



Four
Archetypes

C. G.
JUNG

WITH A NEW FOREWORD BY SONU SHAMDASANI,
editor of THE RED BOOK

FOUR ARCHETYPES



from

The Collected Works of C. G. Jung

VOLUME 9, PART I

BOLLINGEN SERIES XX

FOUR ARCHETYPES

Mother

Rebirth

Spirit

Trickster

C. G. Jung

With a new foreword by
Sonu Shamdasani

Translated by R.F.C. Hull



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FOREWORD TO THE 2010 EDITION

READING JUNG AFTER *THE RED BOOK*

With the publication of *Liber Novus*—Jung’s *Red Book*¹—a new chapter opens in the reading of Jung’s works. For the first time, one is in a position to grasp the constitution of Jung’s work from 1914 onward, and to trace the intimate connections between his self-experimentation and his attempts to determine the typical features of this process through his work with his patients and translate his insights into a language acceptable to a medical and scientific public. Thus, reading *Liber Novus* brings with it the task of rereading Jung’s *Collected Works*—much of which appears in a wholly new light.

In the winter of 1913, Jung embarked on a process of self-experimentation. He deliberately gave free rein to his fantasy thinking and carefully noted what ensued. He later called this process “active imagination.” He wrote down these fantasies in the *Black Books*. These are not personal diaries, but rather the records of a self-experimentation. The dialogues that form these active imaginations can be regarded as a type of thinking in a dramatic form.

When World War I broke out, Jung considered that a number of his fantasies were precognitions of this event. This led him to compose the first draft of *Liber Novus*, which consisted of a transcription of the main fantasies from the *Black Books*, together with a layer of interpretive commentaries and lyrical elaboration. Here Jung attempted to derive general psychological principles from the fantasies, as well as to understand to what extent the events portrayed in the fantasies presented, in a symbolic form, developments that were to occur in the world.

Jung recopied the manuscript in an ornate Gothic script into a large red leather folio volume, which he illustrated with his own paintings. The overall theme of the book is how Jung regains his soul and overcomes the contemporary malaise of spiritual alienation. This is ultimately achieved by

enabling the rebirth of a new image of God in his soul and developing a new worldview in the form of a psychological and theological cosmology.

Between 1916 and 1928, Jung published a number of works in which he attempted to translate some of the themes of *Liber Novus* into contemporary psychological language. In 1928, the sinologist Richard Wilhelm sent him a copy of the Taoist alchemical treatise *The Secret of the Golden Flower*, inviting him to write a commentary. Struck by the parallelism between the imagery of the text and some of his own mandalas, Jung finally decided to set aside his work on *Liber Novus* and not publish it. Instead he devoted himself to the cross-cultural study of the individuation process, focusing on medieval alchemy in particular, using parallels with his own material as a means to present the process in an indirect and allegorical form. Until now, this has presented formidable challenges for readers outside of Jung's inner circle.

FOUR ARCHETYPES

In his major 1912 work, *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido*,² Jung argued that beneath the surface of modern consciousness, the mythic forms of antiquity continued to have a subterranean existence, surfacing in dreams, fantasies, and delusions. He called them primordial images, and interpreted them as symbols of psychic energy, depicting its typical movements. In 1919, he used the term "archetype" to describe these forms. In his self-experimentation, Jung was studying the myth-making of the human mind, which led him to a new appreciation of the significance of myths and fairy tales. In Jung's view, at the deepest levels of subjectivity we come across what is quintessentially human and common to all mankind. A maiden in a fantasy explained to him that "the fairy tale is the great mother of the novel, and has even more universal validity than the most-avidly read novel of your time. And you know that what has been on everyone's lips for millennia, though repeated endlessly, still comes nearest the ultimate human truth."³ He had been conventionally seeking the "uncommon truths," and yet she explained to him that "Only what is human and what you call banal and hackneyed contain the wisdom that you seek."⁴ Jung came to see the task of individuation as being one of coming to terms

