

Introduction to the *God Must Not Die!* Issue of Spring Journal

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It is Jung's (some might say, dubious) distinction to have developed a psychology "with God" at a time that he himself described as "a time of God's death and disappearance."¹ In this issue of our journal an essay by Wolfgang Giegerich that critically examines this important aspect of Jung's psychology project is examined in its turn by seven invited respondents. Conceived in the spirit of an immanent critique (all of our authors are long-time contributors to Jungian psychology), both Jung's treatment of Christianity and Giegerich's incisive questioning of this are discussed in a manner that dove-tails with that recent trend within the broader discourses of philosophy and critical theory which goes by the name of the "theological turn." I refer here to the shift from the linguistic focus of postmodernism in general and deconstruction in particular to a focus upon that subject whose development by means of a succession of God-images, and culminating in the death of God experience of the 19th and 20th centuries, has been constitutive of modern consciousness. This is not to imply that Jung's understanding of the psychology that has come to bear his name was in step with this development. On the contrary, compared to this line of thought his "theological turn," if we may call it that, was a decidedly conservative one. Railing against what he regarded as the deleterious effect of the rationalistic spirit of his times upon the larger sense of man's soul that had traditionally been mediated by myth and religion, Jung championed the irrational psyche, that age-old storehouse of animating images, as the enduring source of spiritual renewal for our benighted modern age. "We should never identify ourselves with reason," he warned (with the creeping scourge of intellectualism, atheism, secularism, and political totalitarianism in mind), "for man is not and never will be a creation of reason alone" Reiterating this point, he then reached out beyond the horizon lines which he believed reason to have too narrowly drawn: "The irrational," he declared, "cannot be and must not be extirpated. The gods cannot and must not die."²

The last line of this quote is very close to the wording of the title that Giegerich has given to his essay in this volume, "God Must Not Die!," while the earlier one in which we are cautioned against identifying ourselves with reason alone is taken up in its subtitle, "C.G. Jung's Thesis of the One-Sidedness of Christianity." It was Jung's contention that the critical rationalism which had developed within Christianity had gotten so carried away with itself that Western man had landed himself in the predicament that his consciousness was cut off from its life-source in the unconscious. Hoping to remedy this situation, Jung trained his analyst's gaze upon Christianity. Effete though it had become, it was Jung's position that a resurgent version of its life-giving powers was immediately present in the symptomatic suffering of neurotic patients even as what psychoanalysis had conceptualized as "the libido" could be interpreted from above (or from more deeply below) as the vitalizing reappearance of what had formerly been symbolized as the wine of Dionysus and the blood of Christ.

This, at any rate, was the vision of analysis that he proposed in an early letter:

... we must give [psychoanalysis] time to infiltrate into people from many centers, to revivify among intellectuals a feeling for symbol and myth, ever so gently to transform Christ back into the soothsaying god of the vine, which he was, and in this way absorb those ecstatic instinctual forces of Christianity for the one purpose of making the cult and the myth what they once were—a drunken feast of joy where man regained the ethos and holiness of an animal. That was the beauty and purpose of classical religion, which from God knows what temporary biological needs has turned into a Misery Institute. Yet what infinite rapture and wantonness lies dormant in our religion, waiting to be led back to their true destination! A genuine and proper ... development ... must ... bring to fruition ... the agony and ecstasy over the dying and resurgent god, the mythic power of the wine, the awesome anthropophagy of the Last Supper—only this ...development can serve the vital forces of religion. (Jung to Freud, Feb. 11, 1910)³

Steeped in mythology, Jung's conception of psychoanalysis was modelled upon the pattern of its dying and resurgent gods. Just as the resurrected Christ had appeared to the disciples after his death "... that they might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10), so analysis, in Jung's view, had reversed Nietzsche's verdict concerning the death of God through the life-giving god-images from the unconscious which it offered as its sacrament.

But did Jung get this right? Was the death of God in the modern sense that Nietzsche had announced really nothing more than the latest version of this age-old archetypal pattern? Or did it rather reflect an altogether more decisive change in the life of consciousness: the passing away or going under of the mythic mode of apperception *per se*, of the religious mode of having a God as such—and this, moreover, not as some pathological incursion of dissociated reason upon the soul, but as the soul's own doing, its critical turning upon itself in a syzygial, anima-negating/animus-sublating moment of itself?

