

Persona & Shadow

Jungian Archetypes

According to psychiatrist **Carl Jung**, **archetypes** are **innate universal psychic dispositions** that form the substrate from which the basic symbols or representations of unconscious experience emerge.

Carl Jung rejected the theory of 'Tabula Rasa' (Blank slate) of human psychological development, believing instead that evolutionary pressures have individual predestinations manifested in archetypes.

The archetypes form a dynamic substratum common to all humanity, upon the foundation of which each individual builds his own experience of life, developing a unique array of psychological characteristics. Thus, while archetypes themselves may be conceived as a relative few innate nebulous forms, from these may arise innumerable images, symbols and patterns of behavior. While the emerging images and forms are apprehended consciously, the **archetypes which inform them are elementary structures which are unconscious and impossible to apprehend**. Being unconscious, the existence of archetypes can only be deduced indirectly by examining behavior, images, art, myths, etc. They are inherited potentials which are actualized when they enter consciousness as images or manifest in behavior on interaction with the outside world.

Five main archetypes are sometimes enumerated:

- **The Self**, the regulating center of the psyche and facilitator of individuation - the representative of "that wholeness which the introspective philosophy of all times and climes has characterized with an inexhaustible variety of symbols, names and concepts"
- **The Shadow**, the opposite of the ego image, often containing qualities that the ego does not identify with but possesses nonetheless
- **The Anima**, the feminine image in a man's psyche; *or*:
- **The Animus**, the masculine image in a woman's psyche
- **The Persona**, to Jung a mere "functional complex ... by no means identical to the individuality", the way we present to the world - a mask which protects the Ego from negative images, and which by post-Jungians is sometimes considered an "archetype ... as a dynamic/structural component of the psyche"

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Persona

The Persona, for Jung, was the **social face** the individual presented to the world - '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'. (It acts as a mask to shield the ego from negative images. According to Jung, the persona may appear in dreams and take a number of different forms)

Identification with the Persona

For the growing child, the **development of a viable social persona is a vital part of adapting to, and preparing for adult life in, the external social world.** 'A strong ego relates to the outside world through a flexible persona'

Dangers of the Persona

Identification with a specific persona (doctor, scholar, artist, etc.) inhibits psychological development. Thus for Jung 'the danger is that [people] become identical with their personas - the professor with his textbook, the tenor with his voice'. The result could be 'the shallow, brittle, conformist kind of personality which is "all persona", with its excessive concern for "what people think" with little or no concept of themselves as beings distinct from what society expects of them.

Eventually, there would be an **emergence of the repressed individuality from beneath the persona later in life** & the individual would either be smothered under an empty persona or an enantiodromia (principle that the super abundance of an force will inevitable produce its opposite).

Importance of the Persona – 'if one cannot perform a social role then one will suffer'

For Jung 'the man with no persona...is blind to the reality of the world, which for him has merely the value of an amusing or fantastic playground'.

Inevitably, the result of 'the streaming in of the unconscious into the conscious realm, simultaneously with the dissolution of the "persona" and the reduction of the directive force of consciousness, is a state of disturbed psychic equilibrium'. Those trapped at such a stage remain 'blind to the world, hopeless dreamers...spectral Cassandras dreaded for their tactlessness, eternally misunderstood'

Thus the need for Disintegration & finally Restoration of the Persona

The breakdown of the persona constitutes the **typically Jungian moment both in therapy and in development**- when 'that excessive commitment to collective ideals masking deeper individuality - the persona - breaks down...disintegrates'. Jung holds that **this process is absolutely necessary for individuation**. As the individuation process gets under way, 'the situation has thrown off the conventional husk and developed into a stark encounter with reality, with no false veils or adornments of any kind'

