

## WHAT ARE THE ARCHETYPES?

Jung's theory of universal, unconscious archetypes as important constituents of the human unconscious mind has become a part of 'general knowledge' in our culture. This file will begin with a very simple introduction to the general area, then proceed to brief descriptions of some of the more 'famous' archetypes – well-known ideas like the shadow and the anima/us. Interspersed with this will be my own views of the complexity of human archetypal patterns and their evolutionary significance or functions. Let's begin, though, with a couple of paraphrases of Jung's definitions (from *Man and His Symbols*).

Whoever denies the existence of the unconscious is in fact assuming that our present knowledge of the psyche is total. And this belief clearly is false.

The archetypes are forms without content, representing merely the possibility of certain kinds of thought, feeling and action.

ie. We can't really 'know' the unconscious: and the archetypes of the unconscious are essentially unknowable in any concrete sense. A lot of people give talks (or write essays) on the archetypes as though they were 'things' that could be seen and reduced to descriptions. Beware of this sort of thing.

We could also describe the archetypes as the driving engines of our conscious and unconscious worlds. Given that the human psyche is the most complex structure in the known universe (so far as we know) the archetypes are certainly too numerous and too complex (and too unconscious!) for us to ever really comprehend. Thus, the human mind contains many billions of neurons (nerve cells) and about 5,000 interconnections between neurons for every human being on earth: there are billions of neurotransmissions every minute as the interconnections change and adapt and responds to the overall needs of the psyche. In many ways it is absurd to even attempt to tease out, examine, describe and think to understand even a few of the psyche's strands, let alone all of them! But we can try to a small degree.

Jung did attempt the task – although he was well aware of the limitations of possibility. He didn't give up – in his last BBC interview he emphasized that man's psyche must be studied because 'we are the cause of all coming evil', but that we are pitifully ignorant about the nature of the psyche. For the survival of our species if for no other reason.

So we have to attempt a minute portion of the task in this course. Following the basic techniques of Jung, von Franz and others. And, first of all and most importantly, we have to be aware that Jung himself didn't look at the human psyche as an object to be studied – like a dead skate, for example, from the **outside**. Rather as something to be experienced. This is what happened when he famously undertook a voluntary descent into his own unconsciousness in order to experience the reality of the psyche. Just as those undertaking analysis do in a more safeguarded way. So he didn't, for example, describe the mother complex as (no more than) a series of measurable behaviours of *homo sapiens*, but as variants of a universal experience, with attendant feeling, thoughts and myths.

## **JUNG'S THEORY OF THE ARCHETYPES**

Most of this will be well known for most of you.

As you know both Jung and Freud had complex theories about the unconscious mind. To Freud the unconscious was made up of repressed or never-made-conscious- forbidden thoughts, feelings and so on. There was a continuing battle between the moral branch (the superego) and the id – instinctive drives, but to Freud sex and aggression. The (largely conscious) ego is the intermediary. It was all a matter of the conflict between sexual instinct and societal demands and of early childhood events and wishes that could not be acknowledged, let alone expressed in action – the Oedipus complex, for example.

To Jung, this was all well and good. Everything that Freud described is true – in part at least, for some people, sometimes. But there is far more to the psyche than Freud acknowledged. Thus, the psyche contained both an ego-consciousness (very much as described by Freud) and a (much larger and more powerful) unconscious mind. The unconscious contains both material from personal experiences (again, as described by Freud) -for example, childhood traumas - and also, at a more deeply

unconscious level, a great variety of **inherited** structures - drives, abilities, potential ways of being, and so on. Jung termed this level of the mind the **Collective Unconscious** and his description of it sharply delineates his theories from those of Freud. To accept the presence of a collective unconscious means to put emphasis upon inherited structures as well as environmental influences and to accept that humans are **innately** more complex and more varied in nature than anything envisaged by Freud (or the behaviourists and cognitivists, for that matter). Jungians therefore always tend to stress an **individual uniqueness** that is present whatever our lifetime experiences, and **complexity**.

The **Collective Unconscious** contains what Jung termed **Archetypes**. (lit: *Implanted from the beginning*). Inherited abilities or patterns that are present in everyone and are expressed in lifestyles, relationships and in literature, myth, religious ideas and other creations of the human mind. Jung noticed that myths, fairy tales, dramas and religious ideas in all societies seem to contain the same basic stories and motifs: his explanation was that the motifs must reflect universal patterns within the psyche. And hence, universal human experiences. We write the stories, take part in the dramas because they mean something to us at an unconscious level. As Arthur Koestler put it, we respond to the presence of archetypal material like tuning forks to a true note.

