

## Response to Beebe and Giegerich

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First, I would like to thank the editor for providing me with a forum for detailing an understanding of Jung's kabbalistic vision and the transformation of his attitude towards the Jewish tradition, which, as Dr. Beebe points out, had earlier been suggested (e.g., by Spiegelman and Rosen) but never fully articulated. I am, of course, also thankful to John Beebe for his generous comments, but also to Wolfgang Giegerich for his incisive criticisms, some of which will lead to modifications in my thinking, and others of which will here provide me with an opportunity to further clarify my position with respect to three important issues: (1) Jung's need to account for his purported anti-Semitism, (2) my understanding of the changes in Jung's attitude towards and appreciation of the Jewish tradition, and (3) the evidence for my characterization of Jung as *kabbalistic*.

(1) I do not think that the question of Jung's purported anti-Semitism and optimistic, even enthusiastic reception of Hitler and National Socialism can be compared and assimilated to the questions of Newton's unpleasant character or Picasso's treatment of women. Indeed, it is the tendency of certain Jungians to dismiss the problem of Jung's purported anti-Semitism as irrelevant that has fueled so much antipathy to Jung and his theories in the wider psychoanalytic and psychological communities. I applaud the efforts of those who have contributed to the Lingerin Shadows conference and the volumes edited by Maidenbaum to treat this issue squarely and seriously and I view my "Kabbalistic Visions" paper as an addition to this dialogue. If the issue were one of Jung's extramarital affairs or even one of his general "character" I might agree that this was Jung's business and that to expect an apology or explanation would be uncalled for. But unlike Newton's character, which I assume was completely irrelevant to his scientific theories, Jung used Jungian psychology as a justification for his "Hitler optimism," and engaged in public activities (taking on the presidency of the General Medical Society and editing the *Zentralblatt*) that many, wrongly or rightly, have understood to be commiserating with the Nazi party. Jung's optimism regarding Hitler and National Socialism was apparently linked to his view that the Nazis could revitalize the German spirit by channeling archetypal energies that remained latent in the German psyche. Jung's fascination with Hitler and the Nazis stemmed from what he saw as their appeal to the irrational aspects of the collective unconscious (Jung, 1976, p. 164), and as late as 1938 Jung seemed to praise Hitler as a man who is not directed by his ego consciousness but who, rather, heeds a deeper voice, one that emanates from what Jung, in other places, calls the "Self" (Jung, 1977, p. 118). Giegerich (2004, p. 13) himself has written that Jung erred in his belief that that one could return to a pre-modern immersion in symbolic, archetypal forms, and has argued that such an immersion can act as a drug to benumb consciousness and reason. We are therefore entitled to ask if Jung's thinking (or non-thinking) led to a numbing of consciousness and an optimism, even enthusiasm, for Nazism. If aspects of Jungianism undermine consciousness and reason, if Jung could have encouraged his followers to express anti-Semitic

sentiments as a means of their getting in touch with their shadow (Noll, 1997, p. 276),<sup>1</sup> if National Socialism evolved out of a cauldron of ideas that also impacted Jungian psychology, if Jung could praise Hitler in terms that suggested Hitler had achieved something valued by Jungian psychology, if Jungianism leads to elitism, then Jungians need to examine not only Jung's anti-Semitism and Hitler-optimism but perhaps also those elements in his way of thinking that may have led to or justified it.

Jung (1977) himself demanded no less than a full accounting on these matters from his own patients, stating that if those seeking treatment

come from those "decent Germans" who want to foist the guilt onto a couple of men in the Gestapo, I regard the case as hopeless. I shall have no alternative but to answer the applications with a questionnaire asking certain crucial questions, like "What do you think about Buchenwald?" Only when a patient sees and admits his own responsibility can individual treatment be considered. (p. 150)

Further:

The only redemption lies, as I have already indicated, in a complete admission of guilt. *Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!* Out of honest contrition for sin comes divine grace. That is not only a religious but also a psychological truth. (ibid.)

(2) I do not "forgive" Jung. I have neither tried him nor found him guilty, nor do I, born after the Nazi atrocities, have the standing to forgive anyone on behalf of the victims of the holocaust. What I did write is that Jung's attitude towards Judaism evolved over time and that to "assume that the Jung of the 1950s possessed the same attitudes and character traits that he exhibited during the 1930s... undermines the very possibility of the spiritual transformation and psychological change that are foundational assumptions for mysticism and psychotherapy respectively." I believe that it is reasonable to interpret Jung's kabbalistic visions as having contributed to his transformation, but I am under no illusion that my perspective upon his visions unearths their true meaning or is any but one of a number of points of view that can profitably be brought to bear on this material.

