



# MAGNUM OPUS: NIGREDO

Module 1: Archetypes Explored

## QUOTE

...besides [the intellect] there is a thinking in primordial images, in symbols which are older than the historical man, which are inborn in him from the earliest times, and, eternally living, outlasting all generations, still make up the groundwork of the human psyche. (CW 8: 794).

## Archetypes Explored

Compiled by The Centre for Applied Jungian Studies



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## **Transcript of Podcast**

Hello, welcome to Nigredo, Archetypes Explored. This is your first lecture on archetypes. We hope you enjoy the lecture and please don't hesitate to post any comments or queries on the Facebook group page.

### **Introduction**

Let me read this to you, from Jung; he puts it quite nicely here, I think. This is from the Collected Works Volume 9 Part 1. And this is Jung talking about the collective unconscious, he says:

“My thesis, then, is as follows: In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche (even if we tack on the personal unconscious as an appendix), there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents.”

I'm going to try and unpack that for you a little bit. The first point is that the collective unconscious is populated by archetypes, very much in the same sense that he would speak about the personal unconscious being populated by complexes. Complexes in your personal unconscious are the unique subjective form that the universal archetype takes in your psychology, but at its kernel –



at its root – it has a universal form. And the collective unconscious then is populated by archetypes.

### **Archetypes and instincts**

The idea – just taking a step back, before Jung then, the idea – of a predetermined structure in the psyche was already present prior to Jung’s theory of the collective unconscious and archetypes, in the theory of instincts. In the theory of instincts that Freud and Adler, and psychoanalysis generally, held the idea of an instinct is an innate, biologically determined drive to action. That is the idea that our psychologies already have certain a priori given impulses to action. And I think that this word “drive” that Freud used in psychoanalysis is interesting; so the moment you go from - when you think about it, it’s a linguistic thing but when you think about it as - an instinct, it very much has a kind of a biological overtone about it; it has a sense of being biological, but then psychoanalysis speaks about the drive. Now the drive and the instinct are used interchangeably, but I think it’s interesting when they speak about a drive, because the moment you start speaking about a drive like, Eros, or the aggressive drive, or the death instinct, the concept of drives, I think, starts to evoke the psychological nature and character of the instinct.

At a basic level, Jung has it that an instinct and an archetype exist on a continuum. Instinct would kind of be a biological – and maybe even a neurological - structure, and along that same continuum the form that the instinct takes psychologically, is the archetype. If you want to put it in a very simple, unambitious way, what he’s saying is simply that instincts assume a



specific form in our psychology that manifests psychologically in a specific way. Psyche has a distinct character from biology and physiology, and the experience of instinct psychologically is what he means by “archetype”; the archetypal form is the experience of the instinct on the psychological level.

Instinct in that sense would also be universal, so although Freud and psychoanalysts don’t talk about a collective unconscious, the idea, of course, of instinct is that it’s a universal phenomenon. So the instinct would be archetypal in character and would be universal, and that, I think, would be the same for – although they don’t use those terms, it would be the same in – any psychological theory that subscribed to the theory of instinct.

What Jung’s adding on is the idea that the archetype is the form that the instinct takes in our psychology. At a psychological level that is the way that we experience that instinctive, biological drive and neurological structure, if you will.

Think of the archetypal couple of mother and child.

The instinct would be to nurture the child, or to seek nurture from the mother. The mother and the child would be an archetypal form on either end of the nurturing instinct. The idea is that when the nurturing instinct is evoked it evokes a specific psychic form. So let’s say the child seeking nurturing, or seeking comfort necessarily looks to the mother, and has an image of the mother to which it turns to find that nurturing experience.

That’s where Jung starts, but I think the theory of archetypes gets a lot more ambitious than that, because the idea is that it’s not only related to biological



or instinctive drives. The essence of the theory is that the psyche has a predetermined structure; that we don't come into the world as a blank slate, and we don't apprehend reality – to use a Kantian phrase – as it is in itself. We apprehend reality – we perceive and we reason our experience through predetermined, a priori psychological structures which Jung terms, “archetypes”.

### Categories of archetypes

When we talk about archetypes, it's a broad category because it includes— events; archetypal events, and when we talk about events, so I think that birth would be maybe a good example; birth, death, sexual union

Stone Age man was already experiencing; sexual union, birth, death, and so on. And then characters like the mother, the father, the child, the leader, the enemy. The idea is that these are universal, human truths that are experienced at all times by all cultures across the history of mankind.

And then obviously images and symbols – the most famous one from Jung of course, the “mandala”; Jung talks about the mandala, but, images – once again, the sea, sunset, a flower –; there's no shortage of images that you can think of as being archetypal. And then, very importantly, are archetypal narratives and stories. That was Jung's, of course, that was his big - that's the way he really came upon this - theory, I think, was through the reading of comparative mythology and fable, and that he recognised that there were universal patterns across different cultural narratives, and different historical periods, and different geographical periods. And that is not a - sort of a -



controversial theory; I mean any anthropologist; anyone who studied comparative religion, or mythology, or any sort of comparative cultural narratives, recognises the universality of the motifs that appear in these different cultural narratives.

“The Hero’s Journey” or, “The King” or the story of the maiden, or the story of creation, or whatever it is, and each mythology has its peculiar and unique elements and form, but in that story you can see the universal pattern that connects that with all other creation myths, and all other myths of the hero’s journey, of slaying the dragon, of good versus evil and the various kinds of mythological motifs that we encounter.

