

Part One:
C.G Jung, Mystic or Psychologist? Reflections on the Red Book



The hell fire of life consumes only the best of men; the rest stand by, warming their hands
 Friedrich Hebbel

Following the publication of the Red Book in late 2009, anyone trying to assess Jung in the context of his huge extant corpus of psychological work, the sixteen volume Collected Works (CW for short), is challenged with a dialectic well known to the Scientific and Medical Network—the opposing claims of the Mystic and the Scientist*. In his lifetime Jung shunned the label of mystic, much preferring to see his work as establishing a new science of psychology based on the study of “the archetypes of the collective unconscious” in all peoples and cultures. Yet here in this long unavailable personal record of his inner “encounter with the unconscious” we find a book that looks to all appearances like an illuminated medieval bible, opens with quotations from Isaiah, is full of encounters with spirits of the Dead (including Nietzsche!) and has mythic figures such as Gilgamesh (Izdubar), Siegfried, a winged Gnostic spirit guide and a feminine being who speaks as his “Soul.” This, as the blurbs say, and much, much more.

With the publication of the Red Book all our views of Jung are in need of re-assessment. The simplistic “history of psychoanalysis” view of Jung as the successor who broke from Freud with a broadened view of the unconscious mind and who eschewed the infantile sexuality focus for a religious view of the psyche’s healing already had to be abandoned when *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (hereinafter referred to as *Memories*) burst on the world in 1961. This provocative glimpse half a century ago into so many aspects of Jung’s inner life had already raised questions about the closet mystic, the secret Gnostic, the painter who had renounced his vocation, the reluctant prophet, the question of his past lives and more. His personality had already begun to seem more complex, even multiple given the personas of doctor, scientist, philosopher, sage, preacher, visionary, painter, and often shaman that he presented to the world in varying degrees.

* “Mystics & Scientists” is the name of a conference organized annually by the Scientific and Medical Network.

So many of Jung's prodigious talents are on display in the Red Book that it is sure to attract reactions as varied and complex as *it* is varied and complex. For many it will be the striking paintings that will most impress, for others Jung's brilliance as a poet, for others his deep philosophizing on good and evil and the depths of the soul, for others it will be a guidebook to the more perilous and unpredictable denizens and pathways of shamanic and visionary worlds. For students of psychology it will provide endless material for dissertations, for others it will add flammable fuel to ongoing debates as to the future of Christianity and religion in the contemporary world. And some may be even impelled to heed his prophetic warnings about the price we pay for not heeding "the spirit of the depths" and the doom towards which "the spirit of the times" in this "godforsaken age" (Jung's words) may be leading us.

The Red Book alters the already complex picture we have of Jung in many striking and surprising ways. What follows is only a preliminary assessment of salient parts of this extraordinary work—a full commentary deserves at least a book or two. Jung was and continues to be a cultural phenomenon of such huge proportions that he won't be fitted easily into the Procrustean bed of anyone's categories; he overflows every academic and historical boundary we might try to impose on him. Freudians will continue to revile him as a psychoanalytic heretic, art historians may regard him as a neglected painter of genius in his own right, Christian theologians and Jewish rabbis (like Martin Buber) may rage at him as an aberrant Gnostic, while by contrast the New Age sanctifies him as one of their spiritual Founding Fathers. Yet he stubbornly refuses to belong to any simply defined group, movement, school or even "cult"—as one recent scholar has insisted. (1) Everyone wants a piece of him, to claim him as their authority or fount of wisdom. Indeed, more traditional Jungians are prone to regard his memoirs and Collected Works almost as holy writ. (Jung was embarrassed by this adulation: "thank God I am Jung and not a Jungian," runs an apocryphal saying of his.) Nevertheless, for so many he has become like a tribal elder whom we look up to for wisdom and guidance.

Jung stood and still stands alone, a unique figure on the modern stage of western civilization. After his break with Freud he had no more truck with professional organizations, international associations, conferences, academic journals, and peer reviews. He lectured and spoke widely to anyone who would listen, wrote popular newspaper articles and kept up a voluminous correspondence with a huge range of people and professions, from artists, writers and scientists, to parapsychologists, espionage agents and millionaires; from unknown readers of his books to famous Christian theologians and Zen masters in Japan. And on his travels to Africa to New Mexico to India he would engage traders, beggars, medicine men and gurus. Someone in Zurich once told me that during the late 1930's as the storm clouds of war gathered over Germany and Europe, he would go hiking in the villages of the Appenzell, a particularly remote part of northern Switzerland, and talk to peasant farmers who had no radios and never saw newspapers. He said they had a deeper intuitive grasp of the ways of the world than any city dwelling intellectual. He once wrote:

Anyone who wants to know the human psyche will learn next to nothing from experimental psychology. He would be better advised to put away his scholar's gown, bid farewell to his study, and wander with human heart through the world.

There, in the horrors of prisons, lunatic asylums and hospitals, in drab suburban pubs, in brothels and gambling halls, in the salons of the elegant, the Stock Exchanges, Socialist meetings, churches, revivalist gatherings and ecstatic sects, through love and hate, through the experience of passion in every form in his own body, he would reap richer stores of knowledge than textbooks a foot thick could give him, and he will know how to doctor the sick with real knowledge of the human soul (CW 7)

When, after his great “encounter with the unconscious”—for which we could equally read “encounter with the gods”—Jung came into his own, he no longer belonged to psychology, psychiatry or medicine; but from this time on to paraphrase Ben Jonson on Shakespeare: “he wrote not for an age—or a discipline—but for all time.” Now that we have the Red Book, this far more complete account of his inner journey than the tantalizing hints and fragments first made public in *Memories* (which in some editions also included his elusive piece of pseudo-Gnosticism called the “Seven Sermons of the Dead”), we can begin to appreciate the enormity of his ambition as well as his achievement.

Jung’s Inner Struggle

As his assiduous editor Sonu Shamdasani rightly says, the publication of the Red Book is a watershed in Jungian studies and our understanding of Jung’s unique and prolific creative genius. For the first time, the scholar can see the source and origin of practically all of his psychological theories. But the general reader can see also Jung’s descent to hell laid bare as never before. Here, like an early Desert Father, we find him beset by all the attendant inner demons and bizarre figures that pursued him so relentlessly as to seriously threaten his sanity. Finally it becomes apparent, from this panoply of amazing paintings, that his encounter with the feminine of his unconscious had opened up so much creativity that we can understand how for a while he was tempted to become an artist. Yet it was not just paintings but medieval calligraphy, prophetic utterances, shamanic invocations to spirits and gods and rapturous visions of the divine that poured forth from him.

It also starts to become clear that “the Dead,” already mentioned in his *Memories*, who had “returned from Jerusalem, where they did not find what they sought” were actually demanding not just that he face his deep doubts about Christianity, but confront the whole rotten pathology of what we call “western civilization” (one recalls Gandhi’s famous reply to a journalist’s question: “Mr. Gandhi, what do you think of western civilization?”—“I think it would be a very good idea!”) Jung early came to regard civilization as just a veneer: “at any moment we can fall victim to the beast within,” he once wrote. So in the Red Book, in 1913 on the eve of the worst mass slaughter the world had ever seen, he can be seen confronting that beast. Here is the full account of the momentous “twenty-five nights in the desert”, between mid-November and December 1913 when he encountered that Protean beast that inhabited the sordid and hellish depths of that underworld he later called the collective unconscious, that “Great Memory” of humankind, as another visionary, W. B. Yeats, called it.

On first impression the Red Book invites comparison more with William Blake’s Prophetic Books, or parts of Dante’s *Inferno* than with a psychological or philosophical

treatise—even though there is much philosophizing therein. What it records, minutely and painstakingly, is the raw material of an unmistakable spiritual confrontation with that *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* that is the essence of all true religious experience if we are to go by Rudolph Otto’s classic study *The Idea of the Holy*. (Not for nothing did Jung adopt Rudolph Otto’s term “the numinous” to describe other such encounters with the Wholly Other--*das ganz Andere*.) If this is psychological science, it is not clinically objective, but rather *subjective* science, an unverifiable record of various visionary “altered states of consciousness,” classifiable today more as either transpersonal psychology or the phenomenology of religion. As strict psychological science I suspect it would be dismissed by most academics precisely because of this very subjectivity. “This is just imagination—psychotic hallucinations” I can hear them saying, more at home with the fashionable atheism of a Richard Dawkins than semi-psychotic ramblings.

Sonu Shamdasani’s highly informative and extensive introduction gives a detailed account of how the book came to see the light of day, its place in Jung’s overall writings, its context in the culture of the times as he sees that culture. He also tells us how it was constructed and gives us a summary of its contents. All this is superb scholarship and we are forever in his debt for such Herculean labors. But at the same time Shamdasani is manifestly aiming to fit Jung’s Red Book into a developmental schema called “the history of depth psychology,” clearly establishing it as a crucial missing chapter. In this he follows the reputable scholarly tradition established by Henry Ellenberger in his encyclopedic work *The Discovery of the Unconscious* (1970). Nevertheless, valuable as this hermeneutic undoubtedly is, I feel strongly that Shamdasani is missing the bigger picture. The Red Book is far more than a very important, hitherto buried milestone in western psychology; it must also rank as one of the most outstanding landmarks in the spiritual history of modern times.

Even though Sonu Shamdasani acknowledges the prophetic tone of parts of the work, he largely skirts around the psychic side of Jung as mystic or shaman. Above all he is noticeably uncomfortable with Jung’s mediumistic practices and frequent interactions with “the spirit world.” He makes passing remarks about the various “parapsychological events” that surrounded Jung as he grew up and which were also prominent in his encounters with Freud—poltergeists, cracking tables, shattering knives etc. And although Shamdasani does note that using automatic writing was a popular experimental way of tapping the unconscious at the turn of the 19th century, he does not really explore the deeper question of Jung’s manifest ability to constellate powerful spirit phenomena and the obvious psychic talents he was born with, talents that any anthropologist would see as marks of a shaman.

Jung’s Family: Ministers and Spiritualists

What of the actual religious milieu out of which Jung’s visionary response to a moribund Christian civilization arose? It is well known that his father was a minister of the Zwinglian Swiss Reformed church, descended from a long line of churchmen, and that Jung grew up in a country parsonage. What is less well known is that on his mother’s side he came from another family of ministers, but who were also spiritualists. Several of his cousins and aunts were sensitive to spirits and aware of their secondary or “Number 2” personalities, popularly known in those days as “spirit guides” or “controls”. Grandfather

Samuel Preiswerk was known to set a place at the dinner table for the spirit of his deceased first wife. As a girl, Jung's mother, Emilia Preiswerk had to stand behind father Samuel's chair as he composed his Sunday sermons so that she could ward off nosy spirits who would distract him from his good Christian thoughts. And it was Jung's mother, herself mediumistic, who encouraged the adolescent student Jung to conduct séances with Jung's much younger cousin Helly, recognized from an early age as the most talented medium in the family of that generation.

