Contents

Preface ix
Acknowledgements xi
Abbreviations xii

1 The past and future of Jung 1

PART I
Evolution, archetype and behavior 9

2 Jung on the archetypes 11
3 Language: a model archetype 16
4 Hundred percent primate 29
5 The archetypes and the numinous art of the caves 45

PART II
Jung’s psyche and its neural substrate 65

6 The role of the brain in psychic process 67
7 Individuation: Jung’s phenomenology of psychic process 83
8 Reflective process: the ego in neural context 94
9 Dreams: evidence of dialogic process 107
10 Jung’s complex theory 116
11 Complexes and the neural substrate 125

12  Jung’s psychotherapy and neuroscience  138
13  Jung on archetypes and altered states  145
14  Altered states and transformation  157

PART III  
History of consciousness  175

15  Jung on the history of consciousness  177
16  History of consciousness: primate rituals  186
17  Ritual and consciousness in the Paleolithic  196
18  Ritual and consciousness in the Mesolithic  211
19  Ritual and consciousness in the Neolithic  218
20  Ritual and consciousness in the historical era  242
21  Concluding reflections  258

Notes  262
References  273
Index  282
A vague notion of what would later be called “archetype” began to structure Jung’s thinking as early as 1909, as he searched for a central “nuclear complex” in the psyche. On the hunch that all humans have a fundamentally similar manner of organizing and interpreting the world, it seemed that mythology would hold the key. For it is ancient, held sacred by entire peoples, and explores the fundamental questions: who we are, where we come from, what our purpose is and the absurdity of death.¹

Although one reviewer found more than thirty different definitions of archetype in a single volume (CW9i) of Jung’s Collected Works (R. F. Hobson 1980), there is at least one stable fact. The archetype is always some sort of structuring principle that lies outside of everyday consciousness and, when it emerges suddenly, exceeds all subjective expectations. Running into such an archaic reality, Jung said in 1911, is like encountering a 2000-year-old Corinthian column on a modern street corner—the last thing we expect, yet disturbingly familiar.

Just a moment ago we were given over to the noisy ephemeral life of the present, when something very far away and strange appears to us . . . on this very spot . . . two thousand years ago . . . similar passions moved mankind, and a man was likewise convinced of the uniqueness of his experience.

(CWB: ¶1)²

Sometimes we seem to find “archetypes” outside ourselves as fascinating objects and people, but even so, something inside makes the experience possible. Archetypes guide our perceptions and behavior, often without our awareness. Encountering puberty is a perfect example. Every one of us “remembers” the same package of experiences our ancestors have undergone. When it has not yet happened, we are incapable of imagining it. But once it hits us, we can barely remember how things used to be. Falling deeply in love is another. Every time eros invades our life, the experience seems unique and unrepeatable—the first time it has occurred in the history of the world. And yet, it is as old as time.
Lamarckian flirtations

Jung is often at pains to point out that he did not invent the idea of archetypes, that it has a history, including Plato, Augustine, Malebranche, Bacon, Herbert of Cherburg, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, Lévy-Bruhl, Hubert and Mauss, and Adolf Bastian. In some places, he specifies that it is precisely the imagination that is structured by the archetypes of the unconscious—just as space, time, and the categories structure our Kantian consciousness.

At a time when Darwinian conceptions were still rather fluid and in dispute, Jung borrowed language and imagery that today leaves him vulnerable to the suspicion that he believed an image of great power could somehow cause a precise mutation in one’s sperm or ova and thereby be inherited by one’s children. Today we are much more conscious of how absurd that notion is than were social scientists between 1880 and 1920, before Gregor Mendel’s theory of genetics had been integrated into the evolutionary synthesis.

Thus, in 1920, Jung was using several problematic terms to characterize what later came to be called the archetype, calling it a “primordial image . . . a mnemonic deposit, an imprint or engram (Semon)” (CW6: ¶748). Seven years later, he said the unconscious itself was the “totality of all archetypes,” and “the deposit of all human experience right back to its remotest beginnings” (CW8: ¶339). In 1928, he said our ancestors had “traced these paths,” and that every time an experience of that impressive type “breaks through” it opens up “an ancient riverbed” (CW8: ¶100). “Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution” (1936, CW9i: ¶99). These passages leave no doubt that Jung is sincerely trying to align his incipient concept of archetype with the process of evolution. But the images imply a Lamarckian rather than a Darwinian process.

Confusingly, however, Jung also sought to disavow the language of these published statements. He insisted that the term “primordial image” (borrowed from Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss 1909) and the term “collective representation” (borrowed from Lucien Lévy-Bruhl 1922) did not have anything to do with inheriting images or ideas, themselves—but rather “of having the possibility [to generate and entertain] such ideas” (1917/43, CW7: ¶101, 104). What was inherited was, he said in an inspired fit of ambiguity, “an organ of psychic energy” (1920, CW6: ¶754). Overlooking the inconsistency in his own language, he insisted to the end of his life that his “critics have incorrectly assumed that by archetype I mean ‘inherited ideas,’ and on this ground have dismissed the concept of the archetype as a mere superstition” (CW18: ¶524).