### **Archetypes and genetics**

There’re two other things I want to say about the collective unconscious before we go on a little bit more on archetypes. The idea of the collective unconscious then is also, I think, relatively uncontroversial. I mean, even if you are a material reductionist. In the same way that our genetic structure predetermines our physiology - and that is an inherited form - the idea is very simply that, that structure also predetermines our psychology.

And of course neuroscience today is precisely that, that is not a controversial theory at all anymore. Neuroscience fully recognises that, and the reality of gene therapy where at some point they’re going to start altering your genetic structure to avoid inheriting certain inherited, let’s say, anti-social traits, is on the cards. The fact that your psychology is also subject to genetic predetermination is, I think, a relatively uncontroversial and recognised fact in



contemporary neuroscience. So the collective unconscious really, in a sense, is no more controversial than that. It's the idea that this predetermination of our psychology is something that has been evolving for millions and millions of years, certainly as long as man has been on the planet and, one might say, even before that; since the beginning of the cosmos if you will, there's been an evolutionary process that is experienced in us; in our psychologies.

### **The Two-Million-Year-Old Man**

We didn't arrive, on the scene at the time of our birth and invent the art of living; although a lot of us would like to have it that, that's what happened. The truth is that we inherited a way of being in the world which was, millions – it depends on how far back you want to take it, but Jung liked to talk about the, "two-million-year old man".

And there's a popular movement amongst Jungians, which has to do with the sacredness of nature. In a way I think it's almost a return to paganism – but it's almost pre-paganism because it's the idea that when you are taken into nature; when we do these - bush walks that they take you back to a pre-modern time. There's was a well know Jungian, the late Dr. Ian Player – Gary Player's brother – who has done a lot of work in South Africa in terms of developing this idea of going out into the bush. He would take a small group of maybe ten or twelve people and they take them on for a four or five-day walk, literally on foot in the bush; you carry everything on your back.

That's an idea that one sees quite widely dispersed in the Jungian world, particularly among the American Jungians. The idea behind it is that by being in





nature; by returning to nature, as let's say, nomadic man did tens or hundreds of thousands of years ago; walking as a small, nomadic group in nature, that it evokes a reconnection with that dormant part of our psyches - that lives in the unconscious. And that when one is put into that kind of situation - into that context - there's an ancient memory; a genetic memory that lives in the collective unconscious, that gets awoken. And people have profoundly spiritual experiences on these things. After they do the walk and they'll sit down around the fire at the end of the walk, these hardened businessmen, and these guys will just burst into tears. They have such an overwhelming experience when they encounter nature in this way.

From a Jungian perspective, those memories live in the collective unconscious; they live in us, so our unconscious – our collective unconscious - goes back way, way beyond our personal history and our personal developmental story.

Inasmuch as there's been this evolutionary process that has brought us to this point, you can consider that the universe itself thinks through us; we are the thinking function of the cosmos, if you will. It's not like we got here and invented thinking; thinking "thinks" through us. We are at the sharp edge of the spear, as it were, in terms of, that consciousness lives in us; the thinking function lives in us.

And as we think and we are thinking beings, the universe itself is thinking because, obviously we are the universe; we're part of the universe. We're not somehow separate from it. That is a, very significant fact for Jung; this idea that the phenomenon of being conscious from an evolutionary perspective, is



something quite profound. That something has happened which is miraculous; the fact that consciousness exists. It's significant when you talk about archetypal theory to consider that it's not – yes, we think, but inasmuch as we think, the universe thinks.

### **Language structure as an analogy for archetypal theory**

Then the theory of archetypes, just going back to it briefly. Once again I just want to say a little bit to help you take the theory on board without you feeling that you're being fed a fairy tale. One way of thinking about it, that's quite useful is that when you communicate, you necessarily do so through the medium of language.

Now language itself is given to you; you do not create the language that you speak. You have inherited that language through your culture. Noam Chomsky has it, that language in itself has an innate structure; that language develops along certain pre-existent structured, neurological pathways. Language itself is a kind of an instinct.

The point is that you are not completely free to think what you would like to think. Your freedom is not absolute in that sense, because you necessarily think within the framework of language. And archetypal theory is basically that idea; that all of your experience, all of your perception, all of your cognition, happens within a certain predetermined structure. I think the danger with this is that it can sound a little bit oppressive, but it's as oppressive as you find language oppressive.



William Shakespeare also had the same linguistic tools that we do and he did some pretty remarkable things with them. So it doesn't mean that the possibility, for individual expression; for creativity, doesn't exist. It just means that, that expression and that creativity happen within a prescribed framework. It is not an absolute freedom; it is contained and mediated through our language. And obviously in other things like mathematics or engineering; all of these things happen within a certain predetermined framework. And archetypal theory is very much that idea; the idea is simply that everything you think, every thought you have, every experience you have, every perception you have, is within a given, universal structure.

### **Precursors to archetypal theory**

So briefly – I won't labour this, but briefly then – I'm just looking at some of the antecedent and associated ideas; the originator of this way of thinking, I think, is Plato; Plato's idea, of course, that everything in the world was a copy of a perfect, unformed idea, if you will. So, it goes back to this whole concept of the flower; every flower is an imperfect copy of the perfect idea of a flower; a perfect Platonic form. And he pursued things like, "What is justice? What is goodness? What is beauty? What is truth?" For him the whole process of philosophy was a process of trying to get closer and closer to the essence, which was this kind of platonic form. And although you could never directly apprehend the essence directly, that is what informed this process of moving towards beauty, or truth, or goodness, or justice, or whatever it may be.



