the mirror, the Mercurial trickster or change maker that facilitates consciousness.

Losing a brother

The major imprint from Adler's childhood experience was the death of his younger brother who died of diphtheria on 31 January 1874. This was the exact date of Adler's Mercury return. Adler, born with Mercury retrograde, had Mercury return to its natal position for the fifth time exactly on the day his brother died. Transiting Uranus was retrograde, opposing his natal retrograde Mercury, for the second time. During the Uranus opposition to Mercury a separation from a sibling or sibling pattern could occur. Transits to Mercury awaken sibling themes; Uranus transits to Mercury encourage a separation or reparation of our sibling patterns. Coupled with the return of Mercury it suggests that the consciousness of the event will leave a powerful imprint of Adler's ideas.

As the retrograde planet is closer to a person's internal core (as symbolized by the retrograde being closest to the Earth), Adler's natal Mercury retrograde intensifies the sibling images. Often my experience of natal retrograde Mercury does correlate with an estrangement or loss of a relationship to a sibling, or simply an intense and powerful identification with a sib. It is a clue that alerts me to investigating other sibling themes in a chart.

The sibling, as an embodiment of Hermes, may act as a *psychopomp* in many ways. Literally, he may be our guide through dangerous transitional terrain or bring complex and difficult issues to the liminal of consciousness. He may become a transitional object that carries us through one stage of childhood to the next, our guide into territory we have not yet experienced. A missing sibling may continue to become our guide to the other world. Adler experienced his younger brother die, lying in the cot next to him. A profound imprint is etched on his psyche, the sibling image could now be one of soul guide into the depth terrain of psyche. This was Alfred's first conscious experience of the profundity of death, loss and mortality.

The second profound experience of Adler's childhood occurred near the age of five when he came close to death himself with pneumonia. Throughout this year, Saturn was transiting his Sun-Mars conjunction while transiting Pluto was squaring his progressed Sun, as well as the midpoint of the Sun-Mars conjunction. The impact of the Pluto-Saturn transits upon the Sun-Mars helped consolidate the earlier images of the sense of striving (Mars) for individuality (Sun), born out of his illness of rickets. This sense of striving forward could also be compensatory for the feeling of being swallowed by death. His own brush with death came a year after his younger brother died.

Adler developed the theory of organ inferiority which suggested, in part, that the inferior organ provides a symbolic clue to the psychic complex the ego/body is compensating for. I wonder what he thought pneumonia symbolized: could it be a somatic image of unexpressed grief over the loss of the brother? The second child is highly attuned to what is repressed in the family and unexpressed grief could find a way into consciousness through the body and illness. It is common for a child to express a familial loss or trauma through a physical or emotional illness, injury or intellectual setback. The child's unconscious is flooded by the buried feelings of the family and expresses itself visibly for the family to recognize. Like his two adult colleagues, Freud and Jung, he may have been more influenced by the unexpressed grief of the family than he realized.

The images of Alfred's two brothers make a striking contrast for Adler. Compared to the eldest he is bound, while his older brother is mobile; in contrast, his younger brother dies from an illness, while he survives. The progressed Moon was in Gemini at the time of Rudolf's death, confirming the emotional impact of the loss of his brother. A year later, Adler was close to death with pneumonia. The Uranus transit at his brother's death suggests the detachment from his feelings of loss, facilitating his recovery by not identifying with his brother's death. Adler believed one's unconscious is formed out of the social experiences we encounter, and that it is largely determined by the meaning we ascribe to these experiences. The way we direct these experiences is our own choice. Adler's Sunó Mars in Aquarius aspecting Uranus suggests clarity of thinking through its ability to distance and separate from overwhelming feelings. This supports his conviction that humans have the ability to choose their responses. For Adler, striving forward may also be a means to disconnect from the trauma of loss and grief.

No experience is in itself a cause of success or failure. We do not suffer from the shock of our experiences ó the so-called trauma ó but instead make out of them whatever suits our purposes. We are not determined by our experiences but are *self-determined* by the meaning we give to them; and when we take particular experiences as the basis for our future life we are almost certain to be misguided to some degree. Meanings are not determined by situations. We determine ourselves by the meaning we ascribe to situations.ø¹³

A second child's strategy is to develop a rational perspective or orientation to distance the self from emotional pain. Seconds, often barometers for the un-lived emotional life of the family, may need to create this mechanism to avoid drowning in the family grief.

