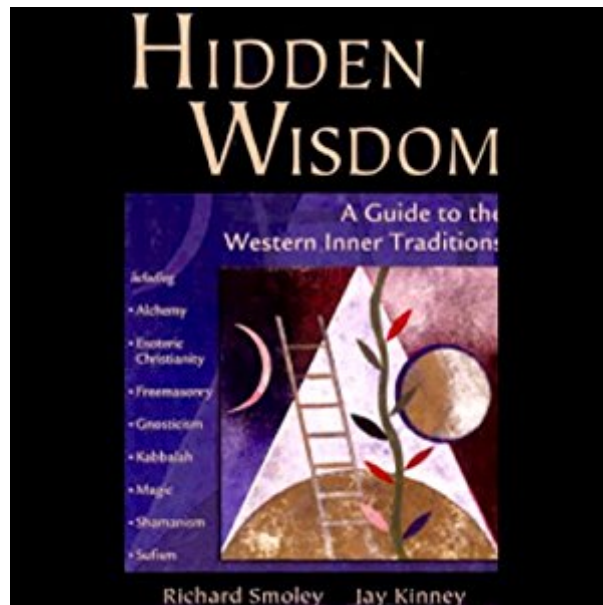


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Hidden Wisdom: A Guide To Western Inner Traditions



Synopsis

The co-editors of Gnosis magazine explore the many esoteric traditions that Western culture has to offer. While terms from Eastern spiritual practices such as Zen, mantra, and karma have become part of our daily lexicon, the traditions of Western spirituality have been largely unexplored by people searching for non-mainstream routes to spiritual experience. But for those who identify with Western culture, Western religious traditions have their own wisdom teachings that are more suitable to their needs and expectations. Many of those searching for alternative religions are not even aware that Western civilization has always had its own traditions, which are often hidden. In this fascinating introduction to non-mainstream Western spirituality, the coeditors of Gnosis magazine - today's leading journal of mystical spirituality - guide you through the teachings of Jung and Gurdjieff, the Kabbalah, neo-paganism, shamanism, alchemy, Sufism, and more. Explaining the history and practice of each tradition and describing its important figures, the authors present the ideas, strengths, and weaknesses of each tradition and offer a wealth of resources for those interested in pursuing these paths further.

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Customer Reviews

Richard Smoley, former editor of the (lamentably) defunct magazine "Gnosis," has written an excellent introduction to the Western Mystery Tradition in all of its major forms: Hermeticism, Wicca, esoteric Christianity, Sufism, and "the Fourth Way," among others. As always, Smoley is balanced, objective, fair, and - above all - sane. There is nothing of the fanatic or obscurantist about Smoley, and he blends a wide knowledge of the field with bits of humor and insights gained from personal

experience. Smoley is an excellent writer - intelligent and engaging, without being pedantic or superficial. I have only one caveat about this book: those already familiar with these topics - including former readers of "Gnosis" - might find that the book covers familiar territory and offers little that is new. Still, even these readers might find it useful as a reference. But for those new to these topics, you couldn't do better than start with this book; Smoley is a trusted guide in a field too often inhabited by quacks, cultists, and uncritical enthusiasts.

In the flood of psycho-spiritual babble books, this one is a quiet winner. Like the magazine *Gnosis* which the authors edited and published for many years, this book is intelligent and well-balanced and shines a much-needed light on musty areas of Western spirituality. I found it very useful, especially the annotated bibliography for each subject - sufism, Gurdjieff, alchemy, shamanism, etc. And where else would you find out the real reason why Hitler didn't invade England...? Highly recommended!

The authors have accomplished a rare feat by being simultaneously sympathetic yet impartial in describing such a broad range of spiritual teachings. They provide succinct but nuanced descriptions of these teachings, along with each's history and relationships to other teachings. Also included is much sage advice for those who may wish to pursue these paths, and annotated references for additional reading. This has clearly been a labor of love on Smoley & Kinney's part. It is well worth reading for anyone with the slightest bit of interest in spiritual matters, whatever their religious preference.

Excellent resource to have on hand if you're exploring the many mystery traditions out there. One of the best ones I've read in that it tries to present each tradition positively and more or less objectively. The authors try to find ways to explain at least a part of most of the systems in Jungian terms, which gets a little old if you don't think that Jung has the best system around - but the histories, facts and stories are well worth reading. Having so many traditions described in one volume is great!

In a way I've been waiting years for this book, without knowing it. I had some knowledge in some areas of esoteric, spiritual studies, but no overall sense of the field, no real sense of the interconnectedness and no real understanding of, for example, the Kaballah, or ritual magic--until this book! What's great about it is the objective tone, the sheer *readability* of it, and the insight.

These guys, as editors of Gnosis magazine, apparently had access to all kinds of people and sources and they used them intelligently. This is the first 'survey' of the esoteric I've seen that made me feel like here's someone who really understands their subjects deeply. Sufism, mysticism, the occult, gnosticism, Gurdjieff--it's all there. And it's so well written, so not-boring. They've knit together what was fragmentary in my mind--but they're not superimposing some spiritual agenda of their own. Really useful.

You've got questions - Smoley and Kinney have the answers. They won't tell you the meaning of life, but they will give you an excellent resource regarding where to look. The Western Inner Traditions have been shrouded in mystery, secrecy, and misinformation until the publishers of Gnosis Magazine came along and put together this wonderful compendium of the often confusing, often hard-to-find spiritual teachings of some of the greatest underground thinkers of all time. They've truly dug deep to bring you one of the most concise, well thought out guides to the spirituality of the west. Each chapter's discussion ends with a detailed reading list selected by the authors which will be a tremendous help to all those who want to know more, but are bogged down with so much to choose from as we enter a perpetually "New Age" of spirituality. This book is for everyone, from the mildly curious, to the would-be initiate of some esoteric secret society. From Jungians to Wiccans, Gurdjieff to Kabbalah, Sufis to Alchemists, this book has all the seekers of gnosis under one cover. Give me to a friend.

Since the 1960's the West seems more interested in the Eastern Spiritual traditions than its often neglected own (kind of a reverse on the Western secular culture that is making inroads in the East!). The authors/editors of this book had their first go at at least making Westerners aware of their rich tradition native to their own culture with their magazine Gnosis. In each issue of Gnosis a particular theme was taken be it "Paganism" "Freemasonry" "Esoteric Christianity" or something else. In that issue they collected articles, book reviews and interviews dealing with that subject. The issue would be an excellent survey, complete with resources if one wanted to learn more on their own. Unfortunately the magazine fell on hard times, and is no longer being produced, but the authors have hardly been hibernating -- this book is a fitting legacy to the magazine - with themes and traditions explored and written about in greater depths, generally, than the magazine. Anyone who is interested in learning about the various Western traditions, some of which are right in front of us, and some are hanging on a thread -- this is just about your only resource! Grab on to it!

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