Moving on about two thousand, two hundred years or so – maybe three hundred years to Immanuel Kant.

Kant's idea was that all experience happens through a priori categories of reason or perception; that we do not experience the thing in itself, as he put it, but we experience it through the medium, of our minds; of our senses. I just saw something interesting about Darwin; Darwin, in 1859 already used the word. "archetype". Lévy-Bruhl talks about "representations collectifs". Hubert and Mauss, Comparative Religion, talk about "Categories of the Imagination." Lévi-Strauss, the anthropologist, talks about "Structuralism"; that social life is a projection of universal laws. Ernst Mayr in Biology talks about "open programmes." Chomsky talks about this idea that language capacity is an innate capacity.

And, evolutionary psychology, the idea that we have neuro-psychic predispositions to experience.

### **Freedom vs. pre-determination**

Freedom is a limited project. But as I say, I don't think we must think of it in a kind of oppressive – one mustn't be oppressed by it. It's going back to the example I used, of language; so every time you express yourself you are obliged to express yourself using your linguistic tools. But I think that you experience yourself as having a lot of freedom within that structure. The way you express yourself, the things you choose to say, the words you use, differ from the way I would express myself and what I want to say. But both of us are restricted by the language that we are using.



It's important not to think of the theory of archetypes as suggestive of the fact that we don't have free will. The theory of archetypes is not that we don't have free will; the theory of archetypes is the idea that experience has a universal character, just as language does, just as physics does, just as mathematics does, just as our physiology does, just as society does; that being a human being and having the experiences we have is coordinated by these universal, a priori ways of perceiving, and of making sense of what you are experiencing, and of processing what is happening.

### **The archetype of the "I" (the subjective – objective paradox)**

Okay, let us go on. I want to talk then about a specific archetype. Everything up to this point is classical Jungian theory. I want to take the conversation a little bit further, and I want to look at a specific archetype, and consider the theory of archetypes from the perspective of this concept, and then after that, in the application I'm going to try and help you to apply this to your own personal context.

So I'm talking about the archetype of the "I". So what I'm going to share with you now; what I'm going to talk about, I'm borrowing very heavily from the Lacanian philosopher Slavoj Žižek. The archetype of the "I", what Žižek has that is interesting about the archetype of the "I" – and this is not an original theory by him; it's borrowed from Hegel and the existentialists - is the idea that in the archetype of the "I" you have the convergence and paradox of uniting the universal and the particular.



Obviously, we all say “I”; all of us; every human being, says, “I”. Maybe they say it in a different way or speak in a different language but we all use the signified personal pronoun, “I”. And so, in that sense of course there’s nothing personal about the, “I”. The “I” is wholly impersonal. Every human being whose psychology is functioning reasonably normally has the experience of the “I”; has the experience of subjectivity. So, Kant talks about the “I” as the transcendental unity of apperception, which I always think is a nice line from Kant. So it’s the idea that in the “I” all of your experiences are unified; it’s like a point that allows you to make sense of, and help all of, your experiences to converge; to meet at a central point. It holds your personal identity and your experience of reality, if you want, together.

But, when you say “I”, of course, you actually mean “me”. I don’t go “I” meaning some universal “I”; when I say “I”, I’m talking about Stephen Farah. So when I say “I” it has a very deeply personal and subjective quality to it. And I think a lot of Buddhist teaching, a lot of – well certainly a lot of – Eastern Mysticism is about the idea of letting go of the particularities - the idiosyncrasies - of your subjective state. So in other words if I can get over this sort of idiosyncratic, personal, prejudicial “I” that I mean when I say “I”, and I can let go of that, and I can sort of reconnect with the universal, cosmic, impersonal “I” then in a sense I’m liberated from the personal burden of my suffering.

Now that may or may not be true. I’m not going to go into the merits of Eastern Mysticism on this particular lecture but the truth is, for all of us and I guess for ninety-nine point nine percent of people living in the Western world



and ninety-eight point nine percent of people living in the Eastern world the truth is, that your subjectivity - your “I” -, is deeply personal; it’s deeply subjective; it’s full of idiosyncrasies and personal quirks.

And so there’s an interesting paradox that happens there, in that I recognise the fact that I am a man, amongst men. So I’m part of the universal, objective chain of being. And in that sense I’m universal; I’m part of objective reality, but I can never fully apprehend or fully experience that objective reality in my life because I’m always acutely aware of my subjective prejudices; my subjective idiosyncrasies. So although I perceive an objective world out there, and I recognise that in that world I am one object amongst many other objects, and have an objective character – characteristic or essence, if you will – I cannot help but perceive it through my subjective lens.

The way Žižek puts it – he puts it quite nicely -, he says,

“The subject’s place of universality is prescribed and yet remains empty, never filled with its proper content.”

I can see that I fit into a historical, cultural, familial, ancestral, communal context. I mean, particularly for me; I mean I’ll tell you personally, I’ve found that very difficult because – I’ll share something very personal with you but hopefully you won’t judge me too harshly for it – I think I’m very special; I’ve always thought that, since I was a little kid. I mean, maybe some of you had the same experience, I don’t know, but in my case I’m really, dreadfully narcissistic. So I always had this belief that, really, there’s something absolutely special about me. I’m, in some strange sense, elevated above other



men. Of course as my life started to unfold and I realised that I'm as fallible as the worst of men and more fallible than most it became difficult to hold onto this concept of, "But I'm very special; it's very strange that I'm making all these stupid mistakes and, falling into all of these pitfalls." I mean, for somebody with my gifts and my talents, somehow my life did not seem to mirror that feeling that I had.

