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E. The Archetypes

1. *The Discovery of Archaic Images*

Jung's sensitivity to the heightened performances of the psyche

led him to the conclusion that certain fantasies and dreams could never be explained through repression, but only through deeper and impersonal (independent of the ego) motives. Their strange and fascinating effect, along with the complete lack of personal experience that preceded them could only be explained by the existence of something greater in us something capable of accounting for these effects. They were not repressed, for they had never been conscious.

In 1912, in *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido*,

Jung showed that the unconscious foundations of dreams and archaic fantasies were objective sources of creativity, largely independent of personal motivations.

It was in this book that he began to explore historical parallels to contemporary dreams and the presence in these dreams of mythological motifs.

He found in the history of religion and mythology were expressed in ageless motifs which pointed to symbols common to all humanity.

He called these symbols primordial images.

This discovery led him to assume there were impersonal nuclear complexes in the unconscious psyche,

collective archaic patterns which he later came to call archetypes.

There is in the psyche a creative urge to express itself in these images.

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Jung says that this new outlook liberated him from the "narrowness of the materialistic concretism" of the 19th century. He writes: "The whole thing came upon me like a landslide that cannot be stopped. The urgency that lay behind it became clear to me only later: it was the explosion of all these psychic contents which could find no room, no breathing-space, in the constricting atmosphere of Freudian psychology and its narrow outlook. I have no wish to denigrate Freud, or to detract from the extraordinary merits of his investigations of the individual psyche. But the conceptual framework into which he fitted the psychic phenomenon seemed to me unendurably narrow."

The primordial images that occur in certain dreams, Jung says, were no more dependent upon individual experience or personal choice than is the inherited structure and functioning of the brain or any other organ. They result from an archaic layer of the mind given with humanity. The background of the psyche, Personality No. 2, is clearly not only personal but also has characteristics common to all humans, characteristics of an impersonal and objective nature.

How then were these contents to be understood? Not by deducing their meaning from material already known, as with personal contents, but by discovering the mythological motifs they express and by questioning these motifs so as to determine their nuclear significance. They were to be accepted as substantial and factual.. They revealed something that surpasses one's personal horizon, an eruption into consciousness of something that had never been there before. They clearly lifted the psyche above something limited to mere drives. They showed a depth to our psychic background.

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The appearance of these primordial images was goal-directed. They anticipated the future destiny of the individual. They sketch in advance the deeper meaning of one's conflicts and the outline of a solution to them. They hold out the possibility of renewal and are expressions of such a possibility (cf. Perry). They provide a meaningful bridge from the present to the future. They are attempts at a new synthesis of life. If they can be taken up and ~~de~~ negotiated by the conscious ego, they can serve the function of self-regulation as one moves into one's future. Even if they do not predict an event, they are related to what seems to be a pre-existent fixation of a final end. They foster adaptation to the inner man, and facilitate a better understanding of one's deepest humanity and of one's community with all other men and women past, present, and future.

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begin here* 2. Some characteristics of primordial images.

- a. high degree of emotionality, beyond the subject's ordinary reach and woven about by the secret of the numinous. An intensity of emotional energy is centered in these images.
- b. They function as a self-acting organism that affords a co-ordinating and coherent meaning to the whole person.
- c. As complexes, they are an individual constellation ~~to~~ that includes feeling and idea. But they have an autonomy completely detached from ego experience and volition.
- d.. They are related to the psychic situation as a whole, and they show a concentrated expression of the individual's particular situation and his psychic contents. They show how the world is reflected in one's psyche.
- e.. They are found in dreams and fantasies, and they show a surprising constancy in their motivation or intention: wholeness, the unity of opposites.

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- f. They are frequently projected onto figures in the patient's life: e.g., transference of father archetype to analyst. Their appearance is meant to help one to withdraw these projections.
- g. They are the dominants of the superpersonal psyche, the ~~realizing powers~~ ^{characteristic features} of regularly recurring events in ^{the} inner experience of human beings as human.
3. The archetypes as structural elements ~~and as formative principle.~~
 ↳ the collective psyche.

Jung seems to have been influenced by Plato and Kant in his elaboration of the notion of archetypes.

That is, he rejects a strictly empiricist notion of these primordial images, according to which they are derived solely from individual experience. Personal complexes are derived from individual experience, but archetypal or impersonal complexes are given with human existence, independent of any experience on the part of the individual.

According to empiricism,

the mind is originally a blank tablet that gradually gets covered with perceptions, images, and ideas originating in one's experience of life and of the world. All ideas and images are purely a posteriori, coming from experience, and they are feebler and more colourless than experience.

Jung rejects this notion.

He accepts, in a loose way at least, the idea of Kant that the mind adds its own preformed determinations to all thought, that thought comes not only from experience but from the interlocking of experience and the preformed dispositions of the mind.

Just as for Kant, the thinking mind is not a blank tablet, so for Jung neither is the psyche.

It is true that the concrete contents are given by experience, but the form that these contents will take is predetermined by the structure of the psyche. The forms are given a priori by the preformed functional disposition of the mind.

For a while,

Jung came to interpret this pre-given functional disposition as a result of the inherited structure of the human brain.

It is, he says, "the product of the brain's functioning throughout the whole ancestral line, a deposit of phylogenetic experiences and attempts at adaptation."

