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The Archetypes And The Collective Unconscious (Collected Works Of C.G. Jung Vol.9 Part 1)



Synopsis

Essays which state the fundamentals of Jung's psychological system: "On the Psychology of the Unconscious" and "The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious," with their original versions in an appendix.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This work, along with Modern Man in Search of a Soul, is one of the best places to start if you are new to reading Jung. It is also the companion piece and predecessor to Aion, which is another spectacular and groundbreaking work. If you want to read Aion, it would make sense for you to read this one first, since it is part 1 of volume nine, while Aion is part two. Overall, I would say that both parts 1 and 2 of volume nine are absolutely essential reading for any Jungian, and if you're going to buy one, go ahead and buy both. As for the actual content of The Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious, I would describe it as an overview and recapitulation of many of Jung's key concepts. As the title implies, the main concepts are archetypal images (as revealed in to people in dreams) and the collective unconscious. These are trademark Jungian concepts, and Jung devoted a large portion of his writings to explaining what he meant by Archetypes and the collective unconscious. If I could explain it to you right here I would, but Jung spends a the first two hundred pages of this book simply explaining and defining "archetype" and "collective unconscious". These are key concepts in understanding the human mind, and may help unlock the mysteries of

conscious existence; it is by no means superfluous to devote such rigorous study to these ideas. The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious is NOT a narrowly focused, specialized, or jargonistic work. It deals with ideas that are central to understanding the human psyche or soul, and applies universally to all of mankind.

Jung's books are not easy reads, but they are almost invariably eye-openers. I recommend first reading his student's works (von Franz, Barbara Hanna, Jolanda Jacobi), his "Man and His Symbols," & (especially with respect to this book) Joseph Campbell & Jean Shinoda Bolen. It helps a lot to understand mythology when exploring the collective unconscious. Jung goes to great lengths to show how the denizens of the collective unconscious (archetypes--universal images~Plato's view) map onto very different cultures throughout time & space--appearing in art, dreams, visions, etc. Bolen uses Greek goddesses & gods to depict these. Jung disliked neologisms (creating new words) instead he transplanted them from other disciplines to map into his psychological theories & constructs--thus, "archetypes" & "complexes"--paralleling General Systems Theory (cf. biologist von Bertalanffy's works). "Complex" comes from mathematics' complex numbers. Jung knew & conversed with physicist Pauli, Kabbalah professor Scholem, & many other famous, high-caliber scholars. It is important to realize, when reading this book, the important differences between archetypes of the collective unconscious & complexes of the personal unconscious--though they have the same names! Thus, the mother archetype is the pure image of motherhood--with both positive & negative aspects. But, each person has an actual, individual mother (or lack thereof--absent mother). The interaction or combination of these two forms one's mother complex. As in math, it has a rational part (actual mother) & an imaginary part (archetype). In math, the imaginary part is multiplied by i , the square root of minus 1--which cannot exist, yet mathematicians use it creatively! So does Jung.

It's a book of essays on a theme, like most of his other books. Here's an attempt to describe the whole theory in a few paragraphs. Jung suggests the existence of a 3-layered psyche consisting of (1) the conscious (active part of the mind), (2) the personal unconscious (thinking over which we have little or no control), and (3) the collective unconscious (unevolved, animal-instinctive mental activity). The collective unconscious is "collective" in the sense that humans resemble each other the most at the lowest, biological levels. "The body's carbon is simply carbon" (pg. 173). We inherit the collective unconscious from the common pool of human characteristics, like morphological aspects of the body such as arms, legs, etc. The "archetypes" originate in the collective unconscious

and are the psychological equivalents of Platonic Forms. (I realized about halfway through the book that archetype-figures also appear in the personal unconscious, where they're called "complexes"). The most important archetypes appear to be the Shadow (the inferior aspects of the self which we hide from others), the Anima/Animus (our object(s) of desire), and the Wise Old Man (e.g., teacher, medicine man). He also discusses a Mother archetype and a Child archetype and indicates the existence of numerous others. Identifying strongly with an archetype leads to psychosis. The heart of the book is in the first essay, but the rest is useful in fleshing out descriptions and giving examples. The collective Anima archetype, for instance, can be found among movie stars and in the general pop culture. Devils and tricksters often represent the Shadow archetype. Tolkien's Gandalf is a good instance of the Wise Old Man.

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