Jung too had striking psychic experiences when he was quite young. As he recounts famously in the early chapters of his *Memories*, when he was still a child he had a number of very strange visions. Most remarkable was that of an awe-inspiring giant enthroned phallus. Another, a few years later was to him truly blasphemous: he envisioned the Almighty God defecating on a cathedral (!). Naturally he could hardly talk of such things to his conservative and spiritually depressed father and he was for a long time fearful of his mother's psychic double personality. It was only as a curious but hyper-intellectual adolescent studying masses of books on psychical research that he could start to look at such phenomena—but initially strictly as a “scientific” observer. This is when he began the early experimental summer séances set up by his mother with cousin Helly, and his other psychically gifted cousins. These communications with the spirit world are largely glossed over in Shamdasani's Introduction as if they were a kind of embarrassment, or as if “parapsychology” has long ago explained away all these strange phenomena. It still hasn't. In fact parapsychology has barely existed as an academic discipline for the last 50 years. (The Rhine Institute long ceased to be part of the University of North Carolina, for example)

Perhaps Shamdasani is also mirroring Jung's own embarrassment and ambivalence over spiritualist practices, for throughout his life Jung himself doggedly clung to parapsychology as a scientific discipline in support his “discoveries” of complexes and archetypes. Even though his public utterances about “spirits” became more ambiguous as time went on (see his remarks on *The Betty Books*, for example), for the most part he publically disdained spiritualism, seeing it primarily as source material for understanding “complexes” and “the unconscious.” Jung's ambivalence about spirit phenomena is also mirrored by a curious omission, rarely remarked upon, that occurs in the chapter called “The Tower” in *Memories*. This chapter, which I have always found indispensable for understanding of Jung's relationship to the spirits of the dead, is entirely devoted to a discussion of his ancestors: *but it is only ancestors on his father's side he mentions*; his mother's side, the Preiswerk family, who all seem to have been spiritualists of one kind or another, is completely ignored in this crucial discussion! (It is however possible this omission was a cut made at the behest of the Jung family estate; I have no way of knowing)

According his own theory of psychological types Jung admitted to being primarily a *thinking* as opposed to a feeling, intuitive or sensate type. How hard he struggled to accept his intuitive, which is to say his own psychic side becomes clear in the early part of the Red Book. This reluctance has its origin, I think, in his reaction to the psychic extravagances, as he came to see them, of the Preiswerk family. He also held back on his intuition partly due to fear of his mother's Number 2 personality (“By day she was a loving mother, but at night she seemed uncanny.”) knowing that he too had her gift of

second sight. When finally he fully let through his own mediumistic side in his experiments leading up to the writing of the Red Book, he found it indeed quite overwhelming as we shall see. Jung's psychic gifts terrified Freud. When Freud's scorn for what he called "the black tide of mud of occultism" got to Jung he manifested a poltergeist. He felt his belly get red-hot and a detonation occurred in a bookcase in the room; realizing he could somehow control it, Jung made it happen a second time. These are signs of the power of a nascent shaman.

When Jung finally went on his initiatory "vision quest," to use shamanic language, his second sight expanded into a prodigious talent as a seer and visionary. Like Swedenborg, not only could he see the spirits of the dead, but like Blake he also found himself talking to Old Testament prophets; Elijah is the first to appear, accompanied by the mysteriously blind figure of Salomé, daughter of Herod. Not long after that comes the Devil. Finally, at a momentous climactic point he envisions himself physically, crucified and encircled and squeezed by a giant serpent till his blood runs. Then Salomé tells him that he is Christ. A while later, crossing a desert, he meets an old anchorite, then he visits an insane asylum where he is pronounced mad, only to find his fellow inmate is Frederick Nietzsche.

Jung's visionary encounters are by no means confined to Biblical Judeo-Christian spiritual figures. He also meets the gigantic figure of Izdubel (aka Gilgamesh) and later a scattering of Nordic heroes, serpents of various ilk, plus divinities and demonic forces from sundry pagan cultures. A powerful source of inspiration and guidance comes from the Vedic cults of India which are interspersed with images and voices from Egypt, the Hellenic Mystery schools and Alexandrian Gnosticism, the latter culminating in the figure of Philemon, who becomes his chief authority or guide as the narrative proceeds. In *Memories* the *Seven Sermons of the Dead* had at first been attributed to the Gnostic persona of Basilides but in the Red Book it is clearly Philemon who the real voice behind these teachings. (See Part 3 below).

At the core of the Red Book are Jung's rapturous hymns to the spiritual figure of Phanes. They are comparable to the lyrical mysticism of the Song of Songs or the ecstatic Sufi poetry of a Rumi. His incantations for the healing of Izdubel recall the Psalms of David and the chants of the Rig Veda. Certainly Jung knew and absorbed all these styles from his vast reading, but what came out of him—or through him—are no clever literary pastiches or scholarly imitations. They clearly issue from a direct and passionate spiritual encounter with that "wholly Other" that Rudolph Otto called the numinous to characterize the presence of the Divine—"in the presence of whom all Nature quaketh and all clerkes be fools" (*The Cloud of Unknowing*). I think we can no longer equivocate about Jung's theurgic powers when we read these invocations and when we contemplate his richly and lovingly wrought manuscripts and paintings.

Was Jung a Mystic?

What are we to make of this panoply of visionary encounters? By and large, the terms *mystic*, *visionary*, *prophet*, *gnostic* or *shaman* are used very sparingly by Shamdasini in his Introduction and his other writings. This is curious given that his copious notes, a

veritable treasure trove of information (there are over 1,200 of them!), show that Samdasani and his fellow translators have followed Jung more closely on his great spiritual journey than anyone else studying Jung to date. Nevertheless, some recent writers are more prepared to fully embrace terms like *mystic* etc. We have Lance Owen's very perceptive review of the Red Book from an avowedly gnostic perspective, which considers "the Hermeneutics of Vision," as well as Gary Lachman's recent book *Jung the Mystic*, and a very sympathetic blog from American dream psychologist/anthropologist Robert Moss. (2)

From my own perspective as a student of both religion and the Jungian corpus I find the dazzling visionary world of the Red Book demands this broader view. To be sure Jung was a supreme psychologist and a radical thinker in psychiatry, but the Red Book also reveals him as a closet mystic and visionary comparable in certain ways to Blake, Swedenborg and Dante. He was scientist *and* mystic; both. This hugely expanded picture that the Red Book gives us of Jung's intense inner life demands that we expand the debate as to who Jung was and where he stands in our religious and spiritual culture as a whole. We can no longer confine him to that ill-defined field called "psychology."

Indeed, now that we have the record of his struggles to integrate the polarities of scientist-philosopher versus mystic within his soul we can also see how they urged upon him another mantel he was very reluctant to wear—because so many have been ridiculed and persecuted for wearing it—that of shaman-prophet. It is surely no coincidence that on the very first page of *Liber Novus*, Jung quotes the from Old Testament prophet Isaiah (53): "He was despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ...").

The Hidden Shaman

The evidence of the Red Book and of those who knew him intimately is that Jung was very much a shaman. But he carefully disguised himself behind the well developed persona of wise old psychiatrist—the "Herr Doctor Professor" effect as Gary Lachman tellingly calls this persona. One of his closest intellectual collaborators, Marie Louise von Franz, who wrote one of the best biographies of Jung, has no hesitation in presenting many parallels between the way Jung worked and the ways of the shamans in many cultures. (Why is Van Franz is left out of Samdasani's otherwise excellent critical survey of Jung's biographers?) Shamanic parallels in Jung's life and especially the Red Book and *Memories* are numerous and striking if we look at Jung's larger role on the cultural stage and reflect on what Von Franz calls "his myth in our time." Perhaps Samdasani shies away from calling Jung a "shaman" because "shamanism" is not politically correct in academic or conservative professional circles in Britain—or perhaps it might compromise his credentials as a researcher!

The fact is that shamans are always outsiders—however much they may try to be insiders, as Jung certainly tried. This is precisely because they see beneath the surface of the very "spirit of the times" to which the established professional class has already largely sold out, as Jung himself did during his years around Freud. The shaman has no choice but to be in touch with those counter-currents that Jung called "the spirit of the depths" and go against the current of the spirit of the times. This is why Jung was forced

to go his own way. For to become who he was born to be—or as he preferred to put it, to individuate—meant not just to reclaim his ancestral mediumistic talents, inherited from his mother’s side of the family, strikingly revealed in his childhood visions, or the alchemical wisdom implicit in his father’s lineage, but also to accept his shamanic role as a “wounded healer of the soul” (cf. Claire Dunne’s biography of this name.) Part of regaining his lost soul meant reclaiming a painful destiny: it meant accepting the mantle of what Robert Moss, calls “shaman of the west,” and not shying away from the pervading spiritual sickness that he saw gnawing at the roots of our culture.

Has Jung been born into a tribal society like the Lakota Sioux, to which the famous Black Elk belonged, his childhood visions (the underground phallus, for example) would have been recognized as exceptional by some wise elder or medicine man and he would have been sequestered and trained as a seer by an experienced practitioner. Black Elk’s childhood visions became the cornerstone of his tribe’s understanding of their coming fate at the hands of the white man and today those visions still stand as sacred utterances for the Lakota people. (3) Some years ago Californian psychologist Julian Silverman wrote an important paper entitled “Shamanism and Acute Schizophrenia” suggesting that many a “patient” labeled and heavily medicated as “schizophrenic” in our secular society might well have been recognized for his or her visions as a potential shaman in other more spiritually attuned societies. The radical psychiatrist R.D. Laing frequently made similar criticisms of our often barbaric ways of treating so-called “psychotics.” (In e.g. *The Politics of Experience*).

From anthropological studies of shamanism far too numerous to list—Mircea Eliade’s classic study is good basic reference (4)—I would enumerate some of the most prominent characteristics of the shaman as they relate to Jung (see also Von Franz for further and more detailed comparisons):

- Shamans are often picked out in early childhood because of their strange dreams, psychic sensitivity and communication with spirits. An older shaman in the tribe will take the child who “sees,” away from the tribe and begin to initiate and train him or her in the healing use of such visions. (E.g. Black Elk, Helly Preiswerk; cf. too Woolger & Woolger: on the Persephone or mediumistic archetype in *The Goddess Within* (1989))
- Shamans often have lifelong struggles with breakdowns and severe illness, earning them the common tag of “wounded healer” (Cf. the title of Claire Dunne’s biography: *Jung, Wounded Healer of the Soul* (2000)).
- Shamans stand apart from their tribes, often seeming eccentric, living separated from the group, keeping strange hours and having unconventional relationships with the opposite sex (Jung’s relationships with women arouse much comment and speculation to this day.)
- Shamans are “seers,” they know and pick up things others are not aware of (Jung admitted that he “saw through people”)
- Shamans are in touch with the greater currents of the tribe’s destiny, often having prophetic “big dreams” of approaching disaster and collective upheaval. (This was the case with Lakota shaman Black Elk who foresaw the coming destruction of the Native Peoples by the white man)

- Shamans are natural healers; just to be in their charismatic presence can shake up and transform a person's psyche, sometimes without verbal exchange (Jung recognized his own charisma. He once said: "By my very presence I crystallize; I am a ferment." (Dunne, p.2.) He was enormously attractive to women spiritually as well as erotically).
- Shamans have secrets they cannot tell; they often suffer the burdens of their knowledge and of "seeing" too much. They "know" more than ordinary people, hence they are often described (or reviled) as "gnostics." Often this is painful and they feel deeply misunderstood (Jung privately complained of this; but he was also deeply committed to secrecy.)
- Shamans are often tricksters, challenging and reversing social conventions in order to loosen the connections between the worlds and bring about a "healing crisis." in those they treat. (Anton Mesmer, another shaman in disguise, coined this term).
- Shamans are the preeminent mediators with the ancestors of their community; they regularly communicate with the dead. (This is the stated intent of the Red Book.) And they have the task of keeping the living and dead in balance (Cf. Malidoma Somé's *Of Water and the Spirit* for a compelling account of this.)
- Shamans "walk between the worlds", which is to say, they are experts in "journeying" to higher and lower spirit worlds where they converse with the spirits and the gods; they are intermediaries between the seen and the unseen worlds (In Jung's later language: "the relationship between the conscious and the unconscious")
- Shamans rescue lost souls and often have to placate or bargain with dark or demonic forces. (Even in his early psychiatric writings, Jung often described psychosis as "soul-loss" and as saw psychotic patients as suffering from invasions by "the unconscious," a useful neutral term for the "spirit world," which science was becoming more and more suspicious of in Jung's time due to all the charlatanism that popular spiritualism frequently degenerated into)
- Shamans know how to work with tutelary and other helping spirits, often animal in form (Jung worked with his "soul," with Elijah and later Philemon, among others, not to say the several serpents who followed him around in the Red Book. Serpents are common in the ancient Mystery Schools and of course in the cult of the healing god Asclepius.)

Jung's intimates, Emma, his wife, Toni Wolff, his close friend and early collaborator, and later Von Franz and Barbara Hannah, always recognized Jung's unusual shamanic nature and the torments that went with it, and while it was stormy and unpredictable, leading him to transgress many social conventions, they respected and tolerated it, recognizing the enormous gifts he was bringing to the larger world. If shamans and psychics are still scorned today by many professional psychotherapists in our cynical post New Age times, we can imagine how much his early (and not so say later) followers were grateful for the much more socially acceptable persona of "Herr Doctor Professor Jung," especially in hyper-conservative Switzerland and other professional circles in various parts of the world.

