



Jung the Mystic: The Esoteric Dimensions of Carl Jung's Life & Teachings

Gary Lachman

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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.

Jung the Mystic: The Esoteric Dimensions of Carl Jung's Life & Teachings Details

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Joshua Lawson says

This book gave me an entirely new view of Jung's work. Granted, I had only read excerpts of his writings before coming to this biography, but it set everything I'd read in a new and intriguing context. For instance, I had no clue that his ideas formed so much of the basis for popular New Age teaching. It will be interesting to keep these connections in mind as I continue to explore his work.

Erik Akre says

Lachman sets out on a righteous venture to reveal the mystical side of Carl Jung, in the form of a biography. We see Jung's development as a person as it pertains chiefly to the search for the inner world, and the insights he gained regarding the same. Full of specific instances in Jung's life that illustrate his own search, *Jung the Mystic* paints a picture that will appeal to spiritual seekers that admire the character of his work, rather than to pure psychoanalysts that might pick at the details for further insight. Perhaps the expert would regard the book as shallow; incomplete, certainly. But the style is accessible, and the reader trusts this author's research and journalism.

Here is described the experience that lies behind creative visualization, channeled writing, mandala-work, theories of individuation, and much more. I found a nice resonance in Lachman's storytelling with my own experience and practice of these Jungian ideas, and it's a treat to have it linked directly to Jung's own personal explorations.

One might value this book chiefly for its confirmation of the value that Jungian spiritual practices hold. Jung's life makes a good story in itself, but under Lachman's pen it fills up with sign-posts for the seeker and psychic traveller. The book might open up further possibilities for psychic exploration, providing greater confidence and inspiration for the explorer.

Khenpo Gurudas says

This book was a light and easy read, although I have to confess to a certain degree of disappointment. Much like some other recently reviewed books on Jung (notably, "Four Archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit and Trickster"), this text seems to pander to those who are "new agey" and self-professed spiritualist types, rather than those who engage in a serious mystical practice, or who wish to really understand the enormous depth of the esoteric dimension of Carl Jung's writing.

Interesting and cursory bits, including Jung's relationship with Sigmund Freud, how Jung's life experiences influenced the development of his theories, and the interesting role he played in the Second World War, made this worth four stars to me, despite my disappointment in the book's failure to live up to my expectations of its subtitle.

John says

A mediocre re-hash of what is already known about Jung. The book appears to be (deceptively) marketed to people who buy books with the words "mystic" and "esoteric" in the title, because there is almost nothing here that discusses either the psychological or religious aspects of mysticism. Instead, the author frequently mentions Jung in the same breath with Gurdjieff so as to draw crude parallels between these two men who have nothing in common. Also, the author presumes that because Jung was a dense writer who was not a systematic thinker, then he must be a closet mystic who hid behind the label of "scientist." The reader would do well to look elsewhere if interested in Jung, or mysticism, or both.

J. Walker says

Jung died at dinner.

Not in his life, but in my own.

Then there was a surprise chapter dedicated to The Red Book, its contents, history and publication.

"Our task, he said, is to understand the forces from within, in order to meet the challenges from without."

A very illuminating book about a most complex man.

The World is composed of both This and That. It is not all one "thing". Reason is a "thing", but is not the whole thing. How do you express the world beyond reason to reason itself?

That was Jung's conundrum. He was the first "western" man to explore the territory, and he blazed a trail we follow, even as we remain unaware of any but the next step.

Studying Jung, reading the Red Book, this book is an invaluable resource.

Ann M says

This is more or less a digest of Jung's thinking on mystical subjects, conveniently all in one book.

Shelby says

An interesting look into Jung's life! I hoped for more in-depth occult and mystical content.

Sammie says

On the twenty-sixth day of July in 1875, Carl Gustav Jung was born to Reverend Paul Jung and Emilie Preiswerk in Kesswil, Thurgau. C.G Jung had an eventful childhood; his father struggled as a reverend, husband and father while his mother suffered from mental illness and the death of her first child. Jung's mother, Emilie Preiswerk, as a teenager was employed by her father so that she could ward off the dead

while he worked as a Reverend. According to the author of *Jung the Mystic* (Copyright, 2010), Gary Lachman addresses Jung's connection with his mother. Lachman explains, throughout Jung's mother's life she communicated with the dead. Jung believed that his mother had a "split personality" and he would often find her talking to herself in trance. She ended up being hospitalized for a number of months, when Jung was a small child, due to her mental illness; he grew apart from her and eventually recognized many of the same characteristics of his mother, in himself (Lachman, p.18). As the distance between Jung and his parents lengthened, Jung became more and more interested in isolation. Jung had an introverted personality, which is one of the six psychological types that later in Jung's life he discovers as a part of personality theory. Jung's personal experiences shaped his career as psychiatrist and psychotherapist. Although Carl G. Jung considered Sigmund Freud as a respected father figure, he could no longer stand their disagreements. Even though there were consistencies between his own work and Freud's, he never understood Freud's fascination with sexuality; this was one of their largest disagreements. Jung had a more spiritual outlook on sexual symbolism, whereas Freud explained sexual themes as a form of sexual gratification (Lachman, 2010, p.96). Freud's influence on Jung was only a starting point; however, when Jung decided to add new concepts and to follow his own beliefs of the collective unconscious and archetypes, he was able to individualize himself. Jung's work isn't always the most convincing, but people recognize portions of his theories and use it in their everyday language. People speak of Jung's archetypes and they connect them to spirituality, but they don't necessarily know where these ideas came from. The most prominent of Jung's work which continues to be of great use is the psychological types and functions that he developed. The concept of personality preferences being placed on a scale of extroversion and introversion will continue to represent individual personality characteristics in order to understand the theory of personality.

