

The Red Book: Some Notes for the Beginner

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In this essay, Mathew Spano offers a concise, valuable set of reflections on the origins and content of Jung's formidable *Red Book*.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO C.G. JUNG'S RED BOOK

By

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Overview:

The old expression “When falling, dive!” might best express the sentiments of Carl Jung as he decided to turn a near psychotic breakdown he was experiencing in late 1913 into an opportunity for self-analysis and self-therapy. The result of this momentous decision is *The Red Book*, Jung's record of his “confrontation with the unconscious,” which he had bound in a custom-made red leather folio that measured approximately 12 X 15.5 inches and weighed nearly ten pounds. Like a massive, medieval folio reminiscent of the *Book of Kells*, *The Red Book* included over 400 pages of beautifully handwritten, calligraphic text and 53 startlingly brilliant full-page paintings. Originally, when Jung began to be afflicted by an unceasing flood of apocalyptic visions in 1913, he started to record them in a series of six black journals (subsequently known as the “black books”) and later transferred them to the large red leather folio. By 1917, he had finished most of the initial composition of the book but poured over it until 1930, revising, adding commentary, editing (Furlotti).

Despite the technical challenges in mass producing copies of *The Red Book* that publishers would have faced in Jung's day, Jung did intend for *The Red Book* to be published. But plans for publication and widespread distribution never reached fruition, in part due to Jung's ambivalence about such a project. Could he expose his own intensely private struggles to a mass audience? Would he be deemed a madman, a mystic, or an unfulfilled artist? Having been ostracized by the psychoanalytic community following his break with Freud (one of the causes of his breakdown), Jung was acutely aware of the risks involved to his reputation. He had said to his close friends on numerous occasions that he wanted to be known first and foremost as a man of science, as a psychologist—an image that might be undermined by the publication of such a fantastic work as *The Red Book* (Corbett, p. 2). Still, those close friends were allowed to see and to read *The Red Book*, and Jung kept the original in his office on an easel for his patients to peruse (Furlotti). He had invented new therapeutic techniques and tested them on himself in the composition of *The Red Book*, and he now encouraged his patients to try some of the same techniques, even to make their own “red books” (Shamdasani, p. 216). Hence, it became a teaching tool and model used in his clinical practice.

Still, after a series of false starts and unfinished attempts to have it published, Jung died in 1961 without having published *The Red Book*. Sensitive to Jung's own misgivings about the risks to his reputation as well as the risks in exposing such extremely personal material, Jung's heirs literally locked the book away in a Swiss bank vault for decades. Despite numerous attempts by hundreds of scholars to see and publish the book, Jung's heirs held to their convictions. Leaks of some of the pages of the manuscript appeared in public, however, and the family eventually relented, concerned that the material might find its way into the hands of Jung's detractors (Corbett, p. 5). It took Jungian scholar and editor Sonu Shamdasani three years of negotiation with Jung's heirs to finally arrange for *The Red Book* to be published in fall of 2009 (p. 5). WW Norton & Co. agreed to publish the manuscript in a large-scale folio format at a cost of two hundred dollars a copy, an agreement that worried the heads of the company to the point that they hesitatingly ordered only 6,000 copies for their first printing (Furlotti). Norton's fears proved unwarranted, however. Thanks to an engaging cover story in the *NY Times Magazine* entitled "The Holy Grail of the Unconscious," as well as displays at the Library of Congress, Rubin and Hammer museums, and even a spot on the hit TV show *Law & Order Criminal Intent*, sales exploded. Now in its sixth printing with over 50,000 copies sold and counting, *The Red Book* has arrived (Furlotti).

Nevertheless, the hype that surrounds *The Red Book* seems to belie the extremely challenging nature of its content. Many who discuss the book, even in professional circles, have yet to read it cover-to-cover. Certainly, readers who are new to Jung would be wise to steer clear of *The Red Book*, at least until they have first digested some of the more accessible introductions, such as Jung's autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Readers familiar with Jung's work still face the daunting challenge of interpreting a book unlike any other that Jung wrote and determining its relevance to the fields of psychology, mythology and classics, philosophy & religion, history, art history, and literature. What did this book mean for Jung, for his time, and for our time? To start to answer these questions, we must first investigate the context in which the book was written.

Context:

For C.G. Jung, the years 1912-1913 were pivotal and painful. Having taken the bold step of publishing his book *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido*, Jung had in effect cut his ties with his mentor Sigmund Freud. Jung's book included his own revolutionary definitions of the concept of the libido, the connections between sexuality and spirituality, the compensatory nature of the unconscious, and an emphasis on the collective unconscious, archetype and myth—all of which was anathema to Freud. Although Jung had known that there would be some personal and professional fallout over the publication of this book, he was emotionally unprepared for the blackballing he would receive. As he later stated, "My book was declared rubbish; I was a mystic, and that settled the matter" (MDR, p. 167). Strains in his marriage now began to take their toll as well, and Jung began what would become an infamous affair with one-time patient turned assistant Toni Wolff. Tensions in Europe were also reaching a boiling point on the eve of WWI, and Jung seems to have felt the mounting pressure of all of it. Professionally discredited and emotionally overwrought, he descended into isolation, withdrawing from most of his professional activities, most notably his position as

president of the International Psychoanalytic Association and his position as Lecturer at the University of Zurich (Shamdasani, p. 201).

