Uncovering the Neurocognitive Archetypes

Dr. Dominique Makowski

2019-11-02

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

Disclaimer: This is a compilation of thoughts that might be someday used in a fictional novel. **It does not reflect any personal beliefs. Warning: This is a work in progress, i.e., currently just a collection of unstructured information.**

The idea that the mind is deeply structured along universal lines has always been fascinating to me. Although strongly criticized, or simply debunked by science (along with the rest of Jungian psychology), the idea that the mind was structurally clustered in a similar way across the time and space has endured, quitting the prison of scientific psychology to pervade other fields such as history of arts, literature and anthropology. In fact, the notion of archetypes and archetypal patterns has never been so popular, evidence being "found" within the redundancies of Human behaviours, myths and stories of old.

But beyond the smell of pseudoscience that emanates from this concept, do archetypes make any scientific sense? The goal of this book is to provide a new and rational perspective on archetypes, informed by biology, psychology and neuroscience.

Chapter 2

History of Archetypes

2.1   Philosophical roots

It is common to mention Plato's Idea as the origin or philosophical basis for archetypes.

2.2   Tarot

The *Major Arcana* consists of 22 cards:

* The Magician
* The High Priestess
* The Empress
* The Emperor
* The Hierophant
* The Lovers
* The Chariot
* Strength
* The Hermit
* Wheel of Fortune
* Justice
* The Hanged Man
* Death
* Temperance
* The Devil
* The Tower
* The Star
* The Moon

- The Sun
- Judgement
- The World
- The Fool.

Cards from The Magician to The World are numbered in Roman numerals from I to XXI, while The Fool is the only unnumbered card, sometimes placed at the beginning of the deck as 0, or at the end as XXII.

2.3   Carl Jung (1875 - 1961)

Originally named "primordial images" (a term he borrowed from the historian of art Jacob Burckhardt), Jung understood archetypes as universal, archaic patterns or images that derive from the collective unconscious, seen as the psychic counterpart of bodily instincts (Feist and Feist, 2009). He makes a distinction between *archetypes-as-such*, the underlying forms from which emerge motives that he refers to as *archetypal images* (e.g., the mother, the child, …). These archetypal images are made *manifest* (i.e., explicit and consciously accessible) as they are filled with specific content through history, culture or personal history (Papadopoulos, 2012).

In his later life, inspired by oriental philosophies, Jung used the term *unus mundus* to describe the unitary reality which underlay all manifest phenomena. Jung expanded the notion of archetypes to the physical world itself, suggesting that "psychoid" archetypes (the non-psychic aspect of the archetype), fundamental principles of matter and energy, are the mediators of the unus mundus.

Critically, Jung's archetypes stem out of the *collective unconscious*, therefore forming a substratum common to all humanity. The collective unconscious is, in Jung's perspective, referred to as the knowledge and experiences that we share as a species. A reminiscent echo of information passed down through generations from the dawn of mankind, and even afore.

Jung also named "archetypes" what could be seen as parts of the psyche. In particular, he focused on five of such dimensions:

- The **Anima** and the **Animus** are the feminine and masculine aspects of our Psyche.
- The **shadow** is the part of one's Self to which the conscious ego does not identify.
- The **Persona** refers to the image that a person presents to the world. According to Jung, the Persona is "a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and on the other to conceal the true nature of the individual".
- The **Self** is the realised product of the integration of all conscious and unconscious aspects of our personality.

Interstingly, while the archetypal images (the manifest motives) are usually the main focus of interest, it is important to note that Jung himself warned against such simplification. Such "definite mythological images of motifs [...] are nothing more than conscious representations; it would be absurd to assume that such variable representations could be inherited". Again, the true archetypes for Jung were their deeper, instinctual, fluid sources – "the 'archaic remnants', which I call 'archetypes' or 'primordial images'" (Jung et al., 1964).

Altough Jung himself did not create any "official" list, other authors have attributed 12 different archetypal images to Jung, organized in three overarching categories, based on a fundamental driving force. These include (**find reference**):

- The Ego Types
    - The Innocent
    - The Orphan / Everyman
    - The Hero
    - The Caregiver
- The Soul Types
    - The Explorer
    - The Rebel
    - The Lover
    - The Creator
- The Self Types
    - The Jester
    - The Sage
    - The Magician
    - The Ruler

Jungian archetypes cannot be fully understood without taking into account his perspective on the structure of the psyche. Shadow, Persona, ...