Nick Mather says

Lachman's book is an easy read and much of the material is well known, especially by those who have read Jung's "autobiography *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* . Lachman provides a balanced approach to some of the more controversial aspects to Jung, namely that he was attempting to set himself up as a messiah figure for a Jung cult (not true) and that he was anti-Semitic (also not true). It might have been better if Lachman had gone into even more detail in several instances, especially regarding whether or not Jung was a mystic. Lachman essentially provides a definition of a mystic and claims that Jung fits the bill. For a book titled *Jung The Mystic* this argument by definition seemed woefully inadequate. A more nuanced discussion regarding mysticism and religious experience in Jung's thought and personal experience would have added much to the text. He also makes comparisions with other mystics, namely Gurdjieff, Swedenborg and Steiner, without going to much into what makes them mystics. The analogies could have been stronger. Otherwise, this was a fun, if brief read.

Mike Luoma says

A clear-eyed look at the more mystical aspects of Jung's life. Better early - the end seems rushed and less detailed.

Aubrey says

As far as biographies go, this was quick-moving, informative and engaging. The subtitle and alleged focus, though, are misleading. Yes, Jung's 'esoteric' teachings are addressed, but Lachman explains them in light of his personal history & psychology. Whether or not Jung actually experienced paranormal phenomena is almost beside the point. The book would have been much better if Lachman stuck with this contextual examination - exploring the *Why* of how Jung came to have the personality theories he did. Lachman is free to write another book talking up Jung's Mystic status, but he definitely hasn't done it here. And that would be just fine, except that he seems to think he *has*, only the extent to which he does this is the occasional unqualified, fleeting comment, like he makes here:

"Critics argue that once again Jung was making grandiose statements based on his pathology. Perhaps. But the experience had a palpable effect on Jung. It changed him, and in that sense, if no other, it was real."

GREAT LINE. STOP THERE.

But, no. Lachman continues just a little more: "I for one will go further and accept that Jung *did* enter some extraordinary state of consciousness and that, like mystics and sages before and after him, he had broken through to the *real* world."

And then he moves on to the next topic, with no elucidation. This happens a lot.

Jung the Mystic has the potential to be a great phenomenological biography, but instead reads like a first draft. Before publishing, Lachman should have clarified for himself what kind of book he wanted it to be.

Lee says

Although I expected more owing to the title of this book regarding the 'esoteric dimensions' & mysticism associated/assumed with Jung (chapter 8 onwards is distinctly more in line with the author's thesis), I did find this book to be an interesting addition to popular biography. Lachman has left it to others to prove/disprove Jung was a mystic. I certainly would have welcomed more in the intended subject & less on the already well-known history of Jung's life, & a few photographs would have been appreciated. Aside, the author, a founding member of Blondie (surprise!), has created a good, brief, readable & well-footnoted summary of a very complex man's life. 3.5 stars

Richard Stuart says

If you want a bio on Jung, this probably shouldn't be your first choice. If you want a book detailing Jung's contributions to psychology, this book will not really be adequate. If you believe that Jung had paranormal experiences that lead him to his most meaningful discoveries in psychology, then this is your book! This book focuses on those experiences and deftly ties them in to how Jung overcame and then translated/assimilated them into a new system of understanding and perspective which helped people overcome their mental challenges. A moderately 'good read'.

Louise says

This is a short biography showing how Jung's life experiences influenced the development of his theories. It explains Jung's relationship with Freud (a one-time mentor) and his recently uncovered roll in World War II. It concludes with a commentary on Jung's writings, on what has been written about him and on his enduring imprint on psychology and other disciplines.

The author, Gary Lachman is a former musician (founder of Blondie and inductee of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame) and not an academic or journalist. He has produced a well-researched volume written with such clarity that (were the thesis not mysticism) it would have pleased Jung who wrote for the "common man".

While Jung would emphasize his role as a scientist and minimize the mystical elements of his theories, from what is presented here, his mysticism is fundamental and impossible to deny.

I was glad for the detail on the Freud relationship and the vindication of Jung's WWII work. It is interesting that Jung's work for the OSS (predecessor to the CIA) makes him (perhaps) the first psychological profiler.

The relationship with Emma Jung is probably worthy of a book (perhaps there is one). She appears to give all from her wealth which helped establish his early career to the end of life arrangements she made for him before her own death. She seems to get only infidelity in return. There are glimmers of her striking back, for instance she wrote to Freud about her husband's affairs.

I found this book very helpful in understanding Jung and his ideas and his role in the development of psychoanalytic practice. I recommend it for anyone who wants a basic knowledge of Jung.

Brian says

Gary Lachman does a phenomenal job juxtaposing Jung the man and Jung the mystic in this biography. I enjoyed the read and came away feeling "more" than I was and experienced my own synchronicities regarding some people and things referenced. I'm springboarding into Lachman's sources like a madman and would like to thank him for what seems to me an important book.
