The interiorizing movement of logical life:
reflections on Wolfgang Giegerich

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Abstract: The following article is an account of my discovery of and subsequent immersion in Wolfgang Giegerich’s work. A sampling of his voluminous writings on the soul is set out to illustrate how he attempts to penetrate thinkingly into psychological phenomena and his claim that this inevitably brings out their internal dialectic. The article summarizes his critiques of Jung, Hillman, and The Red Book: Liber Novus.

Key words: alchemy, dialectic, Jung, Hillman, Liber Novus, logic, soul

You would not find out the boundaries of the soul, even by travelling along every path: so deep a measure does it have.
(Heraclitus in G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven’s The PreSocratic Philosophers, 1984)

Preamble
‘If James Hillman’s work on “archetypal psychology” represents after Jung himself second wave Jungianism, the work of Wolfgang Giegerich may well indicate third wave Jungian thinking’ (Giegerich, Miller, Mogenson 2005, p. x). So says David Miller, a scholar of religion, myth, depth psychology and literary theory, and honorary member of the International Association for Analytical Psychology (IAAP). This observation suggests the passage from one order to another, in this instance from Jung to Hillman to Giegerich, that has a Frazerian (anthropologist, author of The Golden Bough) ring to it. It is significant, in Miller’s statement, that no mention of the developmental Jungians is included. It would appear that two major streams of Jungian thought exist without much contact with each other. One of these is represented by archetypal psychology, of which Giegerich was an adherent; the other by the developmental approach, which had its origins in the pioneering work of the London-based analyst, Michael Fordham. Hillman’s work—or at least his name—is, of course, known to Jungians everywhere.

My interest in producing an article on the Jungian analyst Wolfgang Giegerich’s work has nothing to do with trying to effect a rapprochement between different traditions of analytical psychology through indulging in a
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‘peace negotiation fantasy’ (Giegerich 2005, p. 4). Rather, it is to do with the fact that, as a result of my own growing interest in his work, I have mentioned Giegerich to various colleagues in the UK, many of whom say they have heard of but have never read him. It is, in part, with a view to responding to this lack that the following article will try to communicate some of Giegerich’s ideas to interested readers of this Journal.

Giegerich

Giegerich’s written work fills numerous publications. At the time of writing, the latest of these in English is a book The Soul Always Thinks, a review of which will appear in another issue of this Journal, and an article ‘God Must Not Die! C.G. Jung’s Thesis of the One-sidedness of Christianity’. The latter appears in Volume 84 of Spring, the whole issue being devoted to Giegerich along with responses to him from other writers in the field.

My attention was drawn initially to Giegerich’s work ten years ago by the Viennese analyst, Andreas von Heydwolff, at the IAAP Cambridge Congress. At that time, he suggested I might find Giegerich’s work of interest and sent me a couple of chapters from the 1998 book The Soul’s Logical Life. I made attempts to read those without much success. Later, when hearing Giegerich speak at a London venue in 2003, I was struck by his clarity of expression and humour. Sometime after this, he contributed a chapter to a book I produced. However, I only started to read Giegerich consistently in 2010 when James Hillman invited me to be a speaker on a panel he was putting together for the IAAP Montreal Congress. I opted to talk about Hillman and Giegerich on that panel and read several of the latter’s books and articles in order to prepare for the event. This immersion is leading me to re-think the usage of terms such as the psychoid, synchronicity, and the unconscious, which abound in the Jungian world—not least from the pen of this writer.

It should be clear by now that I do not in any way see myself as an authority on Giegerich’s work. As suggested above, the two aims in producing this article are to further familiarize myself with his ideas through taking slow, small steps in writing about them. The second is to share some understanding of his work with those readers of the Journal who may be unfamiliar with it.

The soul’s logical life

The term ‘soul’ appears frequently in Giegerich’s writing and in the titles of his books as exemplified by the following: The Soul’s Logical Life, Soul-Violence, The Soul Always Thinks. From the start, I have had to try to overcome my own resistance to the use of the word ‘soul’ in psychology—the term is not of course restricted to Giegerich’s approach. This resistance is due to a lifelong usage of it in a religious context. As this led to a
difficulty in coming to terms with James Hillman’s notion of soul-making, it was intriguing to find that Giegerich was critical of Hillman’s way of depicting it. According to Giegerich, this has to do with its being reduced to the poetic and metaphorical. He goes on to claim this is a harmless version of the notion of soul-making that excludes the possibility that ‘a real deed such as sacrificial killing could be an authentic manifestation of soul...’ (Giegerich 2008a, p. 32).

In Giegerich’s writing, ‘the soul’ is the on-going objective thought or logical life as which psychic phenomena exist, the emphasis here being on the lack of a substantiated soul as a separate producing agent behind the psychic phenomena. He cites the brain as a demonstrable fact, a positivity; whereas the mind or soul is productivity itself; i.e., one cannot find soul in a dissected human being. There is only the actually occurring logical life or thinking itself with no literal substantialized soul behind it. When questioned about the apparent substantiating of the term in his written work, Giegerich responds that it is not a hypostasis but is used only as a mythologizing language or façon de parler (a favourite expression). ‘For me there is no such thing as a soul. The soul does not exist. It is the depth of the logical life at work in what happens, no more’ (personal communication).

