

## Jung as philosopher: archetypes, the psychoid factor, and the question of the supernatural

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In a previous essay offering an exegesis of Jung's metaphysics, I concluded that his position on the archetypes emphasizes basic constitutional patterns that manifest as imago, thought, affect, fantasy, and behavior inherent in all forms of human psychic life (*bios*) that are genetically transmitted yet realized on different stratifications of psychical order, including mystical properties emanating from supernatural origins. Mark Saban and Robert Segal provide thoughtful critiques of my work that challenge my basic premises. Saban represents a particular Jungian camp conforming to empirical apologetics, while Segal is more critical of Jung's philosophical ideas. The two main themes that emerge from their criticism are that I fail to show that Jung is a metaphysician, and that the archetypes are not supernatural phenomena. Here I will be concerned with recapitulating Jung's metaphysical postulations about the world and psyche and address more specifically the question of his commitment to supernaturalism.

**Keywords:** Jung; metaphysics; ontology; archetypes; transcendence; psychoid; supernatural

What do Jung's theories mean to Jungians? In *The Wisdom of the Dream* (Segaller, 1989), Robert Johnson says the following: 'The collective unconscious is that set of building blocks in which human reality is made. It is as if there is this great reservoir outside time and space – patterned energy. Mankind struggles to give it definition, like this from which everything is drawn or everything is made'. This statement, I suggest, personifies what Jung means to the world and what Jung represents to Jungians. For Jung, all of psychic reality is founded on the bedrock of a collective unconscious mind that precedes each of us. We know the marbled instantiations of this generative 'objective psyche' through the archetypes, which are symbolic forms that make their way into lived, personal (conscious) reality radiating from a timeless unconscious ground originating from a universal principle, yet awakened within the archaic life of mankind and passed along the aeons through encoded genetic transmutations and the transgenerational transmission of culture. Here Jung commands a very distinct philosophy in the history of ideas, one based on *transpersonal supervenience* from a collective unconscious agency, which I argue is a form of *cosmic emanationism* (see Mills, 2014, p. 16). If all psychic reality derives from or flows out of an original wellspring we call the archetypal collective, then we must ponder the metaphysical and mystical implications of this radical idea.

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### Jung as philosopher

Mark Saban (2014) and Robert Segal (2014) are in agreement that I fail to show that Jung was a philosopher; nor did he have a developed metaphysics, which was neither his intention nor the project of his analytical psychology. Both are adamant that Jung is not a philosopher and that he made no pretense to offer metaphysical claims, which Jung frequently distanced himself from in his writings. Instead, they insist that Jung always identified himself as a psychologist/psychiatrist/psychotherapist and that his theories should be interpreted within this historical context. While this may be the case, and even arguably valid, both Saban and Segal are focused on professional identity rather than on the subject-matter of Jung's theoretics, which situates their arguments as a class distinction of what Jung was in terms of his practical occupation or self-defined professional identity rather than on the propositions of his theoretical claims. To say Jung is not a 'real' philosopher, or that his psychological views do not make him an ontologist or metaphysician so he may remain immune from critique of his theoretical commitments or 'hypotheses', is not a very flattering disclaimer. What Saban and Segal seem to brush over is the obvious fact that regardless of whether Jung identified himself as a philosopher or not, his thought is deeply philosophical and assumes a stance toward ultimate reality, hence constitutes a position on being and becoming, which makes Jung's project a metaphysics of presence and concealment. Here, Jung may be said to be in good company with Heidegger.

