

## Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious

People who had no contact with each other at all formed myths to explain natural phenomena such as great floods and the creation of the world as well as to answer such questions why we die and why we are born. These fantasy images of the primitive mind are so alike for all cultures that Jung calls them the Collective Unconscious. They remain part of every human unconscious mind as dreams of fantasy and fear. They are living, psychic forces which demand to be taken seriously. Jung believes that we can never legitimately be cut loose from our archetypal foundations or we will go mad and become suicidal.

### Characteristics of Archetypes

1. They are not individual but the part we share with all humanity.
2. They are the inherited part of being human which connects us to our past and goes beyond our personal experience to a common source.
3. They are not directly knowable, but instead express themselves in forms.
4. They grow out of a man's social, psychological and biological being.
5. They are universal. From the Roman gladiator to the astronaut, they remain the same.
6. They cannot be explained by interaction among cultures because geography and history often made this impossible.
7. They are recurrent, appearing in slightly altered forms to take present day situations and relate them to the past in order to find meaning in a contemporary world.

### Situation Archetypes

1. **The Quest**—this motif describes the search for someone or some talisman which, when found and brought back, will restore fertility to a wasted land, the desolation of which is mirrored by a leader's illness and disability. Jessie L. Weston's From ritual to Romance traces one facet of this archetype through the quests of Gawain, Perceval, and Galahad for the Holy Grail. (e.g. The Lion King, Excalibur, Idylls of the King.)
2. The Task—To save the kingdom, to win the fair lady, to identify himself so that he may reassume his rightful position, the hero must perform some nearly superhuman deed. NOT THE SAME AS THE QUEST—A FUNCTION OF THE

- ULTIMATE GOAL, THE RESTORATION OF FERTILITY. (Arthur pulls Excalibur from stone, Grendel slain by Beowulf, Frodo must arrive at Rivendale.)
3. The Initiation—This usually takes the form of an initiation into adult life. The adolescent comes into his/her maturity with new awareness and problems along with new hope for the community. This awakening is often the climax of the story. (Huckleberry Fin, Stephen Dedalus, King Arthur, the hobbits, To Kill a Mocking Bird, A Separate Peace.)
  4. The Journey—the journey sends the hero in search for some truth or information necessary to restore fertility to the kingdom. Usually the hero descends into a real or psychological hell and is forced to discover the blackest truths, quite often concerning his faults. Once the hero is at this lowest point, he must accept personal responsibility to return to the world of the living. A second use of this pattern is the depiction of a limited number of travelers on a sea voyage, but ride on other trip for the purpose of isolating them and using them as a microcosm of society. (e.g. The Odyssey, the Canterbury Tales, the Aeneid, The Fellowship of the Rings, The Grapes of Wrath.)
  5. The Fall—This archetype describes a descent from a higher to a lower state of being. The experience involves a defilement and/or loss of innocence and bliss. The fall is often accompanied by expulsion from a kind of paradise as penalty for disobedience and moral transgression. (Adam and Eve, Lancelot and Guinevere, Paradise Lost.)
  6. Death and Rebirth—The most common of all situational archetypes, this motif grows out of the parallel between the cycle of nature and the cycle of life. Thus, morning and springtime represent birth, youth or rebirth' evening and winter suggest old age or death.
  7. Nature vs. Mechanistic World—Nature is good while technology and society are often evil. (e.g. Walden, Mad Max, The Terminator.)
  8. Battle between Good and Evil—obviously the battle between two primal forces. Mankind shows eternal optimism in the continual portrayal of good triumphing over evil despite great odds. (e.g. the forces of Sauron and those of Middle Earth in The Lord of the Rings, Satan and God in Paradise Lost, any western, most cartoons.)
  9. The unhealable Wound- this wound is either physical or psychological and cannot be healed fully. This wound also indicates a loss of innocence. These wounds always ache and often drive the sufferer to desperate measures. (e.g. Frodo's shoulder, Lancelot's madness, Ahab's wooden leg.)
  10. The Ritual—The actual ceremonies the initial experiences that will mark his rite of passage into another state. The importance of ritual rites cannot be overstressed as they provide clear sign posts for character's role in society as well as our own position in this world. (e.g. weddings, baptisms, coronations.)
  11. The Magic Weapon—This symbolizes the extraordinary quality of the hero because no one else can wield the weapon or use it to its full potential. It is usually given by a mentor figure (Excalibur, Odysseus' bow, Thor's hammer.)