These early childhood experiences in the sibling environment inspired many of Adler's theories: organ inferiority, the inferiority complex, the striving for superiority and the effect of the sibling and the family constellation. Like both Freud and Jung, his personal experiences played a central part in his theories. Having overcome his illness, he aligned himself and his psychology with the superiority of the ego. This same attitude permeated his ideas on neurosis. Adler states that neurosis is symptomatic of not being able to overcome the feelings of inferiority, not conceiving that effort will change the dynamic. The Sun-Mars conjunction in Aquarius had become a theology of effort, motivation and forward striving, harnessed by the ego of the individual. This ego ideal was reinforced in his sibling relationships to his healthy brother Sigmund and his dead brother Rudolf.

In second place

Adler's sibling constellation was the seeding ground for the ideas he later formulated on ordinal position in the family. As a second son he was rival to his eldest brother and caught in an unsought competition with his younger brother Max. This sibling theme was replayed through his later association with Freud and Jung in the psychoanalytic family. Not only was Freud his senior but carried the same name as Adler's older brother; Jung was five years junior. Birth position is part of our fate that recreates itself in the adult world of peers:

-And was not his position of a second boy between a brilliant older brother and a competitive younger one revived later when he found himself between Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung.¹⁴

Adler's first contact with Sigmund Freud may have come as early as 1899.¹⁵ This was the year of Adler's Saturn return. Adler's Saturn was opposite Sigmund Freud's Saturn in Gemini; half a cycle of Saturn separated them, a ripe transference image of an elder sibling. There was also fourteen years' difference between Adler and his younger brother. Adler's association with Freud and the Viennese psychoanalytic circle lasted from 1902 to 1911. During the final years, Pluto was conjunct Freud's Saturn, thus opposed Adler. A power rift developed and Adler left with other members of the circle to found his own Society for Free Psychoanalysis. He was no longer bound to the patronage of Freud. The precipitating conflict was centred on Adler's theories, especially the masculine protest which had become his main dynamic focus. Uranus was transiting Adler's South Node; half a cycle before, when Uranus transited the North Node, he had his first recollection of being bound while his brother Sigmund was free. The masculine protest was the ego striving for

freedom. The figure this time that Adler strives to move away from is not his brother Sigmund, but his colleague and one-time friend, Sigmund. Adler was now free of his second position. He founded the Society for *Free* Psychoanalysts and *Individual* Psychology, symbols of Uranus's need to break free. Adler, a later-born, needed to fulfil his destiny described by both birth position and his Sun-Mars conjunction in Aquarius. Sigmund Freud had the Uranus-Sun conjunction in the seventh house exactly square to Alfred Adler's Sun in Aquarius.

Adler took the path of education rather than analysis to help individuals overcome their obstacles. This attitude often led both Jung and Freud to perceive Adler as non-psychological. Two years before Freud and Adler split, Freud wrote to Jung about Adler: "He is a theorist, astute and original, but not attuned to psychology; he passes it by and concentrates on the biological aspect."⁶ In responding to Freud over political intrigues in the psychoanalytic circle, Jung stated: "The most I can do is criticise Dr Stekel for his own sweet self and his theoretical superficiality, and Adler for the total absence of psychology."⁷

The total absence of psychology may have been the absence of eldest-son psychology to which both Jung and Freud ascribed. No doubt Adler was more of a social theorist. His description of the unconscious was not focused on the ancestral past but more on the conscious striving towards a social interest first experienced in the family.

Jung uses the metaphor of the eldest brother and the younger brother when contrasting the Freudian theory of the pleasure principle and the Adlerian theory of the striving for power in his paper "Problems of Modern Psychotherapy". The first-born brother sounds like Freud, who as an eldest is plagued by his desires that unconsciously become the doctrine of the pleasure principle. Adler is the later-born son craving the power that his birth position has not given him. Jung contrasts the eldest and the younger son, an insight probably gleaned through his association with both colleagues:

"The elder brother who follows in his father's footsteps and wins to a commanding position in society may be tormented by his desires; while the younger brother who feels himself suppressed and overshadowed by the other two may be goaded by ambition and the need for self-assertion."⁸

When reading this passage, I was struck by the phrase "overshadowed by the other two". While I assume the "other two" refers to the elder and the father, I wondered if the pen had slipped and Jung had fallen into an identification with Freud as the elder brother, unconsciously suggesting he and

Freud were the two who overshadowed Adler. We express our birth position instinctively, recreating our position in our organizations and associations.

