

## HOW MANY ARCHETYPES OR INSTINCTS?

OR

## DRIVES, INSTINCTS AND ARCHETYPES

This series of files is concerned with human instincts (as the biologists call them) or drives (*triebe*) according to Freud and others, or archetypes (Jung). What they are, how many there are and how they operate and interrelate is our subject. A couple of unsolvable pairs of opposing arguments to begin with.

### **The Nature –Nurture argument.**

This is an argument, or debate, that has been going on for centuries. There have been those who argued that humans are helpless victims of inherited drives of instincts - for example the ethologists Robert Ardrey and Konrad Lorenz. Against this were those who argued that we are equally helpless victims of our training by the environment: for example B.F. Skinner and the behaviourists. The argument continues (in more complex forms) today. And for a good reason. Neither side is completely right. Clearly, we are, in part, driven by inherited forces and, in part, moulded by our experiences. The inevitable clashes between these two forces (the nature of which is well expounded by the Freudians) would seem to create an area where we can make conscious choices about our actions and development. But that is another essay. This one is concerned with that part of the human psyche that is affected (to a greater or lesser degree) by inherited forces.

### **The Conscious –Unconscious Mind Debate.**

Another argument or debate that has been going on for centuries revolves around whether there is such a thing as the unconscious mind and if there is (and, actually, there obviously is) what the nature of the unconscious mind is and how its presence can be manifested. At the simplest and most obvious level are reflexes and maybe dreams, transpersonal experiences and hallucinations. See below for a further discussion. It is, in any case, generally accepted that a harmonious interaction of consciousness and the unconscious is essential to psychological health.

Many psychologists have attempted to describe and define the unconscious mind. To Freud, for example, the unconscious was a repository for events and wishes that had either never been consciously acknowledged or had been repressed (completely forgotten). Based on life experiences, in other words. To Carl Jung, while acknowledging the presence of Freud's "personal unconscious", there was also a "deeper" (and more deeply unconscious) stratum of the unconscious that he termed the collective unconscious. This was based on inherited abilities, and our consequent responses to universal human situations. He called the manifestations and content of the collective unconscious "archetypes" (implanted from the beginning). For example, the shadow (the dark side of human nature), the persona (the social self) and so on.

So far so good. Clearly humans are, in part at least, still instinct-driven. And that our instincts act, at least in part, at an unconscious level. The questions that still arise immediately include the following. How many are there? How do they operate? What are their evolutionary origins and their functions today (if any)? And how do they interact? So, what drives/instincts have been described and rated as important? By psychologists, or biologists, or archaeologists. Or even by poets, film-makers and many others.

Psychologists, most importantly, have attempted to define our instincts. Freud, to begin with, and most famously, held that the sex drive was all-important. Adler argued for social drives and the will to perfection. Jung (after a brief flirtation with the 'alimentary drive') argued for the need for a sense of purpose and a religious attitude to life. Even the behaviourists posited an 'instinct' to learn.

And so on. All of these are important human drives. But none will do as an overall scheme. All of these definitions and descriptions, although helpful, are (and must be) simplifications of reality. And simplifications that reflect the personalities of the theorists more than the human species as a whole. (As Joe Wheelwright said, all psychological theories are projections from the psyche of the theorist: they have to be, because one can only truly understand oneself.) First, then, none of the early theorists took account of every important instinct. And, second, many instinctive processes must surely vary from situation to situation and from time to time in strength and importance and in the proportion and depth of unconscious processes involved.

### **A Note On Jung and Archetypes**

**Jung's archetypes**, although sometimes described by him as instincts, can perhaps be best understood as either the stories that illustrate the working of the drives, or mythic figures that symbolize the essence of a drive, or the behaviours of a human 'possessed' by one of the drives. Hence, for example the myth of Tristan and Iseult (a tragic love story) can be said to represent what may happen when the sexual drive comes to utterly dominate two individuals at the expense of social *mores* and all the other drives). Some of Jung's other ideas about the archetypes or drives are also very useful. For example, that they have positive and negative aspects. An instinct or archetype, in its positive aspect, will create mental harmony and perhaps behavioural effectiveness: it will be 'ego syntonic'. In its negative aspect, it may be undeveloped, infantile and unharmonious: this seems to occur most often with instincts that are weakly inherited in an individual, or otherwise under-developed. And the negative aspect of an instinct may have a lot of unconscious energy, to the point where it may overwhelm ego consciousness. It can 'possess' you. Jim Jones' *Peoples Temple* in Guyana is an example where an obsession with a primitive and negative aspect of Christianity led to the murder/suicide of 909 people, including 200 children.

