

## Was C. G. Jung a Shaman?

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### Abstract

Within the published literature that purports to ask if Carl Gustav Jung was a Shaman, this paper identifies and critically compares two waves of scholarship. The first, in identifying affinities between Jung and Shamanism, has arguably been somewhat one-sided in that it neglects to take into consideration in its analysis points of distinction between Jung and Shamanism. As such it suffers from an overstatement of the similarities. That scholarship also suffers from an overly essentialist approach to the shamanic experience, neglecting to incorporate into its analysis socially constructive considerations. The second wave achieves more of a balanced analysis in that it identifies both similarities and differences between Jung and Shamanism, but it is also limited by the privileged position it accords to essentialist considerations at the expense of constructivist ones. This paper calls then for a more epistemologically integrative approach to the study of the relationship between Jung and Shamanism, one that can build on existing scholarship by complimenting essentialist and constructivist perspectives. When the latter are brought into the analysis, the conclusion that Jung was a shaman is rendered problematic. Such a conclusion also obscures the growing awareness about the true nature of Jung's intellectual ancestry. If one were to draw up a list of traditions to which it might be said that Jung was an heir, this paper argues that high on that list would be German classicism, Gnosticism and Hermeticism. Unfortunately, that is something that the extant scholarship on Jung and shamanism completely ignores.

**Keywords:** Shamanism; Essentialism; Social constructivism

### Introduction

Historians trace Freudian psychoanalysis and Jungian archetypal psychology back to a common root in Central Europe at the turn of the twentieth century [1] and so it is somewhat ironic that Freud and Jung's ideas, especially those that pertain to each of their orientations towards religion and spirituality, are inclined to be viewed as antithetical to each other. This is to say that where Freud has come to be known for his antipathy towards religion and spirituality, Jung's legacy places him in the contrasting position, one that explicitly honors the "spiritual dimension in human nature" [2].

Recent scholarship has been keen to close the religiosity gap between Freud and Jung by, for example, claiming affinities between Freudian psychoanalysis and Jewish mysticism [3]. But, there are so many patently anti-religious sentiments in Freud's writings that scholars' attempts to convince otherwise and to salvage an image of Freud as spirituality-friendly remain far from convincing.

A notable trend within the Jungian scholarship of recent decades is that which focuses on aspects of Jung's own spiritual life and on Jung-the-person [4-6]. Lachman's [7] Jung the mystic is an especially good example of a recent work that epitomizes that trend as is the fact that a growing number of works have ventured to ask the highly intriguing question was Jung a Shaman? My own interest in that question is rooted in my abiding fascination with Jungian psychology and in indigenous thought as well as a growing curiosity about indigenous healing traditions, across cultures. Reflecting on that question promises to mutually illuminate the understanding of both Jung and shamanism. The question was Jung a shaman? Is rendered especially salient given that the term shaman is problematic. Kehoe [8], in

Shamans and religion: an anthropological exploration in critical thinking, decries the widespread use of words such as shaman and shamanism arguing that they are used "loosely and naively" (p.2). Kehoe points out that the term is derived from Saman which refers to the Tungus people of Siberia and argues that the terms shaman and shamanism overlook the not inconsiderable diversity between different indigenous cultures.

On the one hand, Kehoe's arguments belong to a chorus of voices [9,10] that take issue with and caution against the mis(appropriation), by westerners, of indigenous language, concepts, cultural artefacts, ceremonial activities and so forth. But on the other hand, western scholars' usage of the term shaman to describe western psychologists and healers etc. is uniquely ironic because, the contemporary widespread use of the term shaman is a peculiarly western discursive practice. And because of that, important questions arise about its suitability for conceptualizing non-western practices. Hutton [11] brings attention to the fact that many scholars object vehemently to the application of the word shaman to aspects of their culture—quoting in this regard Inez M Talamantez, Apache and professor of religious studies at the University of Santa Barbara: "they are stealing our religion by calling our medicine men shamans...Our language does not know shamans, and that name is known only by neo-shamans, not our chanters" (as quoted in Hutton, p. 158). Such sentiments echo those expressed by religious scholars including Smith [12] and Masusawa [13] who have argued that the major categories of religion (such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and so forth) also reflect the hegemony of western constructs within religious discourse. It is with such qualifications in mind that I explicate and critique what I identify as two distinct waves of scholarship pertaining to Jung's relationship to shamanism.

