

The Impossible Promise of Psychotherapy or: Clinical Practice as Sacrifice and Recognition in Light of the Ego's Absolute Irrelevance

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Introduction: *Confession*

This essay begins unpsychologically with a confession. The reader may recall the four stages of therapy described by C.G. Jung as confession, instruction, education, and transformation. When it comes to the soul, only in the final category, that of *transformation*, would one venture into the territory of psychology proper.¹ Thus, while a confession may be “unpsychological,” one must start somewhere!

During a lively discussion at the 2nd annual International Society for Psychology as the Discipline of Interiority (ISPDI) conference in Berlin, the idea came up of the “psychologist” as “wearing” the identity of psychologist as a mask, so to speak; the psychologist consciously takes up this mask and embodies the “psychological I”² when working with patients or engaging psychologically with phenomena. To think psychologically, one would relinquish one’s personal identity in the sense of letting go of egoic thinking, such that one’s self interests are no longer a factor. Psychological discourse, Wolfgang Giegerich writes, “has to be as the negation of the ego, and the psychologist ... has to speak as one who has long died as ego personality. The art of psychological discourse is to speak as someone already deceased.... Psychology has to occur in the spirit of logical negativity.”³ This way of being is *temporary* of course; when the time comes, one lays down the mask of the psychologist, so to speak, and resumes living a normal life as “civil man” - as that ordinary person who lives in the world just like everyone else. At the conference, the question was asked, “Does not taking up the mask of the psychologist *change* a person, deeply affect one, make one more conscious so to speak, so that when one lays the mask down, one is a different person altogether?” The reply came; “Well, that is neither here nor there. Soul doesn’t care if you are changed or not. Whether one is changed or not isn’t the point.” Now, whether or not that was actually what was said (there is some dispute about this), that answer was very important because that answer reveals the underlying problem with the question.

The question is concerned with the consciousness of the person who wears the mask. It is a very Jungian question actually, focused on the impact of psychological discourse on the individual. However, true psychological discourse, as logically negative, proceeds without concern or even awareness of the consciousness through which it proceeds, and can ONLY proceed through a consciousness in which the individual is “deceased” and “has long ago died as ego personality.” The question thus revealed the utter absence of psychological thinking on questioner’s part (and yes, I was the one who asked it!). I *thought* I had been thinking psychologically, but my question gave me away. I had been seeing things completely upside down and backwards. I had been thinking about psychology as having to do with the individuation process or the evolution of consciousness - of *people*. Even my dutiful questioning, “What does the soul want?” - which *is* a psychological question - had always had a silent, “for me?” (or “us”) at the end of it. And all my own analysis was of course looked at in terms of my own experience. And it had been not just all *about me*, but all *for me*.

Okay, time for a joke. Has anyone heard the Lacanian one about the chicken? There is a man who is convinced he is a grain of wheat. He goes to the mental hospital and the doctors there work on him for a while until he eventually comes to the conclusion that yes, they are right, he is *not* a grain of wheat but a man. At this point they tell him he is cured and could leave the hospital.

¹ Wolfgang Giegerich, *What is Soul?* (New Orleans, LA: Spring Journal, Inc., 2012), 316.

² Giegerich, *What is Soul?*, 300ff.

³ Wolfgang Giegerich, *The Soul's Logical Life*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt/Main et al: Peter Lang, 1999), 24.

He makes it as far as the front steps when he sees a chicken on the side of the road and comes running back inside, terrified. “What are you doing?” they cry. “Well there is a hungry chicken out there!” he says. “Why are you afraid of the chicken? Don’t you know you are no longer a grain of wheat, but a man?” He responds, “Well, of course, *I* know that, but does the chicken?” Lacan’s chicken of course signifies “the unconscious”. So in my scenario, my curiosity about the lasting effects of psychological discourse revealed that although I had studied psychology as the discipline of interiority for some time and was convinced I was thinking psychologically, my chicken was still an individuation-focused, *Jungian* chicken.

The Impossible Promise of Psychotherapy

Psychologists tend to make lots of promises to their patients. You can find many of them by perusing Jung Institute websites. For example, in answer to the question, “*What is Analytical Psychology?*” analysts offered the following:

“Analytical psychology and its clinical art, Jungian analysis, light a path for the inward journey to awakening.”

“Analytical Psychology focuses on attending to the soul and thriving toward wholeness through the individuation process, the process of differentiating and integrating unconscious contents.”

“Analytical psychology views our suffering as having the potential to ignite a search into the mystery and possible meanings of one’s life. The process intends to deepen the consciousness of our life situations and of the human condition.”