Doubtless it is Jung's shamanic nature that has contributed to the rumors, that many have felt as distinctly embarrassing, about the "wild man" side of Jung, reports of which have

slowly leaked out over the years. Surely this is the reason for much of the Jung family's reluctance in letting the entire contents of his "memoirs" be released and their obvious discomfort about the eccentricity of the Red Book from many reports (e.g. Gary Lachman's "Postscript" on *The Red Book*). Reading between the lines, I would say that Jung's "wild" shamanic and visionary side was by tacit agreement long kept secret by his close collaborators and friends, who kept a respectful eye towards protecting Jung's descendants, who from all descriptions sound a fairly conventional Swiss family.

The first fully public revelations of this side of Jung came shortly after his death with the publication in 1961 of *Träume, Erinnerung, Gedanken*. Its translation was soon to take the English speaking world by storm as *Memories, Dream, Reflections* (1962.). The extraordinary chapter "Confrontation with Unconscious" then revealed to the greater world for the first time glimpses of the visions that were the source and inspiration for all of Jung's subsequent psychological theories and writings. Now, with the publication of the Red Book, we can see that this stunning chapter is only the tip of the iceberg, a tiny part of the greater revelations of Jung's inner journey. If the projected further labors of Sonu Shamdasani and his learned team of researchers and translators at the Philemon Foundation come to pass, we will eventually have the raw data of the several Black Books, the personal journals which contain the complete descriptions of Jung's prolonged visionary experiment and from which he transcribed, via a number of drafts, and with great love, the most important parts into his hugely precious Red Book.

Religious Revelation or Psychosis?

With so many personalities within Jung—scholar, psychologist, teacher, healer, artist, poet, prophet, mystic visionary, poet—all bursting at the very seams or borderlines of his psyche it is no wonder that the threat of insanity arose at several points in his *nekya*, his journey to the land of the Dead. In 1913, on the point of being overwhelmed by visions of "a sea of blood" and wholesale devastation all over Europe and never certain to what horrors "the spirit of the depths" would next expose him to, it is no wonder he feared he might go insane. We know that he slept for much of this period with his Swiss army revolver loaded in a drawer next to his bed, in case one more outrageous dream would push him over the edge. It is only thanks to his enormously strong ego, his prior studies of psychiatry and the Hero Journey of myth, plus his god-given talent for objectivity and detachment from his visions that he was able to come through this momentous and all-challenging period.

When psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott reviewed *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, he said memorably that "Jung was insane and healed himself, while we are still trying to recover from Freud's sanity." It is a neat clinical trope but like Shamdasani's "psychological" stance is another clever way—here a "psychiatric" one—of sidestepping the deeper issues that Jung and his Red Book raises about sanity, madness the price of being "civilized." There is no doubt that in allowing himself to let in this throng of spiritual visitors from the Land of the Dead, that Jung knowingly took upon himself—at great risk to his sanity and with a presumptuousness he clearly recognized as potential spiritual inflation—nothing less than the rejected and repressed pagan and oriental shadows of the whole of western, which is to say, Judeo-Christian civilization. Historian Oswald Spengler and notably poets and writers Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot and James Joyce were also

doing something similar at this juncture in history—and each would struggle with depression and near-psychosis—but no-one seems to have gone so far into the murky depths of the lost soul of our culture than Jung. In this sense he is the Dante of our times, braving the depths of Hell.

Against considerable odds Jung succeeded where many would have caved in to alcohol, depression or turned into some wild-eyed rambling eccentric. Jung's discovery of his own soul, his quasi-Augustinian confessions that come to form part of the magnificent and deeply moving opening of the Red Book, could just as easily end as a case study of schizophrenia.

Jung was well aware that he had all the clinical symptoms, yet he persisted, as his own shaman, to seek meaning and method in his own madness. Here I am in agreement with Shamdasani that early biographers and reviewers like Winnicott have jumped far too quickly to a diagnosis of “psychosis,” lacking the full story that we have now. In fact it was only briefly during the 1913 visions of a Europe devastated and swimming in a “sea of blood” that Jung seriously doubted his sanity. Once the Great War broke out he recognized these as psychic premonitions and not signs of his own impending madness. If anyone was going mad, it was the whole of Europe! In an interview with Mircea Eliade he said:

Now I was sure that no schizophrenia was threatening. I understood that my visions came to me from the subsoil of the collective unconscious. What remained for me to do now was to deepen and validate this discovery. This is what I have been doing for the last forty years (*C.G Jung Speaking*, pp. 233-34)

The bulk of the Red Book visions actually came *after* this realization and it is these visions that some biographers, having only seen fragmentary commentary from *Memories* and lacking any insight into their content, have tried to stigmatize as “psychotic.”

The glib use of the term “psychotic” is in the last analysis a lazy and evasive form of reductionism. It simply begs the unasked question of what “madness”, “psychosis” or labels like “schizophrenia” really mean in the cases of men of genius like a Jung, a Blake or a Nietzsche—and shouldn't a list of geniuses who had “psychotic” phases also include Goya, Goethe (*Faust, Part II*), Shakespeare (his King Lear and Lady Macbeth), Hölderlin and Dante? As for the great luminaries of the Bible, there is no question that Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Job would have ended up in mental institutions, neatly labeled as schizophrenic, manic or bi-polar, had they tried to go public in the modern world.

Some years ago, I wrote a thesis on madness in Shakespeare from a Jungian standpoint (5) inspired partly by Michel Foucault's brilliant study *Madness and Civilization*. (1955/1967). Foucault maintains that the widespread shunning of crazy people and the opening of insane asylums in the 15th century was a transference of the old fear of leprosy—now largely disappearing—into the scapegoating a new class of untouchable, the insane. This profound shift in the collective psyche was part of the growing rationalism associated with the early science and philosophy of the Renaissance and the rise of a new type of self-conscious personality, the birth of the modern self-aware

individual ego personality.. (Hamlet's awareness of the difference between his "inner" self and his funereal persona exemplifies this: "I have that within that passeth show/ These but the trappings and the suits of woe.") In Jung's psychological language the irrationality of the Bedlam beggars and madmen became the Shadow of the new rationalistic culture and madness was driven to the very fringes of both society and the psyche, along with that other late-medieval bogey, the witch. The parallel demise of magic and the persecution of witchcraft are also part of the collective repression of the irrational, the visionary, and the mystical and of course the shamanic, in favor of an increasingly rigid and puritanical Christianity, obsessed with rational theology but devoid of much authentic spirituality. (For a brilliant short survey of the decline of the mystical by the mid-16th century, see Aldous Huxley's Introduction to *Grey Eminence*). The deep and growing split it left in the western psyche was brilliantly perceived too by Nietzsche as two polarized religious forms: the Apollonian and the Dionysian.

Shakespeare well understood how all these rejected parts and persons of late medieval society are all agglomerated in the lower depths of the Renaissance psyche. All these themes of madness, crazy beggars, ghosts and witchcraft are to be found in the great tragedies, notably in *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. Thanks to the persistent puritan propaganda of the Church we are still all infected with a paranoia about the occult, magic, and the supernatural. More than anything we forget that the deeply vilified "witch" is simply a pejorative term for the old country healers and shamans that once were everywhere in old Europe before the coming of the Christians.

A sad example of our society's ongoing rejection of shamanism is the way Ted Hughes' magnificent last work, called *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*, was reviled by the literary establishment in Britain. Hughes saw Shakespeare as very much as the shaman of his age in view of his poetic and dramatic exploration the enormous psychic split between the new Puritanism (Diana) and the old paganism (Venus). That split is still with us, responsible for the pervading cynicism and willful ignorance we find among the media and academic world when it comes to the serious study of psychic phenomena, magic, ghosts, the afterlife, healing, reincarnation etc, all conveniently dismissed as "New Age" concerns, along with crystals and Atlantis. Shamanism is of course also relegated to the distant fringes by conventional psychology, which is why it finds no place in Dr Shamdasani's treatment of Jung. Samdasani's attitude is closer to the rationalist side of Freud, who famously said to Jung about his creation, psychoanalysis: "we must make a dogma of it, an unshakable bulwark...against the black tide of mud...of occultism."

Jung dived deep into that black mud and came up with untold riches. He took many years to polish these painfully jagged nuggets of raw experience into philosophy, poetry and painted images. The outcome of his labors is the Red Book, which comes to us like some lost and recovered gospel for our times, or like some Tibetan *terma* or wisdom teaching seeded to emerge at its appropriate time in history. To the content of this extraordinary text we now turn our attention.

Part Two: the Night Sea Journey

I will go down to self annihilation and Eternal Death
Lest the Last Judgment come and find me unannihilate
And I be seized and delivered into the hands of mine own Selfhood.

William Blake

How the Liber Novus starts: Jung's "Answer to Nietzsche"



The Way of What is to Come (Der Weg der Kommende) is the title that appears on the grand and magnificently crafted first illuminated manuscript page of Jung's great book, whose title he engraved as *Liber Novus*, but is commonly referred to as *The Red Book*. It was manifestly his intention that when we open the first part, the *Liber Primus* of his book—and the stunningly reproduced facsimile of the calligraphic Red Book is similarly impressive—that we are the presence of a mighty work of prophecy and wisdom whose utterances are to be received with reverence and awe. Its bulk and heft make one think of those huge Protestant Bibles that graced so many chapels and homes during the Gutenberg era. Yet as soon as we see Jung's meticulous illuminated calligraphy we also feel we are at the same time transported to the Middle Ages. For the leading voice in the opening page is actually that of the Old Testament prophet Isaiah proclaiming "the suffering servant," who was "despised and rejected of men" (texts familiar to British readers who know Handel's *Messiah*). These proclamations are interwoven with a resonant quote about the birth of Christ as the Logos, taken from Jung's "beloved" Gospel of John. A new birth is proclaimed, a fervent call to renewal as orthodox yet as personal an expression of Christian faith as the opening *Kyrie* of Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*. But it soon turns out to be a misleading guide to what will follow, and in no way prepares us for many of the pagan visions, mythic beings and magical invocations that follow. And least of all does it prepare us for the quasi-Gnostic treatise *The Seven Sermons of the Dead* that appears towards the end of the calligraphic volume.

In many ways Jung's opening affirmation of faith is a counterblast to Nietzsche's Zarathustra who had not long before prophesied the "death of God" and decried the decadence of Christianity. Certainly Jung himself was deeply aware of the dereliction of the Christian church just as he was strongly inspired by the boldness of Nietzsche's writings. He grew up with an ailing Christianity personified in the sad plight of his father—as we saw Paul Jung was a Protestant minister who had lost his faith. When the young Jung, already haunted by revolutionary religious visions would ask his father about matters of religious experience, his father would simply say "you must just believe, my boy." This abyss between him and his father's church had to have been reinforced by the shocking vision of his later childhood where he sees God destroying his Church with an almighty turd (!) Thus I am inclined to see the opening of the Red Book as Jung's oblique proclamation, stemming, as we shall learn, from the authority of his inner teacher, Philemon, of the coming of a renewed epiphany of the Christ, but one where the new birth will not be through any institution or church or some great charismatic leader, but a re-birth within the soul of every human being (this was the deep understanding that came to him from Meister Eckhart). We might then call the opening of the Red Book Jung's consciously wrought "Answer to Nietzsche." Later, in the draft for *Liber Secundus* the hosts of the dead tell Jung that they are in need of salvation and that they "were led by a prophet whose proximity to God had driven him insane" (*Red Book*, p. 297); the prophet is clearly Nietzsche.

The Spirit of this Time and the Spirit of the Depths

But before he can reveal the nature of his extraordinary visions Jung is impelled to tell the poignant story of how he has lost his soul and how he has re-found it. This section, a later transcription from one of the Black Books of 1915, recalls St Augustine's *Confessions*, which Jung had recently read and which bespeaks a return to a lost faith (Augustine wrote: "Late have I loved you, o beauty so ancient and so new.") It is a humble recognition of how, in late 1913 at the age of 38, in his years in the Psychoanalytic movement with Freud and at the apogee of his extraordinary career, he had essentially been seduced by "the spirit of the time." And now, after the painful reversal of his career, his fall from fame and prominence, he sees that the necessity of his "descent to hell" was the prompting of a radically different force, namely "the spirit of the depths" that he had so grievously neglected. "I had to become aware," as he writes "that I had lost my soul, or rather that I had lost myself from my soul, for many years". Here are some of the moving opening words of his "confession":

Filled with human pride and blinded by the presumptuous spirit of the times, I long sought to hold that other spirit away from me. But I did not consider that the spirit of the depths from time immemorial and for all the future possesses a greater power than the spirit of this time, who changes with the generations. The spirit of the depths has subjugated all pride and arrogance to the power of judgment. He took away my belief in science, he robbed me of the joy of explaining and ordering things, and he let devotion to the ideals of this time die out in me. He forced me down to the last and simplest things.

