

Rejoinder to Steven Joseph and Sanford Drob

Micha Ankori

Let me begin by thanking Steven Joseph and Sanford Drob for their comments, which help to widen the scope of my paper and open up new channels for discussion.

I accept most of their comments and will therefore confine myself to a brief response.

1) The crucial question hovering above the entire discussion is the status and the role of the symbol within the human soul and its uses in mystical philosophy and in psychotherapy. Wolfgang Giegerich (2004) offers the most radical view on this issue, with his apocalyptic forecast about the death of the symbol as its meaning is exposed. I can only say that my experience is entirely different from that of Giegerich, and I agree with Drob's remarks on this question. The symbol may die between the pages of learned articles, but will never die in its natural habitat—the human soul. The symbol is the soul's natural language, as Jung discovered, the instrument the unconscious relies upon for self-expression and the soul uses in order to connect with the external world. In our case, philosophical speculation must make room for the therapeutic experience, which is intimately related to the symbol's features. In the therapeutic encounter, no doubt can be cast on the expressive and transformative power of the symbol.

2) A danger does lurk here, however, which the discussants intimate in various ways. There is a tendency to turn the instrument into an essence, and the risk of developing an addiction to symbolism is indeed highly prevalent today. One consequence is, for instance, a penchant for replacing modern psychology with "spiritual" psychomysticism or "kabbalist psychology." Psychology developed from the encounter between ancient healing traditions and modern medicine, and to renounce either of these sources is unjustified. Ancient wisdom can make a seminal contribution to modern thought, but cannot replace it.

3) There is a big difference between recognizing the existence of myths in the Bible and presenting the Bible as myth. The Bible discerns myths and even contains segments of myths. But the Bible is not a myth. In my opinion, Jung made a huge mistake in his "Answer to Job" by relating to the story as if to a myth. He attributed changes in God on the level of consciousness, ascribing him with emotions that are much too human. Although this is suitable in the world of the mythological gods, it is definitely foreign to the perception of the biblical God. While Jung's opinions in his "Answer to Job" have great psychological value, they have very little to do with the biblical Job.

4) Drob refers to the claim of Kabbalah scholars who negate the psychological interpretation. Indeed, most academic researchers (at least in Israel) hold that psychological interpretation is arbitrary and has nothing to contribute to the understanding of mysticism. In these terms, no resolution is possible because the discourse is being conducted on two parallel levels: the rational-philosophical and the experiential-therapeutic. My answer to this issue is that classic mystics have already attested in favor of the psychological interpretation. Jung found that

alchemists claim that the alchemical process unfolds in the alchemist's soul, and in kabbalistic literature as well we find the claim that emanation is a process unfolding in the human soul (see Zohar, I:83a-b)

5) I object to Drob's concern with the question of Jung's attitude toward Jews. Although it has become fashionable to trace the links between anti-Semitism and everything else, it makes no contribution to the discussion. Jung's attitude toward Jews is an important topic (and we run a forum on it in our society's website—www.israjung.co.il—that readers are invited to join), but it has no bearing on the links between alchemy and Kabbalah.

Thanks again to both discussants, who shed light on significant issues I failed to address in my paper and suggested interesting directions for further study and research.

References

Giegerich, Wolfgang. (2004). The end of meaning and the birth of man. *Journal of Jungian Theory and Practice*, 6(1).