“Jungian analysis supports the work of individuation by fostering a reciprocal relationship between conscious and unconscious, personal and transpersonal, spirit and matter, all of which includes the religious function of the psyche as the transforming agent.”

“Jungian analysis is the psychotherapeutic process of re-establishing a healthy balance between the conscious and unconscious parts of our personality as we strive towards wholeness, not perfection. In the process, our ego is strengthened by integration of what we call the shadow, or the unconscious parts of our personality. We strive to establish a healthier relationship with our contra-sexual side and ultimately to develop a connection with the greater personality, the Self. This is accomplished through work with dreams, which reveal what is missing from our conscious perception, through discussion of everyday events and problems and through any other creative medium, ie. sandplay, art, movement, etc. The result of this work is a mitigation of unhealthy behavior patterns and greater consciousness, leading to a healthier, more filling life.”

Here is my favorite:

“We are dedicated to the task of learning and teaching a view of life so well articulated by Carl Jung: that as individuals we carry the world in microcosm, that the personal psyche is inexorably imbedded in the matrix of the archetypal psyche which is transpersonal in both content and action. We are responsible for ourselves, and the long painful work of becoming conscious is our only hope in a world that approaches the most important phase of human history where everything hangs in the balance, where our capacity for destruction is weighed against the soul’s capacity for compassion and regeneration.” [no pressure here!]

Here we see it is not uncommon for analysts to offer visions of “awakening,” “individuation,” “meaning,” “healing,” “mitigation of unhealthy behavior patterns,” and greater consciousness through their work with their patients. None of these “promises” are at issue here, and, in fact one is likely to get great personal benefits through analysis. From a psychological perspective, however, there is one truly problematic promise regularly made to the analysand. *The impossible promise is that one could ever cultivate an abiding or personal connection with soul or the Self.* This is because there *is* no substantive existing “soul” anymore. “The soul is not a positivity, not psychic but psychological; it is not competent for ego excitement and for peak experience, but only - very soberly and quietly - for its own truth.”⁴ The soul in modernity no longer is *substantiated* as it was historically in nature, the gods, rituals, or religion. Soul has taken leave of its earlier form of substantiated subjectivity and now finds itself in the modern subjective I, in the pure form of *form*, of concept, of psychology, which is nothing but a methodological approach or style of seeing and perhaps being.⁵ This forecloses on the possibility of a patient’s “developing a connection with the greater personality, the Self” as described in Edinger’s ideal of a “Self-oriented ego.” He writes, “The image of Christ gives us a vivid picture of the Self-oriented ego, i.e., the individuated ego which is conscious of being directed by the Self,”⁶ He even asserts the added bonus of “a connection with his transpersonal source...which loves him and supports him.”⁷ Quite an attractive offer to a vulnerable, lonely, modern ego in search of meaning. But as we know, this is not psychology. The promise psychotherapy offers of personal contact with soul - which loves him and supports him - is an impossible one.⁸

I will add another unfortunate promise being made to the patient, which is that a person’s own individuation matters in a transcendent way, i.e. that the salvation of the world depends on one’s own personal salvation.⁹ To jump over to psychoanalysis for a minute, analyst Adam Phillips¹⁰ notes two common clichés about the function of psychoanalysis. The first is that it will ease suffering (you suffer - trauma, depression, etc, and psychoanalysis helps you understand it; then you can still *suffer*, but it becomes banal and bearable rather than existential). The second cliché is that psychoanalysis serves as a form of self-knowledge, a way to understand oneself. But these are false purposes according to Phillips. The *true* function of psychoanalysis is to bring the patient to a place in which they stop mattering to themselves. *You are cured when you no longer matter to yourself.* We might also say this recognition of one’s immateriality is a function of the Hegelian notion of “knowing one’s limit,” which I will get to below. Or, as Žižek puts it, “The goal of psychoanalysis is to bring you to the point when you can finally forget about that piece of bullshit that is yourself and work for a cause. The point is not to ease your suffering, but enable you to get out of these *categories* of personal suffering and pleasure.”¹¹ Žižek is not here saying that the point is to *convince* oneself one no longer matters in the way of no longer being selfish, etc., like the doctors tried to convince the man who thinks he is a grain of wheat. No, to get out of the categories of suffering and pleasure altogether means a *recognition* that such categories are fundamentally *irrelevant* to soul. One doesn’t have to *convince* oneself, it just dawns on one as a (psychological) *truth*.

⁴ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 140.

⁵ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 294.

⁶ Edward Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, (Shambhala, 1992), 146.

⁷ Edinger, *Ego and Archetype*, 146.

