

## A Child of Jungian Parents

by Micha Neumann

Less than two years ago the awareness of my yekke origins began to stir, and with the help of the “Yakinton,” which in November 2008 I obtained for the first time. On the occasion of the celebration of the publication of the book *Doctors in Eretz Israel from 1799 to 1948*, I was interviewed by Micha Limor about my experiences as a yekke doctor and as the son on a yekke



doctor-professor. In the course of the interview I felt a desire to speak about my parents. My father, Erich Neumann, gained world-wide recognition as a student of Carl Gustav Jung and as a scholar who continued the work of Jungian thought. Father wrote numerous books, which were translated into many languages. But in Israel, where only four of his minor works (*Depth Psychology and a New Ethic, Crisis and Renewal, Amor and Psyche, and Mystical Man*) appeared, he was almost completely unknown.

My parents met in Berlin, when they were both 15 years old. My father, born in 1905, was a serious, contemplative, intellectual youth. He took dance lessons, not I think because he wanted to learn how to dance but because he wanted to meet a nice Jewish girl. So he found his way to the house at number 4 Pariser Straße, where a dance school was located. And there he met Julia Blumenfeld, who lived in the house only a few floors above the school. A young romance blossomed between them that lasted half a year. When they parted, Erich sent Julia a book by Martin Buber in which he inscribed, “Our paths will cross again.”

He went on to study philosophy and psychology in Erlangen and Berlin. Four years later he had a Ph.D. in his pocket. At that time he was particularly interested in Judaism, Hasidism, the Kabbalah, and philosophy. He immersed himself in the writings of Freud and Jung, whose teachings especially appealed to him. It was during that period that he first felt the desire to study psychotherapy. So he decided to pursue medicine. Julia, meanwhile, had become a nanny to infants and older children and likewise became interested in psychotherapy. When they met up again, Erich was a medical student and Julia a teacher of nursing. They married in 1928, and in 1932 I was born. While engaged in his medical studies my father was especially keen on the works of C. G. Jung, and wrote psychological interpretations of books written by an unknown author named Franz Kafka. During those years my mother studied chirolgy with Julius Steier, who was also a follower of C. G. Jung.

The year 1933, when Hitler came to power, was for my parents a time of crisis. Father finished his medical studies but was expelled from the university before he could earn his doctoral degree. Mother suffered from the changes that were taking place in Berlin and could not abide the torch marches of the SA and the blaring of anti-Semitic songs. They both decided to end their strong ties with bourgeois Germany and emigrate to Eretz Israel. On the way they spent a year in Zurich, where they had their first meeting with Jung. Their intellectual rapport was apparent at once. Erich regarded Jung as a teacher and spiritual father. And Jung delighted in the promising and

gifted students. The three resolved to continue their association by letter after the Neumanns' arrival in the Holy Land, to discuss topics of mutual interest. This in fact happened, and the correspondence back and forth continued for years. Father recognized that he would be unable to make a living from psychotherapy in a little Yishuv in Palestine and completed a course on nerve-point massage. Two years after their immigration my parents rented what was for that time a spacious four-room apartment, with a view of the Mediterranean Sea, at 1 Gordon Street, and lived there until Julia's death in 1985.

My memories go back to when I was four years old. From our balcony I could see the Mediterranean and the coast of Jaffa to the south and all the way to the Muslim cemetery in the north. The Machlul settlement extended all the way to the foot of our house. The sea's rustling waves and changing colors and the whistling of the winter winds were always part of our lives. The fact that both my parents worked as Jungian analysts, with patients coming and going, was completely normal for me. Father's office also served as our dining room. His huge desk and the bookcase extending all the way to the ceiling filled my friends with astonishment and awe. Mother's office was my parents' bedroom. The room where my sister and I slept also served as a waiting room, with only a curtain separating us from the patients. Next to the entrance there was another waiting room. On those occasions when my grandmother, my mother's mother, came to stay in 1947 after eight years in London, she too had to share her room with patients. The household budget was managed by clear and unalterable guidelines, which we regarded as a matter of course. Lunch was always served punctually at half past one, and everyone had to be there—without exception. Whatever was on the plate, was eaten. No one could complain about the dishes served. You either ate everything or you didn't get dessert. After the meal we slept until 4 o'clock, then worked until 8. The colloquial language at home was German; it was only when my sister and I were a bit older that we came to speak Hebrew. In public, in the stores and cafe, German was the language spoken. We listened to fairy tales and children's stories in German, as well as the lullabies and folk songs our mother sang us; to this day we remember them word for word. While I was learning Hebrew I also learned to read German. Everything was clear and readily understandable. I was a child who grew up with two languages. As it was my father's wish that I should read Schiller and Goethe, I also studied the gothic script.