2.4 Robert Moore (1942 - 2016)

In "King Warrior Magician Lover", Moore and Gillette (1991) discuss the four primary masculine archetypes:

- King
- Warrior
- Magician
- Lover

To each one of these archetypes correspond an immature version:

- The Divine Child
- The Hero
- The Precocious Child
- The Oedipal Child

In the same framework, feminine (although not directly mentioned by the original authors) are:

- Queen
- Mother
- Wise woman
- Lover

2.5   Margaret Mark and Carol Pearson

The Hero and the Outlaw:

- The Innocent
- The Orphan
- The Hero
- The Caregiver
- The Explorer
- The Rebel
- The Lover
- The Creator
- The Jester
- The Sage
- The Magician
- The Ruler

2.6   Recent Developpments

The coach Scott Jeffrey, after disguising random information as facts ("archetypes influence 99% of human behavior"), ends up with a list of over 325 archetypes (!), suggesting that their number is even larger ("the reality is that there are thousands of archetypes. Each one possesses different behavioral patterns and subtleties"). Such fined-grained perspectives, where archetypes can be anything, are arguably not about archetypes such as conceptualised in this book (as a matter, he defined them as "set pattern of behavior", which is very distinct from psychological protostructures).

Chapter 3

A Scientific Archetypism

Many archetype theorists have adopted a bottom-up approach, from Jung itself, exploring various cultures, myths, religions or the depths of Human's psyche (using tools of pseudo-access such as psychoanalysis or hypnosis). The archetypist's role was then to assemble and integrate the interpretations that emerged from these observations, in a theory that could be applied to explain these observations.

We will take the opposite approach. Based on scientific knowledge about evolution, biology and neuroscience, we will outline a plausible framework, that we will then test on observations.

One of the main angle of attacks could be the practical value of generic archetype. Yes, a loving mother and a fearless father are common tropes in Human existence. What is the point of creating a whole pseudo-theory around them? A collateral question would be, do they (as concepts) have any direct influence over our lives?

Chapter 4

Archetypes

The main archetypes discussed in this chapter reffered to as "axial archetypes", as they emerge from to the axes that structure our mental system. As this system grows and complexifies, its dimensionality increases, creating new planes and providing more coordinates to navigate in this space. As a result of the densification of this matrix, archetypes become more subtler, fine-grained and ultimately fading into the unicity that is characterising our identity.

Thus, archetypes are usually paired (as they are the two spaces created separated by a line), creating a symmetric and hierarchical structure. Importantly, they can be identified, and grouped, relative to their causing axis, which is often an important distinction that the organism has to learn in order to adapt.

Thus, evidence for archetypes can be indirectly gathered by demonstrating the existence and relevance of their axis of reference.

4.1 Masculine and Feminine

Existing theories and models often associate archetpyes with specific genders, namely "feminine" and "masculine". While this will also be the case in the current book, the reader must be aware that we see it mainly as a flexible (and convenient) appelation. In the archetypal framework, the Masculine and Feminine adjectives do not directly refer, nor are limited, to their respective biological genders, but rather to features of the two primordial archetypes, the father and the mother (see below). That does not preclude that a masculine archetype can be embodied by a female figure and *vice versa*.

Moreover, another limitation of this pseudo-sexualised perspective is that it is, to some extent, anthropomorphic or primatomorphic (or at least mammalomorphic). Indeed, in these classes and families, males often endorse the role

of protection, fighting for females through which reproduction can be achieved. However, other taxa of animals, with different reproduction systems, might have these roles changed, or reversed. For instance, in ants, the ruler and the warriors are Females, whereas the males are typically exhibiting roles that would be anthropomorphically labeled as feminine. Thus, while we will keep using Masculine and Feminine in their primatal sense, these adjectives may not be universally relevant.

4.2 The Two Worlds

The Outside *vs.* the Inside, or the external and internal worlds (or Self vs. non-Self), is the first axis differenciating our proto-experience.

Transcendal vs. Natural.

The newborn is a fragile and dependent entity, which safety depends on the *Mother* and the *Father*. These are the first

Both are vectors of **protection**. The father protects from the outside world, unknown and dangerous, while the mother protects from internal dangers by fullfilling biological needs (hunger, thirst, affection, …).

These two primordial archetypes will create the primordial axis, external vs. internal worlds.

A secondary axis could be the real vs. the unreal.

4.3 Known *vs.* Unknown

Knowledge

Knower of beyond vs. knower of within.

The child wants to know, and understand this world around and within him. From the Mother, master of nature, stems out the *Feminine Knower*. From the Father, master of the transcendent, stems out the *Masculine Knower*.