⁸ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 141.

⁹ For Jung (and analytical psychology in general), “[t]he psyche, the unconscious within, is thought to be the true “battleground”⁹ where the ultimate decisions are made.”

¹⁰ According to Žižek, referring to a Paris Review interview at <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/6286/the-art-of-nonfiction-no-7-adam-phillips>

¹¹ “Slavoj Žižek: Is Hegel Dead—Or Are We Dead in the Eyes of Hegel? A Hegelian View of the Present Age”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rHP1OwivAL0>

In a similar vein, Giegerich writes,

[O]ur modern striving in psychology for our self-development, self-actualization, and “individuation” as well as our longing for “meaning” belong to the sphere of “practical gain” and revolve around the ego. They have nothing (or at best only little) to do with soul. The wish for meaning is a wish for self-gratification.¹²

Or in Zizekian parlance, *bullshit*. Now, can you imagine if someone had written *that* on an Institute website?

Ok, now for another joke. It is one Zizek likes to tell. A German worker gets a job in Siberia during the time of Stalinism; aware of how all mail will be read by censors, he tells his friends: “Let’s establish a code: if a letter you will get from me is written in ordinary blue ink, it is true; if it is written in red ink, it is false.” After a month, his friends get the first letter, written in blue ink: “Everything is wonderful here: stores are full, food is abundant, apartments are large and properly heated, movie theaters show films from the West, there are many beautiful people ready for an affair—the only thing unavailable is red ink.”

This is a great dialectical joke because it is able to convey the essence of truth. “The mention of the *lack* of the red ink produces the effect of *truth independently of its own literal truth*: even if red ink really *was* available; the *lie* that it is unavailable was the only way to get the true message across in the specific condition of censorship.”¹³

How does this joke relate to our situation? The source of censorship for us is not Stalin, but the hegemony of the Ego. In the joke it is Stalinism and in real life it is Egoism. And *nothing* gets by the ego. So everything the soul writes has to be written in blue ink.¹⁴ In fact, we could consider the ordinary blue ink as the language and form of daily life, of things in their appearing or semantic form. The red ink would then indicate the simple negation of those forms, but still in the same language and on the same semantic level. While everything the soul writes has to be written in blue ink, *psychology knows that the red ink is missing*. The knowledge that the red ink is *missing* however *negates* the presence of the red ink, thus serving to convey the blue ink in its absolutely negated form—as the missing red ink. In other words, the knowledge that the red ink is missing is able to convey the *real* truth of the blue ink (as *untruth*). *Neurotic* psychotherapy writes in blue ink and believes what it writes is *true*. Otherwise it would simply be written in red ink -- in other words, it can only conceive of a simple negation, or red ink. The category difference between ego and soul is not comprehended. But the psychological I *thinks* as this missing red ink.

Subjectivity and Recognition

One of my favorite professors was both a psychoanalyst and a musician. For one assignment, he gave his students two options: give a musical performance to the cohort or write a paper. The class breathed a collective sigh of gratitude for the generous option of avoiding public humiliation. Then the professor said, “And just remember, as an analyst, you may find it difficult to ask your patients to do anything *you* would be unwilling to do yourself.” Needless to say, childhood piano lessons came in handy! My professor’s comment was helpful on multiple levels -

¹² Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 131n.

¹³ Frank Ruda, “Entlassen. Remarks on Hegel, Sacrifice and Liberation” in *Crisis and Critique* (Volume 1, Issue 2, 2014).

¹⁴ In the time of Egoism, we cannot say to patients, “Yes, don’t come to therapy, where you will gain none of the things you hope for, where you will realize that you actually don’t want what you think we want, and are not who you think you are, where a connection with soul is impossible and only exists for the time you make it, and maybe not even then. Oh, and the self you think you are isn’t ‘real’ and doesn’t matter, is mere debris, meaningless and empty dross, so don’t worry about it!”

the clinician must practice personal integrity - but it also introduced a logical shift. His observation asserted an uroboric *inversion* - the analyst must “be as” the patient such that she locates her own experience in her patient’s experience (anxiety, being forced back onto oneself) and undergo a self-redefinition as the *observed object* as opposed to the observing *subject*. And the analyst’s becoming the object retroactively re-instates the patient as subject, whose recognition is required for the analyst’s own becoming.