He had espoused a false attitude to science which now he has to abandon, submitting to a *sacrificium intellectualis* that will require him to sit long in the darkness of "unknowing"

that a medieval mystic quoted earlier describes as the necessary path of spiritual purification.

Jung's Method of Self-Healing: Active Imagination

Jung's reference to "the spirit of the time," especially to the ears of his German speaking readers, is an unmistakable nod to Faust's alter ego Mephistopheles—"What you call the spirit of the times is fundamentally the gentleman's own mind in which the times are reflected"—and points right back to Jung's own worldly ego-persona. (I will return later to the profound influence of Goethe's Faust on the Red Book). It is the sacrifice of this contemporary mind-set that Jung that has really led him to the brink of madness, not the hurt of his separation from Freud as some have suggested. He realizes how totally he had sold his soul to fame, fortune and prestige when being feted as Freud's "crown prince." He writes of this state of mind that "after the parting of the ways with Freud, a period of inner uncertainty began for me. It would be no exaggeration to call it a state of disorientation. I felt totally suspended in mid-air, for I had not yet found my own footing. It was a period of profound emptiness, a void..." Nothing had energy for him any more.

He tried a careful self-analysis of his life but could find nothing from the past causing this aridity. So he decided on an experiment: "I said to myself, 'Since I know nothing at all, I shall simply do whatever occurs to me.' Thus I consciously submitted myself to the impulses of the unconscious." (*Memories*, p.173)

By allowing himself to sit in this emptiness, assisted by playing with childhood building blocks, he found images from childhood would emerge spontaneously. He had discovered for himself a practice remarkably like Buddhist *vipassana* meditation (as Jungian analyst Elie Humbert observes in his book on Jung). Later he would call it "active imagination." Quite unexpectedly his childhood started to come alive in a certain way: "Aha," I said to myself, "there is still life in these things. The small boy is still around, and possesses a creative life which I lack." Humiliating as this was to his adult ego, to have to play "childish games," he nevertheless persisted. It yielded fruit: "It released a stream of fantasies which I later carefully wrote down."

Little did Jung know he had opened the gates of hell, for in the wake of this stream of fantasies he started to feel "as if gigantic blocks of stone were tumbling down upon me...I had the an unswerving conviction that I was obeying a higher will I felt not only violent resistance to this but a distinct fear. For I was afraid of losing command of myself and becoming a prey to the fantasies—and as a psychiatrist I realized only too well what that meant".

Before long the experiment turns into an uncontrollable nightmare. By October 1913 he was having huge visions of universal devastation, of "oceans of blood" all over Europe. Jung reports the essence of these visions briefly in *Memories* and how they came close to overwhelming his sanity. Now, in the Red Book, that we have the full context of his opening to Europe's "collective" nightmare: we can see how it leads him to doubt whether this vast power really stems from the spirit of the depths, as when he questions:

I needed a visible sign that would show me that the spirit of the depths in me was at the same time the ruler of the depths of world affairs....It happened in October of the year 1913 as I was leaving alone for a journey; that during the day I was suddenly overcome in broad daylight by a vision: I saw a terrible flood that covered all the northern and low-lying lands between the North Sea and the Alps. It reached from England up to Russia, and from the coast of the North Sea right up to the Alps. I saw yellow waves, swimming rubble, and the death of countless thousands. ...Two weeks passed then the vision returned, still more violent than before, and an inner voice spoke: "look at it, it is completely real, and it will come to pass. You cannot doubt this." ... Once I also saw a sea of blood over the northern lands.

These words were actually first written on the very cusp of the "Great War." For all that has been written about his break with Freud causing his near mental collapse, the Red Book makes clear that in the years 1913—1916 Jung was not brooding, on his lost position of prominence in the world of psychoanalysis, but on the seeming breakdown of western civilization. Naturally he doubts his sanity and it is only when war finally breaks out that he recognizes his visions as collective premonitions; not he, but Europe was starting to go crazy.

“Without the soul there is not way out of this time”

Mixed in with these visions of chaos come some of the loveliest passages in the Red Book in which he at last rediscovers the soul he has lost in his years of worldliness and fame

When I had the vision of the flood in October of the year 1913, it happened at a time that was significant for me as a man. At that time, in the fortieth year of my life, I had achieved everything that I had wished for myself. I had achieved honor, power, wealth, knowledge, and every human happiness. Then my desire for the increase of these trappings ceased, the desire ebbed from me and horror came over me. The vision of the flood seized me and I felt the spirit of depths, but I did not understand him....

My soul, where are you? Do you hear me? I speak, I call you-are you there? I have returned, I am here again. I have shaken the dust of all the lands from on my feet, and I have come to you, I am with you. After long years of long wandering, I have come to you again....

As he listens to his long lost soul, he is filled with remorse for having so wantonly immersed himself in the spirit of the time:

I still labored misguidedly under the spirit of this time, and thought differently about the human soul. I thought and spoke much of the soul. I knew many learned words for her. I had judged her and turned her into a scientific object. I did not consider that my soul cannot be the object of my judgment and knowledge; much more are my judgment and knowledge the objects of my soul. Therefore the spirit

of the depths forced me to speak to my soul, to call upon her as a living and self-existing being.

A passage cited from the Black Books by Aniela Jaffé sums up this moving dialogue:

The spirit of the depths sees the soul as an independent, living being, and therewith contradicts the spirit of the times for whom the soul is something dependent on the person, which lets itself be ordered and judged, that is a thing whose range we can grasp. Before the spirit of the depths this thought is presumption and arrogance. Therefore the joy of my re-discovery was a humble one... Without the soul there is no way out of this time.

From the Live and Work of C.G. Jung (1989), p. 172

The Cave and the First Descent to Hell

...easy is the descent to Avernus: night and day the door of gloomy Dis stands open; but to recall thy steps and pass out to the upper air, this is the task, this the toil!

Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, (quoted in Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy* p. 39)

When Jung's visions of the bloodbath that was sweeping over Europe finally subside the spirit of the depths leads Jung into the desert, the equivalent of Eliot's Waste Land. This is the beginning of his journey to the land of the Dead, which he sometimes called his *nekya*, the Greek word for the "Night Sea Journey" made by Odysseus to the place where the shades dwell in Hades as told in Book 11 of the *Odyssey*. This descent, traditionally referring either to an initiation or some kind of propitiation of the Dead, recurs in Egyptian sacred texts, Virgil's *Aeneid*, certain Gnostic texts, Dante, and the Walpurgisnacht in Goethe's *Faust*. Jung is painfully aware he is following a well-trodden path. He was also fond of the Virgil quote at the head of this section which comments on the descent of Aeneas.

After several nights and various strange encounters he has visions, previously reported in *Memories*, of a dark cave with a corpse, a red stone, a black scarab, a red sun, thousands of serpents and a huge stream of blood:

I stand in black dirt up to my ankles in a dark cave.... whose bottom is covered with black water... I catch a glimpse of a luminous red stone...the frightful noise of shrieking voices ... something wants to be uttered. ...I hear the flow of underground waters. I see the bloody head of a man on the dark stream. Someone wounded, someone slain floats there. I see a large black scarab floating past on the dark stream....

In the deepest reach of the stream shines a red sun, radiating through the dark water...terror seizes me...small serpents on the dark rock walls, striving toward the depths, where the sun shines. A thousand serpents crowd around, veiling the sun. Deep night falls. A red stream of blood, thick red blood springs up, surging for a long time, then ebbing. Etc..

This flood of moribund images now makes much more sense in the context of Jung's reflections on his betrayal of his soul that opens Liber Novus. The dead body, the

scarab and red sun reveal to him the death of his old ego self, whilst the potential for re-birth emerges from deep down in the earth attended with numerous serpents, bearers of the chthonic energy of the depths (Jung is to have many encounters and transformations at the hands of serpents in his continuing journey). In the language of Indian tantra this could be seen as the awakening of huge kundalini energy in the yogi or shaman (cf. John White (ed.) (1979) *Kundalini, Evolution and Enlightenment*.)

A further vision of the death of the hero recurs a while later as the killing of Siegfried and Jung agonizes: "I felt certain that I must kill myself if I could not solve the riddle of the murder of the hero." With time and reflection Jung slowly realizes how his personal transformation, demanding a painful sacrifice of his old self, is deeply bound up with the collective fate and unprecedented blood sacrifice of the German people, his immediate ancestors, in the war of horrible ferocity that is about to be waged. It leads directly from meditations on Christ's sacrifice on the cross to the shocking realization that the redemptive power of Christ *entailed a journey to the underworld to become identical with his own dark brother, the dragon or serpent*. It will be the same serpent that in his encounter with Salomé Jung will wrestle with on the cross till he bleed copiously. The psychic agony of holding together upper and lower worlds, dark and light, heaven and hell in a posture of the Cross, will recur later in the Red Book. This psychic crucifixion will become the essence of Jung's later cosmological synthesis, his personal gnostic and esoteric mystery of the union of opposites which is they key to the *Seven Sermons of the Dead*. (6)

After death on the cross Christ went into the underworld and became Hell. So he took on the form of the Antichrist, the dragon. The image of the Antichrist, which has come down to us from the ancients, announces the new God, whose coming the ancients had foreseen...

The rain is the great stream of tears that will come over the peoples, the tearful flood of released tension after the constriction of death had encumbered the peoples with horrific force. It is the mourning of the dead in me, which precedes burial and rebirth. The rain is the fructifying of the earth, it begets the new wheat, the young, germinating God

In Jung's thinking the young green god of re-birth is not only Christ but is another form of the young Dionysus and the dying Osiris. He is also anticipating a life changing dream of "the Green Christ" that will lead him many years later to the study of the alchemists who understood the identity of Christ with the Philosopher's Stone, the sought after Lapis.

Mysterium: the Meeting with Elijah and Salomé

This extended episode is part of a visionary meeting in the desert with the Biblical prophet Elijah and his consort, blind Salomé, the slayer of the holy man John the Baptist. Jung came to remember this meeting as one of the most vivid and powerful of all the visions he recorded in the Liber Novus. (He describes it briefly in *Memories*, with a limited interpretation, but there his truncated account deliberately omits the most provocative part, how he is crucified like Christ, how he experiences briefly an incorporation of a lion-headed god, and how he then witnesses the epiphany of a divine child with black and white serpents in each hand. This was reported briefly to his

students in a candid seminar 1925 seminar called *Analytical Psychology*. (7) This later account, startling as it is, comes however through Jung's "Herr Professor" persona and no longer conveys the sheer terror mixed with numinosity of the original experience he records in the Red Book.

It is the first encounter Jung has with actual identifiable individual figures other than Siegfried

An old man stood before me. He looked like one of the old prophets. A black serpent lay at his feet. Some distance away I saw a house with columns. A beautiful maiden steps out of the door. She walks uncertainly and I see that she is blind. ..

"I am Elijah and this is my daughter Salomé."

A little later after having met two serpents, one black and one white, Elijah takes Jung to a very high summit and shows him there a mighty boulder, like an altar. The prophet stands on this stone and says: "This is the temple of the sun. This place is a vessel that collects the light of the sun."

Following several visionary tropes impossible to summarize here, Elijah invites Jung to "Step over to the crystal and prepare yourself in its light," then:

A wreath of fire shines around the stone. I am seized with fear at what I see: The coarse peasant's boot? The foot of a giant that crushes an entire city? I see the cross, the removal of the cross, the mourning. How agonizing this sight is! No longer do I yearn—I see the divine child, with the white serpent in his right hand, and the black serpent in his left hand. I see the green mountain, the cross of Christ on it, and a stream of blood flowing from the summit of the mountain—I can look no longer, it is unbearable—I see the cross and Christ on it in his last hour and torment—at the foot of the cross the black serpent coils itself—it has wound itself around my feet—I am held fast and I spread my arms wide. Salomé draws near. The serpent has wound itself around my whole body, and my countenance is that of a lion.

