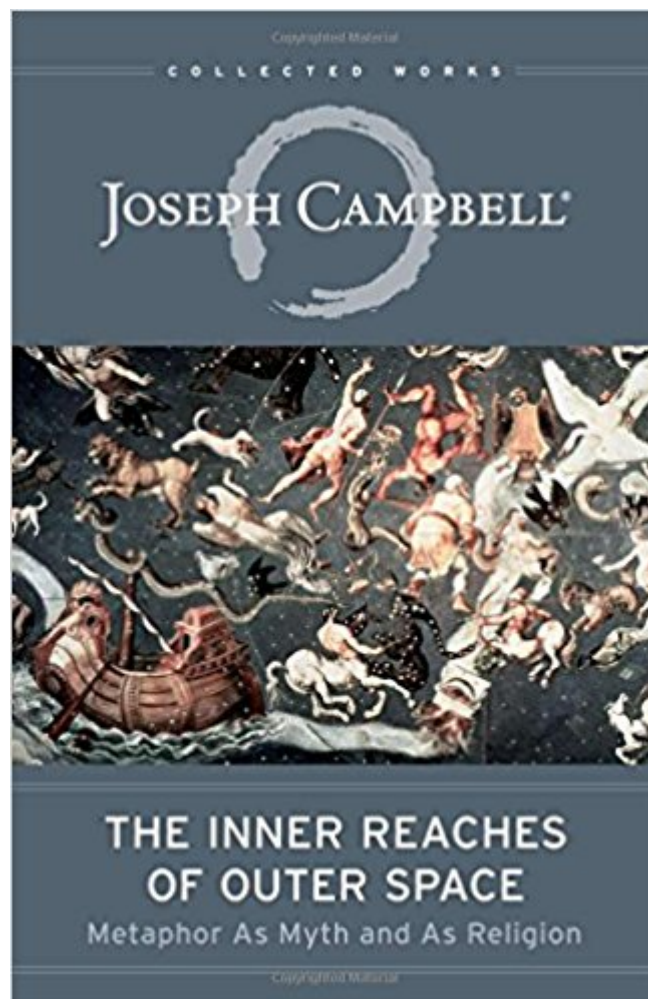


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The Inner Reaches Of Outer Space: Metaphor As Myth And As Religion (The Collected Works Of Joseph Campbell)



Synopsis

In these pages, beloved mythologist Joseph Campbell explores the Space Age. He posits that the newly discovered laws of outer space are actually within us as well, and that a new mythology is implicit in that realization. But what is this new mythology? How can we recognize it? Campbell explores these questions in the concluding essay, "The Way of Art," in which he demonstrates that metaphor is the language of art and argues that within the psyches of today's artists are the seeds of tomorrow's mythologies. Campbell writes in his introduction: "My desire and great pleasure in the preparation of this little volume has been as rendering a return gift to the Graces for the transforming insights of these recent years, which...we have been testing out in a broadly shared spiritual adventure."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *THE INNER REACHES OF OUTER SPACE* Joseph Campbell repeats some of the familiar observations of his earlier works in which he shows how certain mythic motifs can be found buried in all of the world's religious traditions. The similarities may not be easily recognized because the same motifs are usually understood and developed in different ways because of cultural differences. These repetitive motifs are called elementary ideas and in the local forms where they appear in various religions they are known as ethnic or folk ideas. As examples of elementary ideas Campbell offers the concepts of the Promised Land and the Virgin Birth. In writing about the similarities of symbols found in ancient civilizations, Campbell mentions discoveries among such diverse societies

as those that existed in the Indus Valley, Mesopotamia, Egypt, China and Ireland. Because of the great advances in learning which have become accelerated and dramatized by space exploration, Campbell points out that our old gods are either already dead or dying. The big question now is what new mythology will emerge from a modern understanding of a unified planet amidst a vast universe. The creation of any new mythology will certainly depend in part on the contributions of art because artists will be the ones who will produce the images of the future. Those images will come from our knowledge of a constantly changing and expanding universe. Campbell writes about the connection between art and mythology with conviction, no doubt due to the long-standing influence of his wife, Jean Erdman, a well-known dancer and choreographer. The most remarkable feature evident in *THE INNER REACHES OF OUTER SPACE* is the breadth and depth of the author's knowledge and understanding of mythology. Joseph Campbell led an enviable life driven by a singular passion and his writings are the best reflection of that life.

This book was--the back cover says--Campbell's last. I can imagine Campbell working on the manuscript between conversations with Bill Moyers: it feels like this book works out some of the open questions raised in *The Power of Myth*. What a brilliant book! By turns thought-provoking and breathtaking, I found myself rethinking many long-held ideas. And this for someone who has read and seen many Campbell works in the past. The last chapter, *The Way of Art*, really flattened me. Campbell writes throughout his work of the mythic role of the artist, but here is the clearest statement of the artist's power and responsibility.

Joseph Campbell introduces us to the world of mythology and reality making the case that for most of human history, they are one in the same. I give this book 5 stars because it is the best presentation of this type of information for laymen I have found. His writings have brought up the argument that what is lacking in America today is an education in mythology. This is something that would not only enhance an individual's life by adding value to our culture which is in my opinion too often dismissed as empty, but also would enhance our connection with our past and our future. Joseph Campbell has influenced many people and many creative efforts. George Lucas credits Mr Campbell with making *Star Wars* a better movie. In fact Mr Campbell's interviews with Bill Moyers (on many PBS stations) was taped at Skywalker Ranch. I found this link indranet.com/welcometoearth having searched for information about Mr Campbell. In addition to those seeking anthropological or spiritual information, if you enjoy magical stories like *Harry Potter* or science fiction stories then you will enjoy *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*.

THE INNER REACHES OF OUTER SPACE is one of the books being published by The Joseph Campbell Foundation as part of THE COLLECTED WORKS OF JOSEPH CAMPBELL. I agree with another reviewer that it makes sense to first read THOU ART THAT which is an earlier volume in this series. Any book by Campbell will usually be loaded with insights. In THE INNER REACHES OF OUTER SPACE one of my favorite chapters deals partially with a discussion of the Infinite and in this segment the author's extensive knowledge of Eastern religions and mythology is most apparent. After reading this book it is even easier than before to appreciate why Joseph Campbell has managed to acquire such a devoted following.

I know, I know, everyone will point to Campbell's astonishing Hero with a Thousand Faces, and his 4-part book series on different traditions, but I love this book. I think it's because it is Campbell in his later years, synthesizing all he has learned over decades of study, and applying it to the future. It also is one of the more accessible Campbell books in terms of folks who don't usually read high-end academic works being able to follow it without re-reading every other paragraph. (That is NOT a criticism -- Joseph Campbell packed a lot into each of his brilliant thoughts). Another book I'd recommend is the biography on him, "Fire in the Mind."

If you've never purchased a book by Joseph Campbell, please do yourself a favor and get this one. Yes, it's that important for you to read and understand. After this, read "Transformations of Myth and Time."

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