Archetypes are conceived of as existing at every level from simple reflexes, through the ability for emotive and simple cognitive responses to specific stimuli to the stories and figures that have been the basis for the great myths, religious ideas and so on that are universal to human societies. Note that many other psychologists have been, or are, interested in the presence of innate (inherited) psychological structures in humans. Bowlby, for example, with his attachment theory, or the evolutionary psychologists with their ideas about universal patterns in human mate choice. The difference is that, where most psychologists take an 'outside' and scientific look at innate structures in our species, Jung attempted essentially to describe them through human experience of them: from the inside. In the case of a 'mother complex', for example, where evolutionary scientists might quantify the behaviour of orphans and non-orphans, Jung would talk of the manifestations of mother-deprivation in the works of Michelangelo and in the dreams of his clients.

### **How Many and What For: Archetypes and Complexes**

So far, we have been (unavoidably) talking as though archetypes are something that you can see (or hear, or otherwise comprehend directly). This is not the case, of course.

An archetype cannot be seen. It is (presumably) an inherent neural capacity that enables a person to respond appropriately to external situations/stimuli or – from another viewpoint – to help the development and integration of personality. There are a myriad of them, working in an integrated manner to achieve efficient mental equilibrium and function. This is the bottom line.

We invent theories about what the archetypes are **for**, of course. To bring us to the next stage of evolution, to achieve nirvana or psychic integration, to get into a good relationship with god. To achieve spiritual harmony/satisfaction. To make the unconscious conscious. And so on. But these are **inventions** of the conscious mind, assisted by feelings and perhaps instinctive forces (that serve our survival). They tell us what or how we would **like** to be (for whatever reason) not how we are fitted to be. And – and this is important – such inventions can enable us to ignore or suppress – even repress – archetypes or archetypal drives that our egos don't like or are afraid of.

Allied to the above is the concept that the archetypes represent 'higher' brain functions. And no doubt some of them do. Many of especially the more complex themes (for example, the hero myth and much religious material) clearly relate to the advanced stages of human evolution – and don't forget that our genetic content can scarcely have changes at all since, say, the foundations of Greek or Babylonian civilization. But, by the same token, many archetypal human capacities may well be related to our more primitive brain areas – the so-called 'reptile' brain' and so on. To evolution, a primitive drive or reaction is as important as the thoughts of an Einstein or a Jung. An example of this is found in Jane Pretat's *Coming to Age: The Croning Years*, where she makes the suggestion that a dream of a dragon might represent a vision of the brainstem by the cerebral cortex (think about it - the more you think about it, the less silly it seems).

Evolutionary psychology has something to say here. Desmond Morris, for example, once said that our species is so successful because it doesn't possess one 'big trick' that enables its survival: like the claws and teeth of a lion, the tree-climbing ability of a gibbon, the strength and thick hide of an elephant and so on. Instead, we have lots of **little tricks**. We can do anything: adapt to any environment because we are unspecialized and can do a little bit of everything – fight, make love, hunt, make tools, paint, grow plants, worship a god, make music. No individual (no real individual) can make use of all the capacities of the species: we tend to think that we should use and get to know as many of our capacities as we can (and from a biological viewpoint this is probably sound reasoning). But all our capacities are valid in the right circumstances. Evolution is morally neutral (as any broad look

across the spectrum of animal behaviour will tell you). And our behavioural capacities are, inevitably, underlain by a myriad of archetypes or archetypal abilities.

We have hardly begun to look at this, as a species. It seems to be all too much for us now that we don't live in small tribal groups of 50-100 say, with a *weltanschauung* to live by that covers and has appropriate explanations, rituals and so forth for every known human situation - the whole lifespan, god, the universe and everything. We have no agreement, for example, about what to do with religious drives - what to believe, how and whether to separate them from exclusiveness, the dehumanizing of other humans and warfare. What to do with our - especially male - aggression - to repress, to divert, to use in specific circumstances?

And so on almost *ad infinitum*. We have so many capacities and - now - an almost infinite number of situations in which to express them. We think of ourselves as more advanced than tribal peoples - and in material and intellectual terms we are, of course. But we lack the absolutes and certainties that have underpinned our species' evolutionary success. In short, we have archetypal capacities coming out of our ears and we don't know what to do with them.

Jung, also described the archetypes as being as numerous as there are human situations to express them - almost an infinite number in other words. And that they are forms without content, representing merely the possibility of certain types of feeling, thought and action (as above).

He also made the very important point that we never experience archetypes directly (except, perhaps in a few important dreams). Rather, we experience them through our **complexes**. A complex is an energy-filled gathering of psychic material (for example a personal mother complex) within the personal unconscious - related to one's life events, therefore. The complex will have underlying archetypal material, (the great mother - see below) but it is seen only in a culturally- and personally-relevant context. Aspects of the archetype of the great mother, for example, will underlie an Oedipal complex (possibly the seductive and destructive aspects of the former) but the complex is really a sort of personal translation or manifestation of the archetype.