Salomé says, "Mary was the mother of Christ, do you understand?"

I [Jung]: "I see that a terrible and incomprehensible power forces me to imitate the Lord in his final torment. But how can I presume to call Mary my mother?"

S: "You are Christ."

I stand with outstretched arms like someone crucified, my body taut and horribly entwined by the serpent: "You, Salomé, say that I am Christ?"

It is as if I stood alone on a high mountain with stiff outstretched arms. The serpent squeezes my body in its terrible coils and the blood streams from my body; spilling down the mountainside. Salomé bends down to my feet and wraps her black hair round them. She lies thus for a long time. Then she cries, "I see light!" Truly; she sees, her eyes are open. The serpent falls from my body and lies languidly on the ground. I stride over it and kneel at the feet of the prophet, whose form shines like a flame.

E [Elijah]: "Your work is fulfilled here. Other things will come. Seek untiringly; and above all write exactly what you see."

The black serpent who coils himself around Jung's cruciform body, squeezing out his blood has the function of coercing him to connect to and to make sacrifice to the power of earth mother principle, so neglected in most forms of Christianity: "The serpent is the earthly essence of man of which he is not conscious. Its character changes according to peoples and lands, since it is the mystery that flows to him from the nourishing earth-mother."

The lion headed god who comes into Jung's body briefly is an epiphany of Aeon, the solar God of the Orphic and Mithraic Mysteries who rules the cycles of cosmic time and cosmic renewal. (8) This extraordinary many faceted god is also called Phanes. Later he appears in his youthful form in the *Liber Secundus* of the Red Book where he is central to the regeneration of Izdubar. In the third book, *Scrutinies* where we meet Jung's most refined and definitive cosmology, the *Seven Sermons*, we find Phanes balancing his polar opposite or dark brother Abraxus. A vision of Abraxus can be seen painted into Jung's famous, but little understood mandala *Systema Muditotius*, helpfully reproduced in an appendix at the end of the Red Book.(9) As in many gnostic images Jung's Abraxus is a lion-headed serpent who unites the cosmic opposites of heaven and earth by fusing the luminous sun lion with the dark cosmic earth serpent. (Note: some scholars, notably Gilles Quispel, point out how Jung's Abraxus differs in significant ways from the gnostic god)

After briefly incorporating Aeon/Phanes, Jung makes an unnerving discovery. In the middle of his agony as he is being crucified, he realizes that Salomé, who has earlier proclaimed herself his sister, now announces that *Mary is their mother and that therefore he must be, yes, Christ!* The full implications of this sacred family constellation are too sudden and too shocking for Jung to fathom during his torment on the cross. Some years later in a Black Book reflection on this staggering episode (included by the editor as Appendix B of the Red Book), Jung comes to understand how strongly every traditional Christian is tied to Mary the Mother of God by a deep Eros bond that keeps him or her in unconscious infantile dependence. To break this dependence and reintegrate the lost earth mother—here in her serpent form—he has now to die on the psychic cross he must bear within him—crucifixion to the four functions and to the four sacred corners. This mandala, as he later calls it, presages a new wholeness (see page 127 of the RB) and must be won painfully and in isolation, for "whoever steps beyond the Christian outlook, yet does so definitely, falls into a seeming abyss, an utmost solitude..." he wrote. (p.368)

The conflation of several traditional mysteries in this quite brief extract shows how deeply Jung had become psychically identified with the suppressed religious unconscious of the west and the Biblical and pagan antecedents of Christianity, especially its gnostic counter-currents. The sun temple on the mountain recalls many pagan cults of the sun, of sacred stones, of the omphalos at Delphi and kindred holy mountain sacrifices. The divine child, who presages renewal and a new future, must hold both the dark and light serpents that Jung will struggle with for many nights in the desert. They are the hellish and heavenly energies he must hold together in the crucifixion within his soul, as he labors psychically to give birth to the new religious configuration that must supersede the dead Christianity of this time.

The Christian Desert and the rediscovery of the lost Dionysian

The second book, *Liber Secundus*, is entitled “Images of the Erring” and takes Jung through a visionary desert which shows him aspects of Hell and which could be said to mirror various aspects of his Christian ancestry and aspects of the Christian myth whose contradictions and decadence he had never dared consider as fundamentally “erring”. (His seemingly blasphemous early dream of God defecating on the cathedral now makes sense as an early pre-figuration of these revelations). There follow some lengthy and tedious discussions which I won’t attempt to summarize. Among them, there is a debate with the Red One, the Devil that inevitably recalls exchanges between Faust and Mephistopheles.

In the forest he meets another father-daughter pair, a scholar who is hiding his beautiful daughter in a castle where she guards his library. Jung imagines seducing her as if he were in a romantic novel. But the novel starts to come to life and in a wonderfully comic moment he cries out desperately “I am truly in Hell—the worst awakening after death, to be resurrected in a lending library.”

He witnesses the apparent murder of a lowly peasant. He meets an anchorite, perhaps one of his own past lives as a Desert Father but this figure is a dried up thinker who only seems to mirror back to Jung some of his own empty intellectualism. The Devil shows him more of the vastness of Death and he must meditate on yet more visions of horrendous mass slaughter, another sea of blood and unending sacrifice. Finally, he abandons “the sad remains of earlier temples and rose gardens” and the solemnities and barrenness of the Christian desert and is drawn into the sensuality and joy of a Dionysian spring orgy, a Bacchanale! This new scene, reminiscent of the extended pagan scenes of *Faust II*, is full of abundant greenery, music, wine and dance. Now he finds himself in a milieu where

Luscious-lewd whores giggled and rustled along the walls, wine fumes and kitchen steam and the foolish cackling of the human crowd drew near in a cloud. Hot sticky tender hands reached out for me, and I was swaddled in the covers of a sickbed. I was born into life from below, and I grew up as heroes do, in hours rather than years. And after I had grown up, I found myself in the middle land, and saw that it was spring.

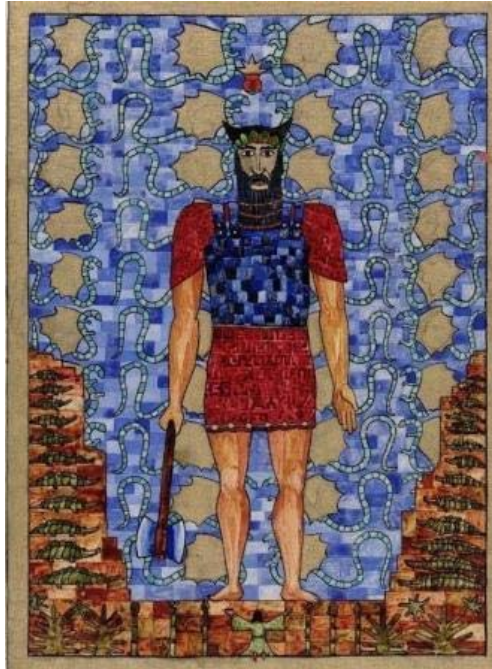
But I was no longer the man I had been, for a strange being grew through me. This was a laughing being of the forest, a leaf green daimon, a forest goblin and prankster, who lived alone in the forest and was itself a greening tree being, who loved nothing but greening and growing....

He has found his Dionysian Green Man self, the lost shadow of the arid, excessively apollonian and overly “spiritual” part of his Christian soul.

The Healing of Izdubel, the Cosmic Egg

This Dionysian-Bacchic interlude leads us thematically to the great encounter with the giant Izdubel, known nowadays as Gilgamesh. Jung envisions him as a wounded bull god who carries the energy of cosmic renewal and who is identical to Dionysus, Siva, and the

Vedic Prajapati, Lord of the Animals. But Izdubel is sick and longs for the immortality he imagines to be in the west.



This long section, to which Jung returned many times and added some of the most powerful paintings in the Red Book, is pivotal in the “healing” of the pagan underbelly of Christianity. It starts as a dialogue between the titanic dying god who is seeking immortality in the west—part of Gilgamesh’s quest—and the western spirit of Logos or rational understanding that Jung represents. With supreme cunning Jung, with his clever western mind, sets about stealing from Izdubar his primordial earth power, a power which Jung lacks, which belongs to the primordial mother who dwells in the east. Izdubar, by supreme contrast wants to be re-born in the west through the doorway of the setting sun. Both are wounded and both lack something the other has; Jung wants Izdubar’s magical cthonic force; Izdubar craves the light of the western logos, but both are wounded in their respective ways: “Knowledge lamed me, while he [Izdubar] was blinded by the fullness of the light” writes Jung.

Jung actually has great pity for the wounded giant and wants to see him healed. In the end Jung resorts to metaphysical trickery and gets Izdubar to accept that he is only a fantasy, knowing that a fantasy takes up no space! Then Jung captures him, shrinks him to the size of an egg and puts him in his pocket. He is fearful, however, that many “who have wanted to heal their sick god ... were then devoured by serpents and dragons on the way to the land of the sun.”

Then follow a series of magnificent drawings that Jung must have returned to over several years illustrating the regeneration Izdubar (images 50—69). They lead to the stupendous opening of the cosmic egg and the birth of the new god. For three nights Jung assembles a glorious array of incantations and invocations, some his own poetic creations, some drawn from Vedic texts he had been immersed in for many years. It is for me the richest and most moving part of the whole Red Book, full of compassion and

parturient care in the birthing of his new god. It is Jung the old shaman-priest, practicing a rite of ancient theurgy. Here is one example of these lovely hymns that illustrates the richness of the many dream references and personal sacrifices that he has woven into this momentous ritual

I have slain a precious human sacrifice for you, a youth and old man.
 I have cut my skin with a knife.
 I have sprinkled your altar with my own blood.
 I have banished my father and mother so that you can live with me.
 I have turned my night into day and went about at midday like a sleepwalker.
 I have overthrown all the Gods, broken the laws, eaten the impure.
 I have thrown down my sword and dressed in women's clothing.
 I shattered my firm castle and played like a child in the sand.
 I saw warriors form into line of battle and I destroyed my suit of armor with a hammer.
 I planted my field and let the fruit decay.
 I made small everything that was great and made everything great that was small.
 I exchanged my furthest goal for the nearest, and so I am ready.

The Coming of Phanes

This powerful series of pictures accompanied by Jung's rich poetic incantations for the healing of Izdubar are a pivotal phase of Jung's visionary journey. The egg into which Jung has cast Izdubar becomes the agent of a visionary re-birth and marks the splendid arrival of a new figure, who is in every sense an *epiphany*. This the luminous figure of Phanes, who is to be central to Jung's cosmology from this point on. Phanes is the divine child, or *puer aeternus*, whose spiritual light balances and complements the chthonic energies of Abraxas, who rules creation.

Near the end of this pictorial sequence of incantations Jung has painted a glorious image with calligraphic text of a fiery sun rising out of molten magma supported by two incandescent serpent energies (image 59). He titles it *hiranyagarbha* which is the Vedic Sanskrit name for the Golden Child, Brahma, who is born from the Cosmic Egg. This cosmogonic vision exactly parallels the Orphic myth of the birth of the primordial Eros from such an egg recorded in Hesiod's *Theogony* (in all likelihood the Indian myth migrated to Greece.) The emergent Eros is frequently given the epithet "phanes", which means "the Shining or Resplendent One." It also becomes the name of the god himself in the Orphic mysteries.

The Cosmic Egg which heals Izdubar is not only anticipates and brings about the birth of Phanes, but confirms a prediction made by Philemon, Jung's pre-eminent spiritual teacher, that Jung's own transformation is moving towards some kind of completion. For under the painting he eventually made of Phanes, the divine child he writes:

"This is the image of the divine child. It means the completion of a long path. Just as the image was finished in April 1919, and work on the next image had already begun, the one who brought the [sun] came, as Philemon had predicted to me. I called him Phanes because he is the newly appearing God." (image 117).

