SEVEN MAJOR ARCHETYPES

The Shadow
Jung defines the Shadow as "the thing a person has no wish to be". Everything substantial casts a shadow, and for Jung the human psyche is no exception: "unfortunately there can be no doubt that Man is, on the whole, less good than he wants or imagines himself to be". Jung identified the shadow as the primitive, instinctive side of ourselves. The more that we repress this side, and isolate it from consciousness, the less chance there is of preventing it from bursting "forth suddenly in a moment of unawareness". Even at best, "it forms an unconscious snag, thwarting our most well-meant intentions".

Jung credited Freud with drawing proper attention to this "abyss in human nature". Concealed under our civilized veneer, the Shadow reveals itself in the selfish, violent and often brutal actions of individuals, communities and nations. It feeds on greed and fear and can be projected outward as the hate that persecutes and makes scapegoats of minority groups. In dreams, the Shadow usually appears as a person of the same sex, often in a threatening, nightmarish role. Because the Shadow can never be totally eliminated, it is often represented by dream characters who are impervious to blows and bullets, and who pursue us past every obstacle, and into the blind alleyways and eerie basements of the mind. However, it can also take the form of the brother or sister figure (the Biblical figure of Cain), or the stranger who confronts us with the things we prefer not to see and the words we prefer not to hear.

Because the Shadow is obsessional, autonomous and possessive, it arouses in us strong emotions of fear, anger or moral outrage. Yet Jung insists it is not evil in itself, merely "somewhat inferior, primitive, unadapted and awkward". Its appearance in dreams indicates a need for a more conscious awareness of its existence, and for more moral effort in coming to terms with its dark energies, which otherwise prey upon and gradually overpower the conscious mind.

The Shadow does things in "the old way", as Jung put it; and we must learn to accept and integrate it because the unpalatable messages it gives us are often indirectly for our own good.
The Divine Child
The Divine Child is the archetype of the regenerative force that leads us toward individuation: "becoming as a little child", as it is expressed in the Gospels. It is therefore the symbol of the true self, of the totality of our being, as opposed to the limited and limiting ego which is in Jung's words "only a bit of consciousness, and floats upon an ocean of the (hidden) things". In dreams, the Divine Child usually appears as a baby or infant. It is both innocent and vulnerable, yet at the same time inviolate and possessed of vast transforming power. Contact with the child can strip us of the sense of personal grandeur upon which the ego so greedily feeds, and reveal to us how far we have strayed from what once we were and aspired to be.

The Anima and Animus
Jung's studies and clinical experience convinced him that we each carry within us the whole of human potential, male and female. The Anima represents the "feminine" qualities of moods, reactions and impulses in man, and the Animus the "masculine" qualities of commitments, beliefs and inspirations in woman. More importantly, as the "not-I" within the self, the Anima and Animus serve as psychopompi, or soul guides, to the vast areas of our unacknowledged inner potential.

Mythology represents the Anima as maiden goddesses or women of great beauty, such as Athena, Venus and Helen of Troy; while the Animus is symbolized by noble gods or heroes, such as Hermes, Apollo and Hercules. If Anima or Animus appear in our dreams in these exalted forms, or as any other powerful representation of man or woman, it typically means that we need to integrate the male and female within us. If ignored, these archetypes tend to be projected outward into a search for an idealized lover, or unrealistically ascribed to partners or friends. If we allow them to take possession of our unconscious lives, men can become over-sentimental and over-emotional, while women may show ruthlessness and obstinacy. However, once the process of individuation has begun, these archetypes serve as guides, taking the dreamer deeper and deeper into the realm of inner possibilities.

The Great Mother
The image of the Great Mother plays a vital role in our psychological and spiritual development. Its prevalence in dreams, myths and religion is derived not only from our personal experiences of childhood, but also from the archetype of all that cherishes and fosters growth and fertility on the one hand, and all that dominates, devours, seduces and possesses on the other.

Not only is the energy of the Great Mother divine, ethereal and virginal, but it is also chthonic (generated from the earth) and agricultural: the earth mother was worshipped as the bringer of harvests. Always ambivalent, the Great Mother is an archetype of feminine mystery and power who appears in many forms: at her most exalted as the queen of heaven, at her most consuming as the Sumerian goddess Lilith, the gorgon Medusa, or the witches and harpies prevalent in myth and folklore.

For Freud, however, the symbolic dream mother was far more a representation of the dreamer's relationship with his or her own mother than an abstract archetype. Freud observed in fact that most dreams involve three people - the dreamer, a woman and a man - and that the theme that most commonly links the three characters is jealousy. Freud believed that the dream woman and dream man most represent the dreamer's mother and father, an maintained that they symbolize aspects of the Oedipus an Electra complex from which men and women respectively suffer. (In Greek myth Oedipus, unaware of his actions slew his father and married his mother: Freud saw this as symbolizing the early male sexual desire for the mother and jealousy of the father. Electra, similarly, desired her father and was jealous of her mother.)