with the accumulated past of human inheritance, in other words, with the archetypes of the collective unconscious. From the 1930s onward, he embarked on a series of studies of the phenomenology of particular archetypal forms and their psychological significance, at times implicitly referring to his own self-experimentation in a disguised form. An example occurs in the essay “The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales,” in this volume.⁵ Jung noted: “In a modern series of visions in which the figure of the wise old man occurred several times, he was on one occasion of normal size and appeared at the very bottom of a crater surrounded by high rocky walls; on another occasion he was a tiny figure on the top of a mountain, inside a low, stony enclosure.”⁶ Jung is referring to the appearance of Elijah in his fantasies,⁷ and to Philemon. Such a figure, he notes, appears in situations where guidance is needed and one is without resources, and spontaneously arises “in the psychic space outside consciousness that comes about spontaneously when conscious thought is not—or is no longer—possible.”⁸ Writing in *Scrutinies*, the third section of *Liber Novus*, Jung came to realize that he himself was not the “author” of the work, but that “[p]robably the greater part of what I have written in the earlier part of this book was given to me by ΦΙΛΗΜΩΝ [Philemon].”⁹ Philemon, a figure from classical myth and literature, in turn becomes Jung’s guide, his guru, and then the “wise old man” and “archetype of the spirit”—this sequence links Jung’s own fantasies, his reflections upon them, and how this led him to formulate new conceptions of general psychological functioning. Similar connections run through the other papers in this volume.

¹ C. G. Jung, *The Red Book*, edited and introduced by Sonu Shamdasani and translated by Mark Kyburz, John Peck, and Sonu Shamdasani, Philemon Series (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009).

² *Collected Works B*.

³ *The Red Book*, p. 262.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ The German word “Geist” has no exact equivalent in English and, depending on context, can be rendered by “spirit” or “mind.”

⁶ See § 398, pp. 93–95.

⁷ *The Red Book*, pp. 245, 251.

⁸ See § 399, p. 95, and § 402, pp. 96–97.

⁹ *The Red Book*, p. 336.

FOUR ARCHETYPES

INTRODUCTION¹

1

The hypothesis of a collective unconscious belongs to the class of ideas that people at first find strange but soon come to possess and use as familiar conceptions. This has been the case with the concept of the unconscious in general. After the philosophical idea of the unconscious, in the form presented chiefly by Carus and von Hartmann, had gone down under the overwhelming wave of materialism and empiricism, leaving hardly a ripple behind it, it gradually reappeared in the scientific domain of medical psychology.

2

At first the concept of the unconscious was limited to denoting the state of repressed or forgotten contents. Even with Freud, who makes the unconscious—at least metaphorically—take the stage as the acting subject, it is really nothing but the gathering place of forgotten and repressed contents, and has a functional significance thanks only to these. For Freud, accordingly, the unconscious is of an exclusively personal nature,² although he was aware of its archaic and mythological thought-forms.

3

A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the *personal unconscious*. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*. I have chosen the term “collective” because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us.

4

Psychic existence can be recognized only by the presence of contents that are *capable of consciousness*. We can therefore speak of an unconscious only in so far as we are able to demonstrate its contents. The contents of the personal unconscious are chiefly the *feeling-toned complexes*, as they are called; they constitute the personal and private side of psychic life. The contents of the collective unconscious, on the other hand, are known as *archetypes*.

5

The term “archetype” occurs as early as Philo Judaeus,³ with reference to the *Imago Dei* (God-image) in man. It can also be found in Irenaeus, who says: “The creator of the world did not fashion these things directly from himself but copied them from archetypes outside himself.”⁴ In the *Corpus Hermeticum*,⁵ God is called τὸ ἀρχέτυπον φῶς (archetypal light). The term occurs several times in Dionysius the Areopagite, as for instance in *De caelesti hierarchia*, II, 4: “immaterial Archetypes,”⁶ and in *De divinis nominibus*, I, 6: “Archetypal stone.”⁷ The term “représentations collectives,” used by Lévy-Bruhl to denote the symbolic figures in the primitive view of the world, could easily be applied to unconscious contents as well, since it means practically the same thing. Primitive tribal lore is concerned with archetypes that have been modified in a special way. They are no longer contents of the unconscious, but have already been changed into conscious formulae taught according to tradition, generally in the form of esoteric teaching. This last is a typical means of expression for the transmission of collective contents originally derived from the unconscious.