4.4 Time

4.5 Moral

For elderly figures, this is assimilated with the place in the society, whether inside (priest, matron) or outside (hermit and witch). For young figures, this reflects the societal and cultural judgment. The hero and the virgin are pure
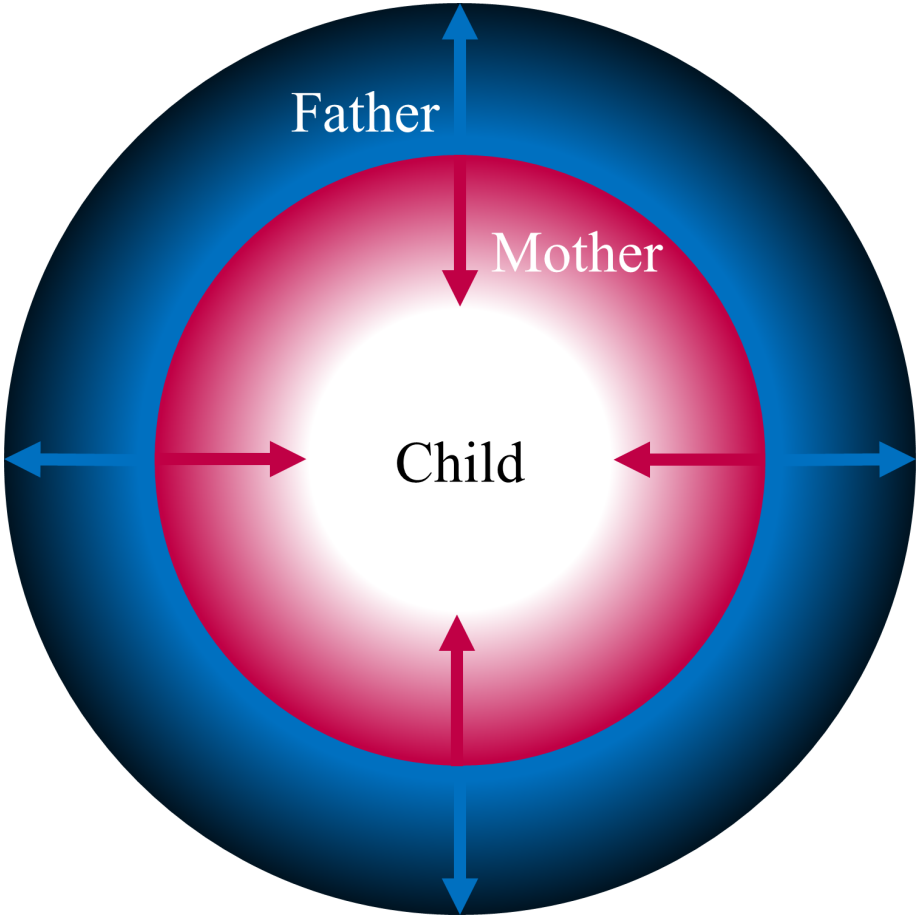
Figure 4.1: The Primordial Axis.

archetypes of virtue, whereas the wanderer and the whore are usually societal and cultural outcasts.

4.6   Order

At one point, the realisation comes that all these figures are subordinated to an overarching ordering and structuring force, the *Ruler*. Altough this archetype has often been related or embodied by Masculine entities, it does not need to be so, as it highly depends on societal and biologoical factors (related to the culture or Specie concerned). For instance, due to the cultural and political system of the western world (for instance, feodalism), the ruler position was generally connected to some level of physical protection offered (hence the king was usually glorified as a great warrior).

4.7   The artist

The artist is the integration of the feminine creation with the masculine transcendental nature of the object. Located at the centre, it shares aspects and potentialities of other archetypes. For instance, the artist can take uptake the purity, such as Michel-Angelo, or being the outcast, combining features of the hermit, living on the fringes of society, but also with the wanderer (as the rogue traveller and story-teller), as well as the whore () or the witch ().

4.8   The Serpent

The serpent represent the cyclical nature of existence. A mother creates a child, the child becomes the mother, and the cycle restarts.

Becoming an adult means facing the serpent. Alternative ways can be to embrace (becomeà the serpent (fulfilling the archetypes and becoming the Father or the Mother), or to battle the serpent, by trying to break the cycle.

