

Sonu Shamdasani, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology: The Dream of a Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. 387. Paper

Reviewed by Greg Mogenson

An alchemical adage warned practitioners of that art against the "reddening coming too fast." The reference here, as long-time readers of this journal will recall,¹ is to a too hasty transit from the silvery-white reflections of the opus's *albedo* stage to that final, reddish-gold stage in which conclusions are drawn and truths proclaimed--the glorious, or when premature, vainglorious *rubedo*. While reading Sonu Shamdasani's important new book, *Jung and the Making of Modern Psychology*, this reference, along with the aforementioned cautionary words, came repeatedly to my mind, not in relation to its author's presentation (which is as measured in its pace as it is masterful in its erudition), but as the unheeded warning of what he calls the twentieth century's "psychology-making process."

Now a sure sign of reddening too fast is an embarrassment of riches in the result. The embarrassment of riches that psychology exists as today is thrown vividly into relief in Shamdasani's text by his careful reconstruction of the *albedo*-like conversations and debates that took place at the inception of modern psychology. These largely philosophical conversations had to do with a thoughtful questioning of what would be required of psychology for it to truly be its own science. As Shamdasani's sub-title aptly conveys, they had to do with what could have then still modestly been called "the dream of a science." Unfortunately, however (or so it seemed to me as I read), a "will to science" quickly overwhelmed "the dream of a science." Or putting this another way, half-dreamt and then largely forgotten, that dream was simply acted out. Psychology became a science, if only by grafting the methods of the more established sciences onto itself. What ideas of itself it did manage to dream were legitimated, often quite uncritically, through what might be called a flight into practice. After becoming what their doctors said they were, psychology's

patients became its doctors in their turn with the consequence that "the third of the two,"² psychology, was given too brief an analysis if it was given one at all. Noting with irony the red in this tincture, Shamdasani writes,

If there is one thing that psychology and psychotherapy have demonstrated in the twentieth century, it is the malleability of individuals, who have been willing to adopt psychological concepts to view their lives (and that of others), in terms of conditioned reflexes, a desire to kill one's father and sleep with one's mother, a psychomachia between the good and bad breast, a parade of dissociated alters, a quest for self-actualization through peak experiences or contorted twists through the hoola hoops of the symbolic, imaginary and the real. (p. 11)

Psychology could have reddened more slowly. Warnings equivalent to those of the alchemists were sounded by its earliest investigators. Jung repeatedly reminded his readers that the discipline was in its very earliest stages, and had not yet properly arrived. And already in 1892, William James wrote about how "strange [it was] to hear people talk triumphantly of 'the New Psychology', and write 'Histories of Psychology', when into the real elements and forces which the word covers not the first glimpse of clear insight exists" (p. 5). From Théodore Flournoy, Stanley Hall, William Stern and others, Shamdasani quotes similar concerns.

Another indication of psychology's false *rubedo* is the gold-gilded God-men it has made of Freud and Jung. As Shamdasani notes, just by invoking the names of these illustrious forbearers many in psychology have sought to legitimate theories and modes of practice that have very little connection with the tradition that they have appropriated in this way. "A new scholasticism has arisen," the author trenchantly adds, in which the names of Freud and Jung "are used to sign and underwrite an endless series of blank theoretical cheques." (p. 11)

Jung, of course, was well aware of the golden-calf that was likely to be fashioned out of that curious amalgam of idealization and mis-reading to which followers are prone. Fearing the deleterious effects this would have on his project, he frequently indicated that he wanted no school to bear his name. But Jung, as he himself would later note in his memoirs, had long since ceased to belong to himself alone. Pupils, former patients, close associates, and collaborators had a stake in his imprimatur, as the shift away from his proposed title--"complex psychology" through "analytical psychology" to "Jungian psychology"--attests. Paving a road to that heaven which has arguably become Jung's hell, well-intentioned followers quickly established institutes, societies, and lay-groups the world over. Voicing yet again his concerns about this to his friend Laurens van der Post, Jung is reported to have said that "the Institute [in Zürich] would be lucky if it did not outlive its creative uses within a generation...." A sentence later he added, "Should I be found one day only to have created another `ism' then I will have failed in all I tried to do." (p. 348)