According to this conception,

the new-born brain is really an immensely old instrument fitted out for quite specific purposes.

It does not only apperceive passively, but actively arranges experiences and enforces certain conclusions and judgments, according to patterns which are not accidental or arbitrary but which follow strictly preformed conditions.

These conditions are not transmitted by experience as contents of apprehension but are the preconditions of all apprehension.

They are a pre-existent ground-plan that gives the stuff of experience a specific configuration.

Even fantasy,

which is seemingly the most spontaneous and original activity of the mind, remains anchored to these preformed patterns, these primordial images. This is shown by the similarity of motifs in the fairytales of the most widely separated races.

It is shown also by the fact that the images that underlie certain scientific theories show constantly similar forms, one of which is the mandala.

When do primordial images appear?

Generally they do so when the external object loses its dominance over our conscious life and the energy thus denied the object accumulates in the subject: i. e., when energy is introverted.

The interaction of the primordial images and personal experience

may be compared with the action of a scissors.

The upper blade consists of the functional possibilities constituted by the archetypes; the lower blade of the stuff of personal experience.

Personal experience is shaped by the archetypal forms that are the a priori element in all human psychic experience.

As we have seen, the primordial images of archetypes possess an archaic character.

They produce mythological parallels, they have a striking accord with familiar mythological motifs.

Their presence indicates that the factors influencing the psychic life of the moment

are collective factors rather than personal factors,

i.e., that the individual is involved not in a purely personal drama, but in the universal drama of the human race.

These collective factors do not belong to me in my individuality, but to humankind in general.

When archetypal images appear or are responded to by the individual, this is a sign that the situation of the individual involves the working out of a fundamental ground-theme that is common to the human race and not purely personal.

For Jung, this fundamental and common ground-theme

is the drama of becoming ever more conscious.

Archetypal images are the indication

that the individual is involved not merely in personal problem-solving but in the drama of emerging or failing to emerge

in his or her own unique way

into ever greater consciousness.

It is this individual attainment of ever greater consciousness

that is the destiny that the inner teleology of the psyche wants for each of us.

It is this that Jung calls individuation.

Archetypal themes, then, are the themes most closely related to the process of individuation; the themes that deal with the fundamental conflicts and tensions which make us human in the first place.

It is for this reason

that they have such a numinous quality about them:

our fate hangs in the balance.

It is the fundamental ground theme

of establishing a conscious balance or ecology of inner energies, of making nature conscious,

that explains the transcultural nature of the primordial images.

In his earlier thought on the archetypes,

Jung affirms a connection between archetype and brain structure.

Later he will seriously question this,

as we will see next week.

But in his earlier thought,

the archetypes are memory deposits or imprints in the brain, psychic expressions of the physiological and anatomical disposition of the human animal.

Furthermore,

our anatomical structure is not the product simply of environmental conditions working on living matter, and so the primordial image is not the product of purely external influences. "The given structure of the brain does not owe its peculiar nature merely to the influence of surrounding conditions, but also and just as much to the peculiar and autonomous quality of living matter, i.e., to a law inherent in life itself..

The given constitution of the organism, therefore, is on the one hand a product of external conditions, while on the other it is determined by the intrinsic nature of living matter. The organism confronts light with a new structure, the eye, and the psyche confronts the natural process with a symbolic image, which apprehends it in the same way as the eye catches the light. And just as the eye bears witness to the peculiar and spontaneous creative activity of living matter, so the primordial image expresses the unique and unconditioned creative power of the psyche."

4. The archetype as a formative principle of individual life

The archetypes are not only repeated patterns of experience in the life of humanity,

but also formative and creative principles that mold and reshape the entire personality.

They manifest themselves as spontaneous reactions to a specific crisis in an individual's life or to a collective threat in the spirit of the times. They challenge the ego to self-reflection and to translating the language of the archetypal image into the language of the present.

What the image does, if it is integrated by the understanding and responsibility of the ego, is the following:

It frees psychic energy from its bondage to sheer perception and links one's perceptions to a definite meaning, which then guides one's actions along paths which correspond to this meaning. It leads the mind back to nature and at the same time channels nature into intelligent forms, into responsibility and love.

Energy becomes responsibility and love by being ~~challenged~~^{channeled} by consciousness along paths that energy itself first opens up.

Again, the reciprocal interaction of consciousness and the unconscious.

This does not mean, however,

that consciousness transforms the image into nothing but an idea.

It does transform it into an idea, because of intelligence, but there still clings to the image an element beyond rational formulation, a state of feeling.

The image has a vitality that no idea has.

It is endowed with creative power, because of this vitality.

It is this psychological understanding of the image

as a creative center

from which formative effects go forth

that opened new approaches to psychotherapy for Jung.

The neurotic, by coming into contact with primordial images, can be liberated from purely personal entanglements, rescued from isolation,

and directed to a superpersonal realm of meaning

as the background of his own life's meaning.

This relation to a superpersonal realm of meaning is in itself therapeutic.

5. Jung's later theory of the archetypes.

There is a noticeable development in Jung's whole view of the world in the last 25 years of his life.

This development is for the most part a deepening, so that his thought was put into a wholly new perspective.

He ventures more and more into areas very little known to medical psychology, in fact into areas still untouched by practically any other school of scientific psychology.

The archetypes were profoundly affected by this development.