Against the backdrop of the collective crisis about to engulf Europe and in the midst of his personal and professional crisis, Jung began to experience a flood of apocalyptic visions, some of which afflicted him in the middle of the day during his routine activities. Nevertheless, he clung to that daily routine as a lifeline, struggling to keep his head above water and avoided drowning in the images, losing his identity, and fully descending into psychosis. Maintaining his private practice as well as his familial duties, he was determined to gain control of the images that afflicted him—a feat which he accomplished by recording his visions, giving shape to them in words and images in the black books each night before bed, after his work and family routine were completed. To calm himself, Jung occasionally practiced yoga, though only to the point of calming himself, after which he once again engaged the images surging up from the unconscious—a practice that he felt departed from that of yoga whose purpose was “to obliterate completely the multitude of psychic contents and images” (MDR, p. 177). Reflecting on this time, Jung contrasted himself to Nietzsche, who experienced a similar flood of images during the composition of his *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, and subsequently began to slip into a full blown psychosis from which he never recovered (MDR, p. 189).

Jung's *Red Book* is in many ways a response to Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Not only is the tone reminiscent of Nietzsche's masterpiece but so is the theme: the search for meaning in a modern world where many of the traditional institutions that once provided meaning and context have been undermined or destroyed. But whereas Nietzsche concluded that “God is dead,” Jung responds with the concept that God can be rediscovered and reborn in the psyche (Shamdasani, p. 202), i.e. as a psychological experience, as an archetype. Dante's influence can be felt as well in *The Red Book*, with the overall narrative arc of a descent into one's more or less private underworld on a quest to redeem one's lost soul. Here too, however, Jung seems to adapt his literary forebear to his own purposes, for whereas Dante relied on the traditional Judeo-Christian cosmology to frame his epic, Jung creates his own cosmology (p. 202). And although the female character of Salome in *The Red Book* is in many ways the antithesis of Dante's Beatrice, Jung's character of Philemon echoes Dante's Virgil in many respects. Jung based Philemon on Ovid's tale of the old couple Baucis and Philemon, chosen by the gods to survive the great flood for their hospitality, as well as on Goethe's use of the same character in his *Faust, Part Two*, in which the old couple are murdered by Mephistopheles when they block Faust's development project. Jung's Philemon, however, has enormous kingfisher wings, is portrayed as a wise and canny old magician, and appears without Baucis. Even Gilgamesh shows up as a character by the name of Izdubar (an older variant of Gilgamesh's name), and Jung takes advantage of the mortal nature of this god-like being to stress the sacrifices that the modern West has made in developing their science and reason. And the images and visionary passages in the text also conjure the visionary works of William Blake who, along with that of Nietzsche, Goethe, Dante, Ovid and Gilgamesh, Jung had studied prior to the composition of *The Red Book* (p. 203).

In addition to being a tour-de-force of Jung's studies in literature, mythology and philosophy, *The Red*

Book has also been hailed as the “nucleus of his later works” and the raw material that led to many of Jung’s most influential psychological theories (Shamdasani, p. 193). Indeed, Jung himself noted in his autobiography that the images that arose during this period, which he collected in *The Red Book*, provided the material for all of the work which he spent the remainder of his life elaborating (MDR, p. 199). In *The Red Book*, one can find the following theories, some in their application and others just being conceived: the collective unconscious and the archetypes, personality types, amplification, compensation, active imagination, inflation, projection, reflection and individuation.

The theories of active imagination and individuation are especially relevant in understanding *The Red Book*. Jung developed the technique of active imagination as a way of gaining control over the flood of images that threatened to overwhelm him and plunge him into a psychosis. The technique involves allowing oneself to “drop” into a twilight consciousness similar to that we experience just before falling asleep. We are still aware that we are awake, but images begin to bubble up from the unconscious in a sort of waking dream. Inducing and sustaining this state, one can then open a dialogue with the figures that emerge, relating to them and integrating them. Jung preferred active imagination to dreaming because the ego is on firmer footing in the former while in the latter it is on weaker, unequal footing relative to the unconscious. Personifying and relating to the forces of the unconscious is essential to Jungian theory, for in doing this one can gain some measure of control over forces that previously threatened to inflate the ego. In other words, as the scholar Thomas Moore once put it, “we are condemned to live out what we cannot imagine” (p. 224). Active imagination is one of the practices and techniques that Jung used to facilitate the process of individuation, a psychological process of integrating elements of the unconscious so as to develop the neglected, split-off parts of one’s psyche and thereby live out a fuller and more conscious life. *The Red Book* may be considered, in part, a record of many of Jung’s active imagination sessions during his crisis. And the model and message of *The Red Book* is certainly the process of individuation—its purpose and practice as well as the potential dangers involved.