## The 1<sup>st</sup> Wave: Senn's Jungian Shamanism

Senn [14] argued that there is evidence in Jung's life and work of the existence of the following 5 defining features of shamanism: the first is a "call", the second is a specific method or technique used to achieve communion with altered states of reality, the third is a particular quality of the altered state of consciousness, the fourth is the process of healing that is utilized. The fifth feature concerns distinctive psychic feats performed by the shaman.

Senn [14] elaborates on the life-changing encounter that Jung had with the unconscious during a time of significant turmoil in the aftermath of his break from Freud. During that time, Jung had several non-ordinary experiences including significant dreams and visions – including those in which he encountered the gnostic figure Philemon and during which Jung and his family could discern the presence of ghosts. This period of Jung's life was marked, according to Senn [14], by the emergence of "the most profoundly creative period of his life" (p. 117).

Senn [14] brings attention to the fact that Jung's method of communing with the unconscious included meditative observation of dreams and active imagination. Regarding Jung's experiences of altered states of consciousness, Senn [14] refers to many significant dreams had throughout his life as well as the fact that at various points in life Jung had the strong perception of having a second personality. Nowhere in his paper does Senn [14] explicitly pronounce that Jung was a shaman but he strongly implies it. He implies it by suggesting that all 5 features of shamanism are seen in Jung's life and by stating that "Jung might finally achieve the acceptance and stature that many therapists and healers believe he merits if his work were recognized... as a pioneering exposition of Western shamanism" (p. 113).

### Critique of Senn [14]

I agree though with Senn [14] that the call or initiation is both a pivotal and catalytic element in a neophyte's flowering into shamanhood. Furthermore, the core sequence to which Senn [14] alludes is found in several shamanic traditions, across cultures and continents. By core sequence I mean an initiatory sickness followed by voluntary entry, by the utilization of certain methods, into altered states of consciousness in which psychic feats are claimed in the ultimate service of healing [11,15-23]. Rich descriptions of that sequence in the ethnographic literature of recent decades includes Jilek's [24] discussion of Shamanic ceremonialism among British Columbia's Coast Salish and Peters' [25] ethnographic study of the Tamang shamans of Nepal.

Insofar as Jung emerged out of the ashes of his profound turmoil with a phoenix-like, reconstituted self and renewed sense of life purpose the notion of a call does seem to adequately capture the meaning of his experience. However, Senn's [14] argument lacks coherence to say the very least. For example, In the section of Senn's [14] paper in which he claims that Jung experienced a call, Senn [14] talks not about the call but about the dreams that Jung had as a 3 year old and feinting spell as a 12 year old. Those childhood experiences may well have had a role in the formation of Jung's personality (the discussion of Michael Smith's work), but they have nothing to do with Jung's call. That was to come later, in his mid-thirties, following his break from Freud. Instead of discussing that under the heading "The Call" where it would have been most fitting to do so, Senn [14] does so in the introduction to his paper and the effect of that is to significantly

dilute the rhetorical force that his own argument might otherwise have had.

Senn's [14] attempt to equate Jung's therapeutic approach to the shaman's reads as contrived and unconvincing. Shamans' ecstatic trance state became known to a wide readership through Eliade's [26] classic work, *Shamanism: Archaic techniques of ecstasy*. In claiming that Jung relied on a similar process, Senn [14] cites various phenomena in Jung's life such as significant dreams and paranormal events as well as moments throughout Jung's life when he strongly identified with a second personality. The former phenomena are ones that Senn [14] should have discussed in relation to Jung's call or initiatory sickness. They have very little or no significance in relation to the performative aspects of with Jung's therapeutic work. Jung used meditative observation of dreams and active imagination to commune with the unconscious. As well, there are numerous instances of Jung having demonstrated tremendous intuitive abilities in the service of healing, an example of which is his success in diagnosis a brain abscess in a patient he had never met simply by reading that patient's dreams [27].

But Jung didn't use traditional or classic shamanic techniques of inducing altered states of consciousness/trance states (such as rhythmic drumming). Jung's second personality may have facilitated a connection to the numinous but even if that were the case that doesn't imply that Jung relied on altered states of consciousness in his therapeutic work with clients in the same way that shamans do.