Freud and Adler's different approaches to psychology are best seen by the metaphor of how they saw their patients. Freud's patients lay on a couch where he could see them but the patient could not see him. Adler insisted on a face to face interview with the chairs being equal. Freudians also have a more rigid adherence to boundaries, whereas the Adlerian school is not as rigid concerning their appointments. Again this reflects Freud's hierarchical view of the patient-doctor relationship based on parent-child, whereas Adler attempts to equalize the scenario which aligns more to the sibling relationship.

It was after the First World War, in which Adler served as a physician, that his theory of social interest became important to him. It was also in 1918 that he presented his theories on birth order for the first time.¹⁹ During this year Uranus conjoined his natal Mars while Saturn opposed it. From 1918 to 1928 he continued to formulate his theories on birth position within the family.

Birth order position became a cornerstone in his delineation of a personality. Adler would know immediately the individual's position of birth by the behaviour and manner shown. In defining the most important points to ask about when obtaining data from the client, birth position was a priority:

the most trustworthy approaches to the exploration of the personality are to be found in a comprehensive study of the earliest childhood memories, of the place of the child in the family sequence.²⁰

Adler was the first to specifically categorize the birth order positions within the family. Birth order implies its own sense of fate just as the time of birth does. This position cannot be changed; however, the understanding and acceptance of its influences can. Unaware of its influence, its fate continues to meet us in the recreation of similar scenarios in our experience within other group constellations.

Exploring Birth Order

Since Adler's delineation of ordinal positioning, birth order has been one of the most researched areas of the family. This research, however, has been perennially criticized and moves in and out of favour with researchers. Within the *Bibliography for Adlerian Psychology* I counted 140 categories for research on Birth Order.²¹ These ranged from the birth order effect on academic achievement through to its effect on virginity, with homosexuality, illness, personality and psychopathology in between.

Researchers have studied whether birth order affects our choice of marriage partners, our levels of stress or our involvement in group therapy. In some presentations, it seems that the understanding of birth order may be the answer to all our ills! Researchers following Adler's lead turned out volumes of material in the field of birth order, often widely contradictory.²² Swiss researchers Cecile Ernst and Jules Angst published their extensive research into birth position in 1983 and were severely critical of other research that had erroneously excluded the appropriate variables that are inherent in sibling position. While they generally agreed that birth order, along with the size of our sibling constellation, had a considerable impact on personality, they highlighted most birth order research as ineffective and inconclusive in this regard.²³

Birth order theory was part of antiquity and part of the stories we grew up with. Myths, fairy tales, fables and biblical stories tell us of birth ordinance. The first sibling constellation in the Bible, Cain and Abel, conflict over their ordinal position in the family. The struggle between the first born and the youngest or last born becomes a clear feature of the Old Testament. In Exodus, God unleashes ten plagues on the Egyptians as a result of the Pharaoh denying the Hebrews release from slavery and Egypt. The last plague smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt (12:29). Birth order is part of our fate and a strong influence on the way we orientate ourselves to life, whether researchers are able to prove it or not.

In 1961, Walter Toman first published his theory and research on birth order in his book *Family Constellation*. Toman furthers Adler's theories by delineating the sibling constellation in terms not only of rank, but also of sex and size. He attempts to delineate the difference between an older brother of a brother as compared to an older brother of a sister, trying to include the variants of sex and sibship size as much as possible. He also suggests that when our position in the sibling system is recreated in adult relationships (partners and friends), there is potentially greater compatibility. The relationships that recreate our sibling position in rank and sex have the greatest chance for a successful outcome. He postulated that the worst case scenario between adult partners was when they were both only children. Only children, according to Toman, are at the greatest risk in adult relationships, ranking low on compatibility with others. They have grown up without a partner, used to being the only focus, and now are called upon to be in relationship to an equal. Other worst-case scenarios were when there was both a rank conflict (two partners who were both eldest or both youngest etc.) and a sex conflict (both partners had same-sex siblings, or each partner only had sisters or brothers). Best scenarios were when partners recreated the rank and sex situation of their sibling constellation (the eldest daughter who has a younger brother marries a younger brother who has an older sister). He applied the same model to friendship. Toman's findings were criticized for having

too much of a theoretical base and not enough research. However, his work picks up the ancient theme of the brother-sister marriage, and echoes the truth astrologers already know about the houses of relationship which link the sibling, the partner and the friend in a trinity. The third house of sibship, the seventh house of partnership and the eleventh house of friendship are linked together in a triangle of houses known as the houses of relationship. The truth of Toman's premise is also borne out in astrological chart comparison and synastry. Aspects of the sibling's horoscope are often chillingly duplicated in the partner's horoscope. Toman's model of sibship position and gender taken into the adult world of relationship is a potent tool to view the immediate link between our adult relationships with partners and friends to our sibling relationships.