The question arises: can the *Jungianism* that "complex psychology" too quickly reddened to become be restored to the *albedo* of Jung's "dream of a science"? Can the sulphur that so obstreperously flared up to create modern psychology in its different forms (the world-wide Jungian movement being one of these) be stemmed and chastened, re-collected, reflected, and psychologized? Or to ask the same thing yet another way, can the real spirit of Jung's contribution to the psychology-making process of the twentieth century finally be recognized and acknowledged, properly critiqued and explored?

One operation associated with the *albedo* involves a repeated and thorough-going washing: "... wash the substance nine times until it has the appearance of pearls, ... that is the whiting," instructs one alchemical author. With patience and care, through reference to many first-hand documents and informed by a complete reading of Jung's many still unpublished papers (perhaps six more volume's worth and another 20,000 letters!), Shamdasani successfully restores Jung's dream of a science to this stage of the opus. A professional historian, his specific approach is that of historically contextualizing Jung's work in relation to its various nineteenth and twentieth century cross-

disciplinary backgrounds and, then, in the light of this, examining its emergence and reception in the human and natural sciences of his period.

The book, itself, is divided into four large sections--"The individual and the Universal," "Night and Day," "Body and Soul," "The Ancient and the Modern." Under these headings, the contributions of thinkers as diverse as Kant, Lévy-Bruhl, and Durkheim are lucidly adumbrated in relation to themes as diverse as instinct, the group mind, and dreams. With respect to the last of these, we learn, for example, of the many precursors of Freud who attempted to explain dreams in terms of the unconscious. Jung's theory of dreams, likewise, is shown to owe much to others--Alfred Adler, Théodore Flournoy, and Alphonse Maeder being especially important sources. The picture that emerges of the dream theories of Freud and Jung is that these are much more the syncretic result of Freud's and Jung's wide reading than of the seminal genius that legend has ascribed to them.

But now to the pearls that are the whitening. Shamdasani's book is so rich that even the long-time student of analytical psychology will learn something from every page. An example. Early in the book what was known in psychology as "the personal equation" is discussed. This phrase, I am sure, will be familiar to readers of Jung, as he used it often. I had always thought its meaning was self-evident. I took it simply as a figure of speech indicating one's ever-present subjective bias. While this is not incorrect, it turns out that there is much more to it. According to Shamdasani, the term actually comes from astronomy. In 1796 the Astronomer Royal Nevil Maskeleyne of the Greenwich observatory noticed that his observations of stellar transits and those made by his assistant were discrepant by one second. Troubled by this, Maskeleyne dismissed his assistant. Two decades later, however, another astronomer, Bessel, became interested in this incident and began to study errors in measurement. Finding discrepancies between different observers to be a rather frequent occurrence he came to refer to this factor as the personal equation. With this discovery, we could say with Coleridge, the telescope was turned around. Attention was focused upon the subject. Psychology in its modern sense had begun.

Now, it is important to understand that since the discrepancy between observers was not a constant factor, intensive investigation was required. These investigations, it is fascinating to note, started out using instruments very similar to those that had been used by astronomers for measuring stellar transits and observer error. Importing into his laboratory in Leipzig the instruments and techniques that had been used for investigating the personal equation in the observatory, Wilhelm Wundt began to study mental processes in a quantitative manner. Physiological psychology had been born.

Following upon these initial investigations, scrutiny of the mental processes at play in the personal equation ramified in diverse ways. We may think, in this connection, of Jung's subsequent work with the word associations experiment as well as his theoretical work in the area of psychological types. As Shamdasani shows, all of this work, as well as Jung's introduction of training analysis into psychoanalysis, was part of a vast attempt to come to terms with the personal equation. Even Jung's later work can be understood in terms of this engagement. I refer here to his theory of archetypes. Inasmuch as the "personal" was viewed by Jung as being based upon innate universal structures, the archetypes (those stars and planets of the interior world) had importance for the analysis of the personal equation, as well.