I doubt that admission to the hallowed status of shaman was ever contingent on the candidate having to meet a set of predetermined criteria. For that reason, there is a certain arbitrariness surrounding the five characteristics of shamanism that Senn [14] chooses as a benchmark against which to compare Jung. Probably because it would weaken the overall thrust of his argument, Senn [14] glosses over the crucial point that shamans are part of a culture that recognizes them as shamans and that has a reciprocal relationship with them. Senn [14] states that "membership in a shamanic culture is not required for successful healing" (p. 120). I agree; it doesn't, but if the healer who undertakes a successful healing is to be considered a shaman then, in my opinion, the sort of membership about which Senn [14] writes is a crucial requirement. Senn [14] does not define shamanic culture. If, however, by that term, he is referring to a social milieu that recognizes and legitimizes the shaman's role and has a mutually interactive relationship with the shaman, then I agree that this is an important albeit under-emphasized dimension of the definition of shamanism. In a later section I will elaborate more on such sociocultural dimensions of shamanism. Jung did not belong to what I assume Senn [14] means by shamanic culture. The inherent bias within Senn's [14] features might not be obvious at initial glance but consider the words of anthropologist Atkinson [28] "...earlier scholars of religion had defined shamanism in ways that incorporated cultural understandings of shamans and their followers". They sensitize us to the fact that Senn's [14] conceptualization of shamanism reflects a regrettable trend in contemporary academia to accord undue privilege to altered states of consciousness in the definition of shamanism at the expense of social and cultural dynamics. Just as a skeleton without flesh and blood cannot be justifiably considered a human, Senn's [14] five features, outside a cultural scaffold, disclose a version of shamanism that is so reductive that it cannot be considered as shamanism at all, in my view. This is an important point and it is one to which I will return. In what follows I want to introduce a work that I consider as reflecting a second wave of scholarship on the issue of Jung's relationship to shamanism.

## The 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave: Michael-Smith's [29] Jung and Shamanism in dialogue

Michael-Smith [29] argues that there are aspects of Jung's life that parallel that of the shaman. His starting point is with the concept of the shaman as wounded healer [30] and with a claim that Jung's life was marked by a very early wound when, at the age of 3, his mother left the family home to be admitted to a mental asylum. Michael Smith cites psychoanalysts who consider that event from Jung's early life to have been significant in explaining Jung's solitariness and his introverted tendencies, traits that Michael-Smith [29] associates with shamans in the making. Late childhood and adolescence was an unhappy period in Jung's life too because he struggled to identify with his peers. The backgrounds of Jung's "Bourgeois classmates" ([29], p. 68) were very different from Jung's. Michael-Smith [29] argues that this period of Jung's life had the effect of deepened his wounds and it was certainly a period of Jung's life that marked by further retreat away from the world and increasing interest in fantasy and reverie. Jung himself commented on that in *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* [31] "...I was growing more and more away from the world." "...I was fleeing from myself" (Jung, p. 30-31). Michael Smith sees the statement from Jung "I was fleeing from myself" as being reminiscent of the shamanic concept of soul loss.

Like Senn [14], Michael-Smith [29] goes onto focus on the crisis experienced by Jung following his break from Freud, describing it at length. Whereas Senn [14] construed that period of turmoil in Jung's life in terms of a call, Michael Smith likens it to a shamanic initiatory crisis. However, the fact that Jung was not able to enlist the assistance of actual ritual elders makes his experience different from the classic shamanic initiatory crisis [32,33]. That is something which Michael Smith acknowledges while also acknowledging that Jung's encounter, in a dream, with the gnostic figure Philemon in some respects satisfied Jung's need for guidance, during that process, from a ritual elder. The overall structure of this seminal period in Jung's life is also likened to the shamanic initiatory crisis by Michael Smith because it was associated with a teleologically significant descent into the underworld from which Jung is understood to have emerged with a boon which in his case was a renewed sense of life purpose.

### Critique of Michael-Smith [29]

Michael-Smith [29] has documented similarities as well as differences between Jung and shamanism and he is to be credited for undertaking such a balanced analysis. His conclusion, that "it is difficult to say that Jung was a shaman in the classical sense of the term as suggested by Eliade [16,26] and others" (p. 97) is also balanced one and represents an improvement upon Senn's [14] one-sided analysis and unduly dogmatic conclusion that arise from that analysis.