After twenty-six years of research and involvement with birth order Frank Sulloway published *Born to Rebel*, an articulate and scholarly excursion through birth order from the Darwinian world on. However, the book's bottom line seems to repeat the constant theme that first borns carry the parental and traditional expectations of the prevailing authority and that later-borns are born to rebel and bring forth revolutionary thought. First borns find their niche by sabotaging change, while later-borns consistently challenge the established order.

Between Adler and Sulloway lie countless methods of approaching birth order and many more theories as to what our birth position may mean. Where then can we begin our examination? Adler points out that it is not only the birth order that dominates the formation of character but the atmosphere into which the child arrives and how this is interpreted. The family atmosphere, the attitudes of the parents, along with the dynamic of the inheritance of the ancestors, contribute to whether the task associated with the sibling position has a light or dark face. Louis Stewart makes this point extremely well in his book *Changemakers*:

-What makes the difference between a Hitler and a Ghandi, both of whom were younger sons engaged in revolution? Here we must look to the family atmosphere, that indescribable amalgam created by the behaviour, values, cultural development, and (perhaps most significantly) the unconscious parental complexes which carry the unanswered questions of the ancestors, and represent the un-lived lives of the parent. It is to these influences of the family that we should look for the difference ...²⁴

One of the first variants in birth order research is how do we actually count the sequence of the sibling if the order has been interrupted by a termination, a miscarriage, neonatal or perinatal sibling death, an adopted sibling or a step-sibling? How old do children have to be before they are included

in the sequence? I suggest the labelling of the position is more important for the researcher than the counsellor or therapist. The death of a sibling, whether *in utero*, at birth or shortly after, has an impact on all the siblings. The shade of the child finds its place in the sibling constellation. The family atmosphere is altered forever by the loss of the child, no matter at what age. When there has been a schism in the sibling order due to a sibling death, life arranges itself in position of those who have survived, but the unconscious life records the missing sibling. For therapists and counsellors, it is the sibling loss that is important to acknowledge and work with.

Generally, birth order is defined in terms of the first born, the middle child, the youngest and the only child. Other systems have delineated the first, second and third positions in the family with later birth positions being undifferentiated. Some systems have delineated a fourth position.²⁵ Karl Konig suggests that only three birth positions exist. He suggests that these three positions are repeated with subsequent siblings so that the fourth child is similar to the first; the fifth, the second; the sixth, the third and so on.²⁶

Astrologically, we can also offer a theory of birth order applying the technique known as the derivative house system. In this system we can locate anyone in the horoscope by deriving them from the house of the primary relationship which is counted as the first house. For example, children in general are the fifth house and therefore the eldest child is located in the fifth house. The second child is the sibling (third house) of the eldest, therefore is three houses from the fifth house or the seventh house. This house is derived from the fifth house, which is counted as the first. The third child is the next sibling and so we would count three more houses from the seventh. This aligns the first child with the fifth house, the second child with the seventh house, the third child with the ninth house, the fourth with the eleventh house and so on. While on the surface this may appear contrived, this model is worth exploring. It implies that the eldest child constellates the myth of the hero and is at risk of becoming the narcissistic mirror of the parent (the fifth house). The second child, aligned with the seventh house, is at risk of triangulation with the opposite-sex parent when there is a dysfunction in the parental marriage. Often it is the second child most at risk in parental conflict, separation and divorce, as this child reveals the undercurrents of the parental marriage. Second children are more prone to taking the role of mediator, negotiator, go-between, but also to becoming the surrogate partner. The third child, represented by the ninth house, is the explorer, the one who steps beyond the beliefs and mores of the family, in a cross-cultural exploration that exposes the family to wider horizons. Here the archetype of Jupiter is called forth in the third child to be acted out. Astrological themes are often synchronous with birth order.