In this way, the soul or objective psyche is viewed as mindedness, i.e., its need to give expression to the inner truth, or the logic, of man’s actual and essentially social and communal being-in-the-world. It presents itself in each historical situation in a different form; indeed, it takes its form from the cultural context in which it finds itself and within which its developmental struggle is situated. The steps forward in this development are not to be found ‘up there’ on the level of dreams and their analysis but rather “down here” on the level of real historical processes and events’ (Giegerich 2008a, p. 18). The latter include wars, revolutions, economic and social change, technical innovations, and the challenges in great works of art and philosophy.

The Western mind has evolved through being subjected to myriad changes across the centuries. By 1800, the latest of these were the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. In other words, the developmental process of the soul has taken place through the historical change from polytheistic gods to the one high God, as well as the change from gods to Platonic Ideas and then to abstract concepts. In this way, the soul developed as the result of a series of ‘killings’, or decompositions and distillations of previously held concepts. As the end product of this processing, the latter are sublated or rendered obsolete.

An example of the way Giegerich puts these ideas into practice may be seen in the article ‘God Must Not Die!’ cited above. In this article, Giegerich says that the death of God long pre-dated Nietzsche’s pronouncement in the 19th century. The origins of that date back to the beginnings of Christianity when Christ, as God incarnate, empties (kenôsis) himself of divinity during his agony at the Cross. It took centuries of alchemical distillation for what was implicit from the beginning to become conscious in the 19th century.
Christ’s teachings are not related to the material world but to spirit and truth as exemplified by his saying that his Kingdom is not of this world. The not is significant here as it is, for instance, in the alchemical saying aurum nostrum non est aurum vulgi (our gold is not the common gold). Giegerich’s conclusion in his article is that Jung tried to reincarnate God as the symbol of the self (God-image) in what he calls ‘the unconscious’. In that way, he split the ‘I’ between ‘the unconscious’ and the ego or consciousness. Jung tried to avoid being seen as a religious thinker making metaphysical claims and presented himself, instead, as a scientist dealing only with empirical facts. However, the painful realization in the 19th century that God is dead was an accomplished fact which had overcome consciousness. This was brought about by history and by the soul itself because an irreversible increase in man’s consciousness had taken place and had made it independent of the former metaphysical belief in the existence of God.

The dialectic of alchemy

As Hegelian ideas feature in Giegerich’s work, it requires some effort in understanding them and for one to make sense of those most frequently to be found there. To start with, it is important to bear in mind that Giegerich does not consider himself to be an Hegelian, which would be an impossibility in the twenty-first century. Nor does he claim to understand Hegel’s work fully. It has been suggested that Giegerich’s so-called ‘neo-Hegelianism’ has been dispatched by William James in *A Pluralistic Universe*. Giegerich’s response is to ask why what one philosopher says should dispatch the thinking of another philosopher. He goes on to say that, although it is not the same, it is a little bit like saying the Impressionists dispatched the Renaissance. To call his work ‘neo-Hegelianism’ shows a lack of grasp as to what his work circles around (personal communication).

It is Giegerich’s view that Hegel achieved the most comprehensive and differentiated thinking which, though it has been superseded historically after his death by thinkers such as Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, has not been superseded in sophistication. Giegerich tries to penetrate thinkingly into psychological phenomena which inevitably brings out their internal dialectic. This may be thought of as the dynamic developmental process in which nothing is discarded or destroyed. Instead, it is sublated or overcome while, at the same time, being preserved not lost. Negation in the dialectic is the negation of a positive, tangible, demonstrable reality, a taking off deeper into the interiority of the phenomenon itself. Absolute Knowledge is one freed (absolved) from the difference between the absolute and the empirical, the infinite and the finite, culminating in a speculative stance that overcomes the alienation of subject and object.

An important point to note here is the way that Giegerich writes about ‘the soul’ as a mercurial term, not a scientific ‘technical term’. It is not to be fixated to one single meaning. There are certain contexts where soul can be likened
to *Geist* in Hegel’s writings, provided the latter is understood as ‘mindedness’, while in other contexts it would not be helpful to compare it to *Geist*. What soul means should always be derived from how it is used in each given context, rather than inserting a fixed definition of ‘soul’ into any case where ‘soul’ occurs. Nevertheless, his work may be viewed as forming parts of an organic whole, rooted in one conception of the soul coming from a commitment to soul, rather than from a commitment to Hegel.

A central aspect of Giegerich’s psychological approach is the way dialectical thinking is linked to alchemical distillation. Alchemy is *contra naturam* in displacing human existence from the biological sphere to the slow path to what Giegerich calls *mindedness*. This is the relation to or openness for the truth, i.e., the logic of actually lived life at a given historical locus. This slow path ‘follows the process which historically constitutes the matter all the way to the utmost consequences lying in the matter… this is how it becomes slowly absolute-negatively interiorized into itself: released into its truth… the freeing of the Mercurius imprisoned in the physicalness of the matter’ (Giegerich 2010b, p. 15; italics original).

What is at work here is not just the alchemical distillation of the semantic contents of ego, for instance, *images* into the logical form or *syntax* of soul. It is the *absolute negation* of the logical form of the content from within itself which arrives back at the starting point albeit a transformed starting point.