Content:

Throughout *The Red Book*, Jung continually expounds on the importance of the process of individuation, and, in just about every instance, immediately follows up with a warning. He implores readers again and again not to mimic him, not to follow blindly the journey he is undergoing in his own confrontation with the unconscious. The whole point of individuation, he emphasizes, is for one to follow one’s own path:

There is only one way and that is your way. You seek the path? I warn you away from my own. It can also be the wrong path for you. May each go his own way. I will be no savior, no lawgiver, no master teacher unto you. You are no longer little children...May each seek out his own way. The way leads to mutual love in community. Men will come to see and feel the similarity and commonality of their ways. (p. 231)

Clearly, Jung was aware of the dangers of blind hero worship and cult formation—a concern that perhaps led him to say years later that he was glad to be Jung and not a Jungian!

Jung's own path begins with a feeling of being possessed by what he calls "the spirit of the depths"—i.e., the unconscious, as distinct from "the spirit of the times," which he defines as daily waking consciousness and routine. The assumption is that we live on the surface of our lives, unaware of the deeper impulses that have a major influence on so much in our daily lives. Drawing parallels to the Old Testament prophets, whom he quotes to open up *The Red Book*, Jung feels similarly overwhelmed by a flood of visions and feels similarly compelled to record these as well as his understanding of them for his readers. Still, with the continual reminders not to follow his path blindly, Jung stresses that he is only *like* a prophet in these limited senses and that he is not himself a prophet, hero or messiah figure. Indeed, imitation of such figures is questioned and undermined throughout *The Red Book*.

What follows is an account of the apocalyptic visions of 1913 that ushered in Jung's crisis, and they are truly harrowing. Like episodes from the biblical *Book of Revelation*, Jung's visions involve the complete destruction of Europe by vast floods, a sea of blood, a killing cold from outer space, and the like. The apocalyptic visions are followed by two visions involving the death of the hero. In the first, Jung drops down into a subterranean cavern. Peeking down through a hole in the ground, he catches a glimpse of a still lower level with a stream rushing past. The body of a young hero floats by with a bloody wound on his head; next, a black scarab passes. Reflected in the stream bed, Jung now sees the sun reflected, but this is soon blotted out by a glut of serpents and a surge of blood. In the next vision, the Germanic hero Siegfried rides down from the mountains on a chariot made from the bones of the dead. Jung hides at the base of the mountain along with a young savage who persuades Jung to murder Siegfried, which they do by ambushing the young hero and shooting him. Jung felt tremendous pressure to understand these visions, so much so that he contemplated suicide if he failed (he kept a loaded revolver in the night table drawer) (MDR, p. 180).

Reflecting on his life and career to this point, he concluded that he had been inflated with the hero archetype (a universal unconscious impulse or instinct that takes on a particular form—in this case, the impulse that all cultures feel to create a superhuman individual, a hero). He had been ambitious, arrogant, successful, but at a price. Living the myth of the young hero no longer suited him, for he had given away his own path in the process and had lost his soul. In becoming Freud's heir apparent (the "blond Siegfried" as the Freudians called him), he had allowed himself to be devoured by the father (in Norse myth, Siegfried's father is named "Sigmund"). He had sacrificed his own convictions and ideas and had become something inhuman and unfeeling in the process (we might add that Siegfried is a warrior without fear who forgets his soul mate Brunhilde in his heroic journey). The visions were telling him that his ego had been inflated with the archetype of the young hero and that this had to stop—i.e., that he must kill the young hero in himself and that this would give rise to a new myth to live by (the scarab is a traditional symbol of rebirth) (Walker, p. 68). Jung felt that if he hadn't come to an understanding of these visions, he might have been tempted to act them out literally (the

revolver in the night table drawer). Soon after he had these visions, Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated, igniting WWI. The parallel between his personal crisis and the collective crisis overtaking Europe was not lost on Jung. The meaningful coincidence (synchronicity) suggested to him that an archetype had been activated and that Europe, as a personality writ large, was also inflated with the archetype of the young hero and had similarly lost its humanity and soul in the process (p. 68). Unable to understand this inflation, it acted it out on a mass scale with the murder of the Archduke as well as millions of young men sent off to battle filled with the heroic ideals of nationalism.

The tragic consequence of such hero inflation, Jung realized, was a loss of soul. For Jung, the word “soul” has many meanings, but in the context of *The Red Book*, it seems to refer specifically to the archetype of the anima—the archetype of relationship and feeling that typically manifests in a man’s dreams, as well as in a patriarchal culture’s myths, as a female figure (Walker, p. 47). When the capacity for relationship and feeling is mature, the anima appears in dream and myth as a spiritual guide (Ariadne, Beatrice, the Virgin Mary). When that capacity is undeveloped and immature, the anima appears as a femme fatale, a witch, a seductress, etc. (Lorelei, Siren, Medea, Calypso, et al.) (p. 47-50). Hero myths in ancient cultures seem to capture the tragic consequences of the young hero’s over-development of his abilities at the expense of his humanity and relationships—after they begin to accumulate heroic deeds and reputation, Jason abandons Medea, Theseus abandons Ariadne, Aeneas abandons Dido. In Jung’s particular case, he had spent the first half of his life developing the functions of intuition and thinking, leaving those of feeling and sensation neglected and undeveloped. It is perhaps no surprise that he began having marital problems at this time and began his affair with Toni Wolff, perhaps an attempt to re-claim the soul he had lost in his heroic career thus far. Jung would theorize later on that a primary challenge for men in the second half of life is to integrate and develop neglected aspects of the psyche, especially the anima. Hence, the main theme of *The Red Book* is “the Re-Finding of the Soul” or, as the title of another work by Jung, “Modern Man in Search of a Soul.”

