

Jung's Red Book for our time: Searching for meaning under postmodern conditions

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A global group of Jungian analysts and scholars was invited to consider writing an essay on the topic: “Jung’s *Red Book* for our time: Searching for meaning under postmodern conditions.” The response we received from this invitation was overwhelmingly positive and enthusiastic. The results will be published in three volumes, the first and the second of which are now in the reader’s hands.

Here is the proposal we sent to the authors, to guide their reflections in composing the essays for this collection.

The essays included in these volumes of the Series vary quite widely in perspective and approach. The book begins with an essay by co-editor Thomas Arzt that lays out the general assumptions operative in the project as a whole. As Jungians we

share the conviction that human beings have what Jung called a “religious instinct,” that is a strong propensity to search for meaning beyond the immediate challenges of everyday life. This leads inevitably to a question for transcendence. Traditionally, religious institutions and collective mythologies have provided this sense of ultimate meaning and orientation for people, but today in postmodernity myth is considered to be metaphor at best and superstitious fiction at worst, and institutions of religion are unconvincing and ineffective for modern and postmodern individuals who have grown up in secular cultures with prevailing scientific and anti-spiritualistic attitudes and values. This has led to the worldwide phenomenon today of the “homeless mind,” to use the memorable phrase of theologian and sociologist, Peter Berger. In addition to embedding his discussion of modernity, postmodernity, and “*posthistoire*” into the broader context of Jung’s speculation of an epochal turn, Thomas Arzt offers a reflection on the *Red Book* that can assist individuals today to do something similar for themselves, also to find psychic ground under their feet and a roof over their heads. It is a way for the mind to overcome the homelessness of postmodernity. The book represents the most important alternatives for conducting this search and for meaning the question where and how is one to look for “a soul,” when culture denies the reality of such a “thing” at its very roots.

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Thomas Arzt writes: “The focus of this book project, *Jung’s Red Book for Our Time*, lies not primarily in looking backward into the personal biographical issues that Jung faced in his own life as he composed the work but rather in considering how the *Red Book* may be of use to the present and future generations of people who are disoriented and in need of psychological guidance for themselves, individually and culturally. To this end the essays in the book reflect on questions like the following (among others): Can Jung’s *Red Book* help us to meaningfully navigate through the rough waters we find ourselves in today individually, professionally, politically, and culturally? What are the “spirits of this time” today, and how can the “spirit of the depths” be found in a way that is meaningful in our contemporary world? Does the *Red Book* help us possibly to formulate a new worldview and god image in order to sustain people in the present crisis the world finds itself in? “

The Essays range in perspective from the clinical and therapeutic, to the cultural, to the literary, to the religious and spiritual, to the political, to the economic, and beyond. Whatever domain the *Red Book* touches with useful and transformative impact is included in these reflections.

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