RESEARCH IN ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND
JUNGIAN STUDIES
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Archetypal Psychotherapy

The clinical legacy of James Hillman

Jason A. Butler

ROUTLEDGE

Archetypal Psychotherapy

"Drawing upon numerous strands from the work of James Hillman and other authors in the field of archetypal psychology, Jason Butler weaves together a consistent approach to an archetypal psychotherapy. His book is an important contribution that situates Hillman's many contributions to archetypal theory within a context of archetypal practice. A must-read for all those who value the work of recovering soul in psychology."
—Professor Robert D. Romanyshyn, Pacifica Graduate Institute, USA

Archetypal psychology is a post-Jungian mode of theory and practice initiated primarily through the prolific work of James Hillman. Hillman's writing carries a far-reaching collection of evocative ideas with a wealth of vital implications for the field of clinical psychology. With the focus on replacing the dominant fantasy of a scientific psychology with psychology as logos of soul, archetypal psychology has shifted the focus of therapy away from cure of the symptom toward vivification and expression of the mythopoetic imagination.

This book provides the reader with an overview of the primary themes taken up by archetypal psychology, as differentiated from both classical Jungian analysis and Freudian derivatives of psychoanalysis. Throughout the text, Jason Butler gathers the disparate pieces of archetypal method and weaves them together with examples of dreams, fantasy images, and clinical vignettes in order to depict the particular style taken up by archetypal psychotherapy—a therapeutic approach that fosters an expansion of psychological practice beyond mere ego-adaptation and coping, providing a royal road to a life and livelihood of archetypal significance.

Archetypal Psychotherapy: The clinical legacy of James Hillman will be of interest to researchers and academics in the fields of Jungian and archetypal psychology looking for a new perspective, as well as practicing psychotherapists.

Jason A. Butler is a psychotherapist in private practice in San Francisco, USA, and a core faculty member at John F. Kennedy University, USA.

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To my three fathers:
Gary—father of blood
Bruce—father of flesh
James—father of thought

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Chapter 1

Introduction

One of the primary pursuits of archetypal psychology has been to "unpack the backpack" of psychology—relying heavily on a methodological stance of *via negativa*, or description through negation, and deconstruction. This position has resulted in a wealth of critique that, while often controversial and even heretical, has had a significant impact on the field of psychology. It is important to note, however, that this deconstructive approach is also one fantasy among many. A move towards seeing through this methodology invokes an immediate encounter with the dismembering influence of Dionysus, a god closely associated with revitalization through disorder. It is the Dionysian presence that facilitates the radical re-visioning and tearing apart of stale, violently fixated, and dogmatic theory and practice. Through the work of archetypal psychology, Dionysus has presented as a dialectic partner to the abhorrent one-sidedness of Apollonian natural science psychology. As necessary as this deconstruction has been, James Hillman (2005) himself has noted, every archetypal image has its own excess and intensity. Without an explicitly constructive element, the clinical implications of archetypal psychology remain largely dormant.

The various theorists contributing to the field of archetypal psychology have yet to produce a work that effectively encapsulates an archetypal approach to psychotherapy (Hillman, 2004). True to its Dionysian form, dismembered pieces of therapeutic method are strewn throughout the literature (Berry, 1982, 1984, 2008; Guggenbühl-Craig, 1971; Hartman, 1980; Hillman, 1972, 1975a, 1977a, 1978, 1979a, 1979b, 1980; Newman, 1980; Schenk, 2001; Watkins, 1981, 1984). This study is an attempt to gather the disparate pieces of archetypal method and weave them together with dreams, fantasy images, and clinical vignettes in an effort to depict the particular style taken up by archetypal psychotherapy.

While respecting the importance of deconstruction and *via negativa*, the aim of this text is to re-construct and clearly describe archetypal psychology's unique contribution to therapeutic practice. Through the careful gathering of the disparate notes on psychotherapeutic method and the mobilization of a running active imagination with Hillman's writing, or more precisely Hillman as image, this study will not only delineate an archetypal approach to psychotherapy but also amplify existing approaches to achieve a more lucid understanding of the therapeutic relevance of archetypal psychology. Throughout the text, I give very little attention to Hillman's vehement and, as David Tacey (1998) noted, projection-filled straw man arguments against psychotherapy. Instead my attention is focused on the therapeutic import embedded in Hillman's work, particularly his work with image.

Although my engagement with Hillman's work has been central to this study, it is essential to recognize the polymorphous styles of archetypal psychotherapy which have been developed by Lopez-Pedraza (1977), Berry (1982, 1984), Watkins (1981, 1984, 1986), Hartman (1980), Newman (1980), Schenk (1989), Coppin (1996), Bleakley (1995), and Giegerich, (1998), among others.