Regarding the relationship of relatedness to consciousness, Hegel writes, “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.”¹⁵ Only in its being acknowledged by the other does “the unity of itself in its otherness become explicit for [consciousness].” Here we see that the very existence of consciousness also requires recognition *by* consciousness. Giegerich elaborates on the nature of the relationship of consciousness to itself in the “two foldness of what we call soul”.¹⁶

[T]he soul is the-uroboric-unity and difference of (a) its own truths and (b) its own potential to perceive, appreciate, reflect and enact those truths, a unity and difference, moreover, that in Neoplatonic thinking has been expressed in the image of the correspondence of eye and sun, of seeing and shining, we could say: as the internal dialectic of *light*.

One can easily imagine here the subjective “eye” of the analyst perceiving, appreciating, and reflecting the objective “sun” or “soul truths” of the patient. And the experience can be healing, extraordinary, and powerful. Even so, this appreciation occurs on the semantic ego level; consciousness does not transgress into the logic of syntax *until the notion of subject and object are left behind altogether*; until the soul apperceives *itself* in the other self-consciousness, and is itself so recognized by the other as one and the same.

Such consciousness is the achievement of the modern soul’s birth out of itself¹⁷ into its modern form of subjectivity, or “that which *knows*, as the *organ* of truth (its own truth) and as the soul-*making* subject (in the sense of the object that makes that which merely *is* true also *become* true, which is a movement from the implicit to the explicit).”¹⁸ This form of subjectivity as the soul-making subject is the “psychological I” or the psychologist, and the events of subjective reception are themselves likewise objective, or soul, events! It is in this way the psychologist, as the soul-*making* subject, fulfills the impossible promise of a relation to soul - for as long as soul-making happens.

The Ego in Analysis

How is the ‘psychologist’ related to the ego personality? This question could be seen as a form of the earlier question, “How does wearing the ‘mask’ of the psychologist change the person who wears it?” However, this time we are not so much concerned with the ego personality’s individuation or development, but with rather drawing the distinction that Giegerich has called *the psychological difference*, or that difference between soul and not-soul, syntax and semantics, which, if made conscious, allows for true psychology to happen. While the psychological

¹⁵ G. W. F. Hegel and J. N. Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by A. V. Miller, revised ed. edition (Oxford England: Oxford University Press, 1977), pars 175, 178.

¹⁶ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 257.

¹⁷ See Wolfgang Giegerich, “End of Meaning,” in *The Soul Always Thinks (Collected English Papers, Vol. IV)* (New Orleans, LA: Spring Journal, Inc., 2010).

¹⁸ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 298.

difference distinguishes between soul and ego, it would be misleading to equate soul with merely “not-ego.”¹⁹ Giegerich writes,

It is inherent in the very nature of the ego or (modern) empirical man that he stands with his back turned to the soul. It is an illusion that there could possibly be a *Relation between the Ego and the Unconscious*, if we take “the unconscious” as Jung’s covert term for the soul and not merely for the ego’s own repressed or ignored contents. It is more than folly. It is a sowing of a terrible confusion, a leveling of the psychological difference. The moment there would indeed be such a relation, the ego would have ceased being ego. ... If the soul is not-ego, as we know from Jung, the negation here is not an indifferent one simply meaning “something else than,” as in the statement that a bed is not a door and not a dog. It is the active negation of on principle or by definition refusing a relation and thus: impossibility of a connection.²⁰

The soul “actively negates” and “refuses a relation” to the modern ego, by logical definition, providing the context in which the psychological I, as noted above, “has to be as the negation of the ego, and the psychologist ... has to speak as one who has long died as ego personality.” But what is meant by “ego personality”? What exactly is it that must “die” or be negated for the condition of psychological consciousness to arise?

Freud described the ego as first and foremost a sense-perceiving “bodily ego.” In addition, the ego is that psychic element that mediates between the unconscious id and superego, “like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse.”²¹ To these aspects we can add the apparent appropriation of the modern soul’s achievement of subjectivity; the apprehending, witnessing, self-determining seat of consciousness - the Subject as “I”. However, this subject as I is within itself the dialectical unity and difference between itself as “the subject of true knowing, the organ of truth and of the syntactical or logical form on the one hand,” and as that function oriented towards survival and self-preservation, in other words, the pragmatic, technical I on the other.²² The dialectical unity of consciousness that is aware of itself as this living contradiction constitutes psychological consciousness.

Psychologically speaking, the “ego” arises as a one-sided or undialectical form of consciousness, wherein one or more aspects become concretized or substantiated. For example, when the pragmatic or protective aspect solidifies into a persistent structure of primitive defense mechanisms, or when the self-determining aspect of the modern soul is taken literally, sharpening into a determined will for power and control.