Observational differences, of course, are not restricted to the astronomer's observatory. They happen in every human and natural science. And that is why Jung, as Shamdasani discusses, regarded psychology to be the queen of the sciences. Charged with the task of comprehending the subjectivity or consciousness that unconsciously shapes the outlook of the other disciplines, psychology could be said to constitute itself by reflecting these other sciences into themselves. As Jung expressed this, "Every other science has so to speak an outside; not so psychology, whose object is the inside subject of all sciences" (*CW* 8: 429). Drawing upon the discrepancies of observation and formulation that create the debates within each discipline, upon the differences and jurisdictional disputes between disciplines, and upon the cultural differences in the world at large, psychology's job, as Jung saw it, was to classify and thematize this vast array of data. And here it

could be said that Jung's own theory of the archetypes, far from merely being a contribution to science in the positive sense, was an attempt to formulate the transpersonal reaches of the personal equation that underpins all sciences.

The movement from astronomy to psychology that I have briefly sketched is only one of the treasures of the book here under review. Many similar discussions having to do with psychology's relations to other disciplines (and Jung's relations to other theorists) are provided as well. But even without the strengthening power of these accounts (which we have no space to recount here), it is important to realize that Shamdasani's scholarship has already, in the example we have discussed, afforded us a glimpse of the true tincture!

Just as the goal of the alchemical opus was symbolized as "the stone that is not a stone," so psychology, in its highest determination as *lapis* or philosopher's stone, is realized in that discrepancy of one second in which a stellar transit is not a stellar transit. A passage from Jung's writings, not quoted by Shamdasani, helps to make this point. In this passage, Jung distinguishes between two kinds of thinking, "directed thinking" and "non-directed thinking." Reflecting upon this distinction in terms of the story of psychology's emergence from astronomy, let us think of the Greenwich astronomer Maskeleyne, where Jung speaks of "directed thinking," and of the observatory assistant whom Maskeleyne dismissed, where Jung speaks of "non-directed thinking." Like Bessel, the astronomer who later reviewed this incident and become interested in the personal equation, Jung writes:

Non-directed thinking [i.e., the observatory assistant--G.M.] is in the main subjectively motivated, and not so much by conscious motives as--far more--by unconscious ones. It certainly produces a world-picture very different from that of conscious, directed thinking. But there is no real ground for assuming that it is nothing more than a distortion of the objective world-picture, for it remains to be asked whether the mainly unconscious inner motive which guides these fantasy-produces is not itself an *objective fact*. (CW 5: 37)

Jung, evidently, concurs with the later astronomer, Bessel: there is no need to fire the observatory

assistant. For it is the assistant, after all (here called "non-directed thinking"), who has led us to the stone, psychology, the science of which Jung dreamt. As the "Jung" of our fancifully read citation notes, though the assistant's subjectively-conditioned picture of the world was different from that of his superior, "there is no real ground for assuming that it is nothing more than a distortion of the objective world-picture." On the contrary, far from being that, it points to "an *objective fact*"--the objective psyche of Jung's later theorizing. Is this not the stone?

The dream of a science that Shamdasani has revived in his book begins to dream on in me. Likely there are discrepancies of a second and maybe more between what the analyst in me gleans from the book and what the historian-author had intended. Such is the personal equation displaying itself in the crevice between reader and writer. I am sure, however, that most readers will concur with the statement appearing on the back of the volume-- that Shamdasani's book "creates a basis for all future discussion of Jung, and opens new vistas on psychology today." Surely, this is true. Through his recontextualizing of Jung, that "most misunderstood figure in Western intellectual history," Shamdasani has done a most important service for psychology. May many future discussions of Jung find a new basis in this truly foundational book!

References

1. James Hillman, "Silver and the White Earth (Part Two)" in *Spring 1981*, p. 21.
2. Wolfgang Giegerich, "On the Neurosis of Psychology or the Third of the Two," *Spring 1977*, pp. 153-174.