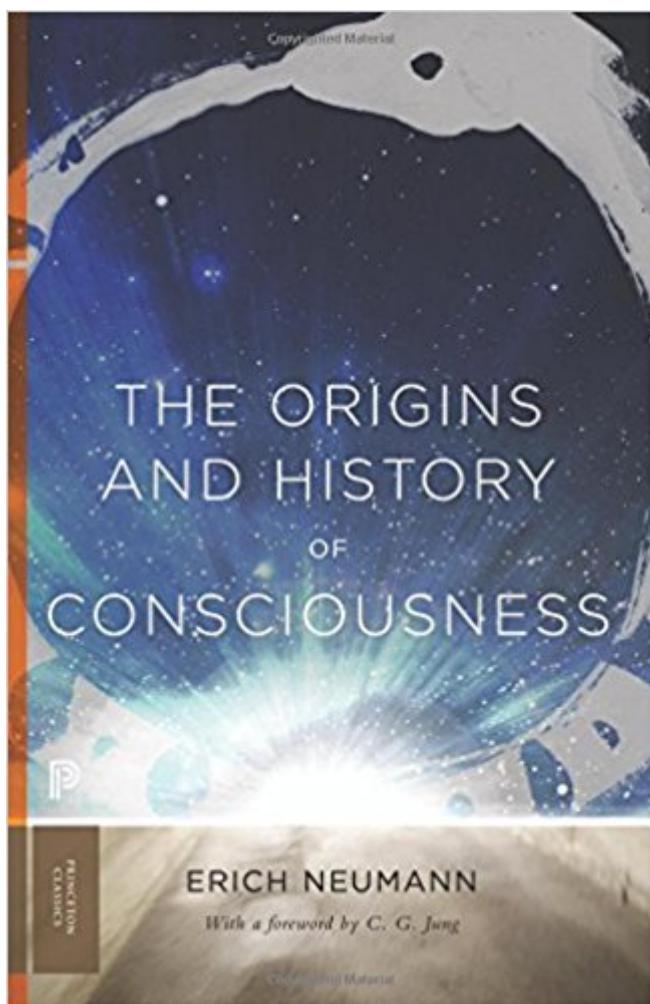


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The Origins And History Of Consciousness (Princeton Classics)



Synopsis

The Origins and History of Consciousness draws on a full range of world mythology to show how individual consciousness undergoes the same archetypal stages of development as human consciousness as a whole. Erich Neumann was one of C. G. Jung's most creative students and a renowned practitioner of analytical psychology in his own right. In this influential book, Neumann shows how the stages begin and end with the symbol of the Uroboros, the tail-eating serpent. The intermediate stages are projected in the universal myths of the World Creation, Great Mother, Separation of the World Parents, Birth of the Hero, Slaying of the Dragon, Rescue of the Captive, and Transformation and Deification of the Hero. Throughout the sequence, the Hero is the evolving ego consciousness. Featuring a foreword by Jung, this Princeton Classics edition introduces a new generation of readers to this eloquent and enduring work.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"There can be no doubt that [Neumann] has brought to his task a remarkable . . . knowledge of classical mythology, some considerable acquaintance with the comparative study of religion, and a deep understanding of those psychological views and theories evolved by C. G. Jung."--The Times Literary Supplement "A welcome source of information for all those who are touched by the relationship between man and his myths."--The New York Times "No better exposition has come to us of the two Jungian themes: the evolution of consciousness in the history of mankind and the

development of personality in the individual."--The Personalist

Text: English, German (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Nothing like having a student of such an extensive subject as the History of Consciousness write most everything down in an easy to follow format. Incredibly long and thorough book, definitely a long term reader involving tons of extra research and learning to comprehend.

This book is one of the important "building blocks" that gird the large task of understanding what human development is. This understanding, if it is not to result in meaningless opinionation, has to start from the beginning of what being human is all about, in so far as we may even postulate. Having such books readily available through your resources is an appreciated boon to my endeavor. Thanks, Allen Heacock

A foundational discussion of the relationship between individual and cultural development.

Neuman's ideas and book need considerable study, I think, not only to understand them but to assess them. I had considerable training in archetypal theory in literature, so I hesitated reading Neuman's book. However, Neuman's ideas came alive for me as I worked through the book. Indeed, there were days when I could not get his notions out of my head. I began to see their application everywhere throughout contemporary life. The book added dimensions to my awareness. It has also provided useful explanations to Buddhist teachings in Zen, Mahamudra, and Dzogchen for me. I found the writing difficult to read, sometimes. The writing repeats itself, but in different ways. What one reads in later chapters was often written in an earlier chapter. To be fair, though, that redundancy was helpful as there were some ideas / concepts that I still struggle with definitively--especially when I have to explain them to someone else outside of this field of study. Last, I disagree with reviews who claim that Neuman's book and ideas are dated or no longer applicable. That would be like claiming that the love of a mother for its child is dated and no longer applicable. I think such criticisms are unambiguous signs of a overly emphasized mental-rational point of view. If Neuman's ideas and book say anything, they work to show how much of the experience of life cannot be understood conceptually or rationally.