Birth order offers an added insight when looking at an individual's horoscope. A first born may be more prone to favouring Saturn while later-borns may favour their Jupiterian or Uranian constellations. Middle children may be at risk of over-identifying with their Libran planets in their sibling role of mediator and go-between. Familiarizing oneself with the roles assigned due to birth order will complement the understanding of astrological statements. To introduce birth order I have used four categories: the eldest, the middle, the youngest and the only child. There are a multitude of other factors that contribute to defining the birth position: gender, sibship size, age spacing, sibling loss, the family atmosphere, etc.; so this can only be a general introduction. The second of *two* siblings will experience being the youngest very differently from the youngest of seven siblings. From the second child's point of view, the gender of the older child exerts a great influence. If there is an age gap of more than seven years (a Saturn square), this second child may feel more like an only child. All these factors should be recognized. Sibship size is decreasing while the phenomenon of step-siblings is increasing, altering the destiny that birth order bestows upon us. None the less, reflecting upon our own birth position can be highly evocative.

The oldest child

Parents' expectations of both themselves and their first-born child are high. By the birth of the second child, the expectations, idealism and fantasy have waned with the reality of actual child rearing. Many parental expectations of the first child are overt; however, the first born is also in a position to be imprinted with the unrealized dreams and un-lived lives of their parents. Upon the newborn's shoulders rests the parents' expectations to accomplish what they did not achieve and to possess what they could not have. Performance anxiety of the eldest child is due to the pressure to succeed, be productive and become a high achiever.

The eldest child is the first member of a new generation, and until the first sibling arrives, the only member of this generation. The eldest are the focus of parental attention and the centre of the family. The first child receives more of the parents' resources and energy but the price demanded is to follow their values, mores, customs and traditions. This is why the eldest is often described as father-identified, aligned with the figure of traditional authority (equally could align themselves in direct opposition to the authority's values). Certainly the eldest position comes with more obvious responsibility and traditional 'masculine' traits. As the second child, Adler's 'masculine protest' could have been a protestation of his lower rank. No wonder Freud, as eldest, categorically opposed his theory.

The pressure for the first child to identify with maintaining the status quo and continuing the familial traditions encourages the first born to be more family orientated. Being first also encourages the Solar qualities, as the child is the centre and at risk of becoming the narcissistic child that is called upon to mirror the parents' attitudes. With the Sun and Saturn highlighted in this position, approval, feedback, identity, self-esteem and getting results become important for the first child.

Having breathed the atmosphere without other peers, the eldest child is alert to social customs, rules, regulations and authority figures in general. When the next sibling arrives, the competitive and aggressive instincts are catalysed and drawn out into the open. The eldest experiences what Freud and Adler refer to as the sense of dethronement and this promotes feelings of rage and jealousy. Competitive instincts are visible and the urge to maintain first place is a priority. Sulloway describes the first born this way:

Like the alpha males of primate societies, firstborns covet status and power. They specialise in strategies designed to subordinate rivals. Firstborns tend to be *dominant, aggressive, ambitious, jealous and conservative*. At these five levels of behaviour, the influence of birth order is consistent and unmistakable.²⁷

This position encourages a sense of responsibility and relationship to authority; therefore first borns are highly susceptible to rules, keeping "the letter of the law" and seeing what is obvious but not always what is underneath. Since their position has been usurped, they may continue to feel vulnerable and fear being dethroned once again in adult relationships.

The middle child

During the class on siblings in our "family development programme" I break the group up into the four categories we are now examining. The first borns gather together quickly, follow the instructions and ask how long the exercise will be. They agree on a place to meet - usually my consulting room. The youngest ones usually end up outside, laughing, swapping stories of who was the most brutalized and how they managed to rebel and annoy their sibs. Ironically, there is often one only child in the class, so they join the eldest group. But the middle children remain in the seminar room and keep wondering what is happening with the other groups. "I bet the youngest ones are having lots of fun" someone inevitably says. Middle children identify themselves through the eyes of their older and younger sibs. On one side they see the elder's need to perform well, on the other they see the younger sib rebelling. The eldest and youngest are more vocal and demanding when asserting their needs, which often leaves the middle feeling withdrawn or solemn. Parents frequently mistake their quietness

or self-absorption for their ability to take care of themselves, when in actuality they may be feeling withdrawn or depressed. The middle child feels left out, suspicious of what they have been missing. They often describe the sense of not knowing where they stand, being invisible or caught in the middle.

The middle child is in the position of the peacemaker and mediator. They are younger than the eldest sib whom they want to emulate yet older than their younger sibs for whom they may feel responsible. They are able to see both sides of the argument and have a difficult time choosing either side. Conflict and confrontation may seem difficult and they are compelled to try to avert confrontation, not only with themselves but between others. They may appear as if they are getting on with the task or amusing themselves, but this may be more a sense of resignation. Often middles will describe a sense of confusion as to their role and direction in life, and envy of those who seem to be more sure of themselves. This envy may be a remnant of their childhood feelings for the elder who appeared to have more resources and parental support and guidance.