But in a sense we all suffer with that problem. You see we all have the experience; there's a subjective experience; there's something about you that you experience as unique – as different. You don't feel like anyone else; you feel like you. But simultaneously you cannot but recognise that, in fact, you are one amongst – if not an infinite continuum, certainly you're one amongst - many.

This idea is well known, in existentialism, but it's also well known - I guess, in German idealism if he's using Hegel; is this recognition – that this is an inherent paradox of subjectivity, that you recognise that you are universal to the degree that you exhibit certain universal characteristics. In a manner of speaking, you are a man amongst men. I mean, I say, "In a manner of speaking" because I want to say, "You're like everyone else" but maybe that's taking it too far, but it's very easy to recognise that you're a man amongst men or a woman amongst women, as the case may be.

But simultaneously you have this experience of subjectivity. And the experience of subjectivity is this – and this goes back to Sartre, with this idea that "I'm not what I'm playing at being." So you always have that experience,





that you are somehow inauthentic. There's something about, you are an actor, or a pilot, or a business person, or whatever it is, but at some level there's a sense of pretending to be that. Or if not pretending to be that, you always have the sense of, "But that's not really, fully who I am". So if you go and describe your professional persona in, in -minute detail to someone you won't have the sense that you've exhausted who you are.

But if you go beyond that and you talk about your personal idiosyncrasies, and your habits, and your history, and you go on ad infinitum, you still have the sense that, "Actually, I don't really know if I communicated who I am". You still have the sense that there's something you haven't fully communicated in expressing yourself. So that's this idea that, "I'm not what I'm playing at being". There's always a sense of pretence; there's always a sense of pretending to be.

But yet paradoxically, intellectually you realise that, "Of course, I am".

So someone, for example, may say,

"I'm not a pilot. I happen to be a pilot; that is my professional occupation, but it's not who I am."

But then if someone said to him,

"But are you not a pilot?"

He would reply, "Of course I'm a pilot."

There's always that paradox, "I'm not, and yes, I am."



There's this tension in the "I"; that the "I" has this distinctly subjective, particular, perspective from which it perceives reality, and yet in the reality that it perceives, it recognises that it is part of the chain of being.

So, where do I want to take you with that? I think that there're a few points here. The one is that at some level subjectivity is an incredibly painful thing because you have the distinct sense that you have been given a cross to bear and you, I think, are often tempted to - or do - rage against the heavens about this cross that you have been given to bear. And at some level I think that we all feel profoundly responsible for that cross. So although there's a lot of pre-reflective consciousness that says,

"Well it's not me; it was fated, and I've been terribly unlucky, the cards fell against me, and if only circumstances were different."

But the moment one starts to enter into a reflective space as we do when we're doing this kind of work, or when one enters into philosophy or psychology in a serious engagement, you start to have the suspicion that, "You know what? I think at some level I'm exactly where I'm meant to be and a significant part of the reason I am where I am, is because of who I am." So one has a sense of, responsibility, if you will, for being the person that you are; in a reflective state.

And the point is that, what is it that we aspire to? What is it that we are reaching for? And I think that what we are reaching for, always, is a kind of a perfect state of being like the idea of the perfect subject. But as we set up this idea - of a perfect subject, we simultaneously see ourselves as a poor reflection



of that perfection. So you've got this idea of the perfect subject; the perfect ego; the perfect kind of particular that in a sense doesn't have any particularities; really exhibits perfect universality. And I perceive my particularities and my idiosyncrasies as somehow a distortion of that universal consciousness or that universal subjectivity.

But the point is this, and I quote from Žižek.

“And yet it is just this subjective distortion that is the universal hallmark of subjectivity. There is of course, no fully universal subject. It is a necessary condition of subjectivity that it is distorted; that it is idiosyncratic. That is written in; that is prescribed in the archetype of subjectivity. So subjectivity includes in its compass, the distortion of your idiosyncratic particular nature.”

I think that's an interesting point to recognise, that you are already – I don't know how to put it except to say you are already - as universal as you can ever be, if you get what I'm saying, because the universal subject is naturally idiosyncratic and naturally perceives through the distorted lens of his subjectivity. Were he not to do that, he would not be subjective.

Let me talk a little bit about the implications that I'd like us to consider in this regard, and then I'm going to read something to you from Jung. My goal here is to try and look at the way one can contextualise that subjectivity in relation to that which is universal that lives in you. That's a practical application of archetypal theory is: the recognition that although I experience myself as subjective, and as personal, and as separate from, these universal principles, and laws, and spirits, live in me and through me. And if one can make sense of



them and one can contextualise them in your life then that is a significant step on the journey to individuation.

I think that you are tasked with the evolution of your archetypal idiosyncrasy. What I mean by that is that you don't choose to be who you are. Using the metaphor of Christ, you don't build the cross that you are called on to bear; that is given to you. I think that your task is to pick it up and bear it. So the point is that these universal principles, these archetypal truths converge in your subjective state, and that individuation calls on you to make sense of them, and to move that archetypal story along.