Jung’s own anima appears in *The Red Book* in the form of the figure named Salome as well as that named simply “my soul” (the two figures appear to be interchangeable and Jung says directly of Salome, “...she is my own soul...” (p. 248). Based on the Old Testament figure who danced for Herod and seduced him into beheading John the Baptist, Jung’s Salome is anything but trustworthy. Unlike the biblical character, Jung’s version is blind (perhaps another sign of her lack of development) and desperately wants Jung to love her. She is the embodiment of feeling and sensation, begging for Jung’s attention and affection. Just prior to her appearance, Jung notes that “The thinker’s passions are bad, therefore he has no pleasure...He who prefers to think than to feel, leaves his feeling to rot in darkness. It does not grow ripe, but in moldiness produces sick tendrils that do not reach the light” (p. 248). Salome is also the daughter of Philemon, the wise old man of Jung’s visions, dependent upon him and subordinate to him throughout.

Philemon, as noted earlier, is Jung’s archetypal wise old man and guide throughout *The Red Book*,

appearing earlier under the name Elijah. In the absence of Freud or any other older male mentor, Philemon served as a “ghostly guru” to Jung. Like Virgil for Dante, Philemon serves as a guide through the underworld of *The Red Book* as Jung finds him to be at work behind the scenes helping him through certain encounters. Jung’s Philemon is based, in part, on Ovid’s tale “Baucis and Philemon,” in which the old couple show appropriate reverence and hospitality to Jupiter and Mercury who, disguised as mortals, are visiting and testing the villagers in their capacity for Xenia (the sacred guest-host relationship valued among the ancient Greeks). As a reward, the couple is spared the wrath of the gods in the form of a great flood that destroys all of their neighbors. The gods transform their home into a temple in honor of their piety and grant them their one wish, which is to die together at the same time. After they pass away, the gods honor them by transforming them into trees, which interlace branches and trunks as they grow together. Jung was also heavily influenced by Goethe’s rendering of the couple in his *Faust, Part Two*. Here, the old couple refuse to move to make way for Faust’s construction and development project, and Mephistopheles ends up murdering them without Faust’s knowledge or approval (an act that induces tremendous guilt in Faust and that plays a part in the redemption of his soul).

Curiously, in his adaptation of Philemon in his visions, Jung completely omits Baucis, and opts not to draw upon the defining characteristic of their story—i.e., their marital intimacy, fidelity and love (Schwartz-Salant, p. 26). Instead, Philemon is made the father and ward of the blind Salome, whom he ends up telling Jung not to trust toward the end of *The Red Book*. Though Jung seems to have made great strides in realizing the immature state of his anima, in personifying her and opening up a dialog with her, and even in making some progress toward her integration (he does confess to loving her and his interaction with her leads to the restoring of her sight), by the end of *The Red Book* he seems unable to have gone further with her. Hence, *The Red Book* has an element of incompleteness, even tragedy—of Jung’s inability to completely trust and love his soul and thereby develop fully this immature part of his personality.

Nevertheless, the progress that Jung does make in reclaiming lost soul and developing his immature capacity for feeling and relationship plays out dramatically in several other of the major episodes of *The Red Book*. In *Liber Secundus*, the second part of *The Red Book*, the writing takes on a new tone—light and comic. In the opening episode, “The Castle in the Forest,” Jung envisions himself in a medieval castle as a solemn, serious tower guard who spies a red knight approaching. The red knight presents himself, and he and Jung begin to verbally joust. They debate the virtues and shortcomings of Christianity and Judaism and Jung eventually calls him the devil. But the knight insists that he is really, in fact, a personification of Joy. He argues that one should learn to dance through life, and Jung stuffily replies that dancing is really just for mating or to re-enact antiquated customs. At its root, Jung asserts, dancing is nothing more than an expression of lust and madness. In a mock serious tone, the red knight counters that one can also dance for joy. Suddenly, Jung’s clothes burst into leaves!

In the analysis following this episode, Jung notes that the devil has an inner reality and meaning. The

devil criticizes religion for its solemnity, but by discussing religion with him, Jung reaches an understanding with the devil—namely, that Joy is not merely a symptom of madness or lust, but an expression of life and a legitimate reason for dancing. Jung realizes that in dancing with this devil, he is continuing his integration and development of his inferior feeling side—this time, represented by the Red Knight with the stuffy Jung in the episode representing his overdeveloped thinking side, or, perhaps, his undeveloped, idealistic feeling side personified in his puer-aeternus dream ego, high up in the tower (Beebe, p. 50). We might add that in being disconnected from the ground, un-grounded as it were, he is also disconnected from dancing—hence, the Red One might serve as a trickster personification of Jung’s undeveloped sensation as well as his undeveloped feeling. As Beebe and others have noted, Jung again seems to make some progress here, and as Jung himself comments about this episode, “Through my coming to terms with the devil, he accepted some of my seriousness and I accepted some of his joy...It is always a risky thing to accept joy, but it leads us to life and its disappointments, from which the wholeness of our life becomes” (p. 261). There are also many echoes of Goethe’s Faust here, especially those episodes in *Faust I* in which Mephisto teaches the stuffy Faust to drink, be merry, and fall in love—however, the parallel also casts an ominous cloud over this semi-comic episode in *The Red Book* since Faust’s feeling was so undeveloped that he is incapable of real love and his lust for Margaret ends up killing her. Jung seems to indicate here that his “greening” is just an early stage of growth—much more development needs to take place in his feeling and relationship.