The way the above may be seen at work in Giegerich’s writing is in his depiction of the process of symbolization.

The invisible soul or logic expresses itself first in symbolic garb, for example, in a sexual phenomenon. Secondly, the phenomenal aspect of the symbol negates itself as follows: ‘I (the way I look) am not what I am about – I am not really about sexuality at all’. Thirdly, the phenomenal aspect of the symbol points to some other hidden invisible as to that which it is actually about. Fourthly, the symbol says: ‘But only through me (this my garb) can you get an access to this other’. Fifthly, ‘Because my meaning is absolutely negative, I really mean *nothing* but not nothing in the sense of total emptiness’. The symbol is this internal drama occurring simultaneously which is a logical drama, the logic of the symbol as a circular, uroboric logic.

(personal communication)

‘Killings’

‘All steps forward in the improvement of the human psyche have been paid for by blood’ (Jung 1960/1975, para. 549). This echoes Jung’s favourite Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, whose often quoted saying is that war is the father of all things. Heraclitus himself may well be considered to be the ‘Father’ of psychology. From Giegerich’s point of view, this is exemplified by the Western mind having taken several developmental steps by which it continually differentiated and sublated (i.e., overcame) itself on ever newer levels. Put another way, it is through a long procession of ‘killings’ that an increase in
consciousness has come about, so that the killing of bulls to offer to Zeus in antiquity illustrates ‘some sense of sacrificial killing as the primordial soul-making’ (Giegerich 2008a, p. 190). The actual killing of bulls for sacrifice to Zeus presupposed a belief in the actual existence of the latter and the other Olympian gods.

The increase of consciousness brought about the capacity to understand blood sacrifices in a more symbolic way. This came about with the shift in the Judaeo/Christian era to a monotheistic system of belief that did away with the necessity of actual blood sacrifice. That represented not just a temporal gap but also a logical one. There was a further increase in consciousness from the time of the Middle Ages to Modernity, so that around 1800 it became impossible for the soul still to be upward-looking for its highest value as a semantic or contents level of consciousness. The reason for this was that it had been integrated now into the overall structural or syntactical level of consciousness.

In the history of the mind, consciousness has objectively moved from an interpretation of the soul as a whole to a new one. ‘It is our historical locus that determines which “self-interpretation” of “the soul” we find ourselves in’ (Giegerich 2008a, p. 86). From this perspective, the soul is not to be viewed as an innate psychic organ akin to bodily organs, but rather as event and history. For Giegerich, the soul’s main alchemical laboratory is history, the history of culture and of consciousness, which is the history of the soul. It was Heraclitus’ insight that the logos structures and permeates both the Real and the ‘I’. What he thought of as the heavenly light is the pure element of all knowing; it is also the small light in humans, the light of the human mind. The awareness of this undivided self-division is a historical achievement. At the time of ritual performance, the heavenly light was imprisoned in concrete factuality and there was no need for a thinking ‘I’, for a subjective soul that reflects.

In the above manner, an irreversible increase in man’s consciousness had taken place and made it independent. This is part of the soul’s self-relation in overcoming itself in the development of the logical life of the soul. This is the alchemical work of history, which is the history of the development of consciousness. Development here means consciousness taking off from its initial stage, negating and sublating the latter and reaching a new stage, from which the same process can begin again. It was Heraclitus’ dictum, quoted at the top of this article, that keeps humanity moving forward all the way. Giegerich’s view of Heraclitus is that instead of presenting a reified negation, ‘his’ negation interiorizes the forward move itself into itself and only in this self-contradictory way causes this decided move to be a recursive move into soul and its depth’ (Giegerich 2008b, p. 214; italics original).

Syzygy

A psychology informed by alchemy would have the task of freeing ‘the spirit Mercurius’, which is the thought that is imprisoned in ‘matter’, for
example, image, emotion, body symptom. The true laboratory of the soul in the
alchemical *opus* is the real historical process whereby the contradictory life of
itself and its own other will have disappeared as something in their own right
and been reduced to sublated moments of unity. This will be explored through
the ‘killing’ of anima by animus as it may be seen to be at work in the story of
*Bluebeard*. The version to be used is the following.

A young girl marries a man who is rich, but, especially due to his blue beard, gives
an uncanny impression. She follows him to his castle. There she lives in wealth and
happiness, without a care. One day Bluebeard tells her that he must go on a journey.
He hands over all the keys to his wife, giving her permission to open all doors except
a certain one which she is not to open under any circumstances. But the woman
succumbs to her curiosity. She opens that door and finds the corpses of Bluebeard’s
former wives. The key, which in her fright had dropped into a pool of blood, cannot be
cleaned by any means, so that Bluebeard, who has come back unexpectedly, recognizes
that she has violated his prohibition. He announces that she will have to die instantly.
She requests a delay for a chance to say a prayer and is rescued by her brothers in the
nick of time.

