

The Bhagavadgita says: whenever there is a decline of the law and an increase of iniquity, then I put forth myself, for the sake of the proud and for the destruction of the cold-blooded, for the establishment of the law's am born in every age.



Ich gehe meine  
straße weiter ein  
feingeschliffen in  
zehn feuern ge-  
härte stahl im  
gewande gebor-  
gen mein begle-  
be ein panghend

liegt mir um die brust heimlich und der mantel getrag- über nacht gewan- die  
schlang- lieb- ich habe ihr rätsel errath- ich sehe mich zu ihm auf die heiß- staine am  
wage- ich weiß sie listig v- grausam z- sang- jene kalt- keufel/ die d- ahnungslos-  
in die ferse stech- ich bin ihr freund geword- v- blase ihm- eine mildlösende  
flöte. meine höhle ab- schmückte ich mit ihr- schillernd- haut- wie ich so mein-  
weg- dahinschritt/ da kam ich z- ein- rölllich- felf- darauf lag eine große  
buntschillernde schlange. da ich nun beim groß- PHILMOW die magie ge-  
lernt hatte/ so holte ich meine flöte hervor v- blies ihr ein süß- zauberlied vor  
das sie glaub- machte/ sie sei meine seele- als sie genügend bezaubert war/

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R E V I E W

C.G. JUNG'S *LIBER NOVUS*  
THE RELEASE OF  
*THE RED BOOK*

C.G. JUNG

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*The Red Book* is a large illuminated volume consisting of writings and paintings by C.G. Jung out of which he developed his main theories of the collective unconscious, the archetypes and the process of individuation. It is a chronicle of his “confrontation with the unconscious” which he worked on from 1914-1930. Jung considered this book to be his most important work yet it had never until now been released to the public and only to a handful of scholars. When Jung died in 1961 he did not leave any specific instructions as to what was to be done with *The Red Book* except that he did not want it to be included in his Collected Works. The Jung family was undecided about what to do with the book and so it sat in a Swiss bank vault for the last 40 years. Through much negotiation the family decided to allow Sonu Shamdasani, a well-known Jung scholar, to edit and translate the book. Shamdasani worked for 13 years on the translations and editing. He was assisted in the translations by Mark Kyburz and John Peck. The book was funded by the Philemon Foundation.

The much-anticipated release of *The Red Book* was on November 7, 2009 in New York City. This release coincided with the 100 year anniversary of C.G. Jung’s first visit to North America and New York. Twelve members of the Jung family were present for the release.

The whole week was filled with related events. There was the opening of the exhibit of *The Red Book* and other of Jung's original writings, including his *Black Books*, on display at the Rubin Museum, a museum of Himalayan art. *The Red Book*, filled with Jung's many mandala paintings seemed to have a kinship with the ancient Tibetan Buddhist thangka on display at the museum. These thangka depicted mandalas used for meditation purposes.

The week also marked various other events among them lectures given by the book's editor Sonu Shamdasani and Jung's grandson, Andreas Jung. Shamdasani's opening lecture included the projection of each page of *The Red Book* sequentially on a large screen. As quotes from the book were read, the projected pages of *The Red Book* turned. The reading, paired with the viewing of Jung's calligraphic script and colorful paintings unfolding page by page, created a reverential atmosphere in the auditorium as something historical and illuminating was being revealed for the first time. Many present felt they had had a profound experience witnessing Jung's work.

The lecture by Andreas Jung, an architect and current occupant of Jung's home in Kusnacht, Switzerland was very stimulating. He spoke about Jung's dreams of houses and about the involvement Jung had in the design and construction of the houses he lived in. Andreas Jung felt Jung's main family house was a representation of Jung's outer life, a product of his persona. This house was built in a design very much in keeping with Swiss culture and faced the street. On the other hand, Andreas Jung interpreted Jung's famous tower in the back of the property as a representation of Jung's inner life, developing out of his Self. The tower was off the street and faced Lake Zurich. Jung began constructing the tower after he completed *The Red Book* as a result of his encounter with the unconscious. Rarely seen photos of Jung in a family setting were shown. Andreas Jung reminisced how as a youngster he would at times go into Jung's study and look through *The Red Book*. His talk helped put *The Red Book* in a historical perspective.

For a period of several years, Jung had entered into dialogues with and had recorded his dreams, visions and fantasies in his "Black Books." Jung called this time an "encounter with the unconscious" and his "greatest experiment." Jung began in October 1913 through July 1914 to have terrible visions depicting death, destruction and war. He worried he might be going mad. After the outbreak of World War I in August, 1914 he realized his dreams were precognitive and not a result of madness. He wondered if there were other connections between his dreams and the culture at large. This inspired him to write a 1,000-page work consisting of his dreams, visions and fantasies and the human universals he discovered in them. Jung sent copies of the manuscript to some of his colleagues. After revising and editing his work, he transcribed it onto parchment pages, using ancient script, illustrating the script in a medieval style. He then inserted the pages into a red leather book, which he had commissioned especially for this project. At this time, Jung also relived his experiences by painting several images in the book. Through this painting process he discovered the power of mandalas in constellating the self. This led him to conclude the goal of

individuation to be the realization of the self. Jung called this book “*Liber Novus*” and it has become known as *The Red Book*. Jung worked on *The Red Book* for 16 years and then decided to leave it and to find parallels to his process and discoveries in Tibetan Buddhism, Hindu philosophy and medieval alchemy. It was after his completion of *The Red Book* that Jung began building in stone and constructed his famous tower at Bollingen.

*The Red Book* is a folio size volume of 371 pages weighing over 8 pounds. 205 of these pages are Jung’s calligraphic text and painted images. The English version has a translation of the opus as well as a full facsimile of the original Red Book. It includes a comprehensive commentary on the book by its editor, Sonu Shamdasani. This commentary places the work in a social and historical context helping to make the book more accessible to the general reader.

The text, written in calligraphy, is a beautiful work of art. Some of the pages contain very small letters while other pages have much larger script. One wonders how Jung found the time for such meticulous and time consuming work. The sheer number of written pages, many with illuminated script, leaves a profound, lasting impression on the reader.

The paintings by Jung in *The Red Book* are nothing short of astonishing. Even more so as he had no formal training in art. They consist of richly colored intricate mandalas and other powerful images that emerged out of his use of “active imagination,” a technique he developed for dialoguing with the unconscious and later taught his patients. This method is now commonly used by Jungian oriented therapists in working with their patients to facilitate a deeper connection to the unconscious.

The impact of *The Red Book* on the Jungian community as well as on the culture at large remains to be seen. Shamdasani has suggested it will shake the very foundations of what we think of Jung and of analytical psychology. At a first glimpse it reveals a man of enormous courage who was committed to exploring and navigating into the unknown world of the psyche. Traveling through incredible storms and plunging to the deepest of waters, Jung developed a psychology of meaning. The experience of reading about and thus bearing witness to Jung’s own inner process, has the capacity to inspire a deepening of one’s own inner work and ultimately to lead to a deepening capacity to travel into uncharted territory with one’s patients. *The Red Book* has much to teach us.