Let us now take a brief look at some of the 'major' archetypes in turn, as if we **could** see them.

## Some of The Archetypes.

In a sense, it is silly to make up lists of structures that we can neither see or know directly, but can only experience intuitively and subjectively. But Jung did it (albeit with many ifs and buts), so we can try.

First, the list of Jung (and von Franz and the other classical Jungians). Again, most of this will be very familiar to most readers. Apologies.

**The Shadow.** The concept of the shadow illustrates Jung's approach to the mind very well. The concept here is that we are all born **multipotential**: we each could develop in a huge variety of ways, depending upon **choice** (the decisions we make about our lives) and **chance** (our opportunities and balance of natural abilities). As you grow up, you make a large number of decisions (both consciously and unconsciously) about the sort of person you want to become: eventually you become that person (more or less). But at each step, as you decide to take on a characteristic (say, the trait of caring), you decide **not** to be its opposite (say, selfishness or cruelty). But the opposite of your chosen ego personality does not simply evaporate. It remains a part of your potential. Your ability for cruelty, for example, rather than ceasing to exist, becomes **unconscious** through **repression**. It becomes a part of your **shadow**. The very act of creating a conscious ego personality, therefore, also creates an unconscious shadow personality that contains the opposite characteristics to those found in the ego. The shadow, then, will contain all those things we have decided **not** to be, including all the feelings and motivations that we despise, or which are forbidden to us, as well as those aspects of our overall potential that we have never had the chance to develop or just don't know about. The shadow will be both good and bad. It contains abilities that we don't use and aspects of ourselves that we have rejected for good reasons. Typically, Jung saw it as a necessary counterbalance to the one-sidedness of the modern ego. We usually see our shadow projections **via projection** onto others (usually of the same sex as ourselves). We meet someone that we immediately hate or admire to a degree that is not justified by anything in **them**. Sometimes everyone else can see that, in some curious way, they are like us, but we can't see it.

There are several further things to note. **First**, the shadow can be either individual or **collective**. Just as every individual has a personal shadow, so nations and other groups will have a collective shadow: for a long time, of course, the Soviets functioned as a shadow for the U.S. collective. Since then it has been at least two evil empires on which to project what the US doesn't want to know about itself. The US is on a constant search for collective projections. As are most other societies and cultures.

**Second**, we are very afraid of our shadows in our society. Where many myths and tribal stories represent the shadow as a positive companion to the ego (more or less), our societal stories produce shadow figures like Iago, Faustus or a huge variety of aliens, bogymen, monsters, demons from hell and the like.—we don't know our unconscious processes any more, but also perhaps we are more conscious, ego-

directed and deliberately 'good' (or maybe just neglectful of our instincts) than in the past – so, naturally, our shadow figures are unconscious and very negative. Old testament stuff!

**Third**, the shadow can be seen (and is often described) as a part of all the other archetypes as well as an entity in its own right (Jung was confused about this – and knew that he was). An example, from Star wars, might be Darth Vader, who can be seen as a simple shadow of Luke, the ego/hero, or as the shadow or negative side of the great father. My own opinion is that most descriptions in the literature of 'the shadow' are really just talking about the underside of the ego. The 'classical' shadow is the twin side of the ego and should be clearly differentiated from the 'bad' or shadowy sides of all the other archetypes. Following this logic, it might not be accurate to describe as shadow, for example, the negative aspect of the anima (see below). Rather this should be called, let's say, the contra-anima. (For further debate on this write to [jungpsyc@chariot.net.au](mailto:jungpsyc@chariot.net.au) )

## The Anima/Animus.

The **Anima** is the image of the female within a male. The **Animus** is the image of the male within the female. The unused 48% of your genetic material, if you like, as Jung put it. This classical description has been criticised more recently and it has been argued that both males and females share an essentially identical 'animaus' capacity (sorry) – a capacity for sexual oppositeness. However, Jung's initial description will do for now.

So.... As you develop, you will (consciously or unconsciously) reject some aspects of yourself (at least as ego characteristics) because they 'belong' to the opposite sex: these repressed, unconscious contra-sexual characteristics become the animus/anima. The woman or man within. Of course, if your development is rigidly and narrowly sexist, your anima/us will become **alarmingly** contra-sexual: the violent ocker, by definition, **should** possess a passive, frilly, over-feminised anima (and try to marry a woman who seems to be like this – try listening to Country and Western music). This is all quite natural, and a matter of psychological balance.