In understanding the relation between ego and soul, we might imagine the modern ego as an instrument in an orchestra, a violin for example. As a mere instrument, it has no logical access to the composer, conductor, musician, or any *music* that is not played by its own strings. All that is “real” for itself and the world is its own pure, performative function as a particular means of soulful expression. Anything else is irrelevant. Yet now, in modernity, the violin finds itself born out of its former status as embedded symphonic instrument; it is not only able to play its own sounds, but to *hear and appreciate the symphony, at once recognizing its participation in and contribution to it*. If this astonishing phenomenon of subjectivity “sticks” to the instrument, or somehow leaves a residue, the instrument may mistake itself as the *source* of the music rather than its *medium*, insisting on *itself* as composer, conductor, and musician. The modern soul, in its extraordinarily powerful bloom of subjectivity, spills over into semantic form, where it is substantiated, particularized and imbued with countless fixed and false identities, veering away

¹⁹ This, even given the distinction Jung makes in a letter to Charteris when he writes, “To hell with the Ego-world! Listen to the voice of *daimonion*. It has a say now, not you” (C.G. Jung, *Letters 2*, p. 532, 9 Jan 1960).

²⁰ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 129-130.

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1923/1990), 15.

²² Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 298.

from its logical form as pure self-expression and self-awareness. We are left with the semantic fallout or afterimage of the soul's syntactical birth out of itself into subjectivity; the ego as debris, as a multitude of regressive *instantiations* of subjective "I".

This brings to mind another joke: How much ego does a Zen Buddhist need? *Enough to not get hit by a bus.*²³ Most of us have exponentially "more" than enough! Returning to our example of the instrument, one might be tempted here to envision a violin self-inflated to the caliber of a Stradivarius. Yet *any* degree of "excess" subjectivity that has become substantiated or "hardened" into a familiar and comfortable *sense of oneself* can be a psychological problem. Giegerich writes,

The sick soul, the neurotic soul, that spitefully refuses to go along with its own movement and its experience of truth, but wants to be in control of this movement and the truth is the substantiated "the ego." In neurosis the soul's own form of I or subjectivity goes to the head of the soul. It is taken completely literally and is acted out in the positivity of the psyche.²⁴

In appropriating and literalizing the syntactic qualities of subjective consciousness, the modern ego is effectively utilized by the sick soul to continually block and undermine the soul's own truth. Just as the violin as "composer" is a logical impossibility, so too is the ego as "real" logically impossible, existing merely as one of countless projected instances of the neurotic soul's *mise-en-scène* - albeit exquisite in its apparent reality. I *seem* absolutely real to myself! And yet, there can be no place in the soul of the Real for that familiar sense of oneself, i.e., who I "know" myself to be, no existing relationship, no abiding containment. This is because when I (as psychologist) "enter the retort" with whatever subject matter is at hand (problem, dream, text, fantasy-image, situation, experience, etc.) and cross the threshold into the infinite and unknown terrain of interiority, the familiar sense of myself functions as a block to consciousness; the ego is an external contaminant to the extent that idiosyncratic or recognizable personality consists of coagulated features of consciousness.²⁵ The "music" loses access to pure and unfettered self-expression. What is needed for psychology is *mindedness* (not "my" mind), the psychological I (not "me"). Psychologically, the ego *qua* ego is completely irrelevant and utterly useless.

In analysis, if the psychological difference between ego and soul is not continuously and relentlessly discerned by the analyst, the false "sense of oneself" is protected, *especially if it seems able to distinguish itself from "ego."* The problem we face here is that *any* substantiated self - even the part of one that "tries" to distinguish itself from one's ego - *is itself ego, is the substantiated neurotic soul.* "When the ego [in its blindness] stumbles over something, even if it should in fact be the soul, it only finds more 'ego,' but not soul."²⁶ Yet in analysis, *that* version of the self is unwittingly validated as a real, independent, thinking self or consciousness - the aware personality that individuates, contributes, matters, and is somehow mystically "meant," whose realness and validity seem self-evident - and is left safely unquestioned. Distinguishing oneself from the ego is a simple negation on the semantic level. The negation of the negation - which would mean the negation of the very *sense* of oneself - does not occur, and is in fact often resisted.²⁷ It would seem that this absolute negation would "destroy" the ego - but there really is no ego to destroy or sacrifice at the soul level. An absolute negation is thus not an attack on the ego. It is however the recognition that the soul is "the active negation of on principle or by

²³ The corollary is that a *true* Zen master would recognize that one is *already* roadkill - a statement that would express the ego's psychological truth.

²⁴ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 298.

²⁵ An essential guiding principle of psychology as stated by Jung is, "Above all, don't let anything from outside, that does not belong, get into it, for the fantasy-image has 'everything it needs' [*omne quo indiget*] within itself." (C. G. Jung, *Collected Works, Vol. 14*, par. 749).