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Recovery, the aim of individuation, 'is not only achieved by **work on the inside figures** but also, as *conditio sine qua non*, by a **re-adaptation in outer life**' - including the **recreation of a new and more viable persona**. To 'develop a stronger persona...might feel inauthentic, like learning to "play a role"...but if one cannot perform a social role then one will suffer'. Thus one goal for individuation is for people to '**develop a more realistic, flexible persona that helps them navigate in society but does not collide with nor hide their true self**'. Eventually, 'in the best case, the persona is appropriate and tasteful, a true reflection of our inner individuality and our outward sense of self'

Note: In developmental psychology - particularly analytical psychology - **individuation is the process through which a person becomes his/her 'true self'**. Hence it is the process whereby the innate elements of personality; the different experiences of a person's life and the different aspects and components of the immature psyche become integrated over time into a well-functioning whole. Individuation might thus be summarised as the **stabilizing of the personality**.

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Shadow

It is **part of the unconscious mind consisting of repressed weaknesses, shortcomings, and instincts**.

"Everyone carries a shadow," Jung wrote, "and **the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is**." It may be (in part) one's link to more primitive animal instincts, which are superseded during early childhood by the conscious mind.

Dangers of the Shadow archetype

According to Jung, the shadow, **in being instinctive and irrational, is prone to projection**: turning a personal inferiority into a perceived moral deficiency in someone else. If these projections are unrecognized "The projection-making factor (the Shadow archetype) then has a free hand and can realize its object—if it has one—or bring about some other situation characteristic of its power." **These projections insulate and cripple individuals by forming an ever thicker fog of illusion between the ego and the real world.**

However, Jung also believed that "in spite of its function as a reservoir for human darkness—or perhaps because of this—**the shadow is the seat of creativity**" so that for some, it may be, 'the dark side of his being, his sinister shadow...represents the true spirit of life as against the arid scholar'.

Appearance of the Shadow

The shadow may **appear in dreams and visions in various forms**, and typically 'appears as a person of the same sex as that of the dreamer'

The shadow's appearance and role depend greatly on the living experience of the individual, because much of the shadow develops in the individual's mind rather than simply being inherited in the collective unconscious. Nevertheless some Jungians maintain that '*The shadow*... contains, besides the personal shadow, the shadow of society ... fed by the neglected and repressed collective values

Jung also made the suggestion of there being more than one layer making up the shadow. The **top layers contain the meaningful flow and manifestations of direct personal experiences**. There is a deeper **bottom** layer Jung describes as "a psychic activity which goes on independently of the conscious mind and is not dependent even on the upper layers of the unconscious—untouched, and perhaps untouchable—by personal experience" referred to by him as the **collective unconscious**.

Encounter with the Shadow

The disintegration of the Persona as part of the **process of individuation necessarily leads as a first stage to the experience of the Shadow**. If and when 'an individual makes an attempt to see his shadow, he becomes aware of (and often ashamed of) those qualities and impulses he denies in himself but can plainly see in others — such things as egotism, mental laziness, and sloppiness; unreal fantasies,

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schemes, and plots; carelessness and cowardice; inordinate love of money and possessions — a painful and lengthy work of self-education”.

The dissolution of the persona and the launch of the individuation process also brings with it **the danger of falling victim to the shadow (merger with the shadow*)** – ‘the black shadow which everybody carries with him, the inferior and therefore hidden aspect of the personality’

{*The impact of 'confrontation with the shadow produces at first a dead balance, a standstill that hampers moral decisions and makes convictions ineffective...tenebrositas, chaos, melancholia'. Consequently (as Jung knew from personal experience) 'in this time of descent — one, three, seven years, more or less — genuine courage and strength are required', with no certainty of emergence.}

The need to acknowledge & assimilate the Shadow ("The shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself")

Here the struggle is to retain awareness of the shadow, but not identification with it.

'Non-identification demands considerable moral effort...prevents a descent into that darkness'; but though 'the conscious mind is liable to be submerged at any moment in the unconscious... understanding acts like a life-saver. It integrates the unconscious' - reincorporates the shadow into the personality, producing a stronger, wider consciousness than before. 'Assimilation of the shadow gives a man body, so to speak'. Jungians warn that 'acknowledgement of the shadow must be a continuous process throughout one's life'