We normally see our animus/a when we project it upon a member of the **opposite** sex. This, in fact, is the basis of falling in love. You pick upon someone who, for some reason, has a resemblance to your inner contra-sexual image, and project the anima or animus. What you fall in love with is an inner image not a real, independent human. Try not to do it (at least, after the first few times): it is not a good basis for a long-term relationship! If you are in a long-term relationship, look at the difference between your present, reality-based opinion of your partner and the view you had when you were in love with them. The difference will tell you something about the nature of your animus or anima. The difference is a part of **you**. For further details about this sort of thing read Robert Johnson's *We: The Psychology of Romantic Love*.

Another point. The appearance of the anima or animus (especially in the young) often has a certain resemblance to the appearance of the appropriate-sex parent. Not surprising, as our first images of the opposite sex are indeed those of the parent. As we mature, and get to know more members of the opposite sex, this image will change. Emma Jung and others have suggested that, in fact, there are normal developmental **stages** of anima/animus images (see Emma Jung's book on the subject), or at least certain very common **types of identity**. The anima as mother, companion, seductive siren, amazon, the animus as seductive vampire, simple sex object, wise teacher, brother....and so on.

Note also that many actors, singers and other performers make a living by representing anima or animus objects for their audience. They are willing **acceptors** of animus/anima **projections**, in other words. Marilyn Monroe, for example, played the simple, childlike purely sexual version of the anima, whereas Marlene Dietrich tended to play the rather sadistic, dominating version. You might like to think what aspects of the anima or animus are, or were, portrayed by Julio Iglesias, Vera Lynne, Tom Jones, Susan Sarandon or anyone else you like who attracts large numbers of the opposite sex to anything they do.

A final note. Marlene Dietrich and her successors, play the 'anima game' with great success while wearing men's/boy's clothes: evening dress in the case of Dietrich. And while surrounded by (often subservient) men. Many animus-accepting men are, contrariwise, softened by a certain femininity of appearance or accompaniment (think Julio Iglesias). This is as it should be for maximum effectiveness. The anima, after all, is not actually a woman: it is the manifestation of the feminine **in a male psyche**. So it will always have masculine attributes or remnants if you prefer. Can this rule be applied to, say Madonna? Similarly, the animus should be a little feminised. Any application to Kurt Cobain or Mel Gibson? Even Sylvester Stallone?

## **The Self.**

Different schools of psychology have different definitions of the word self, but the Self was, to Jung, the central guiding archetype. He envisaged it as being at the 'centre' of (or maybe all around) the collective unconscious, giving us a sense of direction and of purpose to our development. It may be envisaged as containing, or having some conception of, all that we are and may become. As a perception, in Rogerian humanist terms, of 'that self which one truly is at heart'. Jung considered that encounters with the self occur in dreams and in visionary and religious experiences: when one is suddenly confronted with an overwhelming inner reality 'to which one must listen with humility'. He rather inclined to the view that religious experiences were a type of psychological experience and that the search for religious experience was a symbol of the ego's search for union with the self. Note that there is no way for us to know whether this is true or not. In religious experiences and related dream and visionary experiences, at the least the ego is confronted with overwhelming forces that it can't withstand, control or comprehend. Perhaps the self, perhaps merely other powerful archetypes, perhaps God, perhaps a god or gods. We can tell what

the experience **feels** like and we (often) know how to react to the experience, but we have **no** way of knowing objectively what it is that confronts 'us' (i.e. the ego).

### **The Persona.**

Is perhaps best understood as the Jungian equivalent of the social self. A largely unconscious ability and tendency to present an acceptable outward face to the world and hence play effective social roles. Often the 'ally' of the ego and intertwined with it. Note, though, that too-strong an association between ego and persona is said to create a 'false personality' that may be out of touch with inner reality and the self. This, in turn, can lead to a shallow, affectless lifestyle: a well-written example from TV of this sort of thing might be the situation comedy *Seinfeld*, in which the principle characters are shown to have no inner life, but to live from one external event (a kiss, a cup of coffee, whatever) to the next, unable to apply any firm internal beliefs or even rules to their lives. Similar characters are also found in Woody Allen films. And in Frazier Crane, when courting. These are all characters that simply pose. Whose lives are an accidental (purposeless) sequence of incidents from which they try to derive meaning. Who, therefore, discuss and analyse their relations and other life event ceaselessly, trying to find the reality/meaning in them. But always fail, because they have no inner standards or structures for a basis of comparison and for stability. I suppose one could argue that an extreme version of a persona-dominated life of this sort is to be found in sufferers from borderline personality disorder.