The Hollywoodized happy ending was presumably added to please readers’
expectations. Giegerich’s interpretation of the story is that, by the very act of
seeing the other corpses, the psychological innocence of the feminine *anima*
discovers the killer aspect of the masculine *animus*. Giegerich stresses that one
must not take sides in this story by identifying with the wife, as anima and
animus are equally soul and the real point of the story is their inter-relationship.
The virginal innocence of the one constellates the murderous aspect of the other
and the two are yoked in the *syzygy*. Bluebeard in the story is not a sex killer
which shows, instead, how ‘absolutely non-violently the soul violates herself’
(Giegerich 2002a, p. 142; italics original).

When the story is approached from the stance of internal reflection, Bluebeard
may be seen to represent the absolute negation that is animus, while the innocent
wife is the personification of anima. Each is inherent in its own opposite.
Absolute negation here means absolved or freed from the opposites through
the alchemical process of fermenting corruption, sublimation, and distillation
of imagery which, as a consequence, is transformed into the logical syntax
of consciousness that is thought. ‘Dialectics and alchemy...stay with the one
(hermetically enclosed) matter at hand and in both it is always so that the form
of the dialectically or alchemically thinking consciousness itself is subjected to
the same process of the matter that is dialectically decomposed’ (ibid., p. 217;
italics original). From this, one gets a clearer idea of why alchemy may be
thought of as a recursive process.

**Ego**

Giegerich is critical of the notion of *ego*. As a consequence, he has critiqued
Neumann’s ego/self axis, an axiom that is common parlance in some Jungian
circles. Giegerich cites a number of ways in which the *ego* may try to
overthrow what has been alchemically distilled into logical form or the syntax of consciousness. These may manifest as fundamentalism, the theoretical revival of ‘the gods’, or the reduction of the former God to no more than a subjective feeling. Rather than mind being distilled from matter, the opposite can occur in which mind is buried in matter through ‘the redefinition of man as an apparatus’ (Henderson & Henderson 2010c, p. 286), which in today’s terms is done ‘by trying to interpret the findings of the new neurosciences as “support” for, or even proof for, the correctness of what psychoanalysis has said all along’ (ibid., p. 286).

The mind may be benumbed by loud music, drugs, and mass sports events. Alongside these is the quest for ‘meaning’, which Giegerich sees as striving for wish-fulfilment rather than for truth. This is due to the fact that it makes ‘meaning’ a commodity that is supposed to be available somewhere but has not yet been found. He suggests all of the above will increase as life becomes more complex and technical as they represent a love of mindlessness or of consciousness wanting to become unconscious.

Practical therapy

When asked how his approach is grounded analytically, Giegerich responds that it is a descent, a slow learning to be what one really is in emancipating oneself from what Jung called the suggestive power of unconscious images. At first sight, it seems surprising that in his writings, Giegerich is critical of Nietzsche’s Übermensch. Giegerich summarizes this in the following way: ‘Übermensch is not related to what I am getting at. It is utopian and excessive. What I am getting at is, for example, “I am ONLY that!”. Nietzsche had a programme, he wanted to get somewhere. I only want to know where and what we actually are. No goal. Just a bit of honesty and insight’ (personal communication). The following account of his analytical approach has been contributed by Giegerich for this article:

I am not so sure whether it is a good idea to include descriptions of my work in the consulting room in an account of my published work on psychology. I make a strict difference between psychological theory and work in the consulting room. The former serves to my mind the sole purpose of training the mind, educating the mind: teaching it to think psychologically and becoming able to really take a psychological standpoint. It does not have the purpose of establishing a theory to be applied to the work with patients. In the consulting room I try to be present with such a psychologically-trained consciousness, but otherwise forget theories and approach the patient unprejudiced (as much as is humanly possible) in the spirit of Nowness and Eachness. The concentration is on this phenomenon now (this dream, symptom, memory, fantasy today). And the question is: what does it need? Here, I think my intuition needs to come into play. Great openness. No ‘technique’. No psychological jargon (rarely do I use words like anima or shadow or self, etc. I avoid psychological brainwashing of my patients: staying with what shows itself!) Undogmatic. Improvisation, playing it by ear. This also requires honesty: my honest response at this moment to what shows itself. The
work can be very different with different patients, but also different from session to session with one and the same patient. Openness to the Now (which even includes the Now of my mood and my perspective). By the way: usually chair. But if need be also couch. Or even going for a walk... Especially important is for me the respect for the psychological difference. I try to be present in the sessions as the concrete ordinary person that I am (human, all-too-human) and to also see the ordinary human being in my patient. Because of this respect for the ordinary human level, I do not systematically invite transference reactions. I do not offer myself as a kind of guru or so. But despite this acknowledgment of the human level, this is—except in the case of people whose problems are psychic (on the human, all-too-human level, the level of the human animal) rather than psychological—not my focus. The focus is the soul, the psychology of the situation, the soul level. What does the soul, the objective psyche, want? What is the soul content of this dream image or phenomenon? What is the thought or feeling inherent in the phenomenon? Not what does the patient want, think, feel. So when a patient starts to talk about what he feels, or associates, about a given image, I of course listen to it, but try to gently lead him away from this his circling around himself and to put the substance of the phenomenon into the centre. This of course requires psychological tact and an inventiveness (how can one reach this patient and win him over for a psychological approach without hurting his feelings terribly?). But it is not so difficult if one has oneself a strong, convincing commitment and insight into soul, although it is true that not every patient is ready for true psychology... But at any rate the basic intention is to enable a patient to learn to get a distance to himself, to see himself objectively, and to appreciate the objective dynamics of the soul’s life apart from his personal intentions and feelings. A spirit of playfulness, humour, kind irony are helpful in this regard. The psychological difference (‘render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s’) helps to avoid the two dangers that go along with a therapeutic approach unaware of the difference, first, the danger of becoming personalistic and positivistic as often in developmental psychology, and secondly, the danger of mystification (unnecessarily inflating the patient’s life and experiences with mythic importance; seeing the patient’s process as his ‘individuation’ in the loaded Jungian sense; operating with the search for wholeness and meanings, etc. Mystification is of course also based on positivism: it is the inflation of the positive-factual with ‘higher’ meaning). So these are some comments about my emphases in practical therapy.