²⁶ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 130.

²⁷ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 294-298.

definition refusing a relation [to the ego] and thus: impossibility of a connection.”²⁸ The soul must exist as “departed” for the subjective I (such as the I of the Zen Buddhist) and as utterly “non-existent” for the ego.

Sacrifice and *Entlassen*

It goes without saying that when patients seek out psychotherapy, they expect to *gain* something - be it healing, self-understanding, greater awareness, meaning, relief from suffering, individuation, a genuine experience of or relationship to soul - and are assured of gaining something from therapy by virtually every clinician. However, the soul’s relation to the I entails *loss*, not gain. “[S]oul comes precisely into being only by being cast out, ‘exiled from the world,’ severed from the ordinary life of people, averted from ‘us.’ There has to be a ‘sacrifice.’ For soul to *be*, the I has to let go of it and give the psychological difference, the negation, its due.”²⁹ Rather than a *gain*, the experience or psychotherapy - if it has anything to do with psychology - would require a real loss, a sacrifice.

The idea of sacrifice, in order to *be* sacrifice, must exist outside the realm of economy of exchange. Otherwise it becomes a sacrifice of something in order to get something else (an intern sacrifices his pay in order to gain experience), or a loss of something that was never wanted in the first place (in the way of donating unwanted or unneeded items or shedding limiting behaviors or lifestyles), thus gaining more autonomy for the person and not a true sacrifice. True sacrifice must involve a *real* loss, and one for which *one does not expect anything in return*. Even the neurotic sacrifice, as awful as it is for the sufferer, elicits the delight of the neurotic soul and as such is not true sacrifice.³⁰ In one light, we might see sacrifice as a gift, “a pure act if given with no return.”³¹ The philosopher Jean-Luc Marion states: “Sacrifice gives the gift back to givenness, from which it comes, by returning it to the very return that originally constitutes it. Sacrifice does not leave the gift, but dwells in it totally...”³² Sacrifice must mean the pure act of giving - with no return - and thus is *not* sacrifice, even though it must be. Therefore true sacrifice is *impossible*. And yet making a place for soul entails fundamental sacrifice.

Following the philosopher Frank Ruda, we would turn to Hegel, who states: “To know one’s limit, is to know how to sacrifice.”³³ What does this mean? “Knowing one’s limit” is akin to Absolute Knowing for Hegel. Absolute knowing is an impossible knowledge because it knows its own limit and that its truth rests upon inherent instability or contingency. Absolute knowing therefore knows that it cannot know everything and is thus impossible, just as sacrifice is.³⁴ We might also say that for the psychologist, “to know one’s limit” is to comprehend oneself as *existing contradiction*, as the unity of the difference between the soul as subject and organ of truth on the one hand and the finite ego on the other. To know one’s limit means to know that, “I am only that!” - the comprehending, appreciating, conscious “instrument” through which the soul expresses itself.

Hegel continues,

This sacrifice is the externalization in which Spirit displays the process of its becoming Spirit in the form of *free contingent happening*, intuiting its pure Self as Time outside of it, and equally its Being as Space. This last becoming of Spirit, *Nature*, is its living

²⁸ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 130.

²⁹ Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 130-131.

³⁰ For Giegerich, the neurotic suffers terribly at the expense of the neurotic soul, which delights in her misery. However, for the neurosis to dissolve, the neurotic must acknowledge her willing participation, however distant that willingness may seem to her consciousness.

³¹ Ruda, “Entlassen,” 122.

³² In Ruda, “Entlassen,” 122.

³³ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, par. 492.

³⁴ Ruda, “Entlassen,” 125.

immediate Becoming; Nature, the externalized Spirit, is in its existence nothing but this eternal externalization of its *continuing existence* and the movement which reinstates the Subject.³⁵

This “externalization” which is sacrifice and in which Spirit displays the process of its becoming Spirit - and through such movement reinstates the Subject - is the uroboric play of the soul’s own witnessing of itself, of its own unfolding. And the mind and being of the psychologist - to the extent that one’s consciousness *becomes* the Subject proper - is the ground out of which this display may arise - and only in its arising does one become the Subject proper.