But before Jung becomes more preoccupied with Philemon he is apparently seized by an outpouring of mystical fervor which results in a series of ecstatic hymns to Phanes, whom he recognizes as the luminous principle of immortality and the eternal life the soul. For reasons not apparent he transcribed hardly any of these hymns from the Black Books into the Red Book, leaving only a painting of Phanes to mark his epiphany. Fortunately Dr Shamdasani has included some lovely quotations in his notes. Here is part of a paean to Phanes that comes through the voice of Philemon; in its entirety this hymn runs for several pages:

Phanes is the God who rises a gleam from the waters.
 Phanes is the smile of dawn.
 Phanes is the resplendent day.
 He is the immortal present.
 He is the gushing streams.
 He is the souging wind.
 He is hunger and satiation.
 He is love and lust.
 He is mourning and consolation.
 He is promise and fulfillment.
 He is the light that illuminates every darkness.
 He is the eternal day....

(Black Book 7, p. 16).

It will take much diligent study when all the Black Books are published to do justice to the complex interweaving of the voices of Phanes, Philemon and Abraxas, these three powerful figures who became so dear to Jung. The lyrical mysticism of these hymns is one of the unique joys of the Red Book especially when placed with the paintings. Like reading Blake or a medieval Book of Hours they invite reverent meditation. For here, with the epiphany of Phanes one feels Jung's faith has been reborn.

Part Three: the Wisdom of Philemon

We do not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious.
 C. G. Jung

A Further Descent to Hell

Despite the glories of the coming of Phanes, Jung soon realizes there can be two sides to birth. After "the Opening of the Egg" in which he felt he had given his all in the regeneration of the old god, Jung falls into a post-partum spiritual depression "Birth is difficult, but a thousand times more difficult is a hellish afterbirth". In the nights that follow he finds himself once more fully in a Hell crawling with dark serpentine energies, where a maiden is assaulted by demons and there is much blood. He is forced to look deeply into evil: "I saw that my soul had fallen into the power of abysmal evil. The power of evil is unquestionable, and we rightfully fear it". But he can only free himself from its compulsion by recognizing that there is also a part of himself that desires it. "He who does not want evil will have no chance to save his soul from Hell," he concludes.

A shocking scene in this ghastly sojourn in the underworld is the act of cannibalism Jung is forced to perform when he must eat the liver of young girl who has just died. Jung reflects on his eating of the bloody flesh as a part of the sacrifice necessary to create a new god. (10) Following this nauseous scene, Jung inserts another major series of images (images 79—97) that suggest some deeply felt non-verbal reconciliation of good and evil forces in him. The salient motif in these paintings is that of a flowerlike image that seems threatened by a dark volcanic peak thrusting up from below and which contains a dark rubescent sun.(84—91). This dark rising force—and this only my guess at this dynamic—seems to push up from the underworld to invade the flower. It brings with it a stele inscribed with ancient runes that magically provokes the splendid flowering of a green blossom with red-tintured petals (88, 89). Then a counterbalancing golden sun descends from above (91). From this a four cornered, fort like structure emerges, which balances the two forces and expands into an eye-shaped form inscribed with more runes (91—95). New energy flows in four directions. (96). Finally a magnificent egg appears, resting on the waters; it is full of red, black and some white cell like forces (97). The struggle between the two suns; between the upper world and the underworld seems resolved.

The following three nights are called by Jung “Divine Folly.” During them he must encounter a number of opposing scenarios and figures; first come a *kitchen* that seems to mirror the motherworld where he learned intuition and a *library*, clearly the father world of thinking. His mother’s beloved *Imitation of Christ* (à Kempis) is shown to him but he rejects the path of its title: “Christ actually lived only his own life, and imitated no one. He did not emulate any model. If I thus truly imitate Christ, I do not imitate anyone, I emulate no one, but go my own way, and I will also no longer call myself a Christian”. (p.293)

But like it or not, Jung is still very strongly in thrall to the psychic milieu of Christ’s way. Shortly after this scene he is visited by throngs of the Christian Dead, who are “wandering to Jerusalem to pray at the most holy sepulcher.” Among them are the spirits of Ezekiel and a crazy Anabaptist who apparently found no peace in the afterworld. The Anabaptist says to Jung: “Let go daimon, you did not live your animal.” Jung finds himself dragged off into the madhouse where he is obliged to make a long reflection on the relationship between Christianity and its Dead.

The third night brings yet another vision where the indistinct images of pagan and Christian sacrifice are run together. He feels completely alone and disheartened: “This is the night in which all the dams broke, where what was previously solid moved, where the stones turned into serpents, and everything living froze” (p. 299) Now he realizes that no physical god is going to be incarnated to bring us salvation—the conventional belief of Christians—but that “the anointed of this time is a God who does not appear in the flesh; he is no man and yet is a son of man, but in spirit and not in flesh; hence he can be born only through the spirit of men as the conceiving womb of the God” (p. 299)

This series of meditations that follow on the repressed pagan and oriental underbelly of a desiccated Christianity deserve to be read in the penitent spirit in which reads St John of the Cross or Thomas à Kempis or listens to the Bach Passions. It would take too long to comment on all of them here. Here is Jung at his most Christian.

And like Faust and his pact with Mephistopheles, Jung has finally had to face and acknowledge his own Devil, a figure he later calls the Shadow:

The devil is the sum of the darkness of human nature. He who lives in the light strives toward being the image of God; he who lives in the dark strives toward being the image of the devil. Because I wanted to live in the light, the sun went out for me when I touched the depths. It was dark and serpentlike. I united myself with it and did not overpower it. I took my part of the humiliation and subjugation upon myself, in that I took on the nature of the serpent.

If I had not become like the serpent, the devil, the quintessence of everything serpentlike, would have held this bit of power over me. This would have given the devil a grip and he would have forced me to make a pact with him just as he also cunningly deceived Faust. But I forestalled him by uniting myself with the serpent, just as a man unites with a woman. (p. 322)

Jung's meditation on the union of the opposing forces of dark and light within his own soul is hugely courageous and deeply humbling:

If I accept the lowest in me, I lower a seed into the ground of Hell. The seed is invisibly small, but the tree of my life grows from it and conjoins the Below with the Above. At both ends there is fire and blazing embers. The Above is fiery and the Below is fiery. Between the unbearable fires grows your life. You hang between these two poles. (p. 300)

He sees the tree of life, whose roots reach into Hell and whose top touches Heaven. He also no longer knows differences. (p. 301)

To know the cosmic cross or the cosmic tree is to unite heaven and earth within ourselves and thus to become whole. This, Jung saw, is what frees us "from the old curse of good and evil." His mandala *Systema Mundi* and the *Seven Sevens of the Dead* must essentially be understood in the light of these foregoing words. They are the core of the transformative experience he recorded in the Red Book. Norman O. Brown reached a similar place many years later, meditating on Sufi teachings:

Love is all fire; and so Heaven and Hell are the same place.

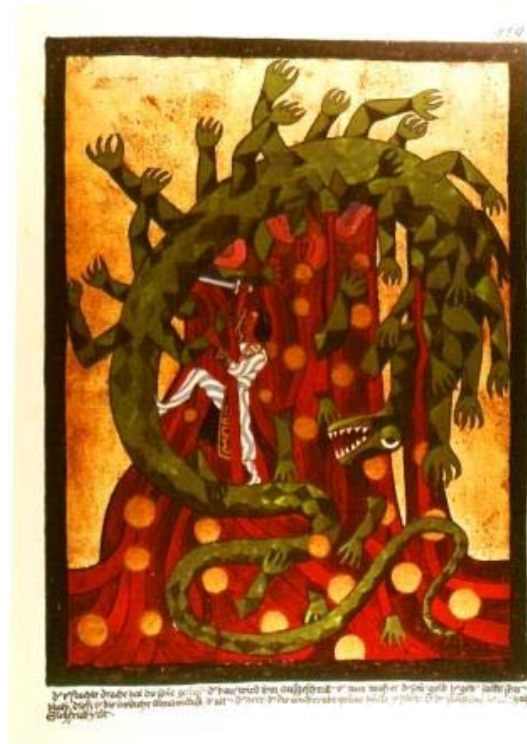
Satan is the primordial Sufi, the model of the perfect monotheist and lover, who, cursed by God, accepts the curse as a robe of honor, preferring eternal separation willed by the Beloved to the union for which he longs.

Love's Body. (1966)

The Dragon Slayer

Jung's journey continues for several nights, bringing still more intense visionary encounters. There is an unsatisfactory visit to a scene in Wagner's *Parsifal* in which he recognizes himself in the malevolent magician Klingsor. This is a prelude to several nights of deep uncertainty as to whether to accept the "gift of magic" which the spirit of the depths is offering him. This takes him into a long discussion of magic with Philemon, which space does not permit me to go into. Attached to this sequence are two painted images of a struggle between a youthful hero and a huge dragon called Atmaviktu. They

are inserted between the *Parsifal* scene and yet another encounter with the spirits of the Dead.



It is not immediately obvious what this dragon represents in the context of Jung's opening to Philemon other than representing the immense power of evil that must be overcome by the youthful solar hero. Eventually it emerges that this terrifying monster is a further transformation of the black serpent who came initially with Elijah and who had squeezed him nearly to death in his "crucifixion". Jung realizes that serpent and dragon are essentially the same energy. But now the great fight between the dragon and the hero is no longer a *theory* that he had studied so deeply when working on *The Psychology of the Unconscious* in 1912-1913, but is now a terrifying psychic reality that indeed threatens to destroy him.

We are at the core of Jung's confrontation with the collective shadow, the ultimate depths of Evil, the implacable force that threatens to devour the sun of consciousness. To prevent the dissolution of consciousness, Jung must fight this ultimate great battle with darkness, and to overcome it he must accept his own darkest shadow, his own evil. "You always become the thing you fight the most," he remarked many years later. This dragon fight, which also strongly recalls Jacob's fight with the angel who finally blesses him, is a supreme moment in Jung's trajectory through hell. Becoming equal to his adversary in the painful recognition that he is identical with him, Jung, the lone hero struggling to retain his sanity, is finally able to rescue the "treasure hard to attain," which is the light of consciousness buried in the darkness. This climactic moment is stunningly represented in a painting of a huge dragon encircling a shining crystal. This stone, which is later to have many alchemical resonances for him as "the philosopher's stone," is here the emblem of his own wholeness, his new sense of self. No longer can he be threatened by insanity, for he is finally at one with the serpent and her awesome power.



From now onward the serpent will follow him not as a dark threat, but as his friend, familiar and “divine brother.”

I have been baptized with impure water for rebirth. A flame from the fire of Hell awaited me above the baptismal basin. I have bathed myself with impurity and I have cleansed myself with dirt. I received him. I accepted him, the divine brother, the son of the earth, the two-sexed and impure, and overnight he has become a man. ...I overcame him, I embraced him .He demanded much from me and yet brought everything with him. For he is rich; the earth belongs to him...

Truly; I have shot down a proud enemy; I have forced a greater and stronger one to be my friend. Nothing should separate me from him, the dark one. If I want to leave him, he follows me like enemy shadow. ...

Who is Philemon?

Like Moses in the desert who transforms a serpent into a rod of magical power Jung also acquires a new power that is difficult for him to assimilate. Only with time and reflection Jung did he come to see that in wrestling with the cosmic force that is Atmaviktu, by becoming both slayer and slain he also has to come to terms spiritually and intellectually with the issue of magical power . There is now no escaping the fact that Philemon the Magician derives his magical power from the chthonic, underworld powers of the earth serpent. Indeed Jung is quick to recognize these underworld powers in their ancient Greek form as the Cabiri, the dwarf-like Tom Thumb beings who served the Earth Mother and who were the friends of the ancient smiths, themselves shamans’ who brought forbidden precious metals out of the earth(11). In a lovely painting, Phanes is seen watering magical plants: “The Cabiri grow out of the flowers which spring from the body of the dragon”.

And as it slowly dawns on Jung that Philemon can take the form of this earth serpent and that he belongs to the same force of nature that had been around him in various forms

from his earliest days, he starts to recall the little manikin he secretly carved as a boy without knowing why. (See *Memories*. Chapter 1: “First Years.”) Intuitively, the nascent shaman in him had been impelled to perform quasi-initiatory ritual acts imbued with magic. The magical complex that would one day manifest as Philemon was then already prefigured in his childhood games and fantasies. All this throws light on the strange phallus dream of his childhood. As ithyphallic deities, Hermes, Dionysus, Pan, Siva and others, all manifest the cosmic Eros that arises out of the earth and strives to unite with heaven Mother, the Mater Coelestis. In the fifth of *Seven Sermons* he calls it PHALLOS, the earthly father.