4.9   Light and Shadow

The stronger the light, the darker the shadow. Idea that everybody has a "shadow", a collection of morally reprehensible desires and thoughts, and that its strength is proportional to the amount of light shining from the persona. Yin and Yang. True peace of mind could be achieved by reuning them (The Grey Path).
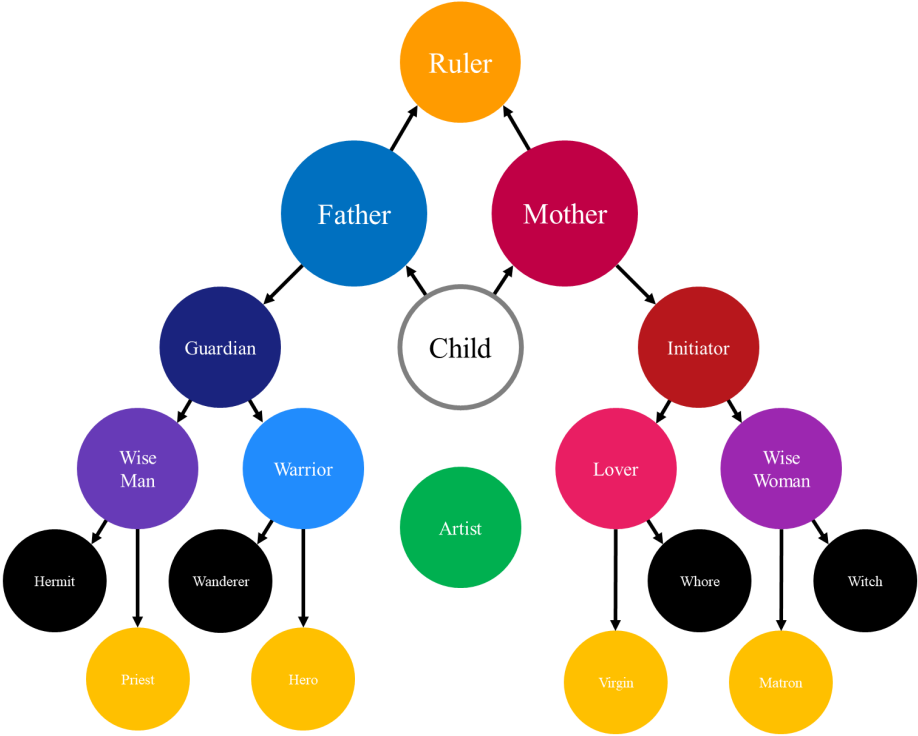
Figure 4.2: The main archetypes and their hierarchical structure.

Chapter 5

Archetypes and the Brain

Do archetypes have a biological existence?

5.1 Origin

Are the archetypes innate? No, (altough they might have been favoured by evolution); they stem out of the redunduncies of existence.

5.2 Archetypes as Neurocognitive Invariants

contrary to Jung, these archetypes are not originating from some collective unconscious, but rather are created and maintained by the ontology of the individual, and patterns are crystilised out of the répétition and similarity accross individual ontologies (e.g., the presnece of a fatherly and a motherly figure, etc.)

5.3 Neurological Substrate

Attempts have been made to map archetypes unto brain structures (Samuels, 2003). For instance, Rossi (1977) suggested that one could locate the archetypes in the right cerebral hemisphere, based on the idea that the left hemisphe would be primarily verbal and associational, and the right primarily visuospatial and apperceptive. In light of the current neuroscientific data, these theories appear as nonsensical and naive.

That being said, if archetypes are engrammed into the cognitive system, a biological basis has to exist. One potential answer is to reframe archetypism

under the predictive coding framework. As such, archetypes could be seen as meta-priors.

Chapter 6

Archetypes and Psychology

The archetypal framework developped in this book is by essence reduction-ist, exploring the abstract core features of cognition and essentializing them to concepts of pure abstraction. As such, archetypes do not directly relate to individual psychology, nor to anything tangible.

6.1   Relationship with Personality

Chapter 7

Archetypal stories

Common motives in religions and myths beg the question of the existence or plausibility of archetypal stories.

Chapter 8

The Origin of Religions

It is possible that archetypes have been deified, mother (nature and creation), father (protection and sky - the unreachable world).

Archetypes might have been integrated with a will to explain terryfing or unknown phenomena, such as storm, rain, fire, day-night cycle etc.

Bibliography

Feist, J. and Feist, G. J. (2009). *Theories of personality*. McGraw Hill Higher Education Boston, MA.

Jung, C. G. et al. (1964). *Approaching the unconscious*. New York, NY.

Moore, R. L. and Gillette, D. (1991). *King, warrior, magician, lover*. Harper-Collins San Francisco.

Papadopoulos, R. K., editor (2012). *The Handbook of Jungian Psychology*. Routledge.

Rossi, E. (1977). The cerebral hemispheres in analytical psychology. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 22(1):32–51.

Samuels, A. (2003). *Jung and the post-Jungians*. Routledge.