

A REPORT ON C.G. JUNG'S *THE RED BOOK*

On 23rd October, 2009, I was present at a seminar held in the C. G. Jung Institute at Zurich for the inauguration of the publication of *The Red Book* by C. G. Jung, edited by Sonu Shamdasani. Interestingly we encountered a small glitch at the outset when the projector failed to project the red colour onto the screen. The problem was overcome quickly and we moved on but perhaps there is a significance yet to be revealed . . .

The Red Book took Shamdasani 13 years of meticulous scholarship, love and dedication. His Zurich presentation covered two main areas: the structure of the book and its 'location' in Jung's opus and in Analytical Psychology in general.

The Red Book's structure is intricate and complex. It is an unambiguously unscientific book in which he records his own mental states, or soul processes, and then elaborates on them. There are thus several layers of language systems that he uses, none of which use scientific concepts. Jung's method of elaboration is more poetic or artistic in nature, in keeping with his acknowledgement of the reality of the psyche with which he was holding a dialogue. Jung worked on *The Red Book* for 16 years intending to publish but never doing so.

Shamdasani told us that Jung said to read his *Red Book* is to understand his psychology. The corollary to this is that if you haven't read this book then you do not understand his psychology! Shamdasani went on to say that the most significant event in the development of Jung's thought was the non-publication of *The Red Book*. Institutes have sprung up all over the world, begun training programs, education programs without the benefit of the one book that is the foundation of his later *Collected Works*. With the publication of this book a totally new light is cast on Jung's biography.

The Red Book records the process of Jung becoming Jung. Shamdasani talked of Jung's pre-war visions, drawing his attention to prophecy and a possible career as a prophet. *The Red Book* shows us how Jung the prophet became Jung the psychologist, making the enormously significant shift from prophesying to trying to understand

how prophecy works i.e. how do subjective states of mind connect with later external world events?

This question is still very much alive today and thus the publication of the Red Book, the 'common denominator' of all Jungian Schools, is timely and portentous.

Shamdasani told us that what happens next depends on us. The work of editing and publishing is done, and he told us that he is still amazed as there were "too many reasons for it not to be". Perhaps in this statement lies a clue for the projector's failure at the beginning of our seminar. It may be a reminder to us all that whenever something comes into the world, something of great significance, we must remain alert to the workings of forces that work against it.

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(This report is based on memory and notes taken during the seminar with Shamdasani. Any errors and misunderstandings are mine alone)