I appreciate and agree then with the note of equivocality that Michael-Smith [29] strikes in relation to the question was Jung a shaman? But it is the line of reasoning underpinning that position that I take issue with. The reader gets the impression that Jung would be admitted unequivocally to the status of a shaman by Michael Smith if only he had a "power animal", was a "psychopomp" (p. 98) if he "used percussion to enter a trance". My argument is that even if those contingencies were to be satisfied, Jung could still not legitimately be a thought of as a shaman. The major flaw then with Michael Smith's conclusions, like those of Senn [14] is that he completely sidesteps those socially constructive considerations that are relevant to the formation of shamans. The following statement attest to that

sidestepping: "If we can suspend, for a while, the cultural differences between shamanic terminology and conceptuality, and Jung's psychological terminology, we perhaps may see that Jung can in some sense be called a shaman" (p. 97). The rub here is that the cultural differences to which Michael Smith refers and which he wishes to suspend cannot be suspended unproblematically. I will elaborate further on these points in the following section.

### Shamanism as a social phenomenon

The social dimension of shamanism tends to be understated in much of the literature addressing definitions, an example of which is Walsh's [34] discussion of what he considers to be the 3 key features of shamanism. In this respect Walsh brings attention, first, to the shaman's voluntary entry into altered states of consciousness. The second feature, according to Walsh, is that "in these states they [shamans] experience themselves leaving their bodies and journeying to other realms in a manner analogous to contemporary reports of some out-of-body experiences" (p. 4). It is only in the third part of Walsh's tripartite definition that he purports to address the social dimension of shamanism. My contention is that he does so in far too superficial and perfunctory a manner, in stating: "They use these journeys as a means for acquiring knowledge or power and helping people in their community" (p. 4). Wallis [35] criticizes the psychologized frame within which much of the contemporary discourses about shamanism take place, one in which the "shamanic experience becomes simply a set of techniques removed from their original cultural and community contexts" (p. 58). To gain a more elaborate and nuanced understanding of the social context of shamanism it is necessary to review some of the ethnographic literature.

With reference to the Macha society of Ethiopia, Lewis [36] does an exemplary job of depicting the dynamic of bi-mutuality that defines the relationship between individual shamans and the wider society of which they are a part. There is a competitive rivalry between the Macha shamans, and as Lewis writes, some of the performative aspects of the shaman's activities (such as powerful demonstrations of trance and possession states) can earn him very high social status and reputation that sometimes extends far beyond his immediate social group. However, there is a flip-side, a vulnerability that comes with such a high social standing; as Lewis writes: "A shaman's position depends on social recognition and reputations can be destroyed as easily as they can be built up" (p. 136).

The way some of the performative aspects of the shaman's role serve to reinforce positive social values are comprehensively described by Peters [25] based on ethnographic research undertaken over several decades in Nepal. Acknowledging his indebtedness to a Levi-Strauss, Peters analyses the ritualistic activity of the Tamang Shamans from a symbolic perspective identifying the white flower (*narling mendo*) as a dominant symbol. The ubiquitous presence of that symbol in Tamang shamanism serves the purpose, according to Peters [25], of reinforcing the attributes of goodness, life, and growth; in short, "...everything sacred and ideal in Tamang culture" (p. 113). For Peters' [25] then one of the shaman's main roles is a socio-cultural one, of reinforcing positive social values. That role is mediated through symbols in the shaman's ritualistic activities as well as by the reorganization, over time, of the shaman's general dispensation so that it comes to be in alignment with social ideals or what Peters calls "cultural ideology" (p. 114). Interestingly, Peters considers that attribute of Tamang shamanism to set it apart from such "personalistic psychological goals"

as “self-discovery” and “individuation” (p. 114). The latter, of course, are fundamental tenets of Jungian psychology and Peters seems to be implying that there is a certain antinomianism within Jungian psychology and that that characteristic differentiates Jungian psychology from shamanism.

Other scholars also seek to rehabilitate a socio-cultural conceptualization of shamanism. Knecht [37], for example, captures very well the fact that shamans exist not as atomized entities in social vacuums but as social phenomena: “In order to be able to function in the role of a shaman, it is necessary that the society, or at least part of it believes in the shaman’s powers and adheres to a view of the world that accepts shamanism”. Based on his much-cited empirical cross-cultural study of shamanism, Winkelman [23] argued that such terms as shaman and medium are not synonymous and ought therefore not to be conflated. One of the factors that distinguishes the former from the latter, according to Winkelman [23] is that the shaman’s “trance-based adaptations for healing and divination” (p. 23) are found in less complex hunting and gathering societies. This contrasts with the situation in more complex societies where trances are characterized by possession and where the term medium is more suitable than shaman.