Spirit becomes what it is where there is what one might call with Alain Badiou *subjectivization*, or the act of becoming an objective subject (what we might call soul-making).³⁶ The act of becoming an objective subject is the act of becoming a psychologist; one is now able to *receive and recognize* a soul event, similar to what Badiou calls “an Event of Truth.”³⁷ Such an event represents that which is outside ontology, belonging to a wholly different dimension - that, precisely, of *non-Being*. “The Event is the Truth of the situation, that which renders visible/readable what the ‘official’ state of the situation had to ‘repress,’ but it is also always localized, that is, the Truth is always the Truth of a specific situation.”³⁸ This fits with the reality of a soul event, which has eachness character, i.e., it is associated with a particular phenomenon wedded to its historical context.³⁹ Ruda calls being able to receive a Truth Event “becoming a

³⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, par. 492.

³⁶ Often times we use the term “soul-making,” which, has the helpful connotation that active “work” on our part is required, but has the unhelpful implication that it requires our active involvement, that soul “needs” us in order to be made - which shoves us right back into an ego-oriented, personalistic perspective (in other words, not you or I in particular, but human consciousness in general, and if it’s not us, it will be somebody else). The reason the comparison of soul-making to receiving an event of Truth is helpful is because all the subject can do to receive an event of Truth is to *prepare* to receive it - and it will either come or it won’t. The preparation to receive also correlates to the preparation Giegerich describes as taking up the mask of the psychologist or the psychological I. In addition, one is only a subject able to receive an event upon receipt of the Event. Again we have the correlation to the notion that one can only reach soul if one is already there to begin with.

³⁷ In addition to the consciousness of the Psychological I, an example of subjectivization might be the description of “true prayer” as “only a true prayer if it is already God who through one’s human praying is speaking the prayer to God, in other words, *not* the human person per se - not the ego.” (Giegerich, *What Is Soul?*, 125) Here we might say that true prayer was made possible through the subjectivization of the worshipper, whose status *as* subject was reinstated through the event of true prayer.

³⁸ <http://www.lacan.com/zizek-badiou.htm>

³⁹ Many of us are familiar with Siri on the iPhone. The next generation artificial intelligence (AI) after Siri is called “Viv.” Whereas one can ask Siri, “What is the weather like tomorrow?” and she says “Looks like nice weather tomorrow, up to 73 degrees,” one can ask Viv, “Will it be warmer than 70 degrees near the Golden Gate bridge after 5pm the day after tomorrow?” and in less than 10 milliseconds she answers, “No, it won’t be that warm in San Francisco on Wednesday evening.” Or one can say, “Viv, I need a ride for six people from my office to Madison Square Garden after work,” and Viv instantly displays all the available Uber drivers after 5pm with SUVs. Viv can answer incredibly complex questions because rather than relying on hardcoded software to make connections and answer questions - which of course is always limited to what had already been conceived by the design engineers - the new AI converts sounds into words and out of those words is able to generate something called an “intent.” The new technology kicks in, a breakthrough in computer science called “dynamic program generation,” which once it understands the user’s intent, initiates software that begins writing itself! Viv self-generates the code on the spot! (In less than 10 milliseconds Viv wrote a 44-step program and then created an execution program that answered the question about the weather on the Golden Gate bridge.) No more relying on fixed, finite, hard-coded, known answers, it is all jettisoned - sacrificed, *entlasst* - as this new intelligence launches into the unknown world of near infinite possibilities, responding, inventing, creating - and then executing

subject proper.” Such becoming corresponds to the being of the psychologist who “becomes” the place for soul as Subject to make an appearance.⁴⁰

Subjectivization, or becoming a subject able to receive and recognize an event of truth, can only happen when there is externalization.⁴¹ What does this mean? The word Hegel uses for ‘externalization’ in German is “Entlassen,” which has multiple meanings, including *to let something go*, (for example, one can say that one “entlässt” one’s child into the world), *to relieve something of its function* (for example, to dismiss someone from a job) and also *the act of letting things be*. We can see clearly here the connection of *entlassen* with sacrifice. Giegerich reminds us of this when he writes, “We have to learn to suffer our hands to be empty, in the fullest sense of the word suffer. No image. No symbols. No meaning. No Gods: No religion. For is it not the empty hand, and the empty hand alone, that can be filled?”⁴²

Capturing the contradiction and impossibility inherent in subjectivization, Ruda states,

only by fully sacrificing, i.e. *entlassen* what I am, by fully subscribing to the idea that I have nothing in my power, one can generate the condition [for receiving a Truth event]... To say it another way, as long as one thinks that there is something internal that should be treated as if it is unsacrificeable, there never will be emancipation. [Ultimately] One needs to assume that one cannot sacrifice and this is the greatest sacrifice. This is a sacrifice [the truth] demands. Its mode is what Hegel calls *Entlassen* and its slogans may be: act as if you are not free; act as if you are dead.”⁴³