Like the second child, the middle can often identify with the feeling life that is flowing underneath the family. In this way they become the emotional caretakers of the family, highly sensitized to someone feeling left out or something amiss in the family atmosphere. They may tend to instinctively act out these feelings or spontaneously respond to someone's needs. The second and middle children are both at risk of fulfilling the unspoken needs of others at the expense of their own and becoming enmeshed in the hidden agendas of their other sibs.

Here the Lunar temperament may be emphasized, as well as a stronger identification to mother. The second and middle children are also attuned to the energies of Venus, as ruler of Libra, in the capacity of mediator and relationship counsellor for the family. Mercurial energies are called forth in the second and the middle child. These are needed to outwit and trick the elder. A sense of humour and a resignation as to the way life *is* often accompanies this position.

The middle child may also forge a unique intellect out of this role. I have often found it is the middle child who has constructed a potent learning tool, a programme or an explanation through the distillation of familial experience. They are able to articulate the complexity of human relationship and interaction.

The youngest child

The youngest child in the family is in last position and is the only sibling in the system who will not experience younger sibs. The arrival of a sibling is a jolt to consciousness, bringing recognition of differences and separateness. The youngest does not have this experience and is often typecast as the "baby" of the family, which has both its privileges and its burdens.

The youngest is pampered with a ready-made support system. By the arrival of the youngest, family members have begun to find their niches and there may be a more relaxed atmosphere to child rearing, so the youngest is often less supervised or less bound by parental rules and expectations. This greater freedom is often a contentious issue for the other siblings. However, the youngest child can also be the one who is ridiculed, bullied and scapegoated by older siblings. Their size and low status through the earlier years may be the brunt of the elders' jokes. The youngest may be the common shadow figure for their older siblings. This is a common theme in fairy tales: the youngest son is the simpleton who is able to perform what his older brothers cannot; the youngest sister is tormented by her elder sisters, but then released from her suffering and transformed into a beauty. The elder shadow siblings are the agents of individuation for the younger child. Youngest children carry the archetypal role of being challenged by tasks and trials, and struggling to individuate, which will encourage them to move farther afield than the others.

Myths also portray the youngest child as the carrier of the new order, confirming the old adage "the last shall be first." Both Chronus and Zeus were the last children in their sibling system, and they led the coup against the old order establishing the new. Youngest children extend themselves beyond the familial horizon. Through education, experimentation and travel, they reach beyond the family beliefs, values and customs. Their quest beyond the familial limits often leaves them confused as to where they belong. They challenge the status quo and rebel, bringing something new back into the family. This revolutionizes, or at least challenges, the family beliefs and traditions. Youngest children struggle against their siblings' and parents' resistance in order to achieve their independence.

Having had no followers, the youngest may compensate for this with their friends and in social situations. They are sensitive to the "underdog" and the "have-nots," befriending the powerless, and encouraging and supporting the underprivileged. This overcompensation as leader or saviour contributes to their vulnerability and being taken advantage of. They know what it feels like to be last and smallest, often overcompensating by becoming extroverted. Within the family, the last child can also side with the sibling or parent he sees as powerless or oppressed, supporting the one he identifies as the victim or disadvantaged one. Birth order theory suggests that the third child is sensitive to the parental marriage and responds to any tension or discord between the parents. A

youngest will also be at risk of being triangulated in an unhappy marriage, easily enmeshed in the parental battles, championing the underdog, especially if cast as mother's son or daddy's daughter or one of the parents' favourites and allies. The last child left at home is in danger of feeling he has to protect and rescue a parent if there is marital discord, or in a single-parent family, or when a parent is ill or unable to cope. In a family where the power imbalance between the parents has created an unhealthy situation, the youngest may have been parented by older sibs making separation from them difficult.

In childhood the sibs always appear bigger, more capable and better adjusted. This attitude is often internalized in the youngest child. They can see the elders' attributes yet not their own. They are often surprised in adult years to find out that their sibs admired their personality and achievements when they were younger. Youngest children are the last to arrive, the last to take or find their place, and this may be a recurring theme throughout their lives. Often they are confronted with having to fight for their space or claim their place.

