

Archetypes and Complexes Notes

CJS Fall 2018

ARCHETYPES

Definition of Archetype

Archetypes are “identical psychic structures common to all humanity” (CW5:224), which together constitute “the archaic heritage of humanity” (CW5:259).

It is an inherited mode of functioning, corresponding to the inborn way in which a chick emerges from the egg, the bird builds its nest, the wasp stings the motor ganglion of the caterpillar. (CW18:1228)

How Jung Developed His Concept of the Archetype

- His extensive reading of philosophers, such as Plato and Schopenhauer, Kant, and of mythologies
- His dream: He was on the top floor of an old house, well furnished and with fine paintings on the walls. He marvelled that this should be his house and thought “Not bad!” But then it occurred to him that he had no idea what the lower floor was like, so he went down to see. There everything was much older. The furnishings were medieval and everything was rather dark. He thought, “Now I really must explore the whole house.” He looked closely at the floor. It was made of stone slabs and in one of these he discovered a ring. When he pulled it, the slab lifted, and he saw some narrow stone steps leading down into the depths. He went down and entered a low cave cut out of the rock. Bones and broken pottery were scattered about in the dust, the remains of a primitive culture, and he found two human skulls, obviously very old and half-disintegrated. Then he woke up. (paraphrased from MDR 158-159)

To Jung, the house was an image of the psyche. The room on the upper floor represented his conscious personality, The ground floor stood for the first level of the unconscious, which he was to call the personal unconscious, while in the deepest level of all he reached the collective unconscious. There he discovered the world of the primitive man within himself. To him, the skulls belonged to our human ancestors, who helped shape the common psychic heritage of us all. (This section based on Steven Anthony’s *Jung: A Very Short Introduction*)

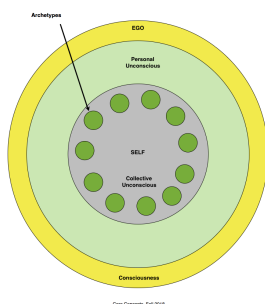
Description

The archetype has vitality. It is a self-activating organism endowed with generative power. It is an inherited organization of psychic energy, an ingrained system, which not only gives expression to the energetic process but facilitates its operation. It shows how this process has run its unvarying course from time immemorial, while simultaneously allowing a perceptual repetition of it by means of a psychic grasp of situations so that life can continue into the future. It is thus the necessary counterpart of instinct. (CW6:753)

The archetypes are the hidden foundations of the conscious mind. They are systems of readiness for action, and at the same time images and emotions. They are the psychic aspect of the brain structure. The archetype and its function must be understood as a part of humanity's prehistoric, irrational psychology and not as a rationally conceivable system. (CW10:53-54)

It is as though we had to describe and explain a building whose upper storey was erected in the nineteenth century, the ground floor dates back to the sixteenth century, and careful examination of the masonry reveals that it was reconstructed from a tower built in the eleventh century. In the cellar we come upon Roman foundations, and under the cellar a choked-up cave with neolithic tools in the upper layer and remnants of fauna from the same period in the lower layers. That would be the picture of our psychic structure. We live on the upper storey and are only aware that the lower storey is slightly old-fashioned. As to what lies beneath the earth's surface, of that we remain totally unconscious. (CW10:54)

Visual



Archetypes are **possibilities** of action or ideas. They are not the action itself. They are not the idea itself. They are predispositions to have certain experiences, but not the experience itself.

Maternal bonding, for instance. Sexual mating. Striving for dominance, or competition in other words. Home building. Archetypes are universal modes of functioning that are lived out in individual ways.

Beyond logic or language, archetypes reveal themselves through images, stories and patterns. They carry a punch. An archetypal story will remain with us. An archetypal image will fascinate us or terrify us. Archetypes are an energy that takes on a form specific to the culture or religion or person.

We can name some common archetypes because of recurring experiences throughout humanity's existence: mother, child, birth, life, death, suffering, God. Each of these archetypes has changed form over time, but the energy is the same.

