

## Bertha Pappenheim/Anna O.

It is remarkable that the origins of psychoanalysis and Jewish feminism could be unified in the life history of one woman, whose life story has served as a Rosetta stone for feminists, historians, psychoanalysts and a diverse group of social scientists. One is confronted by portraits of several contradictory personae. The Anna O. presented by Breuer in *Studies of Hysteria* is an enchanting, witty, delicate young woman of twenty-one, nestled in the wealthy protective milieu of the Viennese Orthodox Jewish *haute bourgeoisie* of the 1880's.

In 1888, after Bertha was able to gain a measure of control over her hysterical illness, she and her widowed mother left Vienna for Frankfurt. Outraging the sensibilities of her fellow German-Jewish assimilationists, Bertha traveled unaccompanied throughout Eastern Europe, rescuing and researching, and publishing articles on Jewish prostitutes, victims of white slavery, and the plight of abandoned wives and unwed mothers. She battled for the political, educational, and economic equality of Jewish women. With the support of allied souls, she imagined and ultimately cofounded the first national organization of feminist Jewish women, the Judischer Frauenbund (League of Jewish Women), in 1904. This was followed in 1907 by a home built for wayward girls in nearby Neu-Isenburg to protect and educate Jewish girls and women who lives hovered on the borders of society.

Feminism did not come easily to Germany's middle-class Jewish women. Moral outrage against white slavery and prostitution, led many religious housewives to join the Judischer Frauenbund (JFB). While they articulated the virtues of purity and invoked Jewish ethical codes, theirs was not merely a morality campaign. The feminist founders of JFB struggled to persuade their more inactive and passive followers that the sexual abuse of women was linked to their inferior status in German society and Jewish culture. These leaders successfully convinced JFB members to take a huge step beyond their traditional family roles and charitable activities in order to challenge sexism. Thus the fight against slavery became instrumental in serving wide-spread feminist goals.

I would like acquaint the readers of our Blog who might not be familiar with JFB with their mission and thus deepen our understanding of a crucial aspect of our shared heritage. Founded by one of our most famous patients, Anna O., in 1904 it attracted a large following. Absorbing some traditional Jewish women's charities and building on programs that Jewish women's groups had pioneered, the JFB offered a feminist approach and analysis to social welfare. Combining feminist goals and a strong sense of Jewish identity, it was the first nationally coordinated organization to promote German-Jewish women's interests. Its membership in and support of the goals of the German bourgeois women's movement distinguished it from other Jewish women's organizations of its time as well as from the major Protestant and Catholic organizations.

Despite the considerable tensions involved in being both feminist and conscious

Jews, the JFB was unwilling to focus on secular feminism in Germany to the neglect of its Jewish roots. Nor was it willing to center only on the goals decided upon by the male leadership of the Jewish community, but instead on fighting for women's equality in Jewish and secular spheres. Its position as a Jewish organization reflects in microcosm a more widespread dilemma which profoundly touches minorities even today: the desire to equality while guarding their own distinctiveness. Moreover, its position as a women's organization highlights an agonizing quandary of minority women's groups: whether to "stand by" their men- often accepting women's second class status within the minority group- or fight their already embattled men for parity.

Allegiance to the JFB was a product of class and age. Its members reflected the overwhelmingly middle class position of German Jews. Most were housewives engaged in volunteer activities. The feminism of the JFB was shaped by the tension between its' members needs for independence and their attachment to traditional "feminine" values, most especially a notion of "separate spheres," the complementarity of men's and women's roles and status in society. Thus, while direction came from above, restraint came from the grassroots. The leaders hoped to strike a balance between their feminism and the attraction of a mass base, modifying their feminism in order not to alienate their more neutral followers. As a consequence, the League did not adhere to a more radical rendering of feminism: rather, it subscribed to a more conventional position that fundamental and natural differences existed between the sexes.

The League's campaign focused upon: strengthening community consciousness among Jews.; furthering the ideals of the bourgeois women's movement; expanding women's roles in the Jewish community ; providing women with career training; and fighting the traffic in women. These causes often provoked irritation. Anti-feminists attacked the JFB and rabbis closed their eyes, nonetheless it swelled to encompass thirty-five thousand women in its first ten years. By 1929 it could claim to have 430 affiliates, 34 of its own branches, 10 provincial alliances and a total membership of 50,000.

Amazingly, in addition to these groundbreaking activities the JFB built and/or supported tuberculosis care, youth homes, old-age retreats, children's health and vacation facilities, and sanatoria. Moreover, the League attempted to make women proud of their accomplishments. Its newsletter, the *Blatter des Juedischen Frauenbundes*, printed articles on early Jewish feminists, on historically prominent Jewish women, and on contemporary female artists and literary figures.

When the Nazis seized power in 1933, the League resigned from the Federation of German Women's Associations. Between 1933 and 1938, it joined other Jewish organizations in an attempt to survive. The League maintained their activities until the Nazis dissolved it after Kristallnacht, November 9-10, 1938. Many of its leaders were deported and murdered in 1942.

We will end by letting Bertha Pappenheim state how she wished to be remembered as she stated it in her Last Will and Testament:

Not with words, which fade away, not with flowers, which

do not last, shall anyone approach my final resting place; if you remember me, bring a little stone, as the silent promise and symbol of the establishment of the idea and mission of women's duty and woman's joy in serving unceasingly and courageously in life.

Sheldon M. Goodman