(personal communication)

Giegerich acknowledges that the soul is at the mercy of the imaginary and emotional passions but even at those times it thinks however only ‘in an obscured, beclouded way’ (Giegerich 2007, p. 255). He states that psychogenic body symptoms and affects are essentially thoughts that are submerged into the natural, physical medium of body or emotion: ‘body symptom is submerged emotion, emotion is submerged image, image is submerged thought, and conversely, thought is sublated image, image is sublated emotion, emotion is sublated body reaction’ (ibid.). Giegerich emphasizes that abstract thinking is what today’s soul needs in the shape of more intellect—not more feelings, emotions, body work. He dismisses the latter as ‘ego-stuff’.
Critique of Jung

Jung and the French anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss, founder of structural anthropology, ‘share in common the fact that they are criticized from within their own discipline as well as from outside it. Lévi-Strauss’s detractors include Sartre, Ricoeur, Derrida, and Geertz some of whose criticisms of structuralism resonate as similar to those levelled at Jung’s theory of archetypes, namely that they are “timeless”, that they negate history and deal with universals of the human mind rather than with particular features of different cultures’ (Casement 2007, p. 87). In the article from which the above is an extract, I was examining Jung’s application of some concepts from the social sciences. I suspect that Giegerich was also struggling to make sense of inconsistencies in Jung’s writing until 1984, which was the time when he (Giegerich) started to emerge from an unconscious identification with Jung. The fact of becoming critical of Jung’s ideas does not mean that Giegerich has dispatched Jung to the outer darkness. On the contrary, he continues to think of himself as a Jungian psychoanalyst.

While Giegerich remains true in particular to Jung’s contribution to psychology of the concept of the soul, of psychological reality, and of his later work on alchemy, three of his main criticisms are as follows.

i) Jung hypostasizes ‘the unconscious’ and in this way treats unconsciousness as a positive fact as if it were some kind of author of dreams, visions, myths, ideas. In the same manner, Jung reifies ‘the archetypes’.

ii) Jung tended to see neurosis ultimately as a sacred disease or religious quest so that psychic illnesses are seen as basically valuable, noble, even ‘sacred’.

iii) Jung insisted that the salvation of the world consists in the salvation of the individual soul. A psychology that deserves its name cannot take any positive reality, either the individual or society (the collective) as fundamental. What the pre-Socratic philosopher, Heraclitus, called the existing logos, the logic or syntax of being-in-the-world is neither something in the individual (the literalized ‘inner’, his ‘unconscious’) nor something ‘collective’ (personal communication).

Jung refused to see that archetypal images do not per se indicate and guarantee the greatness he assigned to them, as well as to the work in the consulting room. These are exaggerated and given an almost religious significance far beyond the limited, personal importance that they do indeed have. For Jung, this is where the numen is to be found but, according to Giegerich, although they may be important psychically, psychologically they are irrelevant. By the former, he means the concrete empirical characteristics of an individual’s ego personality, which would be the subject of study for human biology not of psychology (logos of the soul). Though he acknowledges that in the consulting room the therapist is confronted with a real human being and therefore has to be attentive to both sides of the psychological difference.
Giegerich holds Jung responsible for the condition of today’s Jungianism, i.e., for what he (Giegerich) points to as the prevailing subjective, fundamentally amateurish, and popular character of the typical Jungian publication, on the one hand, and for the inflated, phoney spirit in which use is made of symbols and myths as well as of words such as ‘the sacred’ and ‘the numinous’, on the other. Jung saw the ‘banal’ Nazi movement as ‘expressive of an archetype, even a god (Wotan)’ (Giegerich 2004, p. 274). As a result, it became endowed with a psychological depth which Giegerich is sceptical about. This bears comparison with what the philosopher and political scientist, Hannah Arendt, called ‘the banality of evil’ (Arendt 1963/1994: sub-title).

The advent of the internet, representing as it does a new reality level, has sublated the earlier level in which nature and the physical world served as the logical and psychological basis of human existence. Myth and metaphysics had functioned as mental reflections of the natural world but that era has been over for two hundred years. The underlying substrate is no longer the natural and substantial but has shifted to the intellectual; it is now logical form ‘first and fore-most linguistic, semiotic, information... man himself is language’ (Giegerich 2004, p. 19).

