

ARCHETYPE: In Jungian psychology, an inherited pattern of thought or symbolic imagery derived from the past collective experience and present in the individual unconscious

Anyone who wants to know the human psyche will learn next to nothing from experimental psychology. He would be better advised to abandon exact science, put away his scholar's gown, bid farewell to his study, and wander with human heart throughout the world. There in the horrors of prisons, lunatic asylums and hospitals, in drab suburban pubs, in brothels and gambling-hells, in the salons of the elegant, the Stock Exchanges, socialist meetings, churches, revivalist gatherings and ecstatic sects, through love and hate, through the experience of passion in every form in his own body, he would reap richer stores of knowledge than textbooks a foot thick could give him, and he will know how to doctor the sick with a real knowledge of the human soul. -- Carl Jung

Archetypes

The contents of the collective unconscious are called **archetypes**. Jung also called them dominants, images, mythological or primordial images, and a few other names, but archetypes seems to have won out over these. An archetype is an unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way.

The archetype has no form of its own, but it acts as an "organizing principle" on the things we see or do. It works the way that instincts work in Freud's theory: At first, the baby just wants something to eat, without knowing what it wants. It has a rather indefinite yearning which, nevertheless, can be satisfied by some things and not by others. Later, with experience, the child begins to yearn for something more specific when it is hungry -- a bottle, a cookie, a broiled lobster, a slice of New York style pizza.

The archetype is like a black hole in space: You only know its there by how it draws matter and light to itself.

The **mother archetype** is a particularly good example. All of our ancestors had mothers. We have evolved in an environment that included a mother or mother-substitute. We would never have survived without our connection with a nurturing-one during our times as helpless infants. It stands to reason that we are "built" in a way that reflects that evolutionary environment: We come into this world ready to want mother, to seek her, to recognize her, to deal with her.

So the mother archetype is our built-in ability to recognize a certain relationship, that of "mothering." Jung says that this is rather abstract, and we are likely to project the archetype out into the world and onto a particular person, usually our own mothers. Even when an archetype doesn't have a particular real person available, we tend to personify the archetype, that is, turn it into a mythological "story-book" character. This character symbolizes the archetype.

The mother archetype is symbolized by the primordial mother or "earth mother" of mythology, by Eve and Mary in western traditions, and by less personal symbols such as the church, the nation, a forest, or the ocean. According to Jung, someone whose own mother failed to satisfy the demands of the archetype may well be one that spends his or her life seeking comfort in the church, or in identification with "the motherland," or in meditating upon the figure of Mary, or in a life at sea.

MANA (Spiritual Power)

You must understand that these archetypes are not really biological things, like Freud's instincts. They are more spiritual demands. For example, if you dreamt about long things, Freud might suggest these things represent the phallus and ultimately sex. But Jung might have a very different interpretation. Even dreaming quite specifically about a penis might not have much to do with some unfulfilled need for sex.

It is curious that in primitive societies, phallic symbols do not usually refer to sex at all. They usually symbolize **mana**, or spiritual power. These symbols would be displayed on occasions when the spirits are being called upon to increase the yield of corn, or fish, or to heal someone. The connection between the penis and strength, between semen and seed, between fertilization and fertility are understood by most cultures.

THE SHADOW

Sex and the life instincts in general are, of course, represented somewhere in Jung's system. They are a part of an archetype called the **shadow**. It derives from our prehuman, animal past, when our concerns were limited to survival and reproduction, and when we weren't self-conscious.

It is the "dark side" of the ego, and the evil that we are capable of is often stored there. Actually, the shadow is amoral -- neither good nor bad, just like animals. An animal is capable of tender care for its young and vicious killing for food, but it doesn't choose to do either. It just does what it does. It is "innocent." But from our human perspective, the animal world looks rather brutal, inhuman, so the shadow becomes something of a garbage can for the parts of ourselves that we can't quite admit to.

Symbols of the shadow include the snake (as in the garden of Eden), the dragon, monsters, and demons. It often guards the entrance to a cave or a pool of water, which is the collective unconscious. Next time you dream about wrestling with the devil, it may only be yourself you are wrestling with!

The **persona** represents your public image. The word is, obviously, related to the word person and personality, and comes from a Latin word for mask. So the persona is the mask you put on before you show yourself to the outside world. Although it begins as an archetype, by the time we are finished realizing it, it is the part of us most distant from the collective unconscious.

At its best, it is just the "good impression" we all wish to present as we fill the roles society requires of us. But, of course, it can also be the "false impression" we use to manipulate people's opinions and behaviors. And, at its worst, it can be mistaken, even by ourselves, for our true nature: Sometimes we believe we really are what we pretend to be!

ANIMA and ANIMUS

A part of our persona is the role of male or female we must play. For most people that role is determined by their physical gender. But Jung, like Freud and Adler and others, felt that we are all really bisexual in nature. When we begin our lives as fetuses, we have undifferentiated sex organs that only gradually, under the influence of hormones, become male or female. Likewise, when we begin our social lives as infants, we are neither male nor female in the social sense. Almost immediately -- as soon as those pink or blue booties go on -- we come under the influence of society, which gradually molds us into men and women.