What I'm saying is this. Individuation's an interesting concept, it really is. I think it's a profoundly interesting concept. I'm not sure if I fully believe in it or if anyone does, but as a hypothesis; as a possibility - let's say that Jung speaks about the possibility of something miraculous happening and he calls it individuation - and even if we just allow for the possibility that this concept of individuation is possible; that one can individuate, as he would put it, the process of individuation calls on you to recognise in yourself not only that which is personal but that also which is archetypal. To make sense not only of your personal story but to make sense of the universal story that lives in you.

Individuation is a profoundly personal experience because the point is that, the story; the universal motifs, live in you. And they live in you in a way that they live in no one else. So, the way you personally experience the archetypal presence, of the mother, the lover, the nemesis, your hero's journey, your making meaning of life, coming to terms with what it means to love, etc.



There's something unique and personal in the way it lives in you and also the convergence of those universal principles as they converge in you is going to be unique as well.

Your story is unlike anyone else's story but the elements of your story are all universal. And the elements of your story have been inherited, been passed down to you through the ages. And so, this paradox, if you will; the fact that you are subjective and personal, and, paradoxically, the fact that you are part of an objective continuum of being. Both of those need to be reconciled and made sense of if individuation is to be a real possibility. Individuation calls on you to do it.

### **Karma as an analogue for archetypal context or load**

I'm going to read two passages from MDR where Jung talks about that. Maybe he puts it a bit more eloquently than I do; a bit more poetically, anyway. But going back to my point – so going back to the point that I was saying – that in other words the cross that you have to bear – forgive my Catholic imagery; I'm born a Catholic so the Catholic mythology lives in me, the idea is that the cross that you have to bear – is not of your making; you didn't choose it. It's not like you arrived here on day one and they said, "Okay let's see – how do you want your life path to go? What kind of obstacles? What problems?" You just got given this brief.

Significantly a profound aspect of psychological health is the recognition that fundamentally you are not to blame for your story; you've been put into this context.



It's a very tough question if someone asks is anyone individuated. It's a really difficult question to try and answer, "Well, yes", because I think individuation - at the very least we have to try and recognise that individuation - is a continuum rather than a goal. So maybe what we can say is that some people are more individuated than others, rather than say someone is individuated per se. But certainly some people do seem to pick up the mantle and seem to have a very distinct sense of what their destiny is.

And I don't want to get too esoteric but there're two things that I think about personally, that make sense of it for me. The one is that I have really come to believe in this concept, this Biblical idea that the sins of the fathers are passed down to the children to, seven generations or whatever it is. And so even just in terms of my immediate family I feel a profound sense; profound responsibility, that it's absolutely necessary for me to live the very best life that I can.

Not only for me, but for me, my responsibility extends to my ancestors and also to my progeny. I feel that somehow my life echoes both ways, and what I do has an effect. And obviously one recognises that it has an effect in the material world; in the choices you make. I mean if one chooses to stay here or one chooses to emigrate I mean obviously that has a profound effect on how your family lives. But I think that spiritually, it's very much the same thing and I think that you start off in some sense at the spiritual point that your ancestors have been able to get to and you've got to move that story along.



The idea that's quite nice – I mean this is just a metaphor, but it's a lovely idea from Nietzsche. Nietzsche talks about eternal returns. Now the idea is very simple; it's that Groundhog Day concept. It's the idea that you relive this life for an infinite number of times. Think about what you're doing because you're going to have this experience infinitely – it never stops. It reverberates throughout infinity. Which I suppose are all different ways of just trying to really take bearing the cross very seriously; maybe it's not like that; maybe we die and that's the end of the story.

In any case, even if it's just your personal history, I think that's the brief that we're given and we need to try and make sense of it.

### **Jung in Africa**

Now I was talking about this idea that for Jung, individuation involves the recognition of these archetypal and universal dimensions of being. And there're some passages in MDR. These passages come from Jung's trip to Africa; his first trip to Africa. I think he was round about the age of fifty; it was round about 1925, 1926. And he relates some of his experiences in MDR and some of the experiences in The Collected Works but mainly in MDR. And in the way he relates the experience, he's talking about this idea of – he's trying to bring two things forward; he's talking about – this idea of reconnecting with the historical, ancestral and universal dimension of his being, and also the significance of making that conscious. And so this is how he puts it; he says – so this is Jung writing about travelling West on the train from Mombasa. Jung awoke at dawn and he looked outside and he recalled -,



On a jagged rock above us a slim, brownish black figure stood motionless, leaning on a long spear, looking down at the train. Beside him towered a gigantic Candelabrum Cactus. I had the feeling that I had already experienced this moment and had already known this world which was separated from me only by a distance in time. It was as if I were this moment returning to the land of my youth and as if I knew that dark skinned man who had been waiting for me for five thousand years. I could not guess what string within myself was plucked at the sight of that solitary dark hunter. I only knew that his world had been mine for countless millennia.

Maybe that doesn't warrant unpacking; maybe it speaks for itself, but I think just to make it absolutely explicit, just this idea that he could recognise that figure in himself, obviously. He recognised that, that was part of himself up there, sort of in this ancient figure kind of looking down; someone who'd lived in the world in a very different way from the way he lived in himself. So he recognised that universal, collective part of his humanity and he saw it in, obviously, this figure that he observed from the train.

And then he goes on to write this.

This is one of the most famous passages and most often quoted passages from Jung, I think. So Jung writes,

Grazing heads nodded, the herds moved forward like slow rivers. There was scarcely any sound save the melancholy cry of a bird of prey. This was the stillness of the eternal beginning, the world as it had always been, in a state of





non-being for until then no one had been present to know that it was this world.