Rather than remain hung up on professional roles and titles, I believe it is important for Jungians to embrace the philosophical implications of Jung's thought, which has the potential to be extended into a more formalized, systematic philosophy. While this endeavor is beyond the scope of this immediate project, it becomes incumbent on me to demonstrate more persuasively why Jung's philosophical corpus should be identified as encompassing metaphysical, as well as psychological and phenomenological, parameters. If all the experiences we have are conditioned by and come from a collective psyche as the primordial base dispersed as ontic forms superimposed on all the various layers that comprise human psychic reality, and that we ultimately only know and experience them as our inner world, then if this is not a grand philosophy, I don't know what else it would be. The mere fact that Jung (1961, pp. 158–159) can introduce a theory of the collective unconscious *derived from his own dream*, as reported in *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, shows the creative advance of imagination that seeks to wed higher (universal) unitive forces with the content of dreamt psychic material believed to emanate from a real external correspondent reality he called the archetypal. This is metaphysics at its finest! It is time for Jungians to welcome the philosophical positions inherent in Jung's writings in order to engage or revise them, as well as enter the fray of empirical (academic) psychology if it is to survive as a vibrant intellectual discipline.

Robert Segal (2014) rightfully states that 'Metaphysics is a speculative discipline', but he believes Jung's proposition of the archetypes as 'immaterial entities' do not make it metaphysics. I do not follow his logic. If Jung's thesis on the archetypal collective is about the real, then how is this not metaphysics? Similarly, Segal opines that 'the claim that the collective unconscious exists is not itself an ontological claim'. How so, if it is professed to exist? For Jung, the collective unconscious and the archetypes are extant realities; thus they occupy being and have presence, and hence encompass and issue forth from an ontological structural process. Jung is positing the existence of entities that are said to be real and exist as independent objects that by definition are not reducible to corporeality; but we do not know them as such, for they are not directly observable – hence they elude

proper empirical measurement, yet are conceived to be the ultimate source of psychic life responsible for conditioning all experience.

This theoretical framework mirrors the speculative metaphysics of the great German Idealists – most notably Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer – that Jung himself had read (even if through secondary sources) and engaged in his own writings. It is no coincidence that he was attracted to these idealist thinkers who made a Collective Mind the ontological foundation and force governing nature and soul. In fact, Mark Saban (2014) champions a simpatico between Jung and Schelling with regard to their common projects rooted in a collective unconscious agency burgeoning with innate potencies that condition psyche and world; yet surprisingly, he fails to mention that Schelling's (1800/1978) *System of Transcendental Idealism* is arguably the first metaphysical treatise in the history of philosophy that attempts to overcome (*aufheben*) the traditional subject/object dualism inherited from Plato, Descartes, and Kant through his own speculative philosophy of nature (*Naturphilosophie*) and philosophy of identity (*Identitätsphilosophie*).<sup>1</sup> For Schelling, nature and mind are identical.<sup>2</sup> Here, the thought that Jung's theories are not metaphysical is simply untenable.

Segal nicely points to many conundrums and fine-tuning problems in Jung's theorizing that at times vacillate between monist, dualist, and dialectical perspectives, which underscores the tension in Jung's own thinking with regard to a possible conciliation between the rationalist and empirical traditions he was deeply engaged in. After Segal offers his own critique of Jung's philosophical ideas, from ontology to epistemology, synchronicity, the mind/body problem, and evolution, he concludes Jung's theories are pseudoscientific because the archetypes and their predictability can neither be proven true nor false. But here it is not because of their falsifiability, verification, or potential refutation of conjecture that make them inherently unscientific; rather, it is because their non-falsifiability conforms to metaphysical predication. Because metaphysical speculation relies on logic, abduction, and induction, the question of their scientific status conforming to an empirical methodology becomes moot.