Saunders [38], in asserting that the “shaman’s behavior and acts are mechanisms which reinforce or re-establish social cohesion within a group” (p. 111) is shared by Moerman [39] who states that “it is logical to view shamanism as potentially effective for community cohesion” (p. 64). In a reply to Singh’s [20] recent proposal of a cultural evolutionary theory of shamanism, Watson-Jones and Legare [40] concur that shamans effect social cohesion while also making the additional point that there must also be some degree of pre-existing social cohesion for shamans to be able to reinforce that cohesion “The rituals associated with shamanism provide a means of reaffirming social solidarity through shared experience and providing an indication of commitment to group norms” (p.37).

Did Jung or his ideas occasion social cohesion? Let us for a moment, for argument’s sake, cast psychiatrists in the German-speaking world in the first half of the twentieth century as Jung’s tribe. The schools and ideologies within psychiatry at that time were so divergent that neither Jung nor his psychology can be said to have given rise to anything that remotely looked like social cohesion among that tribe’s members. Nor could it be said that there was much social cohesion within that tribe before Jung came along. Just consider the divergent nature of the work of such key figures in psychiatry at the time as Emil Kraepelin, Sigmund Freud and Medard Boss (these are just 3 of potentially many examples). Emil Kraepelin (1856-1926) made significant contributions to psychiatric classification and nosology but during his lifetime his work came under criticism from many prominent psychiatric theorists including Adolf Meyer and Karl Jaspers [41]. Specifically, the appropriateness for psychiatry of the positivist paradigm within which Kraepelin’s project was rooted has come under much criticism in recent years [42,43]. The same can be said of another movement that emerged during Jung’s life, one with which Jung was in fact intimately acquainted for several years—Freudian psychoanalysis [44]. Another influential—although perhaps a less well known—school was that of daseinanalysis [45], associated with the German psychiatrist Boss (1903-1990). Boss’s [46] daseinanalysis blended Freudian psychoanalysis and Heideggerian phenomenology and the incorporation of the latter arguably reflected an imperative to counter the positivistic biases of psychoanalysis with a philosophical approach that purported to be more faithful to the reality of lived experience. Taken together, what the co-existence all these schools suggest is that

the overall psychiatric landscape in the German-speaking world in the first half of the twentieth century was anything but cohesive. The arrival of Jungian psychology merely added to that diversity, indeed heterogeneity, of schools.

Shamanism is primarily a social fact. To ascribe to Jung the title of shaman and even to assert, as Michael-Smith [29] does, that “Jung was in some sense a shaman” (p. 97) or that his work amounted to “a pioneering exposition of Western shamanism” as Senn [14] does, is to deny that social facticity and is to commit the error of conceptualizing the shaman in overly essentialist terms that deny the social matrix within which shamans are constructed.

## Discussion

Jung was a wounded healer [24,47] but does that make him a shaman? I don’t think it does because the concept of wounded healer is by no means exclusive to shamans, as the life of the catholic priest Henri Nouwen [48] attests. Jung’s crisis in the aftermath from his break from Freud has structural similarities with a shamanic initiatory crisis insofar as it was a temporary regression from which Jung emerged, having encountered entities from the unconscious and having acquired the bounty of valuable teleological insights. Does that imply that Jung was a shaman? Again, I think not. Why? Because temporary regressions of that sort, that are parts of a process that ultimately leads to a higher state of consciousness have been described in all sorts of settings in all sorts of languages. Space limitations do not permit an exhaustive review of the myriad of forms that “creative illness” [1] can take but the reader is invited to look up concepts such as Dabrowski’s [49] “positive disintegration”, “regression in the service of transcendence” [50], dark night of the soul experiences [51] as well as some of the contemporary literature on psychosis and transformation [52] including those that invoke the notion of the Hero’s journey [53]. That basic existential patterning can also be discerned in the book that is known as Nietzsche’s [54] intellectual autobiography, *Ecce Homo*, in which Nietzsche [54] writes about the way in which his most exalted creative insights would often be preceded by exordiums of debilitating depression. The fact that Jung had a spirit guide does not move me to concluding that Jung was a shaman either. Recall Socrates’ daemon [55]. The fact that Socrates had a spirit guide didn’t make him a shaman. The point here is that any one of the shaman’s attributes can be used to argue that Jung was a shaman; but none of those are sufficient to make Jung a shaman, in my opinion. Scholars can try to itemize what they consider to be the constituent elements of shamanism and they can claim to be able to identify those attributes in Jung, but that does not make Jung a shaman. A shaman is greater than the sum of his/her parts. The point is made clearer by the following analogy. Imagine that westerners discover that there exists a game among indigenous people of the Peruvian Amazon that entails hitting a ball with a stick. A North American may well declare that game to be a form of baseball. An enthusiastic Englishman may interpret the game as being a form of cricket. Baseball and cricket may well be useful reference points for westerners against which to compare and make sense of the indigenous stick and ball game, but it should not be assumed that either of those terms are suitable categories to represent the indigenous game. Westerners doing so amounts to the etic imposition of a category that belongs to a different cultural context. Another analogy would be the tendency that some commentators have-to assert that football is a religion. There may well be some overlap between the culture of football (and many sports for that matter) and religions; they may, for example, both satisfy some of the