I felt then as if I was the first man, the first creature to know that all of this is. The world around me was still in its primeval state and it did not know that it was. And in that moment which I came to know the world, the world sprang into being. Without that moment it never would have been. All nature seeks this goal and finds its fulfilment in man but only the most highly developed and fully conscious man. Every advance, even the smallest, along its path of conscious realisation, adds that much to the world.

I think that this is one of Jung's most profound ideas, that in consciousness the world is born again. That we are co-creators with God in the sense that there's a distinct difference between the world existing in its primeval, non-conscious state and when I become conscious of its existence. That act of becoming conscious of its existence is an act of creation. As much as we are able make of these universal, archetypal truths conscious in our own psyches and our own souls, that has a profound significance – not only in terms of what we're going to do with it, and in terms of moving the story along, but the very fact of becoming fully conscious of the truth that I carry and that I bear, is a profound movement in terms of the individuation project. The recognition of who I am.

Okay that's it for this month. Please read through the application (below) carefully and spend some time on it.

Until next month.

Adieu, Stephen.



## Applications

The application this month brings the idea of archetypes closer to home (no pun intended), by looking at archetypes phylogenetically, culturally and personally.

Jung tells us a seminal dream in MDR in his development of the concept of the Collective Unconscious. He traces the idea back to this dream and we're going to use this dream in an application. This is a dream that he had during his association with Freud, so between 1908 and 1912.

Page 182 of MDR. This was the dream,

I was in a house I did not know, which had two storeys. It was "my house". I found myself in the upper storey, where there was a kind of salon furnished with fine old pieces in Rococo style. On the walls hung a number of precious, old paintings. I wondered that this should be my house and thought, "Not bad". But then it occurred to me that I did not know what the lower floor looked like. Descending the stairs, I reached the ground floor. There everything was much older. I realised that this part of the house must date from about the fifteenth or sixteenth century. The furnishings were medieval, the floors were of red brick. Everywhere it was rather dark. I went from one room to another, thinking, "Now I really must explore the whole house." I came upon a heavy door and opened it. Beyond it, I discovered a stone stairway that led down into a cellar. Descending again, I found myself in a beautifully



vaulted room which looked exceedingly ancient. Examining the walls, I discovered layers of brick among the ordinary stone blocks, and chips of brick in the mortar. As soon as I saw this, I knew that the walls dated from Roman times. My interest by now was intense. I looked more closely at the floor. It was of stone slabs and in one of these I discovered a ring. When I pulled it, the stone slab lifted and again I saw a stairway of narrow stone steps leading down to the depths. These, too, I descended and entered a low cave cut into rock. Thick dust lay on the floor and in the dust were scattered bones and broken pottery, like remains of a primitive culture. I discovered two human skulls, obviously very old, and half disintegrated. Then I awoke.

So that dream, as I say, was a catalyst to Jung's theory of the Collective Unconscious. He perceived the house as an image of his own psychology. And each of these layers; as he descended, he felt that he was entering into ancestral dimensions of his own psychology, where he had come from; the aspects that he had inherited from his ancestral lineage. And you can see as he goes –he goes from the first floor, to the ground floor, to the cellar, to this cave underneath, and as he goes – down he's seeing it as an image of his psychology, and he's going down into the deeper and deeper layers which are kind of deeper and deeper into the collective unconscious.

Jung is quite specific that it was his house, but I suppose that each time he descends – so you might say that the first floor would be his and would be personal, but then when he descends obviously that ancestral line is more



collective and communal. And he's going right down into this idea of the origin as in Stone Age, of, prehistoric man - the ancestors of modern man.

And, tangential to application, but Freud's inability to interpret that dream purely in terms of Jung's personal history - led Jung to start wondering about the possibility of aspects in psychology, and in his psychology, that were not personal; that were collective; that were transpersonal.

I draw on this dream for our application this month. I'm using the dream quite loosely, so I'm not suggesting that the way that we're going to do the application is a direct interpretation of the dream. But I'm using the imaginal topography of this dream house in order to lead us in this application, but I do try to broadly draw on the dream.

Obviously we're going to look at your own psychology now. So now I want you to locate yourself in your own house, okay; move out of Jung's dream house, we're just using the frame he provides. I want you to think about the first floor as belonging to - your personal narrative; to your contemporary narrative; to the life that you are aware of; to the life that you are living now, and that the personal memories and narratives since birth.

And the ground floor has got to do with the family from which you emerged. I mean family in the broad sense, so not only your parents but also your grandparents, and your great grandparents, and your extended family.



And then the basement or I realise that Jung uses the word, “cellar” here. In the cellar I want you to locate yourself in your cultural narrative. So going beyond your personal family, your cultural narrative. And I’ll unpack that a little bit for you now.

And finally, at that last level – the fourth level – your ancestral narrative; the ancestors that led you to this point. What I mean by that is, when I think about my family. My surname is Farah, my father’s surname was Farah – he was Lebanese, my mother was Afrikaans – her surname was van Vuuren; and so I’m thinking about the Farah and van Vuuren families as I know them, and as I know stories about them, and everything that I’ve come to know about my extended family.

When I’m talking about the ancestral narrative, I’m talking about the fact that I emerged from two ancestral lines: one that is Lebanese and the other one is Afrikaans, and so I’m talking about them beyond, the immediacy of my extended family.