The comic-serious tone, as well as the theme of Jung’s need to develop his feeling side, carries over into the next episode, “The Castle in the Forest.” This time, Jung is alone in a dark forest where he soon loses his way. At a medieval castle, he meets an old scholar, absent-minded and rude, who, after an awkward and gruff greeting, finally has his servant give Jung a room for the night. Late in the night, the scholar’s beautiful daughter comes to visit Jung in his bedroom—she says she has been waiting so very long for someone to liberate her. Breaking the spell of the fairy tale mood, Jung complains aloud about how clichéd the whole episode feels, like something out of a cheap romance novel. He explains all of this to the maiden, who, in a moment of comic irony, surprises him by telling him that she is actually a real person and that everyone who visits thinks she’s just a cliché of the imagination. Moreover, taking her seriously and literally is the only thing that will liberate her. Even so, Jung complains about the clichéd fairy tale setting; the maiden counters that fairy tales come nearest to human truth. Banality, she explains, has cursed her. Paradoxically, she says the romantic and fabulous and cliché-ridden that he would deride contain the humanity that eludes him in his abstract thinking. To his surprise, Jung feels pity for her and tells her that he believes her. She asks if he loves her, and he replies, curiously, that he does but he is already married. Still, his serious and compassionate response liberates her from her imprisonment. Incredibly, *he* now feels liberated and thanks the maiden, who tells him that she sends greetings from Salome.

In his commentary on this episode, Jung stresses the need for one to integrate the anima and animus. He complains of scholars he has known who were preoccupied and wrapped up in their own abstract, overdeveloped thinking and expectations; these same men often unconsciously

demonstrated their undeveloped feeling sides by continually craving attention and recognition in the outer world and becoming easily offended if their names are not mentioned enough or their work not recognized whenever and wherever they feel it should be. In essence, Jung implies, they all have such a maiden imprisoned by an old scholar of a father. She has waited so long to be liberated, but her needs are denigrated as unimportant, superficial, and clichéd by the overdeveloped thinking father/scholar mind who recognizes her undeveloped state but does nothing to liberate her. Such men typically put down feeling and relationship, or, at the very least, ignore it and deny its reality, allowing it to pine away in vain in a castle tower. That Jung can recognize this in himself speaks well for his awareness of the problem of his undeveloped feeling side and the need to tend to it, but how far he will carry out his work in this regard remains to be seen.

Indeed, in a subsequent scene, Jung shows great feelings of compassion for a man who initially repulses him. In the episode entitled "One of the Lowly," Jung meets a thirty-five-year-old tramp with one eye. Jung speaks with him but hastily judges him to be crude and unintelligent. He is also suspicious that the tramp wants to join him on his journey to the next village where Jung plans to spend the night. The tramp is a locksmith, now unemployed, who rejects farm work because it lacks the intellectual life of the city. Surprised, Jung asks what the tramp values in the city, and the tramp replies that he likes the cinema best. He goes on to cite fantastic scenes he has seen in the movies, including a man who ran up the sides of houses, another carrying his head under his arm, and even one who stood unharmed in the middle of a raging fire. Jung notes that some of these same feats were respected by the Church and noted in the stories of the saints' lives. The tramp also asserts his distaste for the aristocracy and hopes the people will one day be free. As their conversation progresses, Jung comes to respect this tramp and feels compassion for him. They dine at a village inn, and the tramp reveals that he lost his eye fighting over a woman, went to jail, and never saw her again. Still, he is hopeful that he will find work and eventually find and marry the woman he fought for. He also hopes to recover from a chronic cough, which afflicts him throughout the night. Jung checks on him after a particularly violent coughing fit and finds him in a pool of blood. The man dies in Jung's arms:

After dinner I go to bed in a humble room. I hear how the other settles into his lodging for the night next door. He coughs several times. Then he falls still. Suddenly, I awaken again at an uncanny moan and gurgle mixed with a half-stifled cough. I listen tensely—no doubt, it's him. It sounds like something dangerous. I jump up and throw something on. I open the door of his room. Moonlight floods in. The man lies still dressed on a sack of straw. A dark stream of blood is flowing from his mouth and forming a puddle on the floor. He moans half choking and coughs out blood. He wants to get up but sinks back again—I hurry to support him but I see that the hand of death lies on him. He is sullied with blood twice over. My hands are covered with it. A rattling sigh escapes from him. Then every stiffness loosens, a gentle shudder passes over his limbs. And then everything is deathly still...What did this one do? He worked, lazed about, laughed, drank, ate, slept, gave his eye for the woman, and for

her sake, forfeited his good name; furthermore, he lived the human myth after a fashion, he admired the wonder-workers, praised the death of the tyrant, and vaguely dreamed of the freedom of his people. And then—then he miserably died—like everyone else. (p. 266)

