Sex and Gender in Jung's *The Red Book*

Joseph Gelfer

Back in the 1990s, men's movement spirituality was largely based on a particular interpretation of Jungian archetypes such as the Wild Man, King and Warrior. The call to archetypes was supposed to be about men getting in touch with their "inner essence" and the "deep masculine," but had a habit of promoting masculinities of a dominating and combative nature (Gelfer, 2009): as Philip Culbertson (1993) argues, archetypes can be seen as "calcifications of a patriarchal world view" (p. 222). Today, 20 years later, little has changed in "men's spirituality," as witnessed by Matthew Fox's (2008) *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken the Sacred Masculine* which—while attempting to distance itself from more problematic manifestations of archetypes—remains firmly anchored within an archetypal worldview (Gelfer, 2008). Most critics of the men's movement reading of Jung describe it as "neo-Jungian": the "neo" suggesting they flirt with some Jungian themes rather than pursuing any Jungian orthodoxy. For example, Jungian scholar David Tacey (1997) charges the movement with "conservative and simplistic appropriation of Jungian theory" (p. ix).

Recently, we saw the publication for the first time of Jung's (2009) *The Red Book*. Jung spent 16 years on this book, but for a variety of reasons never published it. *The Red Book* is basically an illuminated manuscript charting the topography of Jung's interiority. It contains numerous visionary dreams and experiences which were later distilled in a more scholarly fashion in his published writing. The book's editor, Sonu Shamdasani (2009), claims *The Red Book* is "nothing less than the central book in his [Jung's] oeuvre," and that his other work cannot really be understood without reading this in tandem (p. 221). The publication of *The Red Book* offers an interesting opportunity to see how closely the men's movement neo-Jungian presentation of archetypes intersects with Jung's most intimate and unmediated presentation of sex and gender. Following the way Jung is mobilized in the men's movement we would expect to see plenty of material in *The Red Book* about masculine archetypes, and how these are unavoidable in the male psyche. We would also expect to read of complementarity: of both natural gender roles, and of the gendered aspects of the soul (anima and animus). In *The Red Book* we certainly read plenty about complementarity, but almost nothing about archetypes. There are only two relatively short passages which speak to these issues: one in "Liber Secundus," the other in "Scrutinies."

Specifically, quite early in the section "Liber Secundus," Jung (2009) refers to "completeness" in both men and women: men, for example, must seek the feminine more in themselves rather than in women. This would resonate quite clearly with men's movement literature. Gender holism is also referenced when Jung states,

"humankind is masculine and feminine, not just man or woman. You can hardly say of your soul what sex it is" (p. 263). Indeed, Jung aspires to be free from gender: "This is the most difficult thing—to be beyond the gendered and yet remain within the human" (p. 264). However, Jung goes on to outline some problems in masculine performances, claiming men tend not to engage the task of identifying with the feminine within: "It pleases you, however, to play at manliness, because it travels on a well-worn track" (p. 263). This suggests a critique of normative masculinity, as does his comment, "man despises you [woman] because he despises his femininity" (p. 263), which speaks to both an awareness of misogyny and homophobia. Jung speaks either to the limitations of normative masculinity or his own problematic issues about femininity when he claims, "It is bitter for the most masculine man to accept his femininity; since it appears ridiculous to him, powerless and tawdry" (p. 263). Is Jung asserting a queer challenge to masculine normativity or his misogyny when he states, "It is good for you once to put on women's clothes: people will laugh at you, but through becoming a woman you attain freedom from women and their tyranny" (pp. 263-264)? The jury remains out.

Later, in the section "Scrutinies," Jung speaks to issues of sexuality and spirituality, which is framed by various forms of binary thinking, of sexuality/spirituality and men/women: "Spirituality conceives and embraces. It is womanlike and therefore we call it MATER COELESTIS, the celestial mother. Sexuality engenders and creates. It is manlike, and therefore we call it PHALLOS, the earthly father. The sexuality of man is more earthly, that of woman is more spiritual" (p. 352). This, and other comments in this section, reinforce tired false distinctions: the separation of sex and spirit, the assigning of particular roles to men and women (although it complicates the common assumption that the feminine is earthly and the masculine transcendent). This strategy has a long history of confining men and women to the roles they are given rather than those they choose. Indeed, Jung is very explicit about maintaining such distinctions: "Man and woman become devils to each other if they do not separate their spiritual ways, for the essence of creation is differentiation" (p. 352). Furthermore, should anyone question the construction of such boundaries, Jung states, "no man has a spirituality unto himself or a sexuality unto himself. Instead, he stands under the law of spirituality and of sexuality" (p. 352), and that in the end all we can do is be subject to these spiritual-sexual "daimons." Doesn't sound very empowering, does it?

In short, the themes of sex and gender in *The Red Book* offer significantly more nuance than anything found in men's movement literature but—like that same men's movement literature—they are still bound up in a worldview which seeks to impose a structure upon spirituality and sexuality which is neither natural nor necessary.

References

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Joseph Gelfer
Monash University/AUSTRALIA
e: joseph@gelfer.net