Youngest children have more access to the archetypes of Jupiter and Uranus. In a system where everyone is older, more established and have more resources than they do; the youngest feel the need to venture out to explore how others live. The urge to move farther afield brings them in contact with their spirit of revolution and rebellion and their fate of founding the new order.

The only child

Only children are similar to eldest in that they share parental attention and adoration exclusively without the interruption of another sibling. Unlike the eldest they do not experience being replaced or dethroned or the potent confusing feelings that accompany the arrival of a younger sibling. Winnicott suggests that an only child misses the experience of mother going through the stages of pregnancy and the mysteries and secrets of child bearing. But even more importantly, an only child does not feel the powerful emotions evoked when a new sib enters the family.

-It is so usual as to be called normal when a child is upset at the birth of a new one í
For all children a big difficulty is the legitimate expression of hate, and the only child's
relative lack of opportunity for expressing the aggressive side of his nature is a serious
thing.²⁸

Siblings draw out powerful feelings of love and hate. The only child does not have the sibling system to experience the ambivalence and polarity of feelings ó to be able to come into contact with powerful

negative feelings that do not destroy relationship. This could contribute to the fear of expressing negative feelings, being confronting or angry in subsequent relationships. As Winnicott suggests, the competitive and aggressive instincts do not have the safe container of the family and may spill out into the school yard. Observers studying the ramifications of China's one-child policy suggest an increase in aggression and bullying and a difficulty in sharing. It seems that the only child must find avenues to express aggressive instincts and power with peers. A younger schoolmate may have to become the surrogate sibling. Growing up without siblings also suggests that only children do not have to share toys, clothes, valuables and especially parents. Therefore the issue of sharing and ownership may become a pattern throughout their adult relationships. There is also no division of labour shared with a sibling in family life.

The sibling is an archetypal image and a part of each individual's psyche. We need a caretaker to survive physically, not necessarily a sibling. However, to survive psychically, we need a sibling as a primary agent of socialization. This image in an only child moves to compensate for the loss of a sibling with the friend as a replacement sib. Friends become ultimately very important for an only child. In many cases of only children, I have seen fate arrange it so there is a replacement sibling: a cousin, a boarder, a neighbour. The inner image of a sibling is activated towards breaking the isolation the only child feels. With the increase in the number of only children and day care for working parents, other infants in day care are the replacement siblings. Friendship is the sphere in which the only child will most likely find a surrogate sib, therefore the attachment to friends is strong. Near the end of the natural life cycle, there may be no original family members, stressing the importance of friends as familial substitutes.

An only child may have difficulty in separation and leaving home. There have been no opportunities to separate from siblings and still experience the continuity of life. Siblings help mark important separations and transitions in earlier years. Separating from a parent is much more difficult and threatening for the only child, and often results in the initiatory phases of late adolescence and leaving home being traumatic. In adult relationships I often find only children have difficulty leaving relationships that are unhealthy, since there have been fewer experiences that life goes on after separation. An only child has no sibling allies to fight with against the tyranny of parental power or the oppression of the parental ruling class. The family atmosphere may also be ripe for triangulation. With an unhealthy marriage, the only child feels trapped and often responsible for taking care of the abandoned parent. The only child also feels the full responsibility for an ageing parent's care, having no siblings to share this responsibility with. Nor are there siblings with whom to share the grief of parental loss. The only child may also be prone to wanting mother to be a sister, creating role

confusion. With this high tendency towards enmeshment, separating is risky. Adler also echoed this when he suggested the only child was prone to a "mother complex" for the only child has the exclusive focus of mother.

As parents to siblings, only children may experience difficulty in understanding their own children's relationships and unconsciously collude with keeping siblings separate from each other. They may also find conflict amongst their own children devastating since they have not had this sibling experience.

Some only children blossom under the spotlight of the parental focus, not having to share the attention, aware that they are the sole beneficiaries of the parental legacy. However, this rich legacy is a singular legacy, and sharing a life with a partner is often when the difficulties arise. This is suggested by Salvador Minuchin:

The significance of the sibling system is seen most clearly in its absence. Only children develop an early pattern of accommodation to the adult world, which may be manifested in precocious development. At the same time, they may manifest difficulty in the development of autonomy and the ability to share, cooperate and compete with others.²⁹

Only children grow up in a familial environment populated by adults and are prone to becoming strongly identified with the parent. They are conscious about rules and social customs. From an early age they are sensitized to Saturn. While this archetype may represent an only child's ability to perform well in the world, Saturn often symbolizes both the self-preservation and the loneliness of an only child. While only children may have access to all of the parents' resources, they may also wonder why there is no sibling to share this with. They may feel they have "missed out." This missing seems to be part of the sibling myth except the only child has the literal experience.