Okay, so let me unpack it a bit more for you. Alright, so let’s start at the top. Essentially, what I want you to do, is I want you to look at a governing archetype that is present in your psychology at each of these levels. So you now identify a governing archetype that is present in your psychology at each of these levels. And I’ll give you an example – I’ll use myself as an example to try and flesh it out for you, but let’s just go through it first.



Obviously the first step (first floor) is personal. So if you had to identify a single archetype that is transcendent or is the dominant archetype in your personal narrative. That is the first archetype that I want you to identify.

The second one is your family's governing archetypes. Now of course you've emerged from two distinct families; from paternal and maternal families, so I want you to identify a governing archetype from both of those lineages. So from the lineage that comes from the father - the father's family, and the mother's family.

The cultural archetype; what I mean by the cultural archetype is the culture in which you are immersed. The contemporary cultural archetype; the contemporary culture in which you find yourself. So you've got to identify and articulate that in a way that seems right to you. I would say, if I had to describe my own, I would describe myself as being a "White South African".<sup>1</sup> I think the fact that I'm "white" and the fact that I'm South African are both very significant in terms of capturing my sense of cultural identity. I think being South African obviously comes with a very distinct identity but I think belonging to a particular racial group within the South African context has a strong bearing as well on the way I identify myself and the way I understand myself.

But you might, for example, say that I am a "black" South African or might simply say I am a Zulu – one might drop the South African. Or one might say

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<sup>1</sup> I credit my reader here with not drawing an unintended racism in my using "white" as a cultural identifier, given the very unfortunate political history of South Africa. A history which has left "whiteness" and "blackness" as definite cultural makers, however undesirable that may be.



that I am a Zulu or an Afrikaans South African or that I am a Jewish South African, or an Israeli South African (or any other nationality naturally) and so on. But all of these things have a distinct bearing on the way you conceive of your identity. The point is to identify a governing archetype that you believe is the governing archetype of your contemporary, cultural context.

And then finally, your ancestral archetype. Now obviously, if we follow Jung's –that's why I'm saying we're following his dream loosely, he jumps a couple of hundred years each time. You know his first jump is like a three – four-hundred-year jump, and then his next jump is like a thousand-year jump, and then his next jump is maybe a million years or something. But I think in terms of a practical application, that's reaching a bit, for us. So we're going to be a little bit more modest with where we go with the application. But I do want you to go to your ancestry. So, in my case I have mixed ancestry so I'm half Lebanese, half Afrikaans. So mine is split across my father's and mother's ancestral lines. But obviously if one emerges out of a unified ancestral line then one would simply have a single archetype there.

I want you to pick a dominant archetype. What is the dominant archetype in each of those groupings? I want you to ask the question, okay, "Where and how do I express these in my life?" And a clue that I'm giving you here - but I mean don't be limited by this – is to ask, "Are they in the foreground of my life or are they in the background?" Certain archetypal aspects may be present in your life; you may be living them and giving expression to them, consciously and actively in your life. Others may be in the background, and others may be more unconscious or there's an awareness of them but they are not being



actively expressed. So where are they located in your life? Are they in the foreground or the background and how do you give expression to them?

The second thing I want you to ask yourself is how they express themselves constructively and how they express themselves destructively. So Jung had that notion of archetypes; that archetypes are bivalent. They can “add to” so they can express libido and life, or Thanatos – the death instinct. They can be life-giving or they can be life-diminishing.

And then, this is an exercise in active imagination: I want you to try to characterise and personify those archetypes. So even if it means giving them a name and an appearance; whatever it takes in order for you to be able to enter into some sort of dialogue; some sort of discourse, with them. Okay, so I want you to give them a mask; I want you to give them a face; I want you to give them a voice, so that you can talk to them. Even if you don’t literally talk to them, but so that you can experience them as a presence in your psychology.

And then finally, I want you to use this information to identify your personal myth. What is the myth that you are living? So I think this is a big thing for Jung, and Jung talks about understanding and recognising your personal myth and typically, in the practice of Jungian psychology – not only in analysis but in Jungian psychology generally – the idea is that the general sort of way that it is understood is that one looks at stories; one looks at myths, and one tries to understand, “Okay, what myth or what story - what narrative - is being expressed in my life?” And I think that is actually enormously powerful. But





I'm tapping into your personal myth in a way that is a little bit more immediate and personal to you.

What I mean by that is that I want you to understand what the universal elements are that live in your personal mythology. Just as the characters, and narrative structures, and motifs, live in any fable or myth? What are the elements of your personal mythology? And I'm suggesting that the elements of your personal mythology – inasmuch as you are the expression of archetypal, universal truths – are going to come through these aspects of yourself and of your history, your life, the lives and histories of your family, the culture in which you find yourself and the ancestry from which you emerge.

Now, please, this is an application that we (CAJS) have developed and we don't mean to suggest that it is exhausting every archetype that lives in you, but if you are able to identify these archetypes and understand their presence in your life it would be a good step in the right direction.

### **Example**

In my case I would say that if I had to identify a single archetype in my life it would be consciousness. In other words, as a single, governing truth of my life. What Have I given supreme value to? What do I feel that my life is in search of; is an expression of?

If I was living in ancient Greece and there was a God who was the God of consciousness, I think that's where I would be going to give sacrament, and sacrifice, and the way one sort of served or tried to appreciate the God. So, I



would say in my case it's consciousness, okay. That would be the governing archetype.