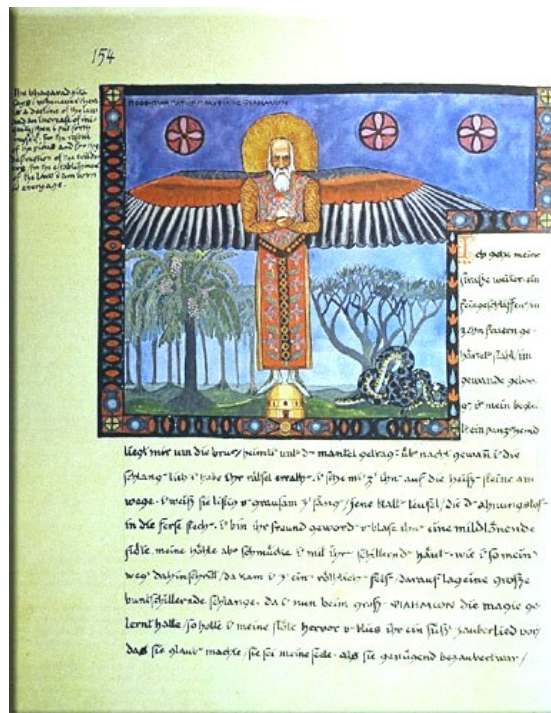
For all his adoration of Phanes and his reverence for the power of Abraxas—Jung wore a ring with an imprint of an early gnostic image of Abraxus on it—it is Philemon who emerges from the Red Book as Jung’s supreme spiritual Master. Intermittently, between 1913—1916, Jung had extended philosophical and spiritual conversations with Philemon, which he wrote down in his Black Books and later transcribed into what became *Liber Secundus* and *Scrutinies* of the Red Book. Trusting Philemon as his teacher or inner guru, Jung was able to work through many of his doubts about evil, the problem of opposites, the role of magic, the nature of psychic renewal and the ultimate form and structure of reality.

Much of this is driven by the incessant importuning of the thronging hordes of the Christian Dead who have “returned from Jerusalem where [they] did not find what [they] sought.” Jung’s collaboration with Philemon thus becomes the search to find a new dispensation for the sick psyche of the Christian west. Eventually dialogue coalesces in the quasi-gnostic *Seven Sermons of the Dead*, which were to be the source, the seed forms, Jung later admits, of all his developed psychological theories. These *Sermons* have long been known to his intimates—he had privately printed copies made as early as the 1920s—but he was clearly ambivalent about them being known to the general public, most likely because of his fear of the slur “mystic” in the face of his stated mission to create a “scientific” psychology of the depths. After his death in 1961 the *Sermons* were published as an Appendix to the German edition of *Memories* but not included in the first American or British editions (later US editions, however, do include them). His publishers and editors also seemed divided about their relevance to his mature psychology.

In *Memories* Jung is vague about the origins of Philemon as his master or guru par excellence. He glosses over the complexities of Philemon’s identity with the great serpent and the underworld, his relationship to evil and magic and to Phanes and Abraxas which we now have revealed in the Red Book. He simply says in *Memories*:

Another figure rose out of the unconscious. He developed out of the Elijah figure. I called him Philemon. Philemon was a pagan and brought with him an Egypto-Hellenistic atmosphere with a Gnostic coloration. His figure first appeared to me in the following dream:

....Suddenly there appeared from the right a winged being sailing across the sky. I saw that it was an old man with the horns of a bull. He held a bunch of four keys, one of which he clutched as if he were about to open a lock. He had the wings of the kingfisher with its characteristic colors.



He goes on to say:

Philemon represented a force which was not myself... He confronted me in an objective manner, and I understood that there is something in me which can say things that I do not know and do not intend, things which may even be directed against me.

Psychologically, Philemon represented superior insight: He was a mysterious figure to me. At times he seemed to me quite real, as if he were a living personality. I went walking up and down the garden with him, and to me he was what the Indians call a guru.

Jung is here talking through his amiable “Herr Doctor Professor” persona, interpreting Philemon somewhat reductively as a psychological function, an “inner” guru from who he received teaching from the unconscious. This is not untypical. Jung always avoided making public metaphysical statements, taking the Kantian position that the “phenomenal” world of nature is knowable, but the divine was “noumenal” or unknowable, thus maintaining a neat division between scientific and religious knowledge. In his BBC interview when asked if he believed in God, he said, famously: “I know. I don’t need to believe.” Elsewhere, when cornered he would say he knew only the pattern of God in the psyche. But in private he said far more. In the 1920’s he made an extraordinary admission to an early collaborator, Cary de Angelo. When they were discussing the visions of the Red Book, she reports that Jung said to her:

There were various figures speaking, Elias, Father Philemon, etc. but all appeared to be phases of what [he] thought ought to be called "the master." [He was] sure that this latter was the same who inspired Buddha, Mani, Christ, Mahomet—all those who may be said to have communed with God.

(cited by Shamdasani in Red Book, 213)

Goethe as Jung's Spiritual Ancestor: Faust's Unfinished Business

A closer examination of the nature and origin of Philemon leads us to the central role of Goethe and his *Faust* in Jung's inner life. (12). From adolescent years onward *Faust* provided a lifelong counterpoint to Jung's reflections on the the Old testament and Gospels. The very name Philemon clearly connects Jung's "master" to the latter part of *Faust, Part Two* in which Faust callously murders a saintly couple called Philemon and Baucis. (I will return to this shortly).

Family legend had it that Jung's paternal grandfather, C.G. Jung the Elder (1794-1864) was actually an illegitimate son of Goethe. Whether or not this is true we shall probably never know. But as an inspirational figure and pre-eminent imaginal ancestor the author of *Faust* never ceased to reverberate in Jung's soul from the day his mother gave the 15 year old boy a copy of the play to read. In a letter to Max Rychner in 1932 Jung wrote:

It seems to me that one cannot meditate enough about Faust, for many of the mysteries of the second part are still unfathomed...it is as much the future as the past and therefore the most living present.

Add to this a letter in 1942 to Paul Schmidt and it becomes clear that the spirit presence of Philemon marks a direct continuation by Jung of Goethe's later preoccupations with the decadence of the west and the depredations of Faust. Faust, for Jung, was a prescient symbol of modern man's destructive materialist hubris. He writes to Schmidt:

I have taken over *Faust as my heritage* and moreover as the advocate of Philemon and Baucis, who unlike Faust the superman, are hosts to the gods in a ruthless and godforsaken age. It has become—if I may say so –a personal matter between me and *proavus* [ancestor] Goethe.

Jung labored long on this deep spiritual affinity he felt with Goethe and the teachings that came through Philemon. It was a deeply personal myth and one he could confide to very few. He preferred to frame his insights into a "scientific" psychological doctrine more palatable to the modern psyche and for many years kept his visions private for only a small inner circle. But in 1926, on receiving a book from the great sinologist Richard Wilhelm, Jung came out of his isolation and started to link up with kindred spirits who also sensed the need for spiritual renewal and the forging of new connections with the lost wisdom and ancient religious traditions of all peoples. He realized, and had it confirmed in the eyes of others he respected, that his mission was to bring about a renewal in our ways of relating to those depths and heights he knew to be sacred from his own searing experience. And he also must have realized that he was part of a chain of the "wise" or the "knowers" (loosely speaking "gnostics") who are connected down the ages. For in the same letter to Max Rychner in 1932, he also wrote:

Faust is the most recent pillar in that bridge of the spirit which spans the morass of world history , beginning with the Gilgamesh epic, the I Ching, the Upanishads, the Tao-te-Ching, the fragments of Heraclitus, and continuing in the Gospel of St. John, the letters of St. Paul, in Meister Eckhart and in Dante.

In other places he refers to the golden chain or *aurea catena* that links the ancient spiritual teachings of the East, the Mystery Schools and Gnosticism to medieval alchemy, and passes on through Jacob Boehme, Swedenborg and Blake and Goethe.

From his *proavus* Goethe Jung believed he had inherited what we might call Faust's *karma*. He recognized that he was taking on the collective spiritual problem of the power hubris of not just Germany but the imperialist nations of the west. The karma which goes hand in hand with colonialism, slavery, genocide and the plunder of the natural world. He must have immediately realized the continuity of the magnificent figure who called himself Philemon with the saintly couple Philemon and Baucis who were martyrs to Faust's hubris, since this is the couple who are drowned along with thousands of others in the service of Faust's megalomaniac land reclamation scheme. In other letters Jung interprets the powerful images of large scale destruction by water and by fire that recur throughout *Faust*, as portents of the great wars of the twentieth century. In other words he saw his ancestor Goethe as a prophet and himself as his successor, linked by his Number 2 personality and Philemon as gnostic sage.

Goethe had publically denied that Philemon and Baucis were conscious references to the Ovid's myth in the *Metamorphoses*. There Ovid told of a saintly couple who were hospitable to the gods Jupiter and Mercury and were rewarded for their hospitality to these divine visitors by being made priest and priestess of a temple sacred to them. But Jung thought Goethe, as an initiate, was hiding his esoteric sources and but was nevertheless hinting at the spiritual importance of this simple pair whose humble reverence for the divine exemplifies something that the modern world has sadly lost. Their drowning by Faust leaves his boundless hubris unchecked and the issue of contemporary alienation from the sacred entirely unresolved. Jung always thought the climax of *Faust, Part Two* in which "the eternal feminine leads us upward" and redeems Faust to be hollow and in no way redeemed Faust. Goethe couldn't really finish his epic poem and Jung in many ways felt the task had fallen to him and that he had to "dream the dream onward," as he once described the dynamic of active imagination. This could well be what he is referring to when he writes in *Memories*:

I feel very strongly that I am under the influence of things or questions which were left incomplete and unanswered by my parents and grandparents and more distant ancestors. It often seems as if there were an impersonal karma within a family, which is passed on from parents to children. It has always seemed to me that I had to answer questions which fate had posed to my forefathers, and which had not yet been answered, or as if I had to complete, or perhaps continue, things which previous ages had left unfinished.

He adds that from very early he was aware of his complicity with Faust's sin and the need to redeem it. For he writes in the same chapter of *Memories*:

In the days when I first read Faust I could not remotely guess the extent to which Goethe's strange heroic myth was a collective experience and that it prophetically anticipated the fate of the Germans. Therefore I felt personally implicated, and when Faust, in his hubris and self-inflation, caused the murder of Philemon and

Baucis, I felt guilty, quite as if I myself in the past had helped commit the murder of the two old people. This strange idea alarmed me, and I regarded it as my responsibility to atone for this crime, or to prevent its repetition.

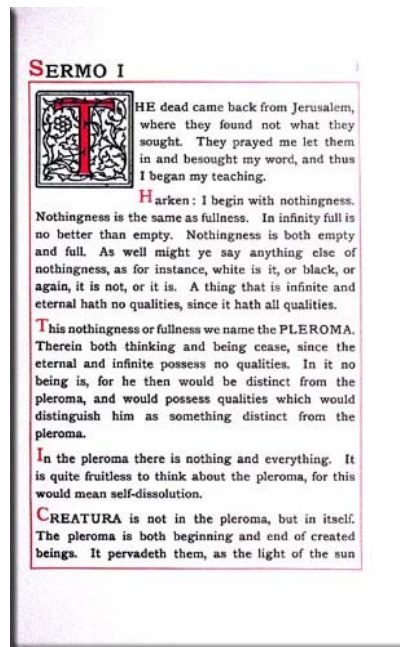
Philemon, then, was the spiritual master who came through Jung to redeem and atone for the collective sins of Faustian man, who was leading the west deeper into barbarism. This was how Jung saw it 1913-1914. That this atonement was to be a lifelong undertaking for him is confirmed by the standing stone he carved in later life at his retreat at Bollingen, which he inscribed thus: *Philemonis Sacrum—Fausti Poenitentia* (Shrine of Philemon—Repentance of Faust).