Adler drew our attention to the fated role that birth position plays in our lives. As parents we are prone to replicating our sibling experience with our own children, particularly sensitive to the child that mirrors our birth position. Our experience of position in the sibling system is taken into our adult relationships, friendships and marriage. Birth order is also taken into the workplace. For instance elders strive for recognition, status and leadership positions, often becoming depressed when they feel what they have achieved is motivated by the urge for parental approval not the authentic self. The middle child shapes the atmosphere of the organization, while the third or youngest often feels left out or marginalized yet injects revolutionary blood into the system. Consciousness of our birth

position and the arrangement of our sibling constellation may help us become aware of the roles and expectations assigned to us and the personality forged from this. We then may be freer to shift our perspective.

ENDNOTES

All references to *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung* will be abbreviated as *CW*, followed by the volume and paragraph number.

1. Adler, *What Life Could Mean to You*, 133.
2. *Ibid.*, 128.
3. Lois Rodden in *The American Book of Charts* (Astro Computing Services, San Diego, CA: 1980), 260, lists Adler's birth time under DD: Dirty Data, the category containing rectified and speculative times. She quotes a time of 00.15 a.m., which was published in the magazine *Mercury Hour* (July 1976) by Dewey, quoting Ebertin. Rodden lists other speculations.
4. Henri Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, 649. Details of Adler's siblings and their birth dates are given on 577-69.
5. *Ibid.*, 577, quoting Phyllis Bottome.
6. *Ibid.*, 578, quoting Phyllis Bottome.
7. Phyllis Bottome, *From the Life* (Faber, London: ND), 16.
8. Adler, *The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology* (Kegan Paul, London: 1945), 10.
9. Bottome, *From The Life*, 21.
10. Bottome, *Alfred Adler, Apostle of Freedom* (Faber & Faber, London: 1939), 30.
11. See note 35, Chapter 3.
12. Adler, *The Neurotic Constitution*, trans. Bernard Glueck and John Lind (Kegan Paul, London: 1921), 1.
13. Adler, *What Life Could Mean to You*, 24.
14. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, 592.
15. *The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sanador Ferenczi* (vol. 1; Belknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, and London: 1993). In a footnote to letter 13, there is a reference to a letter dated 27 February 1899. When speaking of Adler, the footnote suggests, he was in contact with Freud since at least 1899.
16. William McGuire (ed.), *The Freud/Jung Letters*, Freud letter 147F, 18 June 1909.
17. *Ibid.*, Jung letter 217J, 29 October 1910.
18. Jung, "Problems of Modern Psychotherapy" *CW* 16§150.
19. Heinz L. and Rowena R. Ansbacher, *The Individual Psychology of Alfred*, 382.
20. Alfred Adler, *Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind*, trans. John Linton and Richard Vaughan (Capricorn Books, New York: 1964), 41.

-
21. Harold H. and Birdie Thosak, *A Bibliography for Adlerian Psychology* (Hemisphere Publishing, Washington: 1975).
 22. Because of its vigorous attempts to link the pattern of the sibling constellation with human behaviour, birth order research is often compared to astrology. Reviews of Frank Sulloway's book *Born to Rebel* used the astrological comparison, and Walter Toman's article on birth order research in *Psychology Today* 4 (12/70) was titled: "Never Mind your Horoscope, Birth Order Rules All".
 23. Cecile Ernst and Jules Angst, *Birth Order: Its Influence on Personality*.
 24. Louis H. Stewart, *Changemakers: a Jungian Perspective on Sibling Position and the Family Atmosphere*, 44.
 25. John Bradshaw, *The Family*, 3366, summarizes the fourfold approach to birth order based on the research done by Dr Jerome Bach at the University of Minnesota.
 26. Karl Konig, *Brothers and Sisters: The Order of Birth in the Family* (4th ed; Floris Books, Edinburgh: 1984).
 27. *Ibid.*, 79.
 28. D. W. Winnicott, *The Child, the Family and the Outside World*, 133. Winnicott often speaks eloquently of the only child. He was a youngest with two older sisters but has suggested he grew up as "an only child with multiple mothers" (see *Winnicott* by Adam Phillips, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA: 1988).
 29. Salvador Minuchin, *Families and Family Therapy*, 60.