In all societies, the expectations placed on men and women differ, usually based on our different roles in reproduction, but often involving many details that are purely traditional. In our society today, we still have many remnants of these traditional expectations. Women are still expected to be more nurturing and less aggressive; men are still expected to be strong and to ignore the emotional side of life. But Jung felt these expectations meant that we had developed only half of our potential.

The **anima** is the female aspect present in the collective unconscious of men, and the **animus** is the male aspect present in the collective unconscious of women. Together, they are referred to as **syzygy**. The anima may be personified as a young girl, very spontaneous and intuitive, or as a witch, or as the earth mother. It is likely to be associated with deep emotionality and the force of life itself. The animus may be personified as a wise old man, a sorcerer, or often a number of males, and tends to be logical, often rationalistic, even argumentative.

The anima or animus is the archetype through which you communicate with the collective unconscious generally, and it is important to get into touch with it. It is also the archetype that is responsible for much of our love life: We are, as an ancient Greek myth suggests, always looking for our other half, the half that the Gods took from us, in members of the opposite sex. When we fall in love at first sight, then we have found someone that "fills" our anima or animus archetype particularly well!

OTHER ARCHETYPES

Jung said that there is no fixed number of archetypes which we could simply list and memorize. They overlap and easily melt into each other as needed, and their logic is not the usual kind. But here are some he mentions:

Besides **mother**, there are other family archetypes. Obviously, there is **father**, who is often symbolized by a guide or an authority figure.

There is also the archetype **family**, which represents the idea of blood relationship and ties that run deeper than those based on conscious reasons.

There is also the **child**, represented in mythology and art by children, infants most especially, as well as other small creatures. The Christ child celebrated at Christmas is a manifestation of the child archetype, and represents the future, becoming, rebirth, and salvation. Curiously, Christmas falls during the winter solstice, which in northern primitive cultures also represents the future and rebirth. People used to light bonfires and perform ceremonies to encourage the sun's return to them. The child archetype often blends with other archetypes to form the child-god, or the child-hero.

Many archetypes are story characters. The **hero** is one of the main ones. He is the **mana** personality and the defeater of evil dragons. Basically, he represents the ego -- we do tend to identify with the hero of the story -- and is often engaged in fighting the shadow, in the form of dragons and other monsters. The hero is, however, often dumb as a post. He is, after all, ignorant of the ways of the collective unconscious. Luke Skywalker, in the *Star Wars* films, is the perfect example of a hero.

The hero is often out to rescue the **maiden**. She represents purity, innocence, and, in all likelihood, naivete. In the beginning of the *Star Wars* story, Princess Leia is the maiden. But, as the story progresses, she becomes the anima, discovering the powers of the force -- the collective unconscious -- and becoming an equal partner with Luke, who turns out to be her brother.

The hero is guided by the **wise old man**. He is a form of the animus, and reveals to the hero the nature of the collective unconscious. In *Star Wars*, he is played by Obi Wan Kenobi and, later, Yoda. Notice that they teach Luke about the force and, as Luke matures, they die and become a part of him.

You might be curious as to the archetype represented by Darth Vader, the "dark father." He is **the shadow** and the master of the dark side of the force. He also turns out to be Luke and Leia's father. When he dies, he becomes one of the wise old men.

There is also an **animal** archetype, representing humanity's relationships with the animal world. The hero's faithful horse would be an example. Snakes are often symbolic of the animal archetype, and are thought to be particularly wise. Animals, after all, are more in touch with their natures than we are. Perhaps loyal little robots and reliable old spaceships -- the Falcon-- are also symbols of animal.

And there is the **trickster**, often represented by a clown or a magician. The trickster's role is to hamper the hero's progress and to generally make trouble. In Norse mythology, many of the gods' adventures originate in some trick or another played on their majesties by the half-god Loki.

There are other archetypes that are a little more difficult to talk about. One is the **original man**, represented in western religion by Adam. Another is the **God** archetype, representing our need to comprehend the universe, to give a meaning to all that happens, to see it all as having some purpose and direction.

The **hermaphrodite**, both male and female, represents the union of opposites, an important idea in Jung's theory. In some religious art, Jesus is presented as a rather feminine man. Likewise, in China, the character Kuan Yin began as a male saint (the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshwara), but was portrayed in such a feminine manner that he is more often thought of as the female goddess of compassion!

The most important archetype of all is the **self**. The self is the ultimate unity of the personality and is symbolized by the circle, the cross, and the **mandala** figures that Jung was fond of painting. A **mandala** is a drawing that is used in meditation because it tends to draw your focus back to the center, and it can be as simple as a geometric figure or as complicated as a stained glass window. The personifications that best represent self are Christ and Buddha, two people who many believe achieved perfection. But Jung felt that perfection of the personality is only truly achieved in death.