Archetype and instinct: Darwinian glimmers

Our concern, therefore, is to determine what an archetype would have to be if it were more than a “mere superstition,” indeed a concept harmonious enough with modern biology to aspire to the status of a genuine “human science.” It would have to be inherited with our DNA and give rise to typical brain structures whose...
employment correlates with the behaviors ascribed to the archetype. Furthermore, it would have to have identifiable precursors in evolutionary history, as seen in primates, mammals, and even “lower” animals. Fortunately a great many of Jung’s assertions about human mental inheritance seem very much in tune with natural selection.

As early as 1918, he said, “We receive along with our body a highly differentiated brain which brings with it its entire history . . . that age-old natural history which has been transmitted in living form since the remotest times” (CW10: ¶12). More vividly put thirty years later:

It is more probable that the young weaver-bird builds his characteristic nest because he is a weaver-bird and not a rabbit. Similarly, it is more probable that man is born with a specific human mode of behavior and not with that of a hippopotamus or with none at all.

(CW8: ¶435)

We are born with a structured brain and mind, not a “blank slate” (tabula rasa); rather the “instincts . . . engender peculiar thoughts and emotions” that express “ever recurring patterns of psychic functioning” (1958, CW18: ¶1271).

In 1912, he referred to “vestiges of obsolete functions” that still occur in our minds today” (CWB: ¶36). By 1927, however, he had removed the Lamarckian overtones:

This whole psychic organism . . . preserves elements that connect it with the invertebrates and ultimately with the protozoa. Theoretically, it should be possible to “peel” the collective unconscious, layer by layer, until we come to the psychology of the worm, and even of the amoeba.

(CW8: ¶322)

If it had been known at the time, Jung would surely have been delighted to cite the brain-like functions in the *E. coli* bacterium in support of his intuition:

The mechanisms whereby they [*E. coli*] sense, remember, and move about their environment provide an excellent model for the basic features of nervous systems, albeit in an organism contained within a single cell and lacking a brain in a conventional sense.

(Allman 1999: 3)

It is still true today that *instinct* remains a fairly loose notion. Jung called it “a biological phenomenon of immense complexity . . . a borderline concept of quite indefinite standing” (1932, CW11: ¶493). Nevertheless it remains useful to speak of “instincts” or “drives” when trying to describe the archetypes. In 1919, Jung wrote: “Instincts are typical modes of action” (CW8: ¶273), while “archetypes are typical modes of apprehension” (CW8: ¶280); instinct and archetype “determine
one another" (CW8: ¶271). The instinct drives the behavior pattern, while the archetype apprehends the environmental and/or physiological conditions under which the instinctual behavior is an appropriate response. No instinctual behavior will be initiated unless its archetype “apprehends” the necessary conditions.

According to his favorite example, every human archetype functions like those primitive and unvarying mechanisms that drive the yucca moth and leaf-cutter ant to perform highly complicated activities to fertilize their eggs and provide for their survival. Because the adult sexual forms of these insects are so short lived, they never have a chance to observe and learn their mating behavior before they have to carry it out. Archetypes shape innate tendencies that predate all learning. An innate releasing mechanism is identical with the archetype and functions in place of learning. While an instinct “drives” them to reproduce, a closely related archetype enables them to “recognize” the appropriate season and the specific plants necessary for depositing eggs and feeding future larvae. Insects carry out such behavior patterns with invariable precision, and with nothing like what we would call “consciousness.”

Another aspect of the instinct/archetype relation Jung proposed in 1919 is based in this higher complexity, where the archetype “might suitably be described as the instinct’s perception of itself or as the self-portrait of the instinct” (CW8: ¶277). The reproductive archetype of the yucca moth apprehends the flowering yucca plants as “affording” it the opportunity and necessity of reproducing. It sees, smells, and feels the blossoming plant as an archetypal image. This is the trigger that fires the instinctual pattern. An archetypal image gives the instinct direction.

An insect’s behavior pattern is automatic and pre-established. But as we proceed “upward” from phylum to phylum, evolution builds increasing complexity, enabling wider ranges of freedom. In the human imagination, instinctual reactions appear in symbolic fashion, “as ideas and images, like everything that becomes a content of consciousness” (CW8: ¶435).

Thus it is that not only our “behavior patterns,” but also our dreams, fantasies, illusions, hallucinations, art work, religion—all are structured by the archetypes. Although no part of our experience is free of such structuring, and so subtly that we rarely notice it, there are also times when we undergo disturbing changes in our awareness due to a new archetype interrupting our everyday waking lives. A specific emotional charge may enthuse us, disorient us, or put us “under a spell.” We may find ourselves hyper-alert, dreamy, overwrought, or in some other “altered” state of consciousness.

Summary

Although Jung was not a systematic thinker and juggled a variety of different images and ideas to sketch in broad strokes what he intuited as an “archetype,” he nevertheless provided a clearly discernible core of notions. An archetype is a module of inheritance recognizable by typical patterns and images. It is the
instinct’s recognition of appropriate conditions and goals. Subjectively, it manifests as a powerful emotional charge that invests what we see with overwhelming significance. Although it manifests in lower phyla as automatic and inflexible patterns, greater brain complexity gives animals increasingly greater freedom in adapting those patterns to individual circumstances.