6

Another well-known expression of the archetypes is myth and fairytale. But here too we are dealing with forms that have received a specific stamp and have been handed down through long periods of time. The term “archetype” thus applies only indirectly to the “représentations collectives,” since it designates only those psychic contents which have not yet been submitted to conscious elaboration and are therefore an immediate datum of psychic experience. In this sense there is a considerable difference between the archetype and the historical formula that has evolved. Especially on the higher levels of esoteric teaching the archetypes appear in a form that reveals quite unmistakably the critical and evaluating influence of

conscious elaboration. Their immediate manifestation, as we encounter it in dreams and visions, is much more individual, less understandable, and more naïve than in myths, for example. The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.⁸

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As the archetypes, like all numinous contents, are relatively autonomous, they cannot be integrated simply by rational means, but require a dialectical procedure, a real coming to terms with them, often conducted by the patient in dialogue form, so that, without knowing it, he puts into effect the alchemical definition of the *meditatio*: “an inner colloquy with one’s good angel.” Usually the process runs a dramatic course, with many ups and downs. It expresses itself in, or is accompanied by, dream symbols that are related to the “représentations collectives,” which in the form of mythological motifs have portrayed psychic processes of transformation since the earliest times.

¹ [From “Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious,” first published in the *Eranos-Jahrbuch 1934*, and later revised and published in *Von den Wurzeln des Bewusstseins* (Zurich, 1954), from which version the present translation is made. The translation of the original version, by Stanley Dell, in *The Integration of the Personality* (New York, 1939; London, 1940), has been freely consulted.—EDITORS.]

² In his later works Freud differentiated the basic view mentioned here. He called the instinctual psyche the “id,” and his “super-ego” denotes the collective consciousness, of which the individual is partly conscious and partly unconscious (because it is repressed).

³ *De opificio mundi*, I, 69. Cf. Colson/Whitaker trans., I, p. 55.

⁴ *Adversus haereses* II, 7, 5: “Mundi fabricator non a semetipso fecit haec, sed de alienis archetypis transtulit.” (Cf. Roberts/Rambaut trans., I, p. 139.)

⁵ Scott, *Hermetica*, I, p. 140.

⁶ In Migne, *P.G.*, vol. 3, col. 144.

⁷ *Ibid.*, col. 595. Cf. *The Divine Names* (trans. by Rolt), pp. 62, 72.

⁸ One must, for the sake of accuracy, distinguish between “archetype” and “archetypal ideas.” The archetype as such is a hypothetical and irrepresentable model, something like the “pattern of behaviour” in biology. Cf. “On the Nature of the Psyche,” sec. 7.

I

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE MOTHER ARCHETYPE

[First published as a lecture, “Die psychologischen Aspekte des Mutterarchetypus,” in *Eranos-Jahrbuch 1938*. Later revised and published in *Von den Wurzeln des Bewusstseins* (Zurich, 1954). The present translation is of the latter, but it is also based partially on a translation of the 1938 version by Cary F. Baynes and Ximena de Angulo, privately issued in *Spring* (New York), 1943.—EDITORS.)

1. ON THE CONCEPT OF THE ARCHETYPE

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The concept of the Great Mother belongs to the field of comparative religion and embraces widely varying types of mother-goddess. The concept itself is of no immediate concern to psychology, because the image of a Great Mother in this form is rarely encountered in practice, and then only under very special conditions. The symbol is obviously a derivative of the *mother archetype*. If we venture to investigate the background of the Great Mother image from the standpoint of psychology, then the mother archetype, as the more inclusive of the two, must form the basis of our discussion. Though lengthy discussion of the *concept* of an archetype is hardly necessary at this stage, some preliminary remarks of a general nature may not be out of place.