### **The Child.**

The child archetype is said to represent the inner child in everyone. When we are very young, we identify with, or 'live' this archetype. We become cute littlies (with the evolutionary purpose of our survival). When, later on, we become parents, we project the inner child upon our children and love and adore them far more than they merit! Thus, they survive! Jung said that, in neurotic development of the child archetype, the perceived inner child characteristically splits into two halves – and that the two manifestations are always present together. There is, first, an abandoned, hopeless, ill-used, persecuted and perhaps dying child (see the desolate story told by the grandmother in *Woyzeck*). And, second, there is an all-important, strangely heavy golden child of the Saint Christopher legend (see the child in Eddie Murphy's *The Golden Child*). The sufferer perceives herself or himself as someone of great, even magical importance, that everyone else should worship and adore, but also someone who lives a lonely, misunderstood life, abandoned by the world, misjudged and cruelly mistreated. Further examples of the portrayal of children in 'literature' might include Calvin in the cartoon *Calvin and Hobbes* and St. Exupery's *Little Prince*. Calvin is essentially a realistic portrayal of a small boy, while the little prince (see by St Exupery in an hallucination or vision) is a beautiful description of the magical inner child, wise and wonderful, but always alone and doomed. Who must die in order for St. Exupery to return to the adult world. St. Exupery himself (who really was a pilot) seems to have never really moved on from his fascination with the inner child. His books, perhaps most especially *Vol de Nuit*, are filled with a sense of the beauty of another world high above this one and the inevitability of death.

## The Great Mother and the Great Father

The great mother and the great father are major subjects in fairy tales. They are images, of course, derived – at least at the level of the personal unconscious – from our experiences of our real-life parents. They are also important inherited archetypes. Every human is biologically designed to interact with parent figures. Of both sexes, but most crucially, when very young, with mother figures. Relating to parent figures in an appropriate way is an important factor in biological survival. You have to behave in certain ways towards them (e.g. being cute, or obedient, or determinedly hungry) and you have to see/perceive them in appropriate ways. When you are young they are god-like figures to be listened to and obeyed with awe and love. We see them as the great good mother and the great good father –familiar to everyone as the beginning parents of every fairy tale you care to mention. You, inevitably, have strong – even overwhelming parent complexes. The parents will simultaneously be seeing their children through the rose-coloured glasses of the inner child archetypes. This makes them very susceptible to manoeuvring by their children.

Note that the great mother and the great father can be invoked in a young child by anything that mothers or fathers have been in the history of our species. In the case of the great mother anything that will hold, feed, nurture and so on: a field of corn, perhaps, a statue of the virgin, a cornucopia, a ploughed field, a soft pillow; or, on the negative (shadow) side of the mother, Scylla or Charbydis, a devouring dragon (can be dad too), an open grave and so on. The contact just has to be made for the archetypal substrate to be projected (the case histories in the books of Dorothy Bloch are wonderful examples of the way that small children can invent loving and adorable parent images from the most unpromising material). In the case of the great father, perhaps a king (see elsewhere), a whippy cane, a bull, a rugby ball, whatever.

At a certain stage of development – a few years before puberty perhaps – the developing child will need to resolve, or overcome, or move beyond, their parent complexes, in order to progress to adulthood and independence. Typically, at that stage, the projection of the good parent complex or archetype onto the actual parent will be switched off. If the complex was never overwhelmingly strong, you would think that this would be enough. The path to progress would be cleared. All the evidence (especially of world literature) however says that this is often **not** enough. In order to break free, it seems that many children find it necessary to reverse the polarity of their projections upon their parents. To project a terribly negative image of the great mother or father onto the parents. To see them as wicked witches or destructive ogres for a while: to hate them. Only when this negative projection passes is the child really free of parental complexes. Many of us, it would seem, never get to this stage.

The logic of this is that the parental archetypes must therefore contain equally important positive and negative imagery. And be symbolised in literature, in dreams, wherever, by a host of experiences and images. And also – note – to be acted upon when the time is right. You can compose your own imagery for the positive and destructive aspects of the mother and father images in your life.

## The Trickster

The trickster is famous in Jung's writings as the lord of misrule, who eats off the altar, makes love to the vestal virgins, gets stuck down a drain, caught and flogged, but yet has some role in the human psyche to break down frozen attitudes and bring renewal. He is mischievous and iconoclastic (albeit perhaps without much intention) and is represented by such diverse characters as Hermes, Mercurius, the playwright Joe Orton, Mr Punch, The Greek hero/villain Kharagiosis, Peter Cook (with Dudley Moore), Tom Thumb of the fairytale and various others.

The trickster is often described as being at the lowest level of 'development', roaming the landscape with a huge belly and a huge penis and up to whatever impulse decides next. He is said to represent the least developed period of life, his behavior dominated by physical appetites, his mentality that of an infant.

