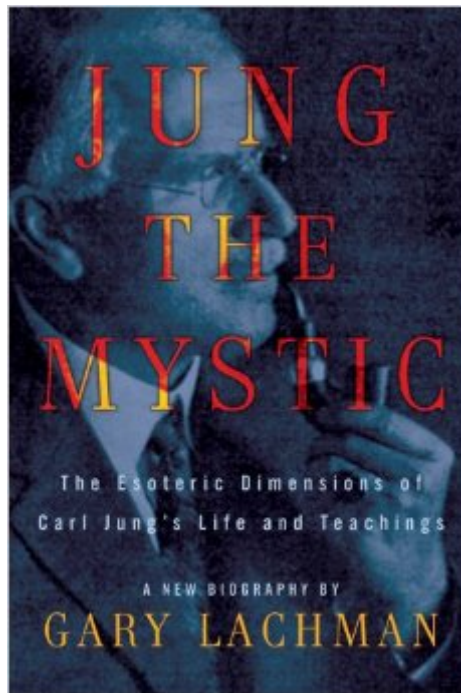


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Jung The Mystic: The Esoteric Dimensions Of Carl Jung's Life And Teachings



Synopsis

This bold, compact new biography of Carl Jung fills a gap in our understanding of the pioneering psychiatrist by focusing on the occult and mystical dimension of Jung's life and work, a critical but frequently misunderstood facet of his career. Although he is often called the "founding father of the New Age," Carl Jung, the legendary Swiss psychiatrist best known for his groundbreaking concepts like the collective unconscious, archetype theory, and synchronicity, often took pains to avoid any explicit association with mysticism or the occult. Yet Jung lived a life rich in paranormal experiences-arguing for the existence of poltergeists in a debate with Sigmund Freud, participating in séances, incorporating astrology into his therapeutic work, reporting a near death experience, and collaborating with the pioneering ESP researcher J. B. Rhine. It is these critical experiences-often fleetingly touched on in other biographies or critical studies, and just as frequently used to make a case against Jung and his philosophies-that form the core of this exciting new biography, *Jung the Mystic*. While Jung's ghostwritten memoirs, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, touch on the role his mystical and occult experiences played in his life, Gary Lachman's *Jung the Mystic* completes the circle: Lachman assesses Jung's life and work from the viewpoint of Western esoteric tradition and helpfully places Jung in the context of other major esoteric thinkers, such as Rudolf Steiner, G. I. Gurdjieff, and Emanuel Swedenborg. In that respect, this new biography appeals directly to the sensibility of spiritual readers who rightly see Jung as a pioneer of today's contemporary metaphysical culture.

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Customer Reviews

Having read Lachman's book I can now safely discard my collection of Jung biographies by Barbara Hannah, Marie-Louise von Franz, David Rosen, Laurens van der Post, Paul Stern and Claire Dunne! While Jung's *Memories, Dream, Reflections* provides an introverted autobiography (almost devoid of references to people in his life), Lachman counterbalances this with an extraverted biography populated by Jung's interpersonal relations. Despite the book's title, accounts of Jung's mystical side provide only broken threads that do, however, weave into a coherent life tapestry. The many footnotes and references attest to this fully documented and researched study. The biography imbeds Jung's major psychological contributions in an historical context of influences by other psychologists (especially Freud), philosophers, novelists, patients, and colleagues, not to mention the influence of Jung's confrontation with his own unconscious through dreams, visions, and mystical experiences. Many of Jung's psychological ideas remain controversial to this day, not only those pertaining to mysticism. Lachman often presents opposing viewpoints, sometimes adding his own meaningful conclusion. The text introduces many of Jung's key concepts such as the collective unconscious, synchronicity, individuation, active imagination, the shadow, anima and animus. The author does the reader a great service by summarizing in a few sentences the essentials of Jung's work, for example, on gnosticism (p. 152) and alchemy (p. 158). Lachman's treatment of two topics I found particularly insightful. First is the controversy surrounding Jung's supposed anti-Semitism and pro-Nazi sympathy. Jung's participation in several plots to overthrow Hitler and Jung's psychological profiling for the Office of Strategic Services with Allen W.

Gary Lachman's biography of Carl Jung is as intelligent as its subject. Anyone trying to wade through the writings of Jung himself will have a hard time understanding the man in any way that might be useful. I've learned of Jung through Joseph Campbell in his works on the power of mythology in our lives, and now with Lachman's new biography, I can finally understand the genius of Jung himself. Lachman writes as someone who truly understands his subject in a deep and meaningful way. Even though Lachman's writings read like a scholarly paper, it was still an

enjoyable and easily understood book. Filled with quotations and researched to within an inch of its life, *Jung the Mystic* is a great introduction to the life of a man who opened so many doors into the unconscious of humankind. Without Jung we wouldn't have the common terms such as synchronicities and collective unconscious. Joseph Campbell might not have been able to give us the hero's mythic journey, and maybe we wouldn't know that our mass despondencies come from living a modern life that lacks any real meaning, something only the inner world of our subconscious can give us. Exerts from the book: "Pierre Janet's central concept was what he called the "reality function." Like Bleuler, he believed that mental illness was a result of a "loosening" of consciousness, a slackness in our grasp of reality, as if the mind was a hand too feeble to hold anything properly. We even tell someone who seems on the verge of hysteria to "get a grip." Mental health, Janet believed, was determined by our ability to focus, to concentrate our attention (as we often say "pull yourself together" to someone who is danger of losing it").

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