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In former times, despite some dissenting opinion and the influence of Aristotle, it was not too difficult to understand Plato's conception of the Idea as supraordinate and pre-existent to all phenomena. "Archetype," far from being a modern term, was already in use before the time of St. Augustine, and was synonymous with "Idea" in the Platonic usage. When the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which probably dates from the third century, describes God as τὸ ἀρχέτυπον φῶς, the 'archetypal light,' it expresses the idea that he is the prototype of all light; that is to say, pre-existent and supraordinate to the phenomenon "light." Were I a philosopher, I should continue in this Platonic strain and say: Somewhere, in "a place beyond the skies," there is a prototype or primordial image of the mother that is pre-existent and supraordinate to all phenomena in which the "maternal," in the broadest sense of the term, is manifest. But I am an empiricist, not a philosopher; I cannot let myself presuppose that my peculiar temperament, my own attitude to intellectual problems, is universally valid. Apparently this is an assumption in which only the philosopher may indulge, who always takes it for granted that his own disposition and attitude are universal, and will not recognize the fact, if he can avoid it, that his "personal equation" conditions his philosophy. As an empiricist, I must

point out that there is a temperament which regards ideas as real entities and not merely as *nomina*. It so happens—by the merest accident, one might say—that for the past two hundred years we have been living in an age in which it has become unpopular or even unintelligible to suppose that ideas could be anything but *nomina*. Anyone who continues to think as Plato did must pay for his anachronism by seeing the “supracelestial,” i.e., metaphysical, essence of the Idea relegated to the unverifiable realm of faith and superstition, or charitably left to the poet. Once again, in the age-old controversy over universals, the nominalistic standpoint has triumphed over the realistic, and the Idea has evaporated into a mere *flatus vocis*. This change was accompanied—and, indeed, to a considerable degree caused—by the marked rise of empiricism, the advantages of which were only too obvious to the intellect. Since that time the Idea is no longer something *a priori*, but is secondary and derived. Naturally, the new nominalism promptly claimed universal validity for itself in spite of the fact that it, too, is based on a definite and limited thesis coloured by temperament. This thesis runs as follows: we accept as valid anything that comes from outside and can be verified. The ideal instance is verification by experiment. The antithesis is: we accept as valid anything that comes from inside and cannot be verified. The hopelessness of this position is obvious. Greek natural philosophy with its interest in matter, together with Aristotelian reasoning, has achieved a belated but overwhelming victory over Plato.

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Yet every victory contains the germ of future defeat. In our own day signs foreshadowing a change of attitude are rapidly increasing. Significantly enough, it is Kant’s doctrine of categories, more than anything else, that destroys in embryo every attempt to revive metaphysics in the old sense of the word, but at the same time paves the way for a rebirth of the Platonic spirit. If it be true that there can be no metaphysics transcending human reason, it is no less true that there can be no empirical knowledge that is not already caught and limited by the *a priori* structure of cognition. During the century and a half that have elapsed since the appearance of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the conviction has gradually gained ground that thinking, understanding, and reasoning cannot be regarded as independent processes subject only to the eternal laws of logic, but that they are *psychic functions* co-ordinated with the personality and subordinate to it. We no longer ask, “Has this or that been seen, heard, handled, weighed, counted,

thought, and found to be logical?” We ask instead, “*Who* saw, heard, or thought?” Beginning with “the personal equation” in the observation and measurement of minimal processes, this critical attitude has gone on to the creation of an empirical psychology such as no time before ours has known. Today we are convinced that in all fields of knowledge psychological premises exist which exert a decisive influence upon the choice of material, the method of investigation, the nature of the conclusions, and the formulation of hypotheses and theories. We have even come to believe that Kant’s personality was a decisive conditioning factor of his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Not only our philosophers, but our own predilections in philosophy, and even what we are fond of calling our “best” truths are affected, if not dangerously undermined, by this recognition of a personal premise. All creative freedom, we cry out, is taken away from us! What? Can it be possible that a man only thinks or says or does what he himself *is*?

