

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL FALLACY by Wolfgang Giegerich

One conception of the psyche that one can get from studying Jung's work, above all the work of early Jung, is that the psyche has a clear-cut orderly structure that can be presented in the geometric forms of concentric circles (the ego as the center, surrounded first by the realm of consciousness, then of the personal unconscious and finally of the collective unconscious) or of a cone (with different layers, the deepest of which would be that of the collective unconscious whereas the tip would represent the ego) as well as in the imaginal form of personified figures (ego, persona, shadow, anima/animus, self). To this conception, Jung's psychological typology with its compass-like representation of the four orientation functions fits very neatly. The crux of this conception is that it starts out from the human person. The human being is here the container or vessel of the soul and accordingly also the horizon of psychology. A psychology based on this fantasy clearly operates with the division between man and world, subject and object, inner and outer, psychology and physics and feels competent for only half of this divided whole.

Psychology's belonging to one side manifests for example in the concept of "extraversion" and in the "object-level" method of dream interpretation. Psychology is here what goes on inside the human person, which is why I speak of the anthropological fallacy. This fallacy is of course by no means a specialty of (the early) C. G. Jung. It is, and has been, the generally accepted, conventional idea about psychology ever since there has been a scientific discipline by this name, an idea that seemed so natural, so self-evident that it was not felt to be in need of any argumentative justification.

In depth psychology the anthropological fallacy had the practical consequence that the individual was urged to turn inwards and, in the case of Jungian analysis, to develop his or her self and to strive for his or her wholeness. Not only the "individuation process," but Jung's adamant emphasis on the individual as "the measure of all things" (CW 10, par.523) and "the makeweight that tips the scales" (par. 586) affirmed and highlighted this concentration on the person. It is true, Jung repeatedly insisted that "individuation" and his psychological stance in general does not exclude, but include, the world. But such a semantic statement does not undo the underlying structure or syntax of this thinking, namely that it irrevocably starts out from a human being who has the world ("external reality") outside and vis-à-vis himself. Even synchronicity as the meaningful coincidence of an inner and an outer event still has the anthropological conception of psychology as its background and precisely by trying to overcome the opposition of psychology and physics in the direction of the idea of *unus mundus* once more confirms the anthropological stance.

A serious consequence of this methodological standpoint is that the soul is logically relegated to second rank, as much as it may be prioritized, semantically and emotionally. The human being is here the substrate or actual substance and the psyche is merely one of the attributes of this substrate.

But the human being as the substrate personality is not itself the topic of psychology. It lies outside psychology's field of vision. Psychology's topic is the soul, is psychic life (which, however, often manifests in people). The moment psychic life is defined as being the life of the substrate personality, psychology has the task of exploring something (namely, psychic life), whose actual substantial reality (namely, the human being) is pre-supposed as lying outside ("pre-") its own precincts of competence and responsibility.... The soul, not the person, is what I have to focus on.

The notion of "the human being" is not a psychological notion at all. Inasmuch as I am a psychologist the human being falls without the precinct of my vision, just as for the chemist, inasmuch as he is a chemist, there is no "human being," no "flower," no "Napoleon," no "mind," no "God"—not because he as person would not have access to such notions, but because his field systematically excludes them and exists only to the extent that this exclusion is total. The psychological phenomenon is psychological only to the extent that psychology has rid itself of the notion of a substrate altogether and therefore views phenomena in their absolute negativity, in the baselessness of their self-sufficiency. Instead of the move back to the safe anchor of "the human being" (which is the exit out of psychology), psychology needs the absolute-negative inwardization of phenomenon (e.g., neurosis) into itself...The psychological approach, the approach from the point of view of "the soul," views phenomena from within. Owing to the absolute-negative inwardization of the phenomenon into itself, there is no outer reality any more that could provide the context for the discussion of the phenomenon. The latter, being construed as having everything within itself, even its own context, has become a world unto itself. It provides its own horizon within which it is to be apperceived. Using alchemical imagery, we could say that (in our case) technological civilization has been placed into the alchemical retort, which, as we know, is hermetically sealed: everything external is rigorously excluded. In this way having become our prime matter, it is for us, for the duration of our psychological investigation, the whole world.

Nothing else exists. No other, nothing external. The psychological object is a true self.

Wolfgang Giegerich: Technology and the Soul: From the Introduction