Reflecting on the episode, Jung feels somehow responsible for the tramp's death. On the one hand, he seems envious of the simple yet strong feeling and passion with which the man lived his life. Several times, the man had commented on the rare beauty he found in everyday experience that evoked powerful feeling within him. Jung also reflects that it is sometimes essential for one to "bottom out" in order to appreciate and comprehend one's own heights. Indeed, he muses, the heights of consciousness are only meaningful if one has experienced the depths. Curiously, Jung does not comment extensively on the feeling of compassion and sorrow evoked in him that dominates the scene, choosing instead to move in his thoughts to the philosophical and spiritual as he contemplates the life of the individual, imagining a drop of water moving through its cycle from sea to cloud and back again. Yet it is the scene of the tramp dying in Jung's arms, and the powerful feeling that evokes, that remains long after one is finished reading this scene.

A similar pattern emerges in what is perhaps the highlight of *Liber Secundus*--the episode involving the hero/giant Izdubar, an encounter that sheds even more light on the theme of Jung's struggle with his overdeveloped intellect and need to reclaim his lost soul. Here, Jung travels East where he encounters a giant, who strides out of the light rising in the east and out of the ancient, heroic past of the earliest civilizations and cultures. The giant, seemingly invincible and arrayed in full battle gear, is called Izdubar, an older name for the semi-divine Sumerian epic hero Gilgamesh (Schwartz-Salant, p. 18). Incredibly and tragically, Jung, in using his reason and intellect to explain the nature of the natural world as well as of the giant's being, reduces all of its grandeur and power in mere moments, his rational explanations striking the giant like poison darts. The tone is tragic here as Jung becomes aware too late of the tyranny of reason and intellect in their tendency to strike down and poison other modes of thinking, such as the visionary, the magical, and the imaginative. Jung feels deep remorse and guilt for having laid the giant low and desperately seeks a way to revive him as he lies dying at Jung's feet. The giant is too large and heavy for Jung to carry, but it occurs to him that he might alter the giant's size if he conceives of him as a fantasy. The giant suddenly shrinks down to the size and shape of an egg, and Jung is able to put him in his pocket and carry him to a place where he might be able to revive him. Jung chants a number of incantations and revives Izdubar, yet he realizes that as the giant's powers increase, his own decreases. Apparently, Jung must reach a workable relationship with the god, neither destroying it with his intellect, nor sacrificing completely his own ego in the realization of its seeming insignificance when confronted by the archetypes. Of special note is the tone of great remorse followed by deep compassion, and it dominates Jung's account of this active imagination:

I: O Izdubar, night is falling, and it will get cold up here. Shall I not fetch you help from men?

Iz: Let it be, and answer me instead.

I: But we cannot philosophize here, of all places. Your wretched condition demands help. (p. 278)

"I paced the mountain ridge, pondering, and looked back to my Western lands, where there is so much knowledge and so much possibility of help. I love Izdubar, and I do not want him to wither away miserably. But where should help come from?" (p. 281 - 282)

I: A way has been found. You have become light, lighter than a feather. Now I can carry you." I put my arms round him and lift him up from the ground; he is lighter than air, and I struggle to keep my feet on the ground since my load lifts me up into the air ... Once we have crossed the mountains and have reached the houses of hospitable men, I can calmly go about finding a means to restore you completely again."

Carrying him on my back, I climb down the small rock path, with great care. (p. 282)

This is Jung's attempt at resurrecting God (whom Nietzsche declared dead) as a psychological phenomenon, as an archetype with an inner reality with which one can develop a deeply emotional relationship.

Next, in perhaps the most harrowing episode in *Liber Secundus*, Jung finds himself in a dark, swampy, serpent infested wasteland. Looking down, he sees a dead child, her skull partially crushed and bloodied. A shrouded woman commands him to eat the child's liver. Repulsed, Jung is outraged at the suggestion and at the entire situation, but when the woman says she is the soul of the child, he feels compelled to obey her. Disgusted, he carries out the macabre ritual only to have the woman lift her veil and announce that she is really Jung's soul. Jung interprets the vision, noting that the child is really the image of God. He implies that one regains one's humanity when one is able to symbolically slay one's God—i.e., compensate for one's inflation with an extreme faith in God. Indeed, many atrocities throughout history and across religions have been carried out by those who claimed to be acting in the name, and through the will, of their god. Jung seems to imply here that such inflation weakens and destroys the soul, one's capacity to feel and empathize with the suffering of one's fellow beings. The god must be sacrificed in order to re-claim the psychic energy projected onto it and re-claim his own life. To do this, Jung asserts, a particular type of "evil" is necessary for men to break free of inflation with an archetype (possession by a god). Jung cites the ritual of communion as a means to this end, the eating of the Savior's flesh and drinking of his blood healing the soul in the ritual of the mass. In a sense, he implies that in the ritual of communion, the image of Jesus as an all-powerful, omniscient and omnipotent being is slain (just as the image of the all-too-human suffering Jesus is emphasized). Ironically, in this violent and seemingly barbaric episode, Jung seems to regain some of his lost humanity. Significantly, it is his soul that asks him to carry out this symbolic act of his own, inner ritual of sacrifice and communion.