## Symbolic Archetypes

The collective unconscious makes certain associations between the outside world and psychic experiences. These associations become enduring and are passed from one generation to the next. Some of the more common archetypal associations are as follows:

1. Light vs. Darkness—Light usually suggests hope, renewal, or intellectual illumination; darkness implies the unknown, ignorance, or despair.
2. Water vs. Desert – Because water is necessary to life and growth, it commonly appears as a birth or rebirth symbol. Water is used in baptismal services, which solemnizes spiritual births. Similarly, the appearance of rain in a work of literature can suggest a character's spiritual birth. (e.g. The Wasteland, the sea and river images in The Odyssey)
3. Heaven vs. Hell—Man has traditionally associated parts of the universe not accessible to him with the dwelling places of the primordial forces that govern his world. The skies and mountain tops house his gods; the bowels of the earth contain the

## Character Archetypes

1. Hero
2. The young man from the provinces—This hero is spirited away as a young man and reared by strangers. He later returns to his home and heritage where he is a stranger who can see new problems and new solutions. (e.g. Tarzan, Arthur, Dorothy from The Wizard of Oz, Mr. Spock, Oedipus Rex.)
3. The Initiates—These are young heroes or heroines who, prior to their quest must endure some training and ceremony. They are usually innocent and often wear white. (e.g. Arthur, Daniel in The Karate Kid.)
4. Mentors—these individuals serve as teachers or counselors to the initiates. Sometimes they work as role models and often serve as a father or mother figure. (e.g. Merlin, Gandalf to Frodo.)
5. Mentor-Pupil relationship—the mentor teaches by example the skills necessary to survive the quest.
6. Father-son- conflict—Tension often results from separation during childhood or from an external source when the individuals meet as men and where the mentor often has a higher place in the affections of the hero than the natural parent. (e.g. Arthur and Uther, Romeo and Lord Montague.)
7. Hunting Group of Companions—Loyal companions willing to face any number of perils in order to be together. (e.g. Robin Hood and his Merry Men, The Knights of the Round Table.)
8. Loyal Retainers—These individuals are somewhat like servants who are heroic themselves. Their duty is to protect the hero and reflect the nobility of the hero. (Sam in The Lord of the Rings, Watson to Sherlock Holmes, C3PO, R2D2)
9. Friendly Beast—This shows that nature is on the side of the hero. (e.g. Toto, Lassie, Trigger, Chewbacca.)

10. The Devil Figure—Evil incarnate, this character offers worldly goods, fame, or knowledge to the protagonist in exchange for possession of the soul. (e.g. Satan, Mephistopheles, Hitler, Dark Vader, Emperor in the 3<sup>rd</sup> movie).
11. The Evil Figure with the Ultimately Good Heart—A redeemable devil figure saved by the nobility or love of the hero. (e.g. Green Knight, Scrooge, any romance novel hero, Heathcliff.)
12. The Scapegoat—An animal or more usually a human whose death in a public ceremony expiates some taint or sin that has been visited upon a community. Their death often makes them a more powerful force in the society than when they lived. (e.g. Oedipus, the Jew, Obi Kenobi, Frodo.)
13. The Outcast—A figure who is banished from a social group for some crime (real or imagined) against his fellow man. The outcast is usually destined to become a wanderer from place to place. (e.g. some cowboys, Cain, the Ancient Mariner.)
14. The Woman Figure:
  - a. The Earthmother—symbolic of fruition, abundance, and fertility, this character traditionally offers spiritual and emotional nourishment to those with whom she comes in contact. Often depicted in earth colors and has large breasts and hips symbolic of her childbearing capabilities. (e.g. Mother Nature, Goldberry in *The Lord of the Rings*, Mammy in *Gone with the Wind*.)
  - b. the Temptress—Characterized by sensuous beauty, this woman is one to whom the protagonist is physically attracted and who ultimately brings about his downfall. (e.g. Delilah, Guinevere, Cleopatra, the Sirens.)
  - c. the Platonic Ideal—This woman is a source of inspiration and a spiritual ideal, for whom the protagonist or author has an intellectual rather than a physical attraction. (e.g. Dante's Beatrice, Petrarch's Laura, the Virgin Mary.)
  - d. The Unfaithful Wife—A woman married to a man she sees as dull or distant and is attracted to more virile or interesting man. (e.g. Guinevere, Madame Bovary, Anna Karenina.)
  - e. The Damsel in Distress—the vulnerable woman who must be rescued by the hero. She often is used a trap to ensnare the unsuspecting hero. (Guinevere, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Buffy is the opposite of this.)
  - f. The Star Crossed Lovers—these two characters are engaged in a love affair that is fated to end tragically for one or both due to the disapproval of the society, friends, or family or some tragic situation. (e.g. Romeo and Juliet, Tristan and Isolde, Lancelot and Guinevere.)
15. The Creature of Nightmare—A monster usually summoned from the deepest, darkest part of the human psyche to threaten the lives of the hero/heroine. Often it is a perversion or desecration of the human body. (e.g. werewolves, vampires, huge snakes, Frankenstein, desecration of human body, Jaba the Hut coiled like a snake, things that come out of the darkness.)