Transcendent function

The transcendent function is of central importance in Jung’s approach as it is frequently referred to in the work of subsequent writers. Giegerich’s critique of this is that Jung starts with the idea of the tension of opposites which are resolved through a creative synthesis. This comes about in a seemingly miraculous way without an attempt on Jung’s part to look at the process from the point of view of its internal inconsistencies.

Giegerich’s formulation of the dialectical process is that its starting point is not from a position of twoness but from that of one. As a result of staying doggedly with that position, the mind discovers it to be untenable, which is a Negation of the initial position ‘A’. This negation results in ‘non-A’, a contradiction to the initial position. This negation itself when tested also proves to be untenable, which then results in the Negation of the Negation and may be expressed as ‘not-non-A’. The negation of the negation as such is Absolute Negation which reverts to the initial position ‘A’. But this is not exactly the same point as at the beginning of the process as it has been mediated and refined by the history of all the negations it has been through. The positions on the way have been sublated, in the course of which, nothing has been lost or discarded but rather has been enriched by the various negations. The dialectical process then starts again from this new differentiated position.

As Giegerich puts it, the dialectic proceeds from the standpoint of interiority and is noetic and linguistic (contradiction), not thing-like as it exists in Jung’s model. It is, instead, an alchemical process of fermenting corruption and decomposition, a recursive process of negation and going under, not a utopian resolution in a so-called ‘creative synthesis’.
Pushing-off

Giegerich’s own work focuses on the psychological Jung and ignores or rejects the other, naturalistic, scientific Jung. Being true to the soul of his life’s work means paradoxically pushing-off (taking off) from Jung. It is only in the title of a late work of his that Jung shows he is no longer concentrated on entities and substance. In *Mysterium Coniunctionis: An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy*, Jung expresses the abstract notion of the oppositional structure or form of the psychic. ‘What the opposites are here is not said, and it cannot, should not, be said in the context of this late work because this would be a relapse into the substantiating style of thought that this title has long left behind’ (Giegerich 2007, p. 249).

Critique of Hillman

In a letter dated 23rd September 2008 sent to a Brazilian seminar on James Hillman and his work, Giegerich wrote the following:

...when I began my psychological work I was deeply impressed by the new life James Hillman had breathed into Jungian psychology and I co-operated with him closely for many years. At a certain point, his and my thinking began to drift apart in slightly different directions, although we remain connected through a passionate psychological concern we share. Towards the end of the 1980s it appeared to me that it was Hillman, not me, who had moved away from some of his earlier positions in a direction that I was not able to follow.

(Giegerich 2008c)

According to Giegerich, the major differences between him and Hillman all more or less boil down to one and the same difference, which may nevertheless be broken down in the following points that Giegerich sent to me in 2010 when I was preparing for the panel at the Montreal Congress.

1. Hillman started to ‘Re-Vision’ psychology and go beyond Jung. My charge is that he did not go far enough, not all the way.
2. Concerning the style of psychology, his is, basically, an ‘anima-only’ psychology, as I call it. The ‘animus’ and its negations have no place in its own form, at least generally.
3. He thinks that the image, the imaginal is the ultimate. I think that the image is merely a form of manifestation of the soul’s thought. ‘The soul always thinks’.
4. He eliminated Time, history from his scheme. Ultimately he operates within a scheme of psyche as timeless (his ‘Platonistic’ fallacy).
5. He has a nostalgic agenda. A programme. He does not simply describe and analyse. Hillman rightly attacked the idea that psychotherapy could bring about a bettering of the world, and suggested that there should be a shift from ‘mirror to window’. But by saying ‘We’ve had a hundred years of psychotherapy and the world is getting worse’ he shows his disappointment, and insofar as a disappointment is the disappointment of a hope or wish,
he shows that he wants to be in the business of world-improvement. For me, this is the hope of a prophet, not the job of a psychotherapist.

6. In his style of writing and thinking, he tends to be ‘impressionistic’, merely suggestive (thus also his preference of rhetoric), without thoroughly working out and thoroughly arguing and supporting his case. Some of his interpretations and theses, therefore, are weighed in the balance, and found wanting when one examines them more closely.

‘Divergences’

James Hillman drew my attention to his response to Giegerich’s criticisms in a short paper entitled ‘Divergences’ (Hillman 2008) written in the first person. The following is an extract from that paper.

For me, the soul’s logos is not a logic, nor is the soul itself a logos. The soul’s logos shows itself in its capacity to word itself, to account for itself, describe itself, tell its truth, and this logos is boundless (as Wolfgang already said), and not necessarily only logical, or syntactical. Its logos, the logos of the psyche, psychology may appear as well in images as in thought.

I like Giegerich’s idea that psyche is [also] thought and soul-making is [also] thinking... (he) writes that we think in words of language and not in images. I’d say just the contrary. Words are themselves images... Language can never free us from its primordial mother, the sensory, the natural, the physical...

Must we prioritize word over image or image over word? If, however, we do make this move in one direction or the other, what could be the consequences? Image first means a psychology that is aesthetic and immersed in cosmos. Word first offers a psychology ‘cut’, as Wolfgang says, from all physicality, save the human mind.