For example, the warm, protecting, nourishing side of the mother took the form of the sheltering cave and the surrounding vegetation for our earliest forebears. After the discovery of fire, the hearth was added as an association with Mother. Early art depicts the mother with voluminous breasts and thighs. As agriculture developed, the milk-giving cow and the herd joined the Mother idea. (CW10:67) In more modern times, we have mother-country, mother-church, alma-mater, the Virgin Mother and Mother Theresa.

The era gives shape to the archetype. Likewise, a person's socialization and experiences tweaks the archetype to its particular shape in that person's psyche. Like a fingerprint. Fingerprints are universal; all people have them, yet they are also individual in detail. There are no two fingerprints alike in the world. Just so, the energy of the archetypal mother takes a personal form in each of our psyches.

INSTINCTS

Partner to the archetype is the instinct – an involuntary drive toward certain activities. The two are a pair of opposites, naturally linked and often difficult to tell apart.

Instinct is not an isolated thing, nor can it be isolated in practice. It always brings in its train archetypal contents of a spiritual nature, which are at once its foundation and its limitation. In other words, an instinct is always and inevitably coupled with something like a philosophy of life, however archaic, unclear and hazy this may be. Instinct stimulates thoughts, and if a man does not think of his own free will, then you get compulsive thinking, for the two poles of the psyche, the physiological and the mental, are indissolubly connected. (CW16:185)

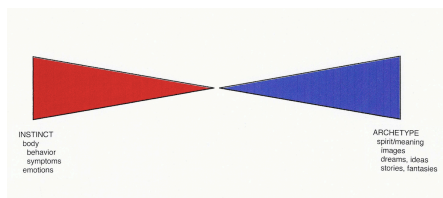
Jung identified five prominent groups of instinctive factors: creativity, reflection, activity, sexuality and hunger.

- Hunger, a primary instinct of self-preservation, perhaps the most instinctual of all drive;
- Sexuality, a close second;
- Activity – the urge toward change, travel, play
- Reflection – a desire for meaning
- Creativity – construction and destruction

Jung labels the archetypal essence as spiritual. By this he means a psychic intention that enlivens the person and the person's psyche. It is an invisible, breath-like presence, an invigorating energy. He says, "Psychic processes seem to be balances of energy flowing between spirit and instinct..." (CW8:407)

Thus, archetypes are foundational to the life of the human psyche. They oppose and also link to Instincts. Jung illustrated this dynamic relationship by referring to a spectrum.

Visual



The dynamism of instinct is lodged as it were in the infra-red part of the spectrum, whereas the instinctual image lies in the ultra-violet part... The realization and assimilation of instinct never take place at the red end, i.e., by absorption into the instinct sphere, but only through integration of the image which signifies and at the same time

evokes the instinct, although in a form quite different from the one we meet on the biological level. (CW8:414)

In other words, instincts cannot be integrated, or even related to. They reside in an area that Jung called “psychoid” – an area that is unknown and uncontrollable.

Archetypes, through their images and stories, translate the instincts into a form that we can grasp. Jung called the archetype the instinct’s perception of itself...the self-portrait of the instinct. In other words, the archetype is the instinct’s selfie.

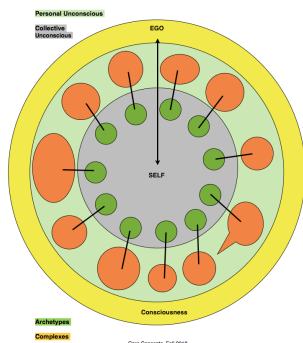
Instincts are autonomous and express themselves biologically – through the body, in behaviours, emotions. Archetypes are numinous – they evoke fascination – and express themselves psychologically. One is of the physical world, the other is of the spiritual realm. One cannot be accessed. The other can be related to through rituals and imagination.

Instincts are typical modes of action. (CW8:273) Archetypes are typical modes of apprehension. (CW8:280)

With this background on archetypes, we can now look at complexes.

COMPLEXES

Visual



Definition of Complex

A complex is an emotionally charged group of ideas or images.