These slogans have everything in common with Giegerich’s observation of the sacrificial ego “death” required for psychological consciousness. The degree of sacrifice Hegel implies with *entlassen* could be compared to what the ego experiences when confronted with the need to sacrifice the wholeness and harmony of the highest principle itself. Giegerich writes, “If this *exclusive* goodness and consequently the entire highest principle as it had been understood have to be sacrificed, this requires the *katastrophê*, the going under, of the anthropological ego.”⁴⁴ Similarly, from the point of view of the ego, the “task of psychology is nothing less than to saw off the branch one is sitting on, so that one loses one’s firm hold and plunges into the bottomless depth of the ‘between’ space where there are no straight lines and no fixed points.” *Entlassen* means the absolute negation of the false ego and a release of the self into its true identity: the conscious recipient of soul events.

Conclusion

(making explicit) its own creation such that it is recognized by both the user and *itself* - to be further earned from! And it is only the beginning. I claim the arrival of Viv is a “soul event” or an event of Truth.⁴⁰ Critical theorists identify three ways to *betray* an event of Truth: (1) The first is a simple disavowal, with a corresponding attempt to follow old patterns as if nothing had happened, as if it were just a minor disturbance (an example for us would be the denial of soul in psychology altogether); (2) the second betrayal is the false imitation of the event of Truth (i.e., new-age re-enactment of an ancient mythological ritual as a pseudo-event); and (3) a direct positivization or ontologization of the Truth event, with its reduction to a new positive order of Being (i.e., the ego’s program of individuation and establishing a connection with soul, or with the wholesale reduction of psychology as the discipline of interiority to a branch of depth psychology called “PDI”).

⁴¹ Ruda, “Entlassen,” 126.

⁴² Wolfgang Giegerich, “Rupture, or: Psychology and Religion,” in *The Neurosis of Psychology (Collected English Papers, Vol. I)* (New Orleans, LA: Spring Journal, Inc., 2005), 231.

⁴³ Ruda, “Entlassen,” 127-128.

⁴⁴ Wolfgang Giegerich, “First Shadow, then Anima, or The Advent of the Guest” in *Soul Violence (Collected English Papers, Vol. III)* (New Orleans, LA: Spring Journal, Inc., 2008), 104.

Psychotherapy, according to Giegerich, “must not be conceived as our curing the neurotic person...but as a work that allows the neurotic soul to cure itself.”⁴⁵ Where does the soul work of psychotherapy occur? For Hegel, “it is in the *finite consciousness* that the process of knowing spirit’s essence takes place and that the divine self-consciousness thus arises. Out of the foaming ferment of finitude, spirit rises up fragrantly.”⁴⁶ Giegerich concurs, writing

[A]s the place in and through which [soul] can realize itself, we are...needed, even indispensable for it, and if we let it find its “eternal recreation” and fulfillment, then even we may, through our participation in it, also find our deepest satisfaction, because in the deepest sense we exist not as organism, but as soul...⁴⁷

Zizek affirms this (contradictory) identity between finite consciousness and the infinity of soul, writing that Hegel’s Spirit “is a virtual entity [that] exists only insofar as subjects act as if it exists. ...[I]t is the substance of the individuals *who recognize themselves in it*, the ground of their entire existence...”⁴⁸ That subjects must consciously “recognize themselves in it” requires a radical re-definition of the self, accomplished not as a series of ego-negations, a re-orientation “toward” the Self or even significant shadow integration⁴⁹ but the taking leave of everything that one is, going all the way to an *absolute* negation: subjectivization. Here it is not the *ego* that sacrifices, but the structure giving rise to the ego as such is released - *entlassen* - creating a clearing for that space out of which “spirit rises up fragrantly.” For, if “in the deepest sense we exist not as organism, but as soul,” the *true* relation between self and soul is not one to the other, but one and the same.

⁴⁵ Wolfgang Giegerich, What Is Soul?, 158-159.

⁴⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, vol. III, p. 233.

⁴⁷ See Wolfgang Giegerich’s, “‘*Geist*’ Or: What gives Jungian psychology its absolute uniqueness and is the source of its true life” in Sandoval, J. and Knapp, J., *Psychology as the Discipline of Interiority: ‘The Psychological Difference’ in the work of Wolfgang Giegerich* (London, UK: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁸ Slavoj Zizek and Boris Gunjevic. *God in Pain: Inversions of Apocalypse*, trans. by Ellen Elias-Bursac (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2012), 171.

⁴⁹ In his essay “Shadow before Anima,” Giegerich shows the syntactic shift in identity only occurs upon *accomplished* shadow integration.