In Europe, according to Jung, he originated in the concept of the devil as the 'fool of god'. Mercurius, for example, with his shape-shifting and malicious pranks and a dual nature – half animal and half divine. Jung thought that poltergeists might have trickster energy, with their stupid messages and tricks. But, poltergeists being essentially a teenage phenomenon, this would place the trickster opposite the hero again, (there is an interesting discussion possible here about the hero and trickster as an opposing pair) but I don't think that trickster energy is confined to youth. Iconoclasm certainly declines with age but, hopefully, it never entirely vanishes. Jung also points out that the phenomenon or myth of the trickster extends to the highest level of the psyche – to Jaweh with his orgies of destruction and his senseless sufferings (imposed on Job and others who somehow were too perfect or got on his wrong side in some other way).

The trickster was very apparent in medieval Europe and was responsible for medieval saturnalia. At that time Christmas was celebrated by singing and dancing (as in pre-Christian times), usually performed by priests and their allies. But by the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century this had degenerated to become a *festum stultiforum* (fool's festival). There were 'abominations', shameful deeds and bloodshed, apparently. By 1444 elections of fools' popes, eating off the altar and generally sex and violence in the cathedrals of Europe were reported. All this had died out by the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. But, of course, when banished from the church, tricksterism reappeared at the profane level – in theatre of various sorts. All those comic characters with huge sexual bits and stomachs and all the old trickster characteristics, as above

Jung, although seeming to look down on tricksterism, did see it as perhaps a collective compensation to ego consciousness, like a gigantic Freudian slip perhaps. A dose of medicine for those who wish to think about human history as benign or as the 'good old days'. But it is surely more than this. The trickster hones in on icons – whatever is sacred and seen to unchallengeable in a society. And it drags them down relentlessly. It challenges the *status quo*, to the horror of establishment figures (like Jung). Of course, this impulse will be directed to any *status quo* – it is blind – even psychopathic – in this sense. If the iconoclastic impulse were structured and specifically directed it would be a revolution and aim at replacing one system with another. But it isn't: it breaks up, drags down and destroys blindly to allow for some other aspect of the psyche a chance to replace the old structures (perhaps, but not certainly, for the better).

The English comedian Peter Cook was an exemplar of a trickster or iconoclast. He was originally a member of a satirical group in England from the 1950s (the other members were Dudley Moore, Alan Bennett and Jonathan Miller). When he died (in 1995 at the age of 57) much was made of the fact that, unlike the rest of the quartet, he had never become rich and famous. As writer, film star, director, and so on. He had stayed a satirist and 'pure' iconoclast to the last. As Hannibal Lector would have said, that was his nature. He lived and died a trickster. Anyone who wants to know more about tricksterism might gain some insight from the Cook-Moore tapes (e.g. *Pete and Dud Come Again*). These are scurrilous, infantile and enter areas of thought that no 'decent' person ever would: and very, very funny.

### **The WOP (Wise Old Person)**

Time was (during patriarchy) when this was the wise old man. A wise guide encountered on the way. Who must be treated with respect and/or kindness: in return for which the traveller is give a gift, often seemingly insignificant, but in fact vital to her/his quest. All this occurs, most famously to the hero, but in plenty of other situations too.

Nowadays, of course, women are more likely to encounter Shirley Maclean or Hilary Clinton than Gandalf. In addition, there are a number of wise old persons, in a great variety of situations, with apparently different functions in the individuation process.

The hero's selfless guide, for example (as in many Native American myths among others). The magician like Merlin who has strong magical powers and may advise the king but who is a mixture of good and evil. And what, then, of Gandalf from the great English fantasy novel of the twentieth century? He is kindly helper, wise but stern guide, fellow-traveller and representative of another world. Perhaps all the wise old persons rolled into one. Always, though, it would seem, the WOP is, or represents, the gateway to the other world of magic and alternative existence.

Many Jungians believe that it is important to meet a WOP in one's dreams: and they hope it's Jung or some other highly developed spiritual guide. But not everyone is so 'lucky'. For many the WOP is an animal (as in many fairytales), or a drunk, or a primitive being (Iron John?), or a little demonic, and so on. When this occurs it should tell one something about our individuation process and the nature of our developmental steering-apparatus.

## **The Hero**

Or (perhaps) saviour. Rather than being seen as an individual (which the hero often is not), the hero is seen in terms of (several variants upon) a story. Briefly here, there is usually a humble (and often oddly placed) but miraculous birth, early proof of some superhuman power, rapid rise to prominence, but usually including a meeting with a wise helper and often with the help of a more primitive but strong best friend, struggle with evil forces and/or the need to do a great deed for the collective. When the deed is done (in Europe at least), there is an attack of hubris (overweening pride) and death through betrayal or heroic sacrifice: the death often completes or affirms the great deed.

The hero has been said to perhaps represent the ego's struggle to overcome early (usually parental) complexes, achieve mastery, then sink back into the self/unconscious with maturity. There are many variants on the story and Joseph Campbell has a somewhat different basic storyline, as you will see if you read his *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*.