Then if I look at my families' lines, my father – and how I identified this with my father is, I didn't think only of my father and my grandfather, both of whom I knew, but I thought also of every male member in my familial line - my brother, my cousins, my uncles – every Farah that I've ever met, that I was related to. And if I had to identify one dominant characteristic in all of them – will to power. There's only one, single, dominant characteristic that they share; will to power.

In my mother: - same thing. But with my mother what I did was I thought about - not her whole extended family but - the female members of her family. I looked specifically at the maternal – I'm looking at anima, in other words. So my mother, her sisters, my grandmother, etc. I disregarded the male members of her family because as soon as I included them it created a confusing picture, so I just looked at the feminine and if I had to think of one governing thing that they expressed - melancholy. Profound sadness in all of them, a number of suicides, sadness, depression - present in a very, very strongly lived spirit in the female members of my mother's family.

My cultural archetype? I would say what it means to be a "white South African" today: it means that you need to be a survivor, and you need to be creative, and you need to be able to think on your feet. And you need to be able to evolve pretty quickly to deal with type of change that has occurred in the last twenty years in this country, where our previous reality, corrupt at it



may have been, got turned on its head. And for me the one word that comes up actually, is entrepreneur. That, I think is a governing archetype of “white South Africans” – certainly those that are managing to survive the radical shifts that have occurred in this country; those that haven’t become completely marginalised. I don’t mean to say that they are all in business for themselves, but there’s an entrepreneurial spirit; there’s a creativity; there’s an imaginativeness in the way they recreate, rebrand, reconceive, live their lives. I would go further and say the entrepreneurial spirit lives very deeply in the African soul, across all racial groups. I am focusing on the group I identify with to simplify things, however that is a strong archetype constellated in Africa generally.

Then my ancestral archetype: my father’s Lebanese – the Christian Lebanese emerged from the Phoenicians actually. The Phoenicians were famous traders, so that’s pretty simple. And my mother’s Afrikaans and for me and certainly my association with being an Afrikaner – the image that comes to mind immediately - is the image of the Voortrekker. And the fact that in some sense, that is still what the Afrikaner is today. The Afrikaner is a pioneer; it’s like they live in the most savage and toughest of conditions. I think there’s a real pioneering spirit to the Afrikaner. That’s what I would like to – one can think of maybe other predicates or adjectives, but I’ll - go with pioneer.

Okay, so there you have it - there’s mine. This is what I see; these are the archetypes that I see in “my house”, across the various levels.

Consciousness,



will to power,

melancholy,

enterprise – trading and being a pioneer.

So the question is, looking at that, does that resonate? Yes, – for me that resonates very profoundly. It really rings true if I think about what I merged from and the elements – the archetypal elements – that live in me. Then the question is this: what story can be told with these elements? What is my myth? With those characters, what story can I create? What would a happy ending or a meaningful evolution of my personal narrative be or my archetypal narrative – bearing in mind those archetypal presences?

The idea here is –going back to this theory - is that in some sense these aspects determine the coordinates of my existence. In other words, I'm free to choose how I'm going to live this out but I'm not free to choose this. So, the point is that for me, my personal myth has to be a myth that somehow, at some level, makes sense of these things. In some sense I think the individuation project is a return to the truth of who you are and the expression of, "What would a meaningful expression of those things be in me, in my life, in my personal myth?"

And then finally consider (and I know this is challenging, do your best with it. You don't have to answer the question but just think about your personal myth). Consider – if these are archetypal dimensions of your being, what kind of a story can they tell? If they do have a telos; if we go along with them and we kind of accept that, psychological content; all content, even pathological



content; even neurotic content, has a telos. It has a meaning. It wants to go somewhere. Where do these things want to go if they live in you? Where are they trying to get to? Inasmuch as they are living through you, what is their destination?

This is very personal; this is looking at your personal myth. What is the story? What is the brief that you've been given and how do you live it out?

### **Synopsis of the application**

This module has only a single application done in three distinct steps.

Using the four tiered model, loosely based on the house from Jung's dream (MDR, pp. 182 -183; as described in this month's lecture), consider your own archetypal home as a symbol of your psychology.

Identify the dominant or primary archetype in your psychology at these four levels:

- Your personal narrative/life.
- Your parents: a) maternal and b) paternal
- Your contemporary culture, i.e. the society or community in which are socially embedded and most identify with.
- Your ancestors; this could be singular if both parents emerge from a single cultural/racial/national lineage, or plural if they emerge from different cultures.



Once you have identified these dominant structural archetypes of your own psychic home, consider the following questions.

Where is the archetype's influence present in your life? In some cases, you may struggle to locate it, it may be dormant or for some reason there may be a disconnect – don't force it. However, keep in mind that its influence can be oblique. So in my own case I am not a "trader" in the classical sense, but I most certainly bring the characteristics of the trader in virtually every area of my life.

Jung emphasises the bivalent nature of every archetype: productive and/or destructive. Identify in each of the archetypes you have discovered in your home their productive and destructive tendencies both universally and personally.

What is the archetype's Telos? What expression does it seek, where does it want to go? What is its direction of movement – its trajectory?

The final step in this application is to reflect on and imagine (into being) what myth these archetypes constitute the structural components of. These archetypes are dominant or certainly very significant influences in your life and ergo your personal narrative (or myth). What does or what could that myth look like? In order to do this, recognise that every archetype has this bivalent nature so in identifying or constructing your myth (depending on your perspective) you are probably better off considering its productive characteristics; or in any case it's Telos. Your myth should be an attempt to accommodate the Telos of the archetypes such that it both honours them and is meaningful to you.