A complex is the image of a certain psychic situation which is strongly accentuated emotionally and is, moreover, incompatible with the habitual attitude of consciousness. (CW8:201)

How Jung Discovered Complexes

Medical degree with distinction

Job at Burgolzli Psychiatric Hospital in Zurich

There he was assigned to work on the word association test, administered to all patients
 For years, he had had a burning interest in what actually goes on inside the mentally ill
 His observations of subtle details during word association tests led him to formulate the concept of complexes – feeling-toned ideas that form around an archetype

Explain WAE

Visual

SW, RW & RT

Visual

Clip from A Dangerous Method

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQqVxqc7UJ8>

What was typically called a failure to produce, Jung saw as a disturbance – a disturbance in the unconscious that affected the body
 He expanded the data that he recorded when he gave the word association test

Visual

Full data sheet

Second time around/repetition identifies gaps in memory

Gather the disturbed words and get associations to them

Helps reveal archetypes behind the disturbances

Most common: mother, father, perfection, trust

Complexes are autonomous, having a will of their own. They are unteachable, and they play tricks Here are some common ways in which they express themselves:

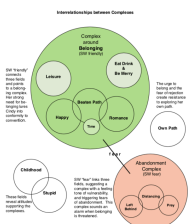
They slip just the wrong word into one's mouth, they make one forget the name of the person one is about to introduce, they cause a tickle in the throat just when the softest passage is being played on the piano at a concert, they make the tiptoeing latecomer trip over a chair with a resounding crash. (CW8:202)

In the psyche, complexes are like magnets. They draw energy to them. This is probably due to the numinosity/attraction of the archetype. As long as the complex is not triggered, we're okay. But when the archetype at the centre of the complex wakes up, energy flows to the complex, robbing the ego and other parts of the psyche of the energy that's needed for thinking, for walking without tripping, for listening to what's really being said. Complexes make us explode, withdraw, forget things, etc.

We can be under the influence of a complex for minutes, hours, days. We may flush, tremble, go blank, explode. When the complex releases its grip, we are often tired, and wonder what came over us. However, they still hoard energy for themselves, They also talk to each other at times.

Visual

Diagram of Cindy's WAE



How complex can a complex be??
family archetype

Everyone knows nowadays that people "have complexes." What is not so well known is that complexes can have us! (CW8:200) Where the realm of complexes begins, the freedom of the ego comes to an end. (CW8:216)

Complexes are in fact “splinter psyches.” The aetiology of their origin is frequently a so-called trauma, an emotional shock or some such thing, that splits off a bit of the psyche. Certainly one of the commonest causes is a moral conflict, which ultimately derives from the apparent impossibility of affirming the whole of one’s nature. (CW8:253)

Moral conflict! ...a seeming impossibility of affirming all of who we are...

Complexes are necessary to the life of the psyche, and therefore to the life of the body. We cannot live without them. They get a bad rap. They embarrass us. They are untrainable and cannot be gotten rid of. They are energy and therefore impossible to kill off. Denying that we have them strengthens them. Believing that we’ve got to get rid of them merely causes them to shape-shift.

The first thing we can do is get to know them. Learn what triggers them, and what they’re really about. Then suffer them, breathe through them, admit them, and go on living. The next step is to relate to them.

Recognizing when we’re in a complex robs it of power. It helps to be able to name the complex, even when we’re in it. As we all know, names are powerful. Naming a complex meets it on its own level of power.

Complexes: good or bad? Positive or negative? Depends on the effects

In conclusion: Instincts express themselves through the body, in behaviors and symptoms. They are autonomous. Archetypes manifest psychologically through images. One is of the physical world, the other of the spiritual realm. Images and symbols carry numinosity because of the archetypal influence permeating them. Complexes gain their energy and power from the archetype at their nucleus. The outer manifestation of a complex comes through behaviours and symptoms.

Complexes are among the normal phenomenon of life and they make up the structure of the unconscious psyche. (CW8:219)

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