In his critique Giegerich seems to make certain "modernist" assumptions that for me are problematic: for example, that there are clear distinctions between an author's subjectivity and the object of his inquiry, between morality and science, between one's activities as a psychologist and the rest of one's life. While I agree that basic standards of evidence must be applied to any historical, biographical, or textual interpretation, I do not believe that such interpretations can ever be made in a vacuum devoid of values, interests, and subjectivity. I have engaged Jung and Jungian psychology as a Jew, as an American, etc. I cannot do so from some presumably neutral, ahistorical position. The only corrective for what Giegerich perceives as my one-sidedness is that others will inevitably engage the same material from other points of view and a dialogue/dialectic will ensue.

(3) The evidence for my characterization of Jung as "kabbalistic" comes from several sources. The first originates directly with Jung (1963/1955-6) himself: his

appeal to the Zohar and other kabbalistic sources in *Mysterium Coniunctionis* and other later works, his acknowledgment in letters and interviews of the concordance between Jewish mysticism and his psychology, and the prominence of kabbalistic themes in the visions that he himself described as “the most tremendous things I have ever experienced.”<sup>2</sup> The second arises out of Jung’s later recognition of the impact of the Kabbalah on the very alchemical texts which he turned to in developing and refining his psychological theories. As I have argued in these pages (Drob, 2003), Patai and others have provided convincing evidence that the Kabbalah served as a significant, if not the most significant foundation for the spiritual aspects of alchemy, the very aspects of alchemy that interested Jung. Thus, in extracting the spiritual/psychological “gold” from the material practice of the alchemists, Jung, whether he was fully aware of this or not, was at least in part reconstituting kabbalistic ideas. Third, I have pointed out that Gnosticism (which impacted Jung so profoundly) and Kabbalah share a number of key symbols, including the symbol of the divine spark entrapped in a material world, and I have argued that Jung’s interpretation of the gnostic symbols was actually *this worldly and kabbalistic* rather than other-worldly and gnostic (Drob, 1999). Finally, a direct examination of the kabbalistic and Hasidic theology, in particular the theosophical system of Isaac Luria (the kabbalistic system that informed the thought of such Hasidim as the Maggid of Mezehirich) confirms the strong affinity between Kabbalism and Jungianism (Drob, 2000) that Jung suggested in his offhand remark about the Maggid,<sup>3</sup> an affinity which includes, but goes well beyond, the Maggid’s contention that the Godhead has a hidden life within the mind of man (Uffenheimer, 1993, p. 207; Zalman, 1981, p. 163). In general, my argument here is twofold: (1) that Jung was influenced more deeply by the Kabbalah than he realized or (perhaps) was willing to acknowledge, and (2) that even absent such direct influence the morphological parallels between Jung’s later thought and Jewish mysticism are such as provide a basis for characterizing a significant portion of Jung’s work “kabbalistic.” Just as a thinker can be “Platonic” without ever having read Plato, Jung can be “kabbalistic” whether or not he was directly influenced by the Kabbalah.

Giegerich correctly points out that in addition to the Jewish/kabbalistic motif in Jung’s vision there are also Christian and Greek themes, and it is true that I have focused on the prominence of the former and minimized the latter in interpreting Jung’s vision as a compensation for his earlier one-sided and anti-Jewish viewpoint. While I do not mean to exclude universal/archetypal interpretations of the divine wedding theme in Jung’s vision, my interpretive strategy was to focus upon an aspect of the *coniunctio* tradition that had earlier been ignored or marginalized by Jung (e.g., in his 1935 letter to Neumann [1973, vol. 1, p. 206]). I find it noteworthy that Jewish mysticism, which had been marginalized in Jung’s earlier writings on alchemy, returns as a priority in his death-bed visions of 1944, and my interpretation offers *one* explanation of why this should have been the case. I will leave it to others to judge whether my interpretation of Jung’s kabbalistic vision is simply “deviant” or is, rather, one that opens up new ways of understanding Jung’s relationship to the Jewish tradition.

John Beebe credits me with “essentially sound” psychological intuition when I argue, as he puts it, “that Jung became a Jew in his sickbed vision of 1944

as a compensation...” Beebe is correct when he suggests that this is a matter of *intuition*. I don’t know how my thesis can be *proven*. Nevertheless, I believe that it is a thesis that will resonate with many who have struggled with certain conflicts generated by their commitment to Jungian psychology, their involvement in or appreciation of Judaism, and their abhorrence of the mentality that eventuated in the holocaust.

## Notes

- 1) As described in Noll (1997): Jung Biographical Archives. Irene Champernowne Interview. December 19, 1969.
- 2) Jung’s (1963/1955-6) description is, of course, retrospective, and may not accurately reflect either the nature of his visions/dreams or his state of knowledge about the Kabbalah in 1944.
- 3) I should also note that Jung was apparently influenced by a whole host of spiritual and philosophical ideas that were current in the German-speaking world at the turn of the twentieth century which were themselves linked in various ways to Kabbalism, but these links have as yet to be adequately traced.

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