Like Segal, the structure of Mark Saban's (2014) critique is to first situate Jung as making no pretenses to offering a philosophical or metaphysical treatise of the psyche, and that as a psychologist he was mainly interested in 'clinical realities'. First of all, I argue this cannot be the case since Jung's entire body of works cover broad, eclectic aspects of the humanities as an intellectual canon from mythology, philosophy (recall his education in neo-Platonism, medieval and modern philosophy, and that he taught a seminar on Nietzsche), field research in cultural anthropology (American Southwest, Africa, India), theology, and religion in Western and Eastern traditions (note his ongoing involvement with the Eranos group), just to name a few. He had a lot more to say about humanity and culture than confine his explorations to just psychopathology, clinical theory, and technique that related to the psychotherapeutic process. Also, when Jung (1952a) employs these defensive side-stepping strategies in his caveats of disavowing any intent to offer a 'system nor a general theory' (*CW*, 18, p. 666), this does not mean his collected body of works on various topics do not constitute a treatise on human nature, which I argue they do. Jung's caveats belie a transparent intention: they are designed to insulate him from external criticism and are interjected selectively where he sees fit. But Saban's general accusation that I import intentionality to Jung that he himself did not purport when making ontological claims is to miss the general point that any (mental or written) act is an intentional event, whereby consciousness is directed toward perceived and meant objects. To say that Jung did not intend for his so-called psychological theories to be interpreted as philosophical does not negate his ontological commitments, for he

would not make his ‘hypotheses’ universal features of the psyche if he held no such intentions. To make his theories mere hypotheses is to water-down their radicality and originality and couch his doubt (or problematic epistemology) under the rubric of science as a safety-net to evade criticism from others steeped in the scientific hegemony of his era.

Secondly, I do not think it is necessary to introduce a false dichotomy between theory and clinical work, as both are operative in the consulting room; and Jung was also keen to hook up aspects of clinical encounters with his general theories of archetypal process when they presented themselves in sessions (which he wrote openly about; recall the famous scarab session). Of course, Jung himself holds multiple personas, as his theory illuminates – such as Jung the psychologist, empirical scientist, philosopher, mythologist, anthropologist, mystic, alchemist, gnostic sage, etc.; which I think makes him fascinating in the history of ideas for taking up so many intellectual arenas, like other philosophers in the history of ideas who address the questions of being, soul, ethics, God, the good life, aesthetics, religion, politics, and culture. Although Saban wishes to emphasize the clinical Jung and the practical implications of his thought, I wish to emphasize the superordinate value his philosophy brings to nonclinical realities. First of all, Jung was not impressed with having to think the same thing throughout his life. He was constantly changing his mind and perspectives on reality, introducing ambiguity and paradox, and contradicting earlier theoretical positions. This is natural for any thinker of genius. But to say, ‘He did not say that!’ or ‘You are confounding his words’, or ‘He really meant something entirely different’ does not do justice to how *thoughts* put to paper are alienated from the author’s immediate intentions and open to interpretation by other people who approach the implications of his thoughts. This is not a debate about the accuracy of scholarship, but rather over the reappropriation of Jung’s radical ideas taken up from interdisciplinary studies – here, most notably, philosophy. To say that Jung was not a philosopher by trade, so therefore he is immune from philosophic criticism, is actually to infantilize his life work.

Saban’s argument continues to privilege the psychological edifice of Jung’s ideas over the ontological when this grants psychology itself a metaphysical status, one I happen to agree with; for every psychological act encompasses an ontological process as the expression of our being. Saban wants to set out and delineate the realm of the psychological as the primary domain of Jungian theory; but this itself is an ontological claim, for every human activity is mediated by mind, including any propositions we make about reality, clinical or otherwise. When Jung (1937) states that he wants to ‘eschew any metaphysical or philosophical considerations’ (*CW* 11, p. 16) from his ‘empirical’ take on the phenomenological manifestations of human psychology, what does he mean by this? Granted, he wants to set his investigations within the context of a particular domain of study or inquiry (here, from this last quote, it is religion); but he cannot ‘eschew’ metaphysics, especially when religion is ultimately concerned (historically) with the question of God, itself a metaphysical posit. Psychology *is* ontology: our psyches define and shape lived reality, and hence animate being itself with a certain psychic presence. This is very much an idealist position – that the structures of subjectivity necessarily condition our experience of the world, and in this way construct reality (cf. Mills, 2010, pp. 208–212). I don’t think Jung would disagree with this statement, given his statement that ‘metaphysical assertions ... are statements of the psyche’ (1957, p. xxxvii).