In numerous papers written during the last few decades, and again now in his essay for this volume, Giegerich's reading of what he calls "the soul's logical life" has taken this tack. Basing himself upon Jung's account of the death of symbols, Giegerich has reached the conclusion—so very different from Jung's—that the death of God, or as this has also been figured, the end of meaning, has had to do with the integration of this great symbol into the *form* of consciousness itself such that man comes fully and self-responsibly into his own *as man*.

The back-story here has to do with Jung's important insight that the life of a symbol resides in its being an "expression for something that cannot be characterized in any other or better way." Likening this to a state of pregnancy, the great psychologist had spoken in the same breath of its parturition and demise: "The symbol is alive only so long as it is pregnant with meaning. But once its meaning has been born out of it, once that expression is found which formulates the thing sought, expected, or divined even better than the hitherto accepted symbol, then the symbol is *dead*, i.e., it possesses only an historical significance."⁴

Apropos of this development, Giegerich has read “the death of God” as the death of that greatest of symbols. As for the “better formulation” or “better expression” that has been born from this symbol’s death, this for Giegerich corresponds to psychology, which is also to say, to that determination of consciousness that is associated with and constitutive of psychology.

It is a matter of demythologization. Having arisen from the shift from *mythos* to *logos*, psychological consciousness no longer relates to itself in personified form as had formerly been the case with myth and religion. For the God(s) that consciousness, as religious consciousness, had had in front of itself or above itself as its contents have gone under into the universality of its self-acknowledging, self-relating form such that it now exists negatively, as Giegerich has put it, not as consciousness of some numinous being or thing, but as consciousness of consciousness, mindedness *per se*.

Now Jung, it is true, in keeping with his insight concerning the death of symbols, also regarded psychology to have arisen from a process of demythologization.⁵ However, gravely concerned about the effect upon the soul of its having been turned out of its spiritual home in religion, he assigned psychology the task of continuing its religious life via the analysis of the unconscious. Though God had outwardly died (this seems to have been his view), he could still be accessed as the God-image within.

But is it really the psychologist’s job to shore a symbol up against its ruin? In Giegerich’s view, Jung’s attempt to do just this with respect to God shows him to have not been willing to follow the soul’s own process, at least not when it came to that rupture-point at which consciousness or the soul had turned against its having to have the form of God. This, of course, is a familiar resistance. In his poem, “The World is Too Much with Us,” Wordsworth wistfully complains of the alienation that modernity has brought and then, in a line that anticipates Jung’s effort to carry on what he called “the symbolic life,” declares that he’d “rather be a pagan suckled in a creed outworn”⁶ than give way to a modernity with which he feels so out of tune. But the modern world *is* with us! There is no denying that, or at least no credible one. Having emancipated itself from religion, “the spirit that bloweth where it listeth” (John 3:8) has now transformed itself into money, medial-technology, and cyberspace. Rather than deploring these uncanny phenomena of our modern situation (or seeking refuge from them, as Jung was wont to do, in the 16th century atmosphere of his Bollingen tower⁷), the challenge for the psychologist is simply to discern what they say about consciousness or show about to the soul.

In numerous books and articles, Giegerich has taken up this challenge. Mindful of Jung’s dictum that the doctor must be as much in the analysis as the patient, he has again and again brought analytical psychology before the bar of the phenomena that have concerned it in order to see whether its own constitution as psychology is truly up to or in accord with the interpretations it metes out. Now in his essay for this volume, it is not the aforementioned realities of our modern world—money, medial-technology, and cyberspace—that are subjected to this treatment,⁸ but the interpretation of Christianity that Jung put forward in an effort to stave these off. Critical of Jung’s efforts to therapeutically revivifying Christianity, Giegerich points out that the negation of God is inherent in Christianity itself. Long before Nietzsche had announced the death of God, the Christian soul had already (though, of course, only implicitly) emancipated itself from having to have a God through that central, form-changing mystery wherein its incarnate

God empties himself of his divinity and dies on the cross as a man--or so Giegerich contends in the course of showing up what he regards as the errant positivity that Jungian psychology and popular Christianity both share.

These, of course, are contentious claims. In a veritable cascade of powerfully argued papers, and again now in his essay for this volume, Giegerich's Jungian critique of Jung has led him to a very different reading of what Christianity and psychology are about than the one that Jung promoted. The question arises: does this show, as some of his critics contend, that Giegerich is a contrarian who has gone off on a hobby-horse of his own? Or is it rather the case, as others maintain, that even where Jung's views are contradicted, Giegerich's contribution is to be seriously taken into account as a radical and contemporizing "return to Jung" inasmuch as its insights are the result of a deep fealty with and thoroughgoing application of essential impulses and interpretative gestures that are at the heart of Jung's own psychological vision?

