

ARE 'ARCHETYPES' BIOLOGICAL CODES?

First International Conference in Code Biology | Paris, 20-24 May 2014

J.C. Major, PhD

Portuguese Catholic University
Department of Psychology
jcmajor@mail.telepac.pt

Abstract

Analytical Psychology is understood as a depth psychology. In fact, Carl Gustav Jung aimed to understand the profound (bio)logic of the mind and thought finding this depth in 'archetypes' (which can be understood as a very old code, or codes — a small set of biological rules — surreptitiously influencing human behaviour); a concept akin to another: 'instinct'.

In a sense, we can state that: (1) archetypes appeared after the genetic code and before the codes of culture; (2) the existence of archetypes and the collective unconscious are both in line with the mechanistic view: (a) 'archetypes' as *codes*; (b) 'collective unconscious' as our *phylogenetic heritage shared by all* (by no means a metaphysical entity); (3) the archetypes showed a *trend towards conservation* (a code conservation system).

Thus, Psychology cannot ignore these 'archaic codes' to really comprehend the human mind; in equal measure, clinical practice in (Analytical) Psychology cannot afford to ignore the biological/organic 'archetypes' if aims to be truly useful/salutogenic.

English:

The difference between the son-in-law's mother-in-law, and the daughter-in-law's mother-in-law.

Two distinct ladies meet after a long time without seeing each other. Then, one of them asks the other: «How are your son and daughter... Rosa and Francisco?» She replies: «Oh, my dear. Rosa got herself a good marriage. She has a most wonderful husband. He's the one who gets up early in the morning to change my little grandson's dippers, to prepare breakfast, clean the house, wash the dishes, collect the garbage and help in all domestic chores. Only then does he go to work, quietly of course, not to wake up my daughter. An absolute darling. God bless that boy». «Oh, ain't that wonderful? And how about your son, Francisco? Did he marry too?». «Indeed yes, my dear. Ah poor boy, he got quite unlucky that one. Can you imagine he has to get up early in the morning to change my little grandson's dippers, prepare breakfast, clean the house, wash the dishes, collect the garbage and help in all domestic chores? And after all this, he still has to go to work, quietly as it is, to sustain that lazy tart, self-indulgent, filthy, unappreciative daughter-in-law of mine».

Conclusion: "A mother is a mother! A mother-in-law is a mother-in-law!"

Française:

La différence entre la belle-mère du beau-fils et la belle-mère de la belle-fille.

Deux dames se retrouvent après longtemps de ne pas se voir. Puis, l'une demande à l'autre: «Comment va votre fille et ton fils, Rosa et Francisco? «Elle répond: «Oh, chérie, Rosa a un bon mariage. Ella a un magnifique mari. Il est celui qui se lève tôt le

matin pour changer les couches de mon petit-fils, pour préparer le petit déjeuner, nettoyer la maison, faire lave-vaisselle, ramasser les ordures et il l'aide dans toutes les travaux domestiques. Seulement après il va au travail, en silence, bien sûr, pour ne pas réveiller ma fille. Un chouchou absolu. Que Dieu bénisse ce garçon». «Oh, il est merveilleux, n'est-ce pas? Et que diriez-vous de votre fils, Francisco? Est-il marié aussi?». «En effet oui, chérie. Ah le pauvre garçon, il n'a pas eu la même chance. Imaginer vous qu'il doit se lever tôt le matin pour changer les couches de mon petit-fils, préparer le petit déjeuner, nettoyer la maison, faire lave-vaisselle, ramasser les ordures et l'aider dans toutes les tâches ménagères? Et après tout faire, il va au travail, en silence, pour soutenir cette paresseuse, complaisante, sale et ingrate belle-fille mienne». Conclusion: "Une mère c'est une mère! Une belle-mère c'est une belle-mère!"

We may suspect that behind this story some biological truth is hidden: the *archetypal structure*¹ of human nature. The mind, like the human body, have a structure that shares the phylogenetic continuity with the other phyla of the animal kingdom.

While academic psychology in the past — and to some extent even today — insisted that the repertoire of human behaviour was infinitely plastic, almost dependent on the vicissitudes and environmental occurrences and little influenced by innate structures or genetically predetermined, almost a century ago Carl Gustav Jung insisted the opposite: he pointed out that human behavior was archetypically organized. In 1935, in the Tavistock Clinic in London, Jung said:

“It is really quite simple to explain. Our mind has its history, just as our body has its history. You might be just as astonished that man has an appendix, for instance. Does he know he ought to have an appendix? He is just born with it. Millions of people do not know they have a thymus, but they have it. They do not know that in certain parts of their anatomy they belong to the species of the fishes, and yet it is so. Our unconscious mind, like our body, is a storehouse of relics and memories of the past. A study of the structure of the unconscious collective mind would reveal the same discoveries as you make in comparative anatomy. We do not need to think that there is anything mystical about it. But because I speak of a collective unconscious, I have been accused of obscurantism. There is nothing mystical about the collective unconscious. It is just a new branch of science, and it is really common sense to admit the existence of unconscious collective processes. For, though a child is not born conscious, his mind is not a *tabula rasa*. The child is born with a definite brain, and the brain of an English child will work not like that of an Australian black fellow but in the way of a modern English person. The brain is born with a finished structure, it will work in a modern way, but this brain has its history. It has been built up in the course of millions of years and represents a history of which it is the result. Naturally it carries with it the traces of that history, exactly like the body, and if you grope down into the basic structure of the mind you naturally find traces of the archaic mind.” (CW 18, par. 84)

¹“Archetypal (...) patterns — dispositions in animals to establish certain types of meaning relations in ecological communities and to link sign processes with actions in particular ways.” (Maran, 2012, p. 151)