During the war years my father's correspondence with Jung was broken off. Father used the long interval to dedicate himself to his own writing. When communications were resumed in 1947, my father met with Jung and handed him two completely original works he had written during the war years. Jung read them and was astonished. Jung helped get my father's writings published by his own publisher. After that, father was invited every year to Ascona for the Eranos conferences, which dealt with the healing arts, religion, and science. Professor Gerschom Scholem, professor of Kabbalism and mysticism, also traveled to these conferences with Dr. Neumann. After my father's writings were published in Germany he received the medical diploma that had been denied him in 1933. Yet my father continued to work as a psychotherapist and never practiced as a doctor. In the course of time my father's important works were given their proper recognition and were translated, first into English, then later into other languages, e.g., Korean, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, and

Spanish. He became a world-renowned figure. He was invited to international congresses and was awarded stipends, but he never gave up his therapeutic work. Many offers and professional appointments came in from Europe, among them the directorship of the Jung Institute in Zurich. But my father declined them all, for he felt that he belonged to, and was tied to, the Land of Israel.

I can still see him, always sitting at his big desk surrounded by smoke from pipes or cigarettes, studying for hours on end his volumes on art, philosophy, anthropology, and history. Every Sabbath evening there was a festive meal. We lit candles and sang “The Song of Ascents” in Hebrew in an Ashkenazy intonation. The Passover Seder was especially festive, with polished silver and our best set of plates. We read the Haggadah and allowed ourselves to savor the festive dishes. The Hanukkah celebration also began with the traditional lighting of the candles and the circle dances.

Mother was a valued and successful Jungian psychotherapist, but it was from chirolgy that she gained her chief successes and earned her national renown in all levels of society. Although she did not speak Hebrew, young people flocked to her seeking career advice. Mother’s counsels were based on her ability to recognize a person’s special talent, personal qualities, preferences, and abilities, and from these to propose an appropriate area of study, career field, or even a career change. She was often consulted on personal and family crises. As soon as people found out I was Julia Neumann’s son, they praised my mother for the important changes in their lives that resulted from her good advice. Scarcely anyone had heard of my father. He wrote his works in German, which is why his readership in Israel remained limited. He was not a gregarious man; rather, he spent most of his time on reading and jotting down his ideas. Mother, on the other hand, was talkative, optimistic, and always in a cheerful mood. Father was respected and even feared to some extent; Mother was loved by all and people sought her company. She maintained contact with her women friends from the “Blue-White” movement in Berlin in the 1920s. On birthdays, friends and acquaintances would come over to the house without invitation and brought gifts (mainly books and phonograph records), chatted excitedly, joked, and listened to music.



Folding chairs were stacked in the shower (the one that connected both my parents’ offices) when Father was giving classes. He spoke—in German, naturally—before an audience that was respectful and attentive to his ideas. One portion of this lecture series would later be condensed into two important books. Both my parents were homebodies. They never went to the beach, did not have a car, and got a telephone relatively late, as Father considered it a disturbing nuisance. But every year they spent two months abroad in order to visit Jung, took part in the Eranos Conference in Ascona, and recuperated in Sils in the Engadine. They also took side trips and wrote. My parents had an incredibly deep and close relationship. Erich saw in Julia his life-source, the source of his inspiration, his muse. She taught him to enjoy life apart from his career and his writing. Mother admired his gifts and supported him as much as she possibly could. Often she would listen to him, then offer a critical response. Their relationship was the center of their

lives. They were loving, good parents, yet both of us, my sister and I, understood that, as children, we came second, unlike in the families of our friends. But this seemed natural and self-evident. Maybe that is a part of traditional yekke upbringing.

Father died in 1960, from cancer. He was only 55 and was full of ideas for works that were never written. Mother lived for another 25 years, alone. Sometimes she would say that her yearning for my father would only grow stronger. She died in 1985, struck by a taxi as she was in the crosswalk at the intersection of Ben Jehuda Street and Gordon Street; she had wanted to get flowers for our home from the corner florist. She lived at 1 Gordon Street for almost fifty years. After her death we had to terminate the rental on this beloved home and give it back to the landlord who had first rented it to my parents in 1936.

In May of 2007 the city of Berlin installed a plaque at 4 Pariser Straße for Erich and Julia Neumann, which made me very happy. My parents were honored as intellectuals and upholders of culture who had to leave Germany because of Nazi persecution. With this act the city of Berlin wanted to remind everyone of the Nazi persecution and the cultural loss that Germany suffered by it. At the celebratory attachment of the plaque I explained that my parents had met in this building, an event that our family was thankful for, since otherwise we would not be here.