

Letters between James Kirsch and CG Jung

By Thomas B. Kirsch, M.D.

I always knew that there were letters from CG Jung to my father among the papers he left behind, although I did not read them completely until recently. Approximately 5 years ago I was told by an English woman sandplay therapist, Sasha Rosen, who was visiting in Berkeley that the ETH in Zürich also had the letters from my father to Jung, which was a surprise for me. Only within the past two years that have I made a concerted effort to obtain copies of these letters as I was not sure that I wanted to see what was in those letters. They had an analytic relationship and I was uncomfortable delving into it. There are 211 letters from my father to Jung and approximately 41 letters from Jung to my father. Two of the letters to my father were included in the collected letters of Jung, volume 1, and approximately 16 other letters from Jung to my father are published in *Psychological Perspectives* in volume 3, numbers 1 and 2, 1972. The other letters from Jung have not been published. Mostly they corresponded in German and the letters from my father have been translated privately for me by Ursula Egli. The correspondence begins in 1931 and the last letter is dated 1960. Jung died in 1961. The last letters are very short due to Jung's failing health, but the bulk of the correspondence contains substantive discussion of material related to Jewish psychology, Christianity, synchronicity, my father's translation into English of *Answer to Job*, discussion of my father's dreams and those of his patients, and many other subjects. Time does not permit me to give you more than a very small slice of the correspondence. I have made selections from two long letters which my father wrote from Tel Aviv, Palestine in 1934 where my father was

living at the time. Even here, I will need to heavily edit the letters because of time restraints.

Let me give you some biographical data to orient you. My father was born in Guatemala in 1901 to a family of German Jewish merchants. The family returned to Berlin when he was six years old and he was educated in Germany, obtaining his medical degree from Heidelberg University in 1922. In Heidelberg he was introduced to psychoanalysis and became life long friends with Erich Fromm. He returned to Berlin to begin a practice of psychiatry. In the late 1920s he entered a Jungian analysis with Frau Sussman, a lay analyst in Berlin, after two years of Freudian analysis. Subsequently, he traveled to Zurich for analysis with both Jung and Toni Wolff, beginning in 1929. In October 1930 he lectured at the Jung club in Zürich on the "Modern Jew in Germany" and Jung attended. He was part of an informal Jewish group in Berlin which included Gerhard Adler, Erich Neumann, and Ernst Bernhard, each of who played an important role in the formation and dissemination of analytical psychology. He became a member of the C.G.Jung Gesellschaft in Berlin which had been founded in 1931. When Hitler came to power, he moved to Palestine. Having been an ardent Zionist in his youth, he immigrated to Palestine.. He soon became disillusioned with Zionism, but at the time of these letters he was still quite taken with the Zionist movement. In 1935 he immigrated to London where he lived and practiced until 1940. When Britain's fall to Hitler seemed imminent, he and his family moved to Los Angeles where he practiced from 1941 until his death in 1989. Thus, he played a leading role in the formation of analytical psychology in many countries, but in Los Angeles he was a true pioneer.

I chose these letters from 1934 because they represent such an important time in history, and because what Jung wrote at that time about Jewish

psychology has affected the field of analytical psychology until the present. Psychoanalysts to this day cite this article of Jung's as the reason not to read him. In Europe the president of the German Medical Psychotherapy Society, Ernst Kretschmer, had resigned, and Jung as the honorary vice president was coerced into accepting the presidency. Jung agreed only on the condition that it become international in nature and name, which it did. The organization fell apart during the war, but then was resurrected after the war by another Swiss, Medard Boss, and it still exists today. There Jung made his unfortunate remarks on the differences between Aryan and Jewish psychology, saying that the Aryan culture had a higher potential and at the same time Jewish psychology was dependent upon a host culture. My father's letter of May 7, 1934 is written shortly after the publication of Jung's article. (The State of Psychotherapy Today in CW 10 pp.157-173)

The letter begins with my father having felt slighted by Jung when they met in Ascona at the Eranos lectures. My father then writes, "I was informed of some remarks you made which did not indicate that you are a friend of the Jewish people. For instance, it appears that you said, "in analysis Jews are not honest," . Then Mr. Bally came here, visited with all colleagues, and related that you had openly crossed over to Hitler's side, that you were received by him and thus are an anti-Semite. His essay in the Zurcher Zeitung titled "German-bred Psychotherapy" was read by many. The result was that your books which had been exhibited in many bookstores disappeared from the shop windows and your name was placed on the boycott list. Your detailed answer was not read this general disposition against you was of course fabulously exploited by the Freudians in an effort to spread total silence about you at least in this area.....

Well, dear Doctor, the rumor about your being anti-Semitism does not seem to come to an end. From a letter which I received from Germany last week

I learned that you expressed your gratitude in recognition of Hitler's reforms at the German universities on the radio via German broadcasting stations. If that is in fact I do not understand you as a Swiss citizen. Please do not interpret my letter as being aggressive. I am merely interested in understanding you in this regard and hope that you will grant me the privilege of reaching such an understanding. On the other hand, I do not feel understood by you in this matter.....

About the Jews you write: "Probably, the Jews.... will never create their own form of culture because all their instinct's and talents presuppose a more or less civilized society for its development." I am dumbfounded to hear such anticipation from you however, and even the premises to such a prejudice do not appear to add up. What you are writing certainly is true for the Galuth Jews. It seems to me that you received your picture of the Jews essentially from Freud who, of course is an excellent example of the Galuth psychology.