Archetypal psychotherapy will be generally defined as a depth psychological theory and praxis that aims at: "a) precise portrayal of the image; b) sticking to the image while hearing it metaphorically; c) discovering the necessity within the image; d) experiencing the unfathomable analogical richness of the image" (Hillman, 1977a, p. 82). Following C. G. Jung's (1929/1968) understanding of image as psyche, Hillman (2004) has defined this key feature of archetypal psychology as "the psyche itself in its imaginative visibility; as primary *datum*, image is irreducible" (p. 18). Edward Casey (1974) further qualified the notion of image in his well-received declaration that an image is not defined by a particular type of content, that is, a pictorial form, but by the way in which one sees, that is, an imaginal perspective. The central emphasis afforded to image within archetypal psychology qualifies the tradition as an imaginal psychology, meaning "a study of psyche . . . develop[ed] from the nature and reality of its experience, which is understood here to be images" (Watkins, 1984, p. 102).

Introduction to archetypal psychology

James Hillman (April 12, 1926 – October 27, 2011), the initiating force and sustaining voice of archetypal psychology, was a prolific

and talented writer and arguably the most influential Jungian theorist since Jung. His ideas are provocative and have, since the early days of his career, constellated strongly polarized reactions in the psychological community. Whereas his work, spanning over 50 years, covers a diverse array of topics and contains a multitude of different, even contradictory (see Tacey, 1998), moves, Hillman's opus never strays from his primary focus: the vivification and elucidation of a psychology rooted in the archetypal imagination.

After completing his degree in English Literature at the Sorbonne in Paris and a second degree in Mental and Moral Science at Trinity College in Dublin, Hillman made his way to Zurich where he trained at the Jung Institute, founded just five years prior. In March of 1953, Hillman began his training analysis with Carl Alfred Meier, one of the most central figures in the early days of the institute and an analysand of Carl Jung. While training at the Jung Institute, it did not take long for Hillman's provocative nature to make itself known.

Hillman quickly began his confrontation with orthodox Jungian ideas, some of which he would spend his career developing and some that he would vehemently reject. As the first appointed Director of Studies at the Zurich Jung Institute, intent on initiating a "process of regeneration and renewal" (as cited in Russell, 2013, p. 455), Hillman also began confronting the older generation of analysts and their well-established ideas surrounding the institute's direction. Hillman was gripped by the spirit of the new, caught in a tension-filled dialectic between the old and the young, *senex* and *puer*—an archetypal pairing that he spent significant portions of his career investigating and living.

While completing the clinical portion of his analytic training, Hillman met regularly with a group of students and a seasoned supervisor to present and critique case material. As he described in his biography, he had a distaste for the whole process, noting his observation that "everybody's talking about somebody who isn't here, it's all fantasy" (Russell, 2013, p. 421). He decided to trust his instinct, asking one of his patients as well as the supervisor leading the group if the patient could sit in on the meeting and speak for himself about his own psychological process. Although the patient agreed, the supervisor denied Hillman's request, describing his idea as "too radical" (p. 421), a condemnation that would be used often in response to Hillman's work.

True to the astrological sign of Aries under which he was born, Hillman had a martial nature, trusting his anger as his "favorite demon" (Hillman, 1991, p. 147). Hillman's work was spurred on "when something felt insulted" (Russell, 2013, p. 429). These areas

of insult, which in the early days of his career revolved most notably around the prevailing interpretations of puer phenomena, were seeds for Hillman's long career of differentiating his thought from those of the classical Jungian school. Unlike many students in Zurich who fell into an unquestioning relationship with Jungian theory, Hillman retained a sense of critical thought that allowed him to take a different angle. Hillman resisted becoming an enamored devotee of Jung, calling Jung's influence a syndrome, "a kind of magical projection" (p. 426). Hillman noted: "I was so *into* the Jungian world, but at the same time something in me was protecting itself from him" (p. 426).

He held close to what he knew of the value of puer phenomena, protecting his own lived experience of this archetypal dominant from the reductive interpretations he was encountering at the Institute. At that time Marie-Louise Von Franz was offering a number of lectures on the pathology of the puer. Following Jung, she emphasized the relation between the puer and the mother and placed heavy emphasis on descent, an earthly cure for the puer, occasionally even sending her young male patients off to farms where they could get dirt in their shoes, a grounding of the youthful spirit. Hillman read this move as dreadfully literal and worked instead to deliteralize earth, "to see through, to turn into psyche, rather than have the psyche turned into earth" (as cited in Russell, 2013, p. 429).

By the early 1960s, Hillman had become close friends with Adolf Guggenbühl-Craig who, like Hillman, had a fondness for paradox and turning cherished ideas upside down. One of his more notable contributions in this regard came out of a paper he delivered while on a lecture tour through the United States with Hillman. The paper, titled "Youth and Individuality," challenged the classical Jungian notion that the individuation process begins only after one has reached mid-life, arguing that adolescence ushers in many important features of psychological individuation (Russell, 2013). Looking back on this important period, Hillman commented, "The idea was, we were trying to take down the older generation" (p. 495).