Philemon's Treatise: the *Seven Sermons to the Dead*

The difficult task Jung had set himself of editing the huge flow of teachings that were “revealed” to him over several years in dialogue with his spiritual master Philemon was never fully completed. When the Black Books and the Draft and other manuscripts are eventually published by Dr Shamdasani and his co-workers perhaps we shall know more of how this intense exchange with Philemon came to an end, if indeed it ever ceased. Jung seems to have returned to this material fairly frequently over the years between 1916 and 1928, adding more paintings, but not adding more textual transcriptions. In the Epilogue he added in 1959 he writes:

I worked on this book for 16 years. My acquaintance with alchemy in 1930 took me away from it. The beginning of the end came in 1928, when Wilhelm sent me the text of the "Golden Flower," an alchemical treatise. There the contents of this book, found their way into actuality and I could no longer continue working on it. To the superficial observer, it will appear like madness. It would also have developed into one, had I not been able to absorb the overpowering force of the original experiences. With the help of alchemy, I could finally arrange them into a whole...

If there is a culmination, a summing up of Philemon's message it must surely be the *Seven Sermons*, given that Jung chose to place them close to the end of the calligraphic transcriptions that constitute the Red Book. That he intended the Red Book to be available in time to his serious students if not the general readership is well documented by Dr Shamdasani. And it is notable that despite all the ambivalence that accompanied the complicated publication of the bits and pieces eventually cobbled together by Aniela Jaffé as *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* the one *picture* from the Red Book he clearly wished to world to see as an accompaniment to the revelation of his “Confrontation with the Unconscious” was his portrait of Philemon, modestly characterized as “the Wise old man archetype.” And the only *textual* part of the Red Book he wanted re-publishing at his death as an appendix to *Memories*, is the *Seven Sermons to the Dead*, the text he had originally disguised somewhat in the 1920s by pretending it was a gnostic treatise by Basilides, a known early Gnostic.



Several excellent commentaries have already been written on the *Seven Sermons*—best known is Stephan Hoeller’s (13) but Dr Shamdasani lists others in his notes—so I choose not to give a further detailed commentary here. But a few words are in order given the position Jung gave to the sermons as a kind of *coda* to the Red Book and the fact of its actual publication, however obfuscated, during Jung’s lifetime.

Coincidentia Oppositorum

If there is one overarching archetypal theme that runs through the Red Book and which inspires *Psychological Types* (which we now see is Jung’s intellectual working through of the essence of the Red Book in psychological language), it is the union or coincidence of opposites. This dialectic even underlies the title of his final major work on alchemy, his *Mysterium Coniunctionis*. Taken out of context, as an independent text, the entirety of the *Seven Sermons* comes across very much as a gnostic tractate. Among the extant literature of so-called gnosticism (the term is extremely controversial, (14) we find several treatises are cast in the form of rhetorical paradoxes presumably designed to emphasize that Divine Unity transcends all opposites; “I am the first and the last,” “I am the Whore and the Holy One,” for example.(15) Given the position of these sermons as the culmination of Jung’s account of his prodigious journey to hell and back and his visionary crucifixion between heaven and hell, the Above and the Below, what these “sermons” must be understood as far more than abstract metaphysics. Philemon’s teachings, although addressed to the Dead are also designed to reveal to Jung the spiritual meaning of his own lived experience, to highlight the method in his extended bout of seeming madness.

Here is a characteristic example, to give readers not familiar with the *Seven Sermons*, of how Philemon proclaims the union of all kinds of opposites:

Harken: I begin with nothingness. Nothingness is the same as fullness.
In infinity full is no better than empty. Nothingness is both empty and full.

.....

We must, therefore, distinguish the qualities of the pleroma. The qualities are PAIRS OF OPPOSITES, such as:

the Effective and the Ineffective.

Fullness and Emptiness.

Living and Dead.

Difference and Sameness.

Light and Darkness.

The Hot and the Cold.

Force and Matter.

Time and Space.

Good and Evil.

Beauty and Ugliness.

The One and the Many. etc. (Sermon 1)

In the light of my earlier discussion of the crucial position of Abraxas in Jung's spiritual cosmology it is the Third Sermon, seen now in the context of the Red Book, that takes on a rich, if chilling new meaning. Here in the same gnostic rhetoric of paradox, in what a recent writer has called "the mystical language of unsaying"(16). Jung's Philemon penetrates to the heart of the unresolved dualism that continues to haunt traditional Christianity—the moral antithesis of God and Devil, good and evil, redemption in heaven, damnation in hell. And the figure who straddles this deeply split moral polarity is Abraxas, Jung's demiurge and Lord of Creation. In Jung's greater vision Abraxas is the cosmogonic divinity or archetype who redeems all pagan gods of nature, of generation, of erotic profusion, and who is at once (like the tantric Shiva) both the microcosmic and the macrocosmic Phallos, both near and far, "greater than the great, smaller than the small." The *Sermons* are full of such echoes of the Vedas, of Taoism, the Psalms and of the greatest gnostics, as witness the following:

"Abraxas is the God who is difficult to grasp. His power is greatest, because man does not see it. From the sun he draws the *summum bonum*; from the devil the *infinum malum*....

"Abraxas is the sun, and at the same time the eternally sucking gorge of emptiness, of the diminisher and dismemberer, of the devil.

The power of Abraxas is twofold; but you do not see it, because in your eyes the warring opposites of this power are canceled out.

"What the Sun God speaks is life, what the devil speaks is death.

"But Abraxas speaks that hallowed and accursed word that is at once life and death.

"Abraxas produces truth and lying, good and evil, light and darkness, in the same word and in the same act. Therefore Abraxas is terrible.

"He is as splendid as the lion in the instant he strikes down his victim.

"He is as beautiful as a spring day.

"He is the great and the small Pan alike.

"He is Priapos.

"He is the monster of the underworld, a thousand-armed polyp, a coiled knot of winged serpents, frenzy.

"He is the hermaphrodite of the earliest beginning.

"He is the lord of toads and frogs, which live in the water and go up on the land,
whose chorus ascends at noon and at midnight.

"He is the fullness that seeks union with emptiness.

"He is holy begetting,

"He is love and its murder,

"He is the saint and his betrayer,

"He is the brightest light of day and the darkest night of madness.

"To look upon him, is blindness.

"To recognize him is sickness.

"To worship him is death.

"To fear him is wisdom.

"Not to resist him is redemption."

(Sermon 3)

Summary and Conclusion

The intellect of man is forced to choose
perfection of the life, or of the work,
And if it take the second must refuse
A heavenly mansion, raging in the dark.
W.B. Yeats

The Red Book records how Jung's visionary self is led by his Soul through an extended *via crucis*. He is psychically crucified on the unresolved opposites within Judeo-Christianity, forced by his inner teacher Philemon to experience the agony of its most deeply unresolved tensions—psychoanalysis would call them psychic splits—between the polarities of good and evil, of dark and light, of heaven and hell, of God and Devil, antinomies both Blake and Swedenborg had lived out before him in their own visionary encounters.. Even if the re-birth drama that ensues early in the Red Book is based less on the Christian Resurrection than on the cosmology of the Orphic Mysteries of Hellenic times, Jung's visionary trajectory is nevertheless towards a renewal of Christianity and its lost pagan shadow. This is thrust upon him by the early appearance in his visions of the "the Dead from Jerusalem" whose unrelenting chorus, as dogged as the Erinyes or Furies of Orestes, cries out to him that "The number of unredeemed dead has become greater than the number of living Christians."

Jung's deeper mission then, as prophet, it could be said, was to show that only by participating personally in a re-birth of the Christ energy, or the renewal of the Self within individual souls—his individuation process—could there be a redemption of the collective sick soul of western Christianity and a fallen western "civilization," a culture that has its poisonous materialist tentacles all around the world. He realized this was a task given only to rare individuals and that it was fraught with the threat of madness or prophet-like inflation, a razor's edge he was forced to walk and which he warns about in *Two Essays in Analytical Psychology* (II, 1, Ch IV). This perilous path was one that had clearly broken Nietzsche, which is no doubt why Jung studied the latter's *Zarathustra* so closely. Given this precedent he was always rightly terrified of falling into "the abyss of impassioned dissolution," that Dionysiac ecstatic madness that had undermined his predecessor's sanity. So to prevent a replication of Nietzsche's possession by *Zarathustra* he instead stubbornly argued with his master Philemon at great length.

Clearly recognizing the potential for spiritual inflation, Jung, notwithstanding, took it as his destiny to attempt to redeem, nothing less than the rejected and repressed pagan and oriental shadow of the Christian west, a task he felt had been left unfinished by Goethe as well as by Nietzsche. He turned for help, not surprisingly, to the writings of the early Christian gnostics, whose suppressed spiritual activity Jean-Yves Leloup has fittingly called “the unconscious of Christianity.” Thus it was in the language of the gnostics that his quasi gnostic spiritual master, Philemon (inherited as it were, from Goethe) taught him how to answer the pleadings of the betrayed souls of the Christian Dead. Using a carefully implemented method of “scientific” detachment he called active imagination he meticulously recorded his visionary experiences and reflected and meditated on them for nearly two decades. Their meaning slowly became clear to him, and with the help of further dreams and by the creation of paintings and mandalas he found a way to rework this intense raw material in the deep furnaces of his creative genius. Collecting the best fruit of all these experiences he conceived the Red Book, a record of his extraordinary journey, which he thought, with many reservations, might possibly provide a light in our time of spiritual darkness. Here are his final, touchingly modest words from the Epilogue of the Red Book:

I always knew that these experiences contained something precious, and therefore I knew of nothing better than to write them down in a "precious," that is to say, costly book and to paint the images that emerged through reliving it all—as well as I could. I knew how frightfully inadequate this undertaking was, but despite much work and many distractions I remained true to it

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Notes

1. Noll, Richard (1994) *The Jung Cult*, Princeton.
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3. Neihardt, John G. (ed.) (1932) *Black Elk Speaks*.
4. Eliade, Mircea (1951) *Shamanism, Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. Chicago.
5. Woolger (1975/2011) *King Lear’s Madness* at: <http://www.deepmemoryprocess.com/page27aa.html>
6. On the esoteric meaning of the cross linked to the Cosmic Man, *anthropos*, see Guénon, René (1931/1958) *The Symbolism of the Cross*. London, Jung, C.G. (1951) *Aion*, and Woolger (2008) *Mystical Body, Man of Light; the Lost Secret of the Cosmic Christ*. CD of illustrated lectures from Woolger Institute, Oxford. Woolger.uk@talk21.com

7. Jung, C.G. (1989) *Analytical Psychology*, Princeton.
8. Cf. Woolger, *Mystical Body, Man of Light*. op.cit.
9. Cf. Jeromson, Barry “Systema Munditotius and Seven Sermons” (2008) *Jung History* 1, 2
https://www.philemonfoundation.org/resources/jung_history/volume_1_issue_2/systema_munditotiusand_seven_sermons_symbolic_collaborators_in_jungs_confro
10. This may be Jung’s expiation of the very callous way he “sacrificed” the young life (life = liver) of his young cousin Helly to science—she died at age thirty having been rejected and clinically mis-represented by him after he ceased to use her as his experimental subject in his doctoral thesis. See Zumsein-Preiswerk, Stefanie (1975) *C.G. Jung’s Medium: die geschichte der Helly Preiswerk*. Munich and Woolger Institute Conference (2009) *C.G. Jung, Goethe and the Politics of the Spirit: Ancestors, Mediums and Lovers*. Tape Set from: Woolger.uk@talk21.com
11. See Eliade, Mircea (1956/1962) *The Forge and the Crucible*. Chicago
12. See Paul Bishop’s superb study (2008) *Analytical Psychology and German Classical Aesthetics: Goethe, Schiller and Jung*. 2 vols. London
13. Hoeller, Stephan (1982). *The Gnostic Jung and the Seven Sermons to the Dead*. Wheaton, Illinois
14. Williams, Michael Allen (1996) *Rethinking Gnosticism; An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*. Princeton
15. See for example: “The Thunder, Perfect Mind” in Robinson, James (ed) (1977) *The Nag Hammadi Library*. Netherlands.
16. Sells, Michael A. (1994) *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*. Chicago.