To help us with this question responses from upwards of a dozen Jungian writers, many of whom have had a special interest in the topic of Jung and Christianity, were invited. Of course, not everyone that was asked to participate agreed to do so. This, as I was told, had mostly to do with being busy with other projects, the upcoming IAAP conference in Montreal being the most commonly mentioned reason for having to pass on the opportunity. In some cases, however, a particular colleague's decision not to participate seemed to have the quality of a response. There were a few, for example, who after reading Giegerich's essay expressed antipathy for the project. Giegerich, I was told in a somewhat reproving manner, is "a mere intellectual who has no understanding of the soul." Others expressed sentiments that were the reverse of this. Having not yet come fully to grips with the daunting challenge which Giegerich's writings pose, one of these said that he did not feel up to the task. Another who admitted to "a testy admiration" of Giegerich said she did not feel she should "punch above [her] weight-class"! So in the end, though I had solicited responses from far and wide, it was mostly long time contributors to *Spring Journal* that accepted my invitation.

The first of these was David Miller. Giegerich had sent his paper to David and me just after it was written. While both of us were struck by its importance, it was David who brought it to Nancy Cater's attention, and she in turn who came up with the idea of building an issue of the journal around it. Writing from his background in religious studies, Miller's response contextualizes Giegerich's psychological perspective theologically by showing how it fits with and carries on from various ideas and movements from within early, medieval, modern and postmodern theology.

Other complimentary responses follow Miller's. Drawing upon Giegerich's discussion of the Christian God's emptying himself of his divinity even as he dies on the cross as a man, Michael Whan ventures a new interpretation of Jung's vision of the green gold Christ as signifying the Holy Spirit's self-iconoclastic release from the imaginal mode of thought to which Jung, regressing behind the *telos* of his own vision, clung. And in an essay that demonstrates an especially keen grasp of Jung's concern for man's spiritual predicament, Giegerich's psychological approach, and of the Christian ideas referred to by both, Marco Heleno Barreto acquaints us with the metaphysical anthropologist and Romantic *Naturphilosoph* in Jung who, forgetful of what Giegerich has called "the psychological difference," time and again transgressed the limits of a rigorously psychological approach. And then there is the essay by John Peck. After reminding us of

the event/happening/pure occurrence character of Jung's psychology, Peck examines Giegerich's critique of Jung's formulation of this by reading it in relation to aphorisms of Pascal's having to do with thought as that "double inclusion" wherein the impactful surround of events and happenings are interiorized into themselves.

Less sympathetic with respect to Giegerich's critique of Jung are the contributions of our next two authors, John Haule and Glen Slater. Taking exception to Giegerich's having focussed so exclusively upon Jung's *Answer to Job*, Haule reminds us of Jung's early interest in spiritualism, of his work on synchronicity, and of his emphasis upon immediate experience of the God-within, while Slater, for his part, antagonistically inveighs against Giegerich's entire approach to Jung and to psychology as a treacherous "mind-trap" that should be avoided at all costs! And then there is the essay by Robert Romanyshyn. Written not as a response to Giegerich's "God Must Not Die!" essay, but as a rebuttal to his earlier *Spring 82* essay, "The Psychologist as Repentance Preacher and Revivalist: Robert Romanyshyn on the Melting of the Polar Ice," Romanyshyn's essay is published here for its related interest as yet another critical rejoinder to Giegerich.

The final essay of this collection is an essay of my own, "Jungian Analysis *Post Mortem Dei*." Drawing upon the understanding of Giegerich's approach that I have gained in the course of many years of reading his texts on an almost daily basis, I have attempted in my response to both contextualize his essay for this volume within a larger appreciation of what he is aiming for in psychology and to provide a bridge from the consulting room into what I consider to be his enormous contribution to analytical psychology through the reflections I offer with respect to occasions when the analyst is asked by a patient that same question which was famously put to Jung: "Do you believe in God?"