same similar social functions (e.g. to enhance social cohesion, foster group identity, etc.) but that characteristic is insufficient to make football a religion. Just as, then, indigenous stick and ball game is neither baseball nor cricket and just as football is not religion, Jung was not a shaman.

Jung undoubtedly cast his “conceptual net” [2] far and wide, consummately synthesizing science and mysticism [27] and navigating different domains of knowing and spheres of reality. As rarefied and as dazzling a sight that might be, and as much as it might suggest that Jung was no *Homo Ordinarius* [56] by any stretch of the imagination, it still does not, in my view, make Jung a shaman. The same attributes could be said to be possessed by other great synthesizers, Sri Aurobindo, Rudolf Steiner, and William James come instantly to mind; Emmanuel Swedenborg too.

Jung might not have been an ordinary psychiatrist, but he was a psychiatrist nonetheless. He was a psychiatrist because the prevailing episteme (in Foucauldian terms) permitted the collective European psyche in Jung’s day to talk about psychiatry and psychiatrists. The same episteme gave legitimacy to what psychiatrists had to say. The episteme of the day did not admit the concept of a European urban shaman, and certainly not a Swiss, university educated one. I suspect that 13<sup>th</sup> century Siberian shamans might have been occasionally called on to treat mental illness but to claim that Jung was a shaman makes no more sense than calling a 13<sup>th</sup> century Siberian shaman a psychiatrist would! In the twenty first century in some parts of the world, some individuals have the legitimate identity as that of a psychiatrist but that is only because psychiatry is also a social fact; psychiatrists do not exist in social vacuums either but are produced and legitimized by certain types of societies, as are psychiatrist’s knowledge claims and assumptions about health and disease, treatments and so forth.

## Conclusion

In our present era of high modernity [57], as humanity flounders in perpetual crisis and contends with unprecedented levels of personal and social alienation, ecological problems, and so forth, the need for individual and collective spiritual transformation has never been more urgent. Jung, like Giddens [57], was a critic of modernity and his views on its propensity to alienate were most famously articulated in his essay *modern man in search of a soul* [58].

In attempting to understand the lives of great women and men, it seems to me that there is a habit of mind to want to think of them as heirs to one or other great tradition. Historians have, until very recently, reflected that very tendency by narrating the history of Jungian analytical psychology as if it were a mere offshoot of Freudian psychoanalysis. It isn’t. It has its own very distinct developmental antecedents.

It is the same habit of mind, in my view, that inclines scholars to think of Jung as a shaman. I would go so far as to say that Jung evinced the “shamanic archetype” [27] but that is about as much as I would be willing to concede. For reasons that I have given above, Jung was not a shaman. There is growing interest in and awareness of the fact that it is in such towering figures of Western thought as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Goethe [59-61] as well as a range of esoteric teachings that Jung’s own intellectual ancestry is to be located. This suggests that if Jung is to be considered as an heir to any tradition or traditions, German classicism, Gnosticism and Hermeticism would appear high up on that list. The answer to the question of why it is only recently

that these sorts of understandings of Jung’s ancestry have begun to emerge out of the shadows is likely to be complex but what is clear is that the precipitous designation of Jung as a shaman would impede the emergence of a true understanding of his ancestry.

I have argued in this paper that Jung was not a shaman. But I am willing without hesitation to admit that he was a seer and a visionary whose diagnosis of humanity’s ills and prescription for those ills deserve to be taken seriously. And in making such an assertion I do not think that I am not alone. The renowned British Jungian scholar, Samuels [62] in a piece in *The Guardian* went so far as to opine that “This could be Carl Jung’s century”. I agree; it could be and perhaps should be. I have a feeling that if the alchemical transformation that humanity so desperately needs right now is to be occasioned, it may be necessary for Jungians and shamans to start talking to each other.

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