Later in *Liber Secundus*, another act of sacrifice takes place illustrating Jung's need to develop his

feeling and sensation functions. At this point the Cabiri emerge from the depths. They are gnome-like deities from ancient Greece, and Jung describes them as coming from under the earth. Protecting sailors and promoting fertility, the Cabiri were known to supply creative ideas and consciousness but could also interfere with consciousness at times, like gremlins. The Cabiri announce that Jung is now their master but that he should not delude himself that he can control living matter, which is their realm. They say that living matter and creativity emerges on its own, slowly, and cannot be “pulled up” by the intellect and will. The Cabiri give him a sword they have made for him and tell him it is the means of overcoming his madness. They say he is entangled in a great knot, which Jung demands to see. They show him his own brain, in which they say he is too entangled and engrossed. Being lost in his own brain is the source of his madness. The Cabiri are described as piling up on one another, creating fibers, roots and canals—an image of a brain! They say they are indeed Jung’s brain and he must cut them down with a sword. If he does this, they will be pulled up and live through him (i.e., be integrated). He does as they wish. Jung then describes a great tower which was built by the Cabiri; he says they built it from the energy of the guts, not from human thoughts. He says it is solid and the symbol of one who lives from himself.

Near the end of *Liber Secundus*, Jung’s soul appears and he tells her that he has felt blocked, unable to continue with his work. She replies that it is his own ambition that is blocking him and tells him a fairy tale. In it, a king has no children and desires a son. He visits a witch and confesses to her as if she were a priest. She says he should be ashamed but helps him. He buries a pot of otter lard in his garden and in nine months a child, a son, emerges. The son grows up strong and smart, but wants one day to replace his father. Shocked at his arrogance, the father visits the witch again for advice. This time, he plants another pot of otter lard and in nine months the son dies. He buries his son but feels terrible remorse. The king then visits the witch a third time; this time, he buries the pot of otter lard and in nine months has his infant son back again. The boy grows magically fast and soon again desires his father’s throne. This time, the father complies, and the son, now king, takes care of his father for the rest of his life. Jung asks his soul the meaning of the fairy tale. She replies that he is the king and his son is the doubting thought that valued life over love. The witch is the mother to whom Jung must submit as her child if he wishes to nurture a new attitude, for only the mother can create. Jung resists becoming a child to the mother and sees this as threatening his manhood and his plans of autonomy. The soul says this is precisely why he must subject himself to her, as an antidote to his own ambition. Jung takes her advice and lives out the fairy tale, giving over all power to his son and in so doing finds some peace of mind. He does this with resistance and fear, but knows it will heal him.

At this point, Jung reflects that he began this entire journey because he could not live with himself. His “self” (the person he had become) was detestable to him, and he had to return to a type of “middle ages” in order to transform himself into someone he could live with. He needed to go down into hell and transform himself—this, he asserts, is the way. In the final section of *The Red Book*, called *Scrutinies*, Jung develops this idea of becoming a person he can live with. He begins by relentlessly criticizing his own waking personality, or “I” personality, enumerating in detail all of its shortcomings

and failures and threatening it with torture and punishment, seeking to make it more aware of its own vices and tendencies to hurt others. He describes his “I” as arrogant, self-righteous, ambitious, overly sensitive, mistrustful, and vindictive. Such barbaric means are necessary, Jung asserts, for such a barbaric “I” which has made virtually no progress since “the early Middle ages” (p. 333).

Later in *Scrutinies*, Jung’s soul visits him late one night. Soon, there is a knock at his door. It is an enormous crowd of the dead; Jung notes that the dead know no more than the living and seek completion, resolution, redemption for their unfulfilled lives. Jung fears that he can’t trust his soul’s interpretation of this episode; luckily, Philemon shows up just then and proceeds to preach to the dead. He brings with him “the good and the beautiful” and before preaching to the dead, he reinforces Jung’s suspicion of the soul: “Fear the soul, despise her, love her, just like the Gods. May they be far from us! But above all, never lose them! Because when lost they are as malicious as the serpent... Cling to the soul with love, fear, contempt, and hate, and don’t let her out of your sight. She is a hellish-divine treasure to be kept behind walls of iron and in the deepest vault” (p. 343).

Several aspects of the central theme of re-finding the soul are present in this long and complex sequence. One might think that after the scathing self-criticism of the first part of *Scrutinies*, Jung would be more compassionate and more open to building a relationship with his soul. But this is not the case. First, Jung’s treatment of the soul seems unusually harsh. Although Philemon’s teaching about how Jung should relate to the soul might be taken as his warning about projection of the anima (Schwartz-Salant, p. 30), one cannot quite get past the fact that Jung still holds extreme distrust toward her. She is “a hellish-divine treasure to be kept behind walls of iron and in the deepest vault.” For all intents and purposes, she remains a negative, suspicious femme fatale associated with Salome, whom Jung has refused to love since the start of his adventure. Moreover, his soul is not the figure to guide him through the episode of his encounter with the dead; rather, it is Philemon. Contrast this with Circe’s role in instructing Odysseus on how to summon and interact with the dead in *The Odyssey* or Beatrice instructing and sending Virgil to see Dante through the *Inferno*. In each of these cases, the anima is in the positive instrumental role of establishing and developing a relationship to the dead (the unconscious). In Jung’s case, he does not seem to trust his anima with this task, nor does he present her as being very trustworthy. Jung’s overemphasis on Philemon and his use of the Philemon myth from both Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and Goethe’s *Faust II* distorts both his character and that of Baucis, his wife:

In general, *The Red Book*, there seems to be a serious problem with Jung’s attitude toward the feminine. The example of Baucis, being reduced to only “Philemon’s other half...” instead of her having her own rightful dignity and integrity as the proper half of this revered couple has been cited. Jung ignores the primary feature of the myth—marital devotion and fidelity—dropping it to use Philemon’s association to survival of chaos (the flood). He summarily dismisses Baucis because he needs Philemon’s connection to surviving catastrophe, ignoring the fact that they survived as a couple because of their deep love for each other. Instead, Jung splits them up referring to

Baucis as the half that “strives to Hell,” while Philemon strives “toward the good.” This is the age-old connection of the feminine with evil, further characterized in the way he perceives Salome, and later in his reaction to the Feminine Mysteries. (Schwartz-Salant, p. 26)

Philemon now preaches his seven sermons to the dead who visit each night. He provides gnostic teachings that include the importance of incorporating sex with spirituality, etc. At the end of his teaching, Jesus appears and Philemon stresses to Jung that he must sacrifice for his own path of individuation as Jesus did for his—that is the proper way to interpret and follow Jesus’ message. Jung later visits Philemon in his garden and finds that Jesus has also arrived at the garden as one of Philemon’s guests. Philemon welcomes Jesus and says his brother (Satan) is already there; he notes that the two have much in common via the serpent and are inseparable. Philemon says he needs Jesus in his garden and asks what gift he has brought. Jesus replies, “the beauty of suffering and sacrifice” (p. 359).

What seems remarkable about this conclusion to *The Red Book* is not only the complex, esoteric gnostic teachings that Philemon preaches to the dead; but also what is absent from Philemon’s garden. Jung finds some value in Salome’s teaching about the necessity of the devil and of evil, but he does not seem to consider the necessity of including her, or the feminine, in his garden. Jung, Philemon, Jesus and Satan are present, but not Salome, Baucis or any representative female figure. And Jesus’ final message regarding “the beauty of suffering and sacrifice,” apparently applicable to those struggling with their own individuation, does not include compassion, a major aspect of Jesus’ teaching that seems to be applicable and necessary as well to Jung’s belief in individuation. Curiously, Jung would later recognize the need to include the feminine in his praise of the Catholic Church’s dogma of the assumption of the Virgin Mary (MDR, p. 202), but in *The Red Book*, the anima remains unredeemed.

Whether or not Jung, after *The Red Book* years, ever succeeded in fully integrating and developing his anima remains a subject of debate. At the very least, it seems clear that he made some progress in the second half of his life following the completion of *The Red Book*. In his autobiography, composed near the end of his life, Jung commented:

But the anima has a positive aspect as well. It is she who communicates the images of the unconscious to the conscious mind, and that is what I chiefly valued her for. For decades I always turned to the anima when I felt that my emotional behavior was disturbed, and that something had been constellated in the unconscious. I would then ask the anima: “Now what are you up to? What do you see? I should like to know.” After some resistance she regularly produced an image. As soon as the image was there, the unrest or the sense of oppression vanished. The whole energy of these emotions was transformed into interest in and curiosity about the image. I would speak to the anima about the images she communicated to me, for I had to try to

understand them as best I could, just like a dream. (MDR, p. 187-188)

Moreover, Jung seemed to be keenly aware of his responsibility to deal with the anima and the images she introduced:

As a result of my experiment I learned how helpful it can be, from the therapeutic point of view, to find the particular images which lie behind the emotions...The essential thing is to differentiate oneself from these unconscious contents by personifying them, and at the same time to bring them into relationship with consciousness. That is the technique for stripping them of their power...I took great care to try to understand every single image, every item of my psychic inventory, ...and, above all, to realize them in actual life. That is what we usually neglect to do. We allow the images to rise up, and maybe we wonder about them, but that is all. We do not take the trouble to understand them, let alone draw ethical conclusions from them. This stopping-short conjures up the negative effects of the unconscious. (MDR, p. 177-192)

There seems to be some evidence that Jung took his own advice to heart to some degree and that he matured in his capacity for relationship and feeling, for in his later years, he seems to have drawn closer to Emma Jung, his wife, once again, encouraging her in her own studies of the Holy Grail—a subject he forfeited in deference to her interest and work (Bair, p. 429). Jung never devoted a lengthy analysis to the Grail, allowing Emma and Marie Louise Von Franz to produce a book on the subject, a critically acclaimed, in-depth analysis of the Grail from the Jungian perspective. Perhaps *The Red Book* served in part as a wake-up call from Jung's psyche to break from his hero inflation and devote more time to the anima. At the time of its composition, we get an in-depth view of Jung in transition, not yet matured into the benevolent wise old man, the personification of Philemon that he came to be known as, but a middle-aged man struggling in his great experiment upon himself to find and develop his own soul.

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