Good examples of heroes and hero myths include Christ, Luke Skywalker, Orpheus, Nu Jeki Spasu, several Kwakiutl Indians, Gilgamesh, Inana (a rare female example), and Samson. Try making up your favourite dozen in films.

## **Pothos**

Or deep longing. The yearning for that which once was – the golden age or Camelot perhaps – although was never really like that, still, it might have been: and the anticipation of the return of the golden age, or the blossoming land, that will not be confound it, but feels as though it might have been (to quote Jerome K. Jerome). A sweet sadness. Celebrated in music very specifically (Welsh and Portuguese music from *Myfanwy* to Fado). The archetype of the wanderer or migrant. Or of the exile. As a migrant with all sorts of Celtic ancestry, I am very fond of Pothos music: I have observed that most Celts respond positively to it, but that Saxons do not – they get headaches instead!

Pothos means want, desire and regret all at the same time. A painful restlessness that forces us to develop – or to get up out of the village and accomplish 'something' (but, typically, not the specific single task of the hero). Alexander the Great is said to have been afflicted by it – hence his breaking of all the Greek rules and laws and his lifelong search for the unknown, hence for conquest and travelling the world. His father it was that told him that Macedonia was too small for him!

Another of the pothos-afflicted is said to be Odysseus, although in this case you could argue rather that the *Odyssey* was the first really good description of the mid-life crisis.

### **Other Archetypes.**

The list above was composed by Jung, von Franz and others by about 1950. It is important and, but not to be regarded as sacred or –most emphatically – as representing the entirety of the archetypes. Plenty of other authors, film-makers, psychologists and others have different viewpoints. You can, for example, think in terms of **stories** or action sequences rather than figures. The hero's journey rather than the hero. The life journey – usually in the form of a circle – *vide Pilgrims Progress* (and perhaps *The Lord of the Rings*)? Family dynamics from more than one perspective. The theme of paradise lost (and regained or not, according to luck). The concepts of royalty, the royal pair and the royal marriage (*vide* Charles and Diana). The descent into hell and return (with gain or loss). And so on. The essential themes of fairytales, for example are said to include paradise lost and regained (*Cinderella* and its variants), the descent of the soul into the world, initiation, the quest for unity and the trials and tribulations of the life journey, taboos and their contravention (the forbidden room or forest, for example), the power of names, the impossible task and the magical, helpful animal. Another perfectly good suggestion of classification of the archetypes.

Our list would not be complete without a mention of **the King and the Queen**. (see [www.souljourney.net/archetype.html](http://www.souljourney.net/archetype.html)). Jean Raffa here described the **King** as that part of us that tries to establish virtue and order. By asserting our individuality and authority. Responsible for justice and freedom, using a hierarchy of authority. mental discrimination with hierarchical authority. Pick your king from *The Lord of the Rings*. Does he have a shadow?

The **Queen** attempts to establish lawful order and moral virtue as well, but by nurturing, protecting and focusing on relationships. She is behind shared authority from co-ops to communes to rotating chairs in universities. She shares authority and is said to be benevolent. Perhaps one of the socialist archetypes.

All of which is all very well, if somewhat over-simple. The king and queen, to Jung represented the union of the best of the masculine with the feminine and this is far more than suggested here. A little more on the king, then.

The king forms a triad with the hero and the great father. But the king is established authority and rather an impersonal figure, while the hero is struggling (with the help of or against the father) to do a great deed. This may indeed necessitate the overthrow of an ageing or corrupt authority/king, but the hero does not become the king – or not for long anyway. Frodo cannot become Aragorn, and Tristan cannot become King Mark or Cornwall.

Note that there are many myths that begin with a sick or dying king (e.g. *The Fisher King*). This always makes the land (the universe) sick, because the ruling principle has lost direction. But the necessity (at least in Arthurian and related mythology) is not the overthrow of the king, but either a simple recognition that the king and the land are one, or the return of Excalibur (phallic masculinity) or the finding of the (essentially feminine) grail.

Two further things about the king (and the royal pair to a degree). The king and queen are a binding representation of group cohesion. They supply the certainty, the laws, the rituals and so on that give identity to the tribal group. Never forget how important group identity was to our ancestors. To lose this binding symbol has very severe effects upon group functioning. Hence, in my view, the way that many of the British population made a loving queen and mother out of princess Diana as perhaps a reaction to the harshness and divisiveness of the Thatcher era. Remember that individual personality is very dependent upon group identity for at least most people.