Here in Palestine (and Palestine is already the intellectual/spiritual center) the Jews are living as resident people with a purpose, self-reliant, and not in the middle of another civilized nation. I wish that you could see some of these new types of Jews.....

Christ is in the repressed complex of Jewish people but just as all things change in individual lives of human beings as soon as a repressed complex enters into consciousness and comes alive, in the same way things can change collectively-and also creatively-with our repressed Christ complex. I have a great number of proofs (dreams and pictures) for my conception that this Christ complex is pivotal for the Jewish people from this viewpoint, the peculiar psychology, the peculiar fate of the Jews-as well as the anti-Semitism-have to be understood.

I believe you will only be able to confirm my interpretations. It is a question of the collective standstill, the repression with all its consequences. Also we are not nomads, but rather restless people who have lost their living God despite all the warnings of the prophets. We even pronounced the dreadful words about Christ: May his blood flow on our heads and those of our children....

I cannot imagine that what you wrote in your essay "The Current State of Psychotherapy" is everything that you have to say about the Jews. Would it not be possible for you to publish here a detailed essay about Jews? I could arrange for a good translation into Hebrew to appear in an excellent publication

Please excuse this somewhat confusing letter, but I assure you that I am writing from the heart. Would you please respond in detail?

With my most heartfelt greetings

Yours very truly

Jung's response comes on May 26, 1934. will be summarized as it is already published. Basically Jung explains that he took on the presidency of the international society for psychotherapy. He could not leave German psychotherapists in the lurch. About the rumors, he denies all of them and says that anyone who would believe these rumors must think of him as extraordinarily stupid. He has had nothing to do with Hitler or done anything on the radio nor has he made any political statements. He does elaborate on his opinion of Jews about their inability to create a cultural form of their own. He then cites the specific reasons for that. He is quite open to the fact that conditions in Palestine at that time may have him change his mind about needing a host culture. He agrees with my father about the Jewish Christ-complex. He

mentions also that he plans to write something more about the Jewish question in correspondence with Erich Neumann. That sadly never took place.

My father responds on June 8, 1934 with a very long letter which I will have to greatly condense.

First, my father thanks Jung for his detailed response and his willingness to enter into a discussion about the Jewish problem. He goes on to say "I have to admit that without it I might have believed some of the accusations which would have darkened somewhat the image I have of you, particularly in view of the fact as Miss Wolff told me once that if you had been German you would have voted for the Nazis. I realize that I was mistaken or rather that I misunderstood you. I fell into the trap of accepting a collective prejudice in a case where you intended a personal criticism addressed to me."

However, I felt it necessary to inform you of these rumors, and since they produced a reaction from you, such as your clear and unequivocal letter, a great burden has been lifted from my heart.

My father elaborates the four points which Jung makes in his letter about Jewish psychology.

1) The fact that the Jews do not have their own culture. My father goes on to explain to Jung that before Christ the Jews had a very rich culture of their own. My father then mentions a lecture that he has given in Palestine which he sends on to Jung under separate cover.

2) Next follows a discussion of the Jews rejection of Christ, and Jews will never admit to this, but that my father feels this defines the fate of the Jewish people. According to him, the Jews and Christians are shadows for each other.

3) The nomadic nature of the Jewish people. My father feels that this is a consequence of a repressed complex; namely the Christ complex

4) Greek antiquity had a great influence on Jewish psychology.

My father goes into great detail, over a thousand words, to elaborate these four points.

He concludes the letter with the following "Zionism is a great experiment in that its foundation and its meaning is based on the fact that the Jewish people believed in their creative strength. Whether such creativity exists and will give the Jewish people a new imprint will be revealed in the future. I strongly believe in that and feel unconditionally connected with this experiment. To be an upholder and promoter of a culture would not give the slightest meaning to my existence. I would prefer to find the tiniest truth as long as it grows on my pile of manure, rather than disseminate the largest truth of a foreign culture.

Jung does not answer until September 29, 1934. They had met at the Eranos meetings in August of that year, but presumably did not have time for one-on-one conversation. Jung further discusses the relationship between psychoanalysis (Freud and Adler) with Jewish psychology, noting that it is Jews themselves who feel more comfortable with the reductive approach of Freud and Adler.

The last paragraph of Jung's letter to my father is a most prophetic one. I would like to quote it now.

With regard to your patient, it is quite correct that her dreams are occasioned by *you*. The feminine mind is the earth waiting for the seed. That is the meaning of the transference. Always the more unconscious person gets spiritually fecundated by the more conscious one. Hence the guru in India. This is an age old truth. As soon as certain patients come to me for treatment, the

type of dream changes. In the deepest sense we all dream not *out of ourselves* but out of what lies *between us and the other*.

This statement of Jung is the essence of present-day psychoanalytic intersubjective theory and practice. It could not be said more aptly today.

As I said in my introduction, the correspondence covers many subjects over many years. I have chosen these letters because of the times in which they were written and the subject which they discuss. Jung gives very complex answers to the Jewish question, and he attempts a critical appraisal of Jewish psychology at a most inopportune time. What Jung does say is that he has been writing and thinking about this subject for many years, and that is why in spite of warnings from both my father and Neumann, Jung feels justified to continue writing about this issue. Jung talks about many of his theories in a clear and direct manner with him. There are many riches to mine in the letters, and I am hoping that someone with a knowledge of Jung, German, and archival research will want to work on them. For me, to have read the correspondence and to see the nature of the correspondence has been of great value for me both in my relationship to my father and also to Jung and my professional work.