Clearly, then, humans have many **instincts or drives**. As Desmond Morris put it, where most species have only one or a few 'tricks' (for example, the claws and teeth of a lion, or the strong legs and good hearing of a gazelle), *Homo sapiens* has survived -despite being slow, weak and vulnerable -because we have 'many tricks' - instinct-based ways of adapting to all sorts of environments and life experiences. There are at least 30 at even the most superficial glance. Some (like the sex drive) are common to all *Animalia*. Some (like competitiveness) are confined, more or less, to 'higher' species like birds and social mammals. Others (like a love of music, properly defined) are confined to our species. The last group of drives are, in general, more consciously mediated than the others: but can still work unconsciously. Note also that, as with other inherent characteristics (e.g. athletic ability), the strength of any drive varies a lot from person to person: both because of genetic inheritance and because of the degree to which the drive has been developed -nature and nurture. Thus, the obvious variation of the need for and interest in religious experience is a case in point. Any important drive, though, will promote characteristic behaviours and yield a characteristic sense of satisfaction whether it be spiritual enlightenment or sexual orgasm: this is why we continue to act out the drive. Also, the drives interrelate. They may reinforce each other or be a part of one another. To give a couple of simple examples there is the way that music is so important to religious experience and the way that intra-group bonding so often reinforces between-group aggression. Finally, each drive is likely to be represented in mythology: often in an exaggerated form and/or as a mythological figure.

The following 10 instincts/drives have been selected for further examination and use. Note that the selection is, inevitably, rather random. Parenting behaviour and nationalism, for example, are not included. Neither are long-distance loping or hunting. And some of the examples are very simplified. But the list does include drives at several 'levels' (see above) and all are found in every human group. They are assembled, more or less, in ascending order of exclusiveness to our, or related species. Beginning with the universals. See after the quiz for a more detailed analysis of each drive or archetype.

- 1. Nutrition.** Feeding and drinking. From filter feeding in sponges to *Cordon Bleu* cooking. A basic drive that is palliated in humans around three times a day (more often for drinking). Does not include intoxication.
- 2. Sex.** From spawning in salmon, to human courtship. The many pathways to - and end-behaviours related to - the exchange of germ cells and the passing on of one's genetic material.
- 3. Sociability.** In the quiz only refers to being with/relating to friends or colleagues. Strongly related to extraversion.
- 4. Aggression.** Of course, there are many kinds of aggression. Some authors list 40 or more. We will consider only male-to-male or female-to-female aggression, in the broadest sense, here. Male-to-female aggression, while almost a universal in human societies, is too much a symptom of mental illness to be included here.
- 5. Tool Making.** The gift of the opposable thumb. Tool making has been a characteristic of our species, and related species, from the Neolithic period. The ability to make tools was a very important part of our evolution and seems, in my opinion, to have become inherent. We all know that many people like to spend time in their sheds, or building models, or crocheting, but we should also understand that this may be the release of a drive that can be as powerful as any other.

**6. Religious Belonging.** With religious behaviour, we begin to examine species-specific behaviours. The humans-only zone. Religion will have had many functions in early human societies(see later) and belonging to a religious group also provides many guarantees of all sorts of protections. However, the work of Dr Nadel/Bliss at the University of South Australia has demonstrated that there are (at least) two quite unrelated aspects to religious behaviour. Belonging to a group and practicing all the associated rituals, beliefs and so on (the drive being examined here); and the drive for direct, individual, spiritual experience.

**7. Spiritual Experience.** Ecstatic or spiritual experiences, that may occur in a religious setting, or elsewhere. The need for these is not correlated with a need to belong to a religious group.

**8. Musical Experience.** The love of/need for music as a player or listener. Not necessarily connected to any ability as a musician. Almost uniquely human and probably older than *Homo sapiens*.

**9. Growing plants.** From agribusiness to a small flower garden. A high proportion of humans today grow plants. Of course, this is essential for our survival as a species. But many people grow plants for the sheer pleasure of it. Far more than go hunting, for example. And often with no intention of producing food. This has all the characteristics of another archetypal drive.

**10. The Need for Knowledge/Truth.** The driving force of science, as John Steinbeck said so well in *The Log of the Sea of Cortez*. The drive to see and to understand the world around (or inside) us.

A few more details about each of the drives above are given in the file "How Many Archetypes or Instincts 3": I suggest that you look at this file **after** scoring your preference scores,

## The 'Test'

In the file "How Many Archetypes or Instincts 2" are a few questions to measure your preferences for a variety of activities and experiences. They are not a test of intelligence - or anything else. Just a measure of a few individual preferences.