A major divergence is how we look at history... If, however, you look at written work with the lens of image, as paintings or pieces of music, then they may widely differ one from another and not be required to fulfil the idea of chronological consistency. This imagistic, if you will, approach also can apply to Giegerich’s attack style. Imagine his using a palette knife, sandpaper, stiff brushes and hard thick black strokes for limning differences, for breaking through conventions. Think early Stravinsky; Shostakovich. Aggressiveness may be a rhetorical necessity; and so his devastations of Freud and Jung, or me, are not to be taken as literally personally nasty.

It is Giegerich’s view, however, that one must not ‘fall for’ the images that are secondary creations in language. They are not to be taken literally but, instead, one must see ‘through “the sensory, the natural, the physical” through the “imaginal”—and not see through to “the gods” who are themselves produced images to be seen through’ (Giegerich 2010, p. 346; italics original).

He goes on to say that inasmuch as the sounds of language are acoustic signs, these may be called the sensory and physical substrate that underlies language. In using those sounds to create images, the mind precisely strips them of their natural context and appropriates them for its own mental sphere.

The above gives a flavour of some of the differences between these two outstanding figures but there are similarities as well. Both are interested in ideas
and have contributed, and continue to contribute, significantly to the Jungian world of ideas. An important one they share in common is the central place of the soul in psychology. Both are also critical of the emphasis in analysis on subjective, inner problems and of what they see as simplistic notions.

Critique of Liber Novus

In the decades I have been involved in the Jungian world, I have never before witnessed the enormous excitement generated by the publication of the English edition of Jung’s The Red Book: Liber Novus. It was on the Amazon best-seller list, with the first edition selling out before its launch in New York in October 2009. In the pages of this Journal, I said it bore comparison with Nietzsche’s Divine Comedy and Nietzsche’s Zarathustra. This was based on the allusions in the book to those two works such as Descent into Hell in the Future, the title of one section of Liber Primus. From Liber Tertius: Scrutinies there is the following: ‘You call on God for help? The dear old God has died’ (Liber Novus 2009, p. 333).

In Volume 83 of the Journal, Spring, Giegerich’s lengthy review of Liber Novus also makes comparisons between it and the Divine Comedy and Zarathustra. His analysis of the character of the book is unfavourable and consists of a three-part approach: it is Jung’s ‘Answer to Nietzsche’; it is not a great work of art comparable to Dante’s Divine Comedy or Nietzsche’s Zarathustra; it is the ‘new bible’. Giegerich acknowledges the book’s imitation of Nietzsche in style and partly in intent. He views the purpose of the book as Jung’s attempt to overcome the nihilism and godlessness of the present by seeking for ‘meaning’ and ‘God’ in the ‘Overgod’. ‘Jung follows Nietzsche and departs from him at the same time by not seeing salvation in the overman but in a new religiousness’ (Giegerich 2010a, p. 386). Nietzsche was the last of the 19th century’s utopian thinkers in the way he imaged creativity as Dionysus’s coming to the deserted but potentially creative soul, Ariadne. ‘With the fundamental collapse of Nietzsche’s hope the potential of utopian thought—as true thought—was exhausted’ (ibid., p. 381).

What separates Zarathustra and Liber Novus, according to Giegerich, is that, in the former, Nietzsche was struggling with truly philosophical problems about the nature of man and the world whereas Liber Novus portrays the concrete individual as literal man.

In the second part of his critique, Giegerich dismisses Liber Novus as a work of art comparable with the Divine Comedy as the former confines itself to an account of individual experiences. Dante’s work may have had its origins in those but it then released itself from these private experiences into its form as poetic imagination. This comes about through the working-off of the duality of subject and object and finds everything it needs in itself. In this way, the work of art obtains true objectivity ‘so that the generality can experience it as its own’ (ibid., p. 366).
As *Liber Novus*, in contrast with Dante’s work, is about inner experiences from ‘the unconscious’ and the ‘individuation process’ of its author, it maintains the duality of the positivity in the prime matter. Giegerich states that truth is the end product of a long alchemical processing of matter. He is also critical of Jung’s assertion that there was nothing of conscious structure in the fantasies saying that, on the contrary, all art is of conscious structure otherwise dogs would be able to appreciate works of art. The socio-political realities of World War I, for instance, are interiorized as arising from internal problems.

Giegerich’s assertion that *Liber Novus* is the new bible is based on the following: ‘*Liber* is the translation of the Greek *biblion* from whose plural *biblia*, the book of books we have our word “Bible”’ (ibid., p. 382). He cites Jung telling Christiana Morgan that if she made her own *Red Book* it would be her church, her cathedral. For Giegerich, Jung could equally have said it would be her own Bible.

The ‘I’ in *Liber Novus* is identified with Christ in several places, including Jung’s claim that no one knows what happened during the three days Christ was in Hell but that Jung himself has experienced it. This leads into Giegerich’s assertion that as the book teaches people to be ‘Christ’s’ rather than ‘Christians’, it is fittingly entitled *Liber Novus*. ‘Ideally, if there are four billion people in the world, each one should solipsistically have his or her own equivalent to Jung’s Red Book’ (ibid., p. 363).

As to Jung’s saying that the mystery of Christ was incomplete, he applied Nietzsche’s dynamic to a different outcome viz. for Nietzsche it was man that needs to be overcome; in *Liber Novus* it is God himself who needs to be overcome.

