

Comment on "Jung's Kabbalistic Visions," by Sanford Drob

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Some time ago, responding to a then controversial piece by Lawrence G. Corey entitled "For the Sake of God: A Reply to Jung" that I had published in *The San Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal*, J. Marvin Spiegelman commented, "The Jung of the early 1930s...is not the same Jung as the one who wrote *Answer to Job* after the extent of the Holocaust was recognized, nor the Jung who had the powerful visions of Jewish, Christian and Greek pagan themes in his seventies. In short, Jung, like many of us, had sins of unconsciousness which he transcended, with greater awareness, as he grew older." Spiegelman's letter needs to be read in full (it can be found in volume 9, number 4, 1990, of the *Library Journal*, pp. 65-67), but it concludes that Corey, who had complained of Jung's "unconscious identification with the anti-Judaic mythos of Aryan Christianity," might have been "moved as a brother by a man who had a vision of the Pardes Rimmonim, saw a wedding of Tifereth and Malkuth and realized that 'I, myself, was the marriage'" and might therefore also agree that "such a man had cleansed himself of any remaining Western (Christian) prejudice toward Judaism and understood this apprehension of the divine from *inside* himself rather than from apart."

Ever since publishing his letter, I have wished that someone else would take up the implications of Spiegelman's insight. All too apparently, the full context for the apology Jung made after the war to Rabbi Leo Baeck that enabled the latter to signal to Gershom Scholem that Jung was "okay" has never been made clear, even though the apology was convincing enough to make Scholem decide to participate in the Eranos Conferences at Ascona, where he proceeded to make evident for the first time the extent of the kabbalistic parallels to Jung's conception of deep psychological processes. What we have not understood, as a consequence, is the degree to which Jung atoned for the narrowness of his previous view of what a "Jewish psychology" could comprehend. The present paper, though by no means complete as an historical documentation of exactly what in Jung's attitude needed to be transformed and exactly how the transformation managed to occur, is nevertheless most helpful in developing a clearer picture of what Jung was able to take aboard in the course of enlarging his perspective about Judaism during the 1940s.

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I think the author's psychological intuition is essentially sound when he argues that Jung became a Jew in his sickbed vision of 1944 as a compensation for the way he had previously ignored or failed to acknowledge the extent of the Jewish contribution to the potential revision of traditional theology. I am not schooled enough in Kabbalah to comment on the accuracy of the author's presentation of that system's implications, but what he gives us here is enough to convince me that Jung was not merely paying lip service to a Jewish tradition after the war to rectify his image.

Thanks to Sanford Drob's (2003) article and this one, we are grounded in feeling (1) that Jung finally did come to understand the kabbalistic anticipations of the theurgy he was calling for when he spoke of "a Christification of many"; (2) that this understanding did not lead him, regrettably, to a complete social and political atonement for having earlier spoken of Jewish psychology as limited; and (3) that this failure to complete his atonement does not gainsay the significance of Jung's integration of kabbalistic thought, which carried into his late writings and interviews, revealing a conscious gratitude for the contribution of Judaic traditions to the emergence of depth psychology.

References

Drob, Sanford. (2003). Toward a kabbalistic psychology: C. G. Jung and the Jewish foundations of alchemy. *Journal of Jungian Theory and Practice*, 5(2), 77-100.