The Origins and History of Consciousness is a wonderful book that should be read by everyone interested in Analytical Psychology. Neumann did a great job showing myths and images of different cultures as metaphors of the development of our Psyche. It is the expression of a wide and deep research on the Archetypal fields.

A prominent psychologist, knitting together the elements of Jung's psychological theory and some new elements of his own, shows how the great cycles of world myth depict the hard-won development of ego-consciousness in humanity, and how this development is recapitulated in each individual's life. Twenty-six years ago, when I first read this book, Jung's ideas were much more popular than they are now. In this era of cognitive science and its focus on the physiological underpinnings of psychology, there doesn't seem to be room for Jung's collective unconscious, its archetypes, and their polymorphous manifestations in myth and symbol. But this, I think, is more a matter of fashion than any reflection on the quality of Jung's thinking, which was vast, deep, and bold. Neumann, a student of Jung, with erudition comparable to that of his teacher, synthesizes Jung's ideas into a unified theory of psychology around his own new concept of "centroversion", his name for the integrative force of the organism--its survival instinct in the widest sense. He shows how ego-consciousness--the self-aware "I" of the modern human being--is the preeminent organ of centroversion, and that, like other, physical, organs, it has had its own evolutionary history. This history, reflected in the structure and behavior of the modern ego, forms the deep story underlying world mythology. In Part I of the book, Neumann shows how the birth and emancipation of the ego is reflected in three great cycles of myth: the creation myth, the hero myth, and what he calls the transformation myth, which is the apotheosis of the hero. The primordial mythological image is that of the "uroboros"--the serpent biting its own tail, symbolizing the womblike plenum of the unconscious, in which consciousness exists only as a potential. It flickers in and out of existence, almost like the virtual particles of modern nuclear physics. As the germ of consciousness gains strength, it comes to see the nurturing womb of the unconscious in the symbol of the Great Mother. The moment of the ego's realization of its own autonomous existence is mythologized as the Separation of the World Parents--a universal motif, in which the hero creates the manifest world by pushing his parents apart to form Heaven and Earth. Next come the hero myths: the birth of the hero and his struggle with the dragon, which represents the negative aspects of both Mother and Father. Neumann shows how the great myth of the dragon, hoarding its treasure and holding a princess captive, has a deep and precise meaning for the development of consciousness. Then, as though all that were not enough, he moves on to Part II: a discussion of the developmental stages of the

individual ego in light of its symbolic development in human culture. Each of us, man and woman, undergoes these mythological dramas in our quest for consciousness and identity, with the climaxes of the struggle representing the familiar crises of development at characteristic ages. Neumann concludes with a shorter examination of the crisis of modern Western man, which he sees as a symptom of the overemphasis of ego-consciousness at the expense of its relationship with the life-giving unconscious, resulting in a split between them. The results, he thinks, can only be disastrous, and we have seen some of them in the world calamities of the 20th century. It's hard to give a sense of the tremendous reach of this book. In this respect it has few peers. As I read it this time I thought it would make an admirable companion-volume to Joseph Campbell's "The Hero with a Thousand Faces", published in the same year, 1949. I have no real criticisms of this book. Some contemporary readers might take exception to Neumann's approach to the masculine and the feminine in psychology, since these terms have become so charged. But the function and role, indeed the very definition and origin of masculine and feminine--which are aspects of everyone's psyche--are not taken for granted here; on the contrary, they are among the phenomena he examines and explains. In a real sense, he is saying that consciousness was born of the great polarity of masculine and feminine, and I find it exciting to imagine what the next turns in that great drama might be. Neumann also takes some trouble, here and there, to point out what he regards as the errors of Freudian psychology, and shows many Freudian concepts, such as the Oedipus complex, to be special cases of more general principles that he explains. In general he is dismissive of Freudian psychology. Perhaps the highest praise for Neumann's work comes in Jung's foreword to the book, in which the great psychologist expresses what amounts to envy for Neumann's achievement. For Neumann has taken the ideas developed by Jung over decades of observation and research, and fashioned a single, synthetic whole that illuminates the very core of our inmost being, both as individuals and as a race. He has brought together psychology and mythology more completely and more convincingly than any other writer I've encountered.

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