Despite the many moves Hillman made to differentiate his thought from the old guard, or "second generation Jungians" (Goldenberg, 1975), he held close to the notion of fidelity to tradition. He describes his position clearly in a 1965 letter:

> I belong to lots of things: my family tree, the places where I was taught, the school of psychology I am a member of, the country in which I have been landed in. Doctrine is part of my backbone.

> I work within one, working daily to get out, to fight it, to change it, to break it. But from within.
>
> (as cited in Russell, 2013)

It was while in the heat of this struggle with Jungian orthodoxy that Hillman began his formal exploration of the puer-senex tension per invitation to the 1967 Eranos conference. Responding to his felt sense that Jungian psychology was dominated by the negative senex and the "cult of the old" (Russell, 2013, p. 590), Hillman set out to redeem the puer from his traditional association with the mother, emphasizing instead his archetypal role in relativizing the negative senex—the oppressive force of the old wise man. Moreover, Hillman would come to demonstrate the way in which the senex and puer are requisites of each other, abiding as two ends of a polarity that is paradoxically a "union of sames" (Hillman, 2005, p. 58). His efforts to foster the "moist spark" (Hillman, 2005, p. 54) of the puer, to counter the old guard within his psychological tradition, would soon lead him to announce a distinct differentiation from orthodox Jungian psychology, initiating a new movement which he called archetypal psychology.

Hillman's first use of the title archetypal psychology arrived in an essay titled "Why Archetypal Psychology?" first published in 1970. Here he outlined a number of reasons for adopting a title other than "Jungian," "analytical," or "complex psychology." Hillman noted the need to differentiate from Carl Jung the man, leaving possession of the name to the Jung family. He also emphasized the way in which the adjective 'archetypal' "gives the psyche a chance to move out of the consulting room" and "gives an archetypal perspective to the consulting room itself" (Hillman, 1975b, p. 142). Whereas analytical and complex psychology constellate associations to a psychology of the individual, archetypal psychology broadens the scope to encompass the breadth of culture, history, and the "plurality of archetypal forms" (p. 143), a polytheistic psychology. Throughout his career, Hillman used the distinction of archetypal psychology to revision, question, critique, and discard many primary features in both Jung's psychology and psychoanalysis in general.

Hillman's position in relation to both Jung and Sigmund Freud has been to take their work and turn it in such a way as to make it his own. He stepped back from the literal work as noun and psychologized or saw through to the underlying verb, as he noted "the way in which the soil is plowed" (1999). In doing so, he has taken up what he has understood to be Jung's way of working, rather than a literal

adherence to the work. Specifically, it is Jung's love of the unusual and idiosyncratic and his talent for bringing these phenomena into relation with their underlying root that makes Jung radical,[1] and in following this spirit, "Jung's daemonic inheritance," Hillman (1999) has designated himself a "true blue Jungian."

In seeing through Hillman's work, it is clear that his theories spring from a similar adherence to the unusual and idiosyncratic. Hillman has taken Jung's notion of individuation as differentiation and expanded it into a mode of theorizing as well as a mode of practicing psychology. This agenda of difference is strewn throughout the work of archetypal psychology. Importantly, this move is also essential to the practice of archetypal psychotherapy, where the work is to proceed into and enhance the difference, the unusual, to follow the idiosyncratic event into its archetypal root. As Hillman (1971) has noted, "for what else is individuation but a particularization of the soul" (p. 133).

To describe how an archetypal psychotherapy differs from a Jungian psychotherapy is an endeavor bound to be fraught with over-generalizations. Psychotherapeutic process is highly contingent on the idiosyncrasies of both the therapist and the patient, making general statements about what constitutes "Jungian" or "archetypal" therapy inherently limited. However, clear differences can be described based on the distinct theoretical emphases of these two highly related traditions.

Differentiating Jungian and archetypal psychology

Hillman has been justifiably criticized, most notably by Tacey (1998), for his extremism in his attempt to differentiate himself from Jung, discounting the master while implicitly exaggerating the originality of his own work. One primary example can be found in Hillman's (1992) later work emphasizing the Neoplatonic notion of *anima mundi*. It takes no stretch of the imagination to notice the parallels between Hillman's anima mundi and Jung's description of the *unus mundus* (1970) and the psychoid archetype (1947/1970). Moreover, as Tacey (1998) noted, "forty years before Hillman, with much less fanfare and bravado, Jung had already (re)discovered the Neoplatonic idea of anima mundi" (p. 225).

Both Jung and Hillman were attempting to reconcile the profound rupture between spirit and matter—to spiritualize matter and to materialize spirit, arguing that soul is the intermediary space within which this connection takes place. Yet, despite the commonality of