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Provided that we do not again exaggerate and so fall a victim to unrestrained “psychologizing,” it seems to me that the critical standpoint here defined is inescapable. It constitutes the essence, origin, and method of modern psychology. There *is* an *a priori* factor in all human activities, namely the inborn, preconscious and unconscious individual structure of the psyche. The preconscious psyche—for example, that of a new-born infant—is not an empty vessel into which, under favourable conditions, practically anything can be poured. On the contrary, it is a tremendously complicated, sharply defined individual entity which appears indeterminate to us only because we cannot see it directly. But the moment the first visible manifestations of psychic life begin to appear, one would have to be blind not to recognize their individual character, that is, the unique personality behind them. It is hardly possible to suppose that all these details come into being only at the moment in which they appear. When it is a case of morbid predispositions already present in the parents, we infer hereditary transmission through the germ-plasm; it would not occur to us to regard epilepsy in the child of an epileptic mother as an unaccountable mutation. Again, we explain by heredity the gifts and talents which can be traced back through whole generations. We explain in the same way the reappearance of complicated instinctive actions in animals that have never set eyes on their parents and therefore could not possibly have been “taught” by them.

Nowadays we have to start with the hypothesis that, so far as predisposition is concerned, there is no essential difference between man and all other creatures. Like every animal, he possesses a preformed psyche which breeds true to his species and which, on closer examination, reveals distinct features traceable to family antecedents. We have not the slightest reason to suppose that there are certain human activities or functions that could be exempted from this rule. We are unable to form any idea of what those dispositions or aptitudes are which make instinctive actions in animals possible. And it is just as impossible for us to know the nature of the preconscious psychic disposition that enables a child to react in a human manner. We can only suppose that his behaviour results from patterns of functioning, which I have described as *images*. The term “image” is intended to express not only the form of the activity taking place, but the typical situation in which the activity is released.¹ These images are “primordial” images in so far as they are peculiar to whole species, and if they ever “originated” their origin must have coincided at least with the beginning of the species. They are the “human quality” of the human being, the specifically human form his activities take. This specific form is hereditary and is already present in the germ-plasm. The idea that it is not inherited but comes into being in every child anew would be just as preposterous as the primitive belief that the sun which rises in the morning is a different sun from that which set the evening before.

Since everything psychic is preformed, this must also be true of the individual functions, especially those which derive directly from the unconscious predisposition. The most important of these is creative fantasy. In the products of fantasy the primordial images are made visible, and it is here that the concept of the archetype finds its specific application. I do not claim to have been the first to point out this fact. The honour belongs to Plato. The first investigator in the field of ethnology to draw attention to the widespread occurrence of certain “elementary ideas” was Adolf Bastian. Two later investigators, Hubert and Mauss,² followers of Dürkheim, speak of “categories” of the imagination. And it was no less an authority than Hermann Usener³ who first recognized unconscious preformation under the guise of “unconscious thinking.” If I have any share in these discoveries, it

consists in my having shown that archetypes are not disseminated only by tradition, language, and migration, but that they can rearise spontaneously, at any time, at any place, and without any outside influence.

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The far-reaching implications of this statement must not be overlooked. For it means that there are present in every psyche forms which are unconscious but nonetheless active—living dispositions, ideas in the Platonic sense, that preform and continually influence our thoughts and feelings and actions.

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Again and again I encounter the mistaken notion that an archetype is determined in regard to its content, in other words that it is a kind of unconscious idea (if such an expression be admissible). It is necessary to point out once more that archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form and then only to a very limited degree. A primordial image is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and is therefore filled out with the material of conscious experience. Its form, however, as I have explained elsewhere, might perhaps be compared to the axial system of a crystal, which, as it were, preforms the crystalline structure in the mother liquid, although it has no material existence of its own. This first appears according to the specific way in which the ions and molecules aggregate. The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal, nothing but a *facultas praeformandi*, a possibility of representation which is given *a priori*. The representations themselves are not inherited, only the forms, and in that respect they correspond in every way to the instincts, which are also determined in form only. The existence of the instincts can no more be proved than the existence of the archetypes, so long as they do not manifest themselves concretely. With regard to the definiteness of the form, our comparison with the crystal is illuminating inasmuch as the axial system determines only the stereometric structure but not the concrete form of the individual crystal. This may be either large or small, and it may vary endlessly by reason of the different size of its planes or by the growing together of two crystals. The only thing that remains constant is the axial system, or rather, the invariable geometric proportions underlying it. The same is true of the archetype. In principle, it can be named and has an invariable nucleus of meaning—but always only