If archetypes are merely ‘concepts’ as Saban suggests, or ‘metaphorical language’ as Jung (1941) tells us (*CW* 9, p. 160) under the guise of provisional hypothetical models, then what is special or novel about his theories of the collective unconscious and the

archetypes? If the archetypes are merely hypothetical models, then where does this leave the present state of contemporary Jungian studies? What good is a hypothesis – a mere guess – when you can't empirically test or verify the concept of the archetypes? This does not help to advance any scientific status of Jungian theory; and this conclusion may be used to fortify the dismissal of Jung as building a psychological mythology of his own. Do not all Jungians participate of this dilemma? This is why I think positing the existence of archetypes is best understood as a metaphysical question rather than an empirical one.

These are the painful questions Jungians will have to contend with, whether they like it or not. Jung makes generic claims of the mind that are universal and apply to all people: if they do not entail an ontological premise, then the collective unconscious and archetypes are bankrupt ideas seen as mere 'concepts' that have no currency. If we accept Saban's view that they are merely 'provisional hypotheses or models rather than ontologically established real presences', then what good are they if they are only *illusions* constructed to help us function psychologically or work clinically? Furthermore, why should we retain a psychomythology in our vocabulary if we are not truly speaking about the real? The field of analytical psychology should aspire toward offering an explanans of the explanandum rather than settle on mercurial hypothetical models. The speculative archetypal and collective unconscious by definition are not empirical because they cannot be seen, measured, observed, tested, verified, falsified, or refuted as conjecture; so by definition, they are metaphysical postulates. Even when Jung backs off language that can be interpreted as a hypostatization of the archetypes for the security of the empirical or psychological, where he is self-aware of the limitations in extending his concepts to the realm of the metaphysical, instead wishing to stay grounded in the legitimacy of the new science of his day he aspired to shape, one he wanted to expand to legitimize the theories he is propounding, he still evokes these questions that beg for ontological explanations. Both Saban and Segal seem fixated on Jung's intentions not to offer ontological theses versus only psychological explanations, when – intentional or not – they speak to other motives and implications beyond his conscious attributions, something that can be said of any theorist.

The negation or denial of metaphysics is itself a metaphysical assertion, for it is making an absolute statement or judgment about objects and reality. I fully accept my bias as an ontologist in viewing things this way, rightly or wrongly. I speculate that this proclivity toward ontological negation by some Jungian circles occurs in part due to Jung's tendency to separate empiricism from metaphysics, not unlike the empiricist tradition's attempt to denounce a priori rationalism when both are operative within any discourse on ontology. What do we think the empirical is about? Science is interested in what exists, how things really are, and what can be known about the universe as independent objective facts, regardless of our personal experience of objects. I think Jungians would do better to dispense with this unnecessary bifurcation and see it for what it is: namely, the pursuit of the unity of knowledge necessarily requires addressing the ontological and our ontic and existentiell relations to it. Following Heidegger, I have no trouble with this endeavor.

It makes no sense to me to separate ontological proclamations from a theorist's intentions, for their intentions are irrelevant to the conveyances and ramifications of their assertions or propositions. One cannot shelter psychology as an empirical discipline (and today, 'empiricism' is something radically different than it was in modernity) from ontology when the very object of one's so-called empirical investigation is an object (or subject-matter) that by definition eludes empiricism. This is why we must accept the metaphysics of the archetypes and question their plausibility: if we rely on empiricism

alone, then they are already disproven as distinct from the psyche because they are deemed to be psychological correlates and nothing more. If the archetypes are not posited to be independent of mind, then they are mental structures responsible for personal and collective human experience. Perhaps this is what Saban wishes to emphasize, and with which many Jungians would be in agreement. And even if this were the case, this is still an ontological theory of mind. But I believe other Jungians would interpret the archetypes to embody a mind-independent realm (something outside the experiential subject) that give rise to psychic phenomena; and this is a more radical (and interesting) thesis that comes from the classical Jungian tradition.