Finally, the king and (in non-patriarchal societies) the queen are very close to being god. In fact, in tribal societies, the king is almost always also the, or a, tribal god (also the case in ancient Rome). This has consequences described most thoroughly in *The Golden Bough* by Frazer. The king, as god, represents the strength (and other

virtues) of the people. This puts him (as a real-life man) in peril. When he begins to weaken with age it is very likely that he will be killed to prevent a weakening of the tribe. But he will try to avoid this. One of the commonest ways is to produce a scapegoat person to die in his stead. This yields some breathing space through sympathetic magic. The commonest scapegoat though is the most immediate and nearest threat to the king. His eldest son. The sacrifice of the god-king's eldest son in his place is one of the recurring motifs of the history of our species. The world record is six eldest sons (in Iceland).

### **A Developmental Theory.**

As we progress through life, there seems to be something of a natural progression through identification with, or projection of different archetypal themes. One often comes across meetings or courses in which participants are asked to identify 'their' god, goddess or archetype. While this may lead to some insights, it is surely unhealthy to spend all one's life identifying with a single theme (or, worse, imagining oneself to be an incarnation of a god or goddess)

To Jung, development of the psyche was a matter of balanced development of the archetypes in turn, while maintaining a good relationship between the ego (itself an archetype) and the self - **the ego-self axis**. One of the problems in modern western society was, to Jung, the way that we need to develop a very strong, logical and relatively unemotional ego in order to deal with the world: if the ego becomes too powerful, the ego-self axis will be weakened or lost and the person will be cut off from their inner core. The result will be a loss of contact with feelings, with a sense of meaning in life, with the ability for spiritual experience and so on. In mid-life this may become unbearable and result in a **mid-life crisis**, during which the individual will seek to rediscover their 'other half' -the part of themselves they lost contact with at 18-20. Most often, to begin with, the shadow. Jungian therapy is very often a matter of dealing with mid-life crises.

In a little more detail, when one is very young it is proper to identify with the archetype of the child and to **project** the archetypal great mother and father onto one's parents. To see the positive aspects of these projections and so love and adore them. And behave in a manner that promotes your survival! Later, when independence from parents becomes appropriate, these bonds will be broken: at, say, 6-8. The anima/us will be projected hopefully just **before** puberty (so that, when sex arrives, one has at least some perception of the nature of the opposite sex) at around the time that hero myths are also lived out. After the establishing of hero/ego mastery comes parenting, identification with inner parents and projection of the inner child onto one's own (but not necessarily other people's) children. Read Shakespeare. Later comes identification with the crone aka the wise old person or silly old fool (a shadow pair?).

### **Which Archetypes are Most Important?**

If Jung was right, archetypes or archetypal themes will be found in every kind of human cultural product. Jung's original list was culled from traditional stories. From myths, religious ideas, fairytales and so on. But there are limitations to Jung's approach. He was, after all, a very wealthy man, with right-wing political leanings and an extraordinarily broad intellectual and academic education, who was brought up in the nineteenth century, in a religious family, at a time when Christian belief and churchgoing were an essential and inevitable part of life. He was able to observe a loss of the power of the Christian myth (in himself and in Western society as a whole) and see the importance of restoring a religious approach (broadly defined) to his clients. An unequalled insight and ability.

But, nonetheless, containing a tendency to elitism. Jung seems to have had a great dislike for collective theories and theorists and his attitude to the working class (i.e. most of our species) was patriarchal at best. These attitudes are present in many Jungians today who still believe that psychological progress is always initiated by the individual, never the collective. Who believe that Jungian psychology is concerned only with religious growth. And who, at times, are so intellectual that one wonders what planet they believe they inhabit! Who believe that, by thinking the thought, there will be a great change in the nature of human awareness.

But, as Jung said in his last BBC interview, humankind has not changed from the beginning. And, from an evolutionary perspective, it would be very difficult to argue that our species is rapidly evolving towards greater enlightenment of any form. As James Hillman has written, we've had a hundred years of psychotherapy and things are getting worse. More than this, again as Jung said, we know pitifully little about the human psyche, even though we are the cause of all coming evil.

We are the only species we have got: and no intellectual, middle-class argument can avoid this realisation. We are a (very) social species of primate, almost unaltered since the earliest days of tribal living, even though our evolution has made us wonderfully adaptable. Everything that we are was present in DNA from the beginning and DNA has not altered in nature. We have an average IQ of 100 and 95% of us are fairly close to this score. And most of us live rather collectively with little thought of, or need for the ideas of psychology

So, if the archetypes represent our inbuilt responses to universal situations, these are most importantly the variants of these situations for the **average** human, not an analyst with an IQ of 170. Spiritual development, then, might be more profitably researched in The Assemblies of God rather than in the writings of the mystics. The archetypal content of Mills and Boon novels might well be more important to our species than the writings of Edinger, Hillman and Neumann. And the experience of collective will and emotion at soccer matches and political rallies might well be much

more important to our species than active imagination. We still know very little about the psyche of our species, perhaps because we haven't been looking in the right places.

More on all this in Archetypes Part 2.