But before we turn to Giegerich's essay and to the rejoinders of his respondents, I would like to share what might be characterized as a scholarly fantasy regarding the *place* of this collegial exchange. This has to do with the 1910 letter to Freud that I cited above in which Jung enthusiastically writes of the vitalizing effect that psychoanalysis can have upon Christianity. When asked by one of his pupils to comment on this text some fifty years later, Jung answered with some chagrin,

Best thanks for the quotation from that accursed correspondence. For me it is an unfortunately inexpungable reminder of the incredible folly that filled the days of my youth. The journey from cloud-cuckoo-land back to reality lasted a long time. In my case Pilgrim's Progress consisted in my having to climb down a thousand ladders until I could reach out my hand to the little clod of earth that I am.⁹

This is an important passage. Though it would be easy to argue that the Jungian movement has actually fulfilled Jung's youthful hopes for a psychoanalysis that would "serve the vital forces of religion" (we have only to think of the popular offerings of Jungian lay-societies world-wide and of the company that Jungian psychology keeps with New Age spirituality), Jung here distances and divests himself from his earlier views. But as Giegerich has pointed out, Jung's kenotic claim to have come down from the clouds is belied by his manner of expressing it.

... the very formulation that Jung uses shows that he has not really come down. Because if one is really down, one cannot reach out one's hand to the little clod of earth that one is, inasmuch as being down means having *comprehended* that one is, and has always been, *just* oneself. As long as I want to reach out my hand to myself, I as the one who reaches his hand out still believe myself to be something else from, and above, the "clod of earth" which I graciously befriend. The idea that I would have to come down and humble myself *is* already presumption, arrogance. The noble attitude of humility is the way in which the simple recognition that in truth I am and have always been down here is kept at bay. There *is* nothing and nobody to whom I could lower myself, because the clod of earth is myself.¹⁰

Further to the imagery of Jung's which Giegerich here applies to itself in the course of criticizing Jung's claim to have fully come down from the grandiose ideas of his youth, I am put in mind of another image of Jung's from one of his late dreams. Recounted in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, this dream is the one in which his father is depicted as a distinguished scholar who is also the guardian of a crypt in which the sarcophagi of some famous personages are entombed.¹¹ Upon announcing to Jung that he will now lead him "into the highest presence," the figure of Jung's father immediately kneels down with his forehead to the floor. Following suit, Jung attempts to bow down in like manner. But again, just as Giegerich pointed out in his critique of the coming down from the clouds and reaching out to the clod of earth passage, Jung could not fully complete this action. "For some reason," he writes, "I could not bring my forehead quite down to the floor—there was perhaps a millimeter to spare."¹²

A millimeter to spare! It is just here, in the equivocating gap between forehead and floor, cloud and clod, that my editor's vision locates this collegial exchange. Distributed between thinkers of the same or similar schools, this millimeter might be thought to correspond to what Freud called "the narcissism of small differences." But this would be a superficial view. Jung's imagery, after all, is not "horizontal" and "extensive" in the manner of Freud, but "vertical" and "intensive." And in keeping with this the differences which the various discussants disclose have more to do with the soul-internal, psychological difference that runs through the discipline they share. When consciousness is conscious of itself, a restless tension, born of its awareness of being discrepant with itself, builds up. As if driven by a millimeter which it can never entirely close, thought goes under into new determinations of itself via the negation of its own base. And so it is in the present volume. Heir to the gap between Jung's forehead and the floor, Giegerich and his respondents try again those ladders between cloud-cuckoo-land and the clod of earth, driving Jungian thought into new determinations of itself in the process.

Notes

¹ C.G. Jung, *CW* 11:149

² Jung, *CW* 7: 111

³ C.G. Jung, *Letters, Vol. 1: 1906-1950*, ed. G. Adler and A. Jaffé, tr. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 18.

⁴ Jung, *CW* 6: 816. Cited by W. Giegerich, "The End of Meaning and the Birth of Man: An Essay about the State Reached in the History of Consciousness and an Analysis of C. G. Jung's Psychology Project." *The Journal of Jungian Theory and Practice* 6.1 (2004), p. 11.

⁵ We have only to think of his well-known statement, "Only an unparalleled impoverishment of symbolism could enable us to rediscover the gods as psychic factors, that is, as archetypes of the unconscious" (*CW* 9, i: 50).

⁶ William Wordsworth, "This World is Too Much with Us," lines 9-10.

⁷ For Giegerich's discussion of this problem see his "The End of Meaning and the Birth of Man," pp. 47-48.

⁸ For Giegerich's analysis of these topics see his *Technology and the Soul*, The Collected English Papers of Wolfgang Giegerich, Volume 2 (New Orleans, Spring Journal Books, 2007).

⁹ Jung, *Letters* 1, p. 18. fn. 8.

¹⁰ Giegerich, "The End of Meaning and the Birth of Man," p. 31

¹¹ C. G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. A. Jaffé, tr. Richard & Clara Winston (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 217-220.

¹² Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 219.