Giegerich has high praise for Sonu Shamdasani’s introduction and annotations but is critical of some of the English translation. It is the job of the translators to take that up should they wish to do so.

When writing about the Red Book in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Jung states:

“I became aware that I still had to translate it into something else. Therefore I gave up this aestheticizing tendency in good time, in favour of a rigorous process of understanding. I saw that so much fantasy needed firm ground underfoot, and that I must first return wholly to reality. For me, reality meant scientific comprehension.”

*(Jung 1963, p. 180; italics original)*

Toshio Kawai, who led the Japanese translation of *Liber Novus*, expressed mixed feelings about the book in an interview he gave for the first issue of the *IAAP Newsheet*. In the course of the interview, he says that he was fascinated and overwhelmed by the book but did not like the exaggerated style, especially in the first book. ‘The whole struggle concerning anxiety about going mad and the death of God was rather strange for me’ *(IAAP Newsheet 2011, pages*
not numbered). On the other hand, he liked ‘Scrutinies’, particularly Philemon preaching to the unsaved dead. His view is that Liber Novus tries to convey something about pre-modern cults that lie beyond Christianity and its conflicts.

The favourable and critical comments about Liber Novus will, no doubt, continue for some time to come. Giegerich’s own conclusion is that it is important for historical studies of Jung, but suggests that psychologists would be well advised to dissociate themselves from it and base their work instead on Jung’s published works on psychology ‘and critically so at that’ (Giegerich 2010a, p. 380; italics original).

Conclusion

A summary of Giegerich’s thought might be the following: the soul lives in mindedness all the time, although in different ways and forms. ‘In my view, mindedness IS the relation to or openness for the truth, i.e., the logic of actually lived life at a given historical locus’ (personal communication).

Immersion in Giegerich’s thinking processes requires strenuous application. It is to be hoped the resulting adumbrations in this article give some indication of the clarity of his writing, the way he thoroughly grounds in argument each point he makes, and his humanity. A key approach in thinking about his writing is one that requires effort to get into it, to achieve interiority rather than to view things or to imagine them from the outside.

In a recent communication, Giegerich sent a ‘hint’ as to how his views may be understood: ‘The motive force behind it is the question how psychology must be if it is to deserve its name (logos of the soul)’.

ADDENDUM

In the course of putting together this article, it was tempting to push-off from Giegerich in critically contrasting his ideas with that of other writers such as Bion (alpha-function), Lacan, Žižek (dialectical thinking), Cambray, Colman, Hogenson, Knox, Wilkinson (critics of Jung’s innatism in this Journal). This has been resisted as it felt like privileging free association, a going off on a tangent to other things rather than remaining as close as possible to the integrity of Giegerich’s own approach to thinking.

Translations of Abstract

L’article suivant relate ma découverte de Wolfgang Giegerich et l’immersion dans son œuvre qui s’en est suivie. Des extraits de ses écrits volumineux sur l’âme sont présentés afin d’illustrer ses tentatives de pénétrer les phénomènes psychologiques par la pensée et d’affirmer qu’une telle démarche met inévitablement à jour leur dialectique interne. L’article résume ses critiques de Jung, Hillman et le Livre Rouge : Liber Novus.
Der folgende Artikel berichtet über meine Entdeckung und anschließende Vertiefung in Wolfgang Giegerichs Werk. Um zu illustrieren, wie er denkend in psychische Phänomene einzudringen versucht und dabei zu der Behauptung kommt, daß dies zwangsläufig deren interne Dialektik hervortreten läßt, wird eine Probe seiner umfangreichen Schriften über Die Seele ausgebreitet. Der Artikel faßt seine Kritiken zu Jung, Hillman und das Rote Buch: Liber Novus zusammen.

Il seguente articolo è un resoconto della mia scoperta e della susseguente immersione nel lavoro di Wolfgang Giegerich. Viene presentato un esempio dei suoi voluminosi scritti sull’anima così da mostrare in che modo egli tenti di penetrare attraverso il pensiero i fenomeni psicologici e della sua affermazione che ciò conduce inevitabilmente a scoprire la loro dialettica interna. Questo articolo riassume le sue critiche a Jung, Hillman e al Red Book: Liber Novus.

Эта статья – рассказ о моем открытии и последующем погружении в работу Вольфганга Гигериха. Приводится пример из его объемистых писаний о душе, чтобы лучше проиллюстрировать его попытки мыслительно проникнуть в психологические феномены, а также рассматриваются его претензии и утверждения, неизбежно раскрывающиеся в его труде во всей их внутренней диалектике. Статья обобщает его критику Юнга, Хиллмана и «Красной книги: Liber Novus»

El artículo siguiente es una revisión de mi descubrimiento e inmersión subsiguiente en el trabajo de Wolfgang Giegerich. Se expone una ejemplarización de sus voluminosos escritos sobre el alma para ilustrar cómo él intenta penetrar mediante el pensamiento en fenómenos psicológicos y su constante clamor de que ello expone inevitablemente su dialéctica interior. El artículo resume sus críticas sobre Jung, Hillman, y El Libro Rojo: Liber Novus.

References

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