

## ‘LIBRARY MATTERS’

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Review of *Catafalque: Carl Jung and the End of Humanity*  
by Peter Kingsley

Although we know that the *Red Book* laid the foundations for Jung’s later writings, how many of us really understand the *Red Book*? *Catafalque* places Jung’s *Red Book* firmly in the long line of prophetic works known as the golden chain, or ‘aurea catena’. This esoteric chain of wisdom was well known to Jung, but a secret to most. Its prophetic nature has been played down or ignored by Jungians in their wish to make analytical psychology into a science. Jung concealed and even at times denied publicly that he had visions and conversations with daimones and divinities such as Philemon, the father of prophets, knowing full well the dangers of inflationary identification with a prophet’s role. True prophets suffer a crushing burden and Jung’s suffering is documented in this book, written by an author well acquainted with the ancient wisdom tradition and how it is always attacked. We learn why Jung built Bollingen, and why he became so charismatic a speaker at Eranos.

*Catafalque* is a two-volume work of meticulous scholarship, including the reporting of numerous mistranslations and misunderstandings by hosts of commentators of Jung’s work and ideas over the years. Written carefully, thoughtfully and feelingly, like a yarn being slowly woven into a magic garment, Volume 1 reveals itself in exciting leaps and bounds, making a compelling read, while the vast absorbing notes and research sources follow in Volume 2. You could simply read Volume 1 alone, a feast of dramatic surprises unearthed by an author who knows vastly more about the prophetic tradition than most. But for more richness check Volume 2 as you go along, for evidence from the *Red Book* and hundreds of other items supporting the book’s thesis, which is nothing less than a revelation of the underlying mystery of Jung’s endeavor that underpinned and occupied his whole life. Jung fought against it to begin with, something he did not seek but which came to him nevertheless through his number 2 personality, from the spirit of the depths, from the voices of the past, from the dead who are alive – if we could only stop to listen.

*Catafalque* is a powerful book with an urgent message, not least as a critique of several named high priests of the Jungian establishment, past and present, who have played down Jung’s prophecies for the sake of keeping the Jungian enterprise optimistic and

growing in the modern world. The book is a challenge to standard orthodox teaching in Jungian trainings, especially the Aristotelian folly of rationalizing Jung's psychology into a science and minimizing religion, magic and prophecy. This tragic tendency still prevails, caught up in the inflated but blinkered spirit of the times, and exposed in vivid prose as a travesty of Jung's true calling. I sense this book is like Zola's *J'accuse* to the Jungian world, and we are all answerable for our inflated ego-consciousness.

Peter Kingsley strips away the rationalizing tendency, allowing glimpses into the depths of a numinous sacred realm reaching back to the roots of Western civilization. Jung read Latin and Greek, understood the work of Empedocles, Parmenides, the Bible prophets, and other mystics of the last two and half thousand years. He was conscious of the weight, suffering and terrible aloneness this entailed. He carried the burden because the sacred divinities had spoken to him, all written down in the *Red Book*, but largely misunderstood except by a handful of people such as Cary de Angulo and Henry Corbin. Kingsley uncovers and exposes for our scrutiny what Jung carried inside himself: namely the responsibility facing Western culture to look into and not away from the collective emptiness and terrible darkness of our own god-almighty Western culture.

Reading *Catafalque* offers ancient philosophy (the love of wisdom) as a route towards attaining true reality behind appearances as Jung did, so that the sacredness of divinity can be properly honoured. The word 'catafalque' means the elaborate outer cover and support of a coffin holding the dead; what is dead, in this case, is our failed western civilization. Kingsley offers a way to value true prophecy, and to value the ways in which the interaction between psychology, alchemy and religion became a unity forged through Jung's endeavors.

I recommend *Catafalque* to readers interested in being initiated into the secrets of Jung's *Red Book* and his place in the golden chain of prophets, seers and sages, traceable right back to the deep past of the pre-Socratic philosophers Empedocles and Parmenides as well as on through Christian Gnosticism. This book explains why the role of prophecy, even when on offer, is still shockingly avoided even by the Jungian community, which by forming institutions and dogma has become unconsciously trapped in the short-sighted spirit of the times. These two volumes are a challenge to complacency, a treasure trove of facts and ideas, shockingly revealing, a timely book of warning. It could awaken us from the collective Western nightmare of disintegration and chaos, and alert us to the grave future facing humanity and the planet, and to the call for incubation in order to face what is to come.

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