### **Archetypes as a supernatural category**

One tendentious criticism that Mark Saban highlights is what I take to be the heart of the matter: I am accused of conflating the collective unconscious, archetypes, and psychoid phenomena with supernaturalism and God, which he opines is illegitimate. I understand that empirical apologists of Jung wish to draw this line; but I am giving voice to many Jungians on a certain way of reading Jung between the lines, which may be said to represent what a faction (perhaps even a majority) of Jungians represent to the field. I do not think Jung wants to confine archetypes to being merely poetic, metaphorical, rhetorical, or even mythic. If hypotheses are offered under the rubric of science, they are either confirmed or refuted. How can the concept of an archetypal collective be investigated, let alone confirmed or refuted? Robert Segal is content with calling Jung's philosophy 'pseudoscience', while Saban is clearly defending his contributions as being commensurate with a scientific discipline. If Jung only thought the unconscious and God were pure myths or fictions, or simply word-plays, then why did he bestow upon them such determinate powers? Jung's disclaimers of not knowing the unconscious directly (*pace* Kant) or God (except through gnosis) still nevertheless commits him to the ontological presupposition via realism that they do exist in themselves; indeed, he offers other passages in his writings and interviews where his personal beliefs are revealed, even if he keeps them segregated from his 'scientific hypotheses'.<sup>3</sup> But this really is not my point. The felt ambivalence I experience when exploring his major concepts leads me to question the supernatural origins of the archetypes. Saban's main claim is that I attribute to Jung a supernaturalism that he neither intended to convey nor employed. I believe this *aporia* between the question of the supernatural and God lies in Jung's profound interest in the psychology of religion.

One of the central features of Jung's project is the pursuit of the religious – what we now typically call spirituality. He came from generations of pastors; was raised in a religious home; inherited a superstitious cultural tradition; attended séances; conducted experiments in occultism, the paranormal, and psychic phenomena; studied anthroposophy, alchemy, astrology, the I Ching, and UFOs; played with Tarot cards; carved mythical figures on the stone walls of Bollingen; believed he possessed the ability to predict the future; and claimed to have secret (esoteric) knowledge that others did not possess.<sup>4</sup> Most reasonable people would conclude that his analytical psychology is ultimately about the human soul, spirituality, and the question of God. Here, empirical apologetics or scientific posturing do not negate these historical facts.

When Saban (2014) attempts to discredit my analysis of Jung's self-professed belief in the interface between the unconscious and God as mere 'mythology' that 'depicts a psychological (though not literal) reality', this assessment seems to undermine Jung's life project. Here, Saban is fastidious in offering apologetics in an attempt to shelter Jung



from his own theorizing. When Jung announces boldly to the world in his famous BBC interview that he knows God exists,<sup>5</sup> not to mention that he had the Latin inscription *Vocatus Atque non Vocatus Deus Aderit* set in stone over the front door of his house (which translates as ‘Whether called upon or not, God will be present’ – which he even had carved on his tomb!), Saban is quick to evoke turf wars between psychoanalysis and analytical psychology by falsely assuming that I am saying that ‘Jung is not really a psychologist, but is actually a purveyor of religious escapism’ and that ‘Jung is muddled mystic!’. These were never my words; I am merely pointing out Jung’s psychological attraction to spirit and belief in divinity. If certain Jungian cliques are uncomfortable with these historical disclosures by Jung himself, and are in favor of reformation in theory, it does nothing to eradicate what he actually said or professed to believe. In my estimation, it would be more intellectually honest to dispense with apologies and openly advocate for redirecting shifts in theory and praxis with a specific focus on what Saban or other neo-Jungians want to emphasize.

Saban’s disavowal of Jung’s supernaturalism is more adamant – a position Robert Segal may not entirely share. In fact, Segal (2014) refers to Jung as espousing the existence of ‘immaterial entities’ when positing the ‘archetypes as irreducibly non-physical’. Whether or not Segal means to imply a realm outside of naturalism, I am not certain; but the mere notion that he is highlighting a dualistic contrast to the natural world or the energetic stratification of matter suggests that his views on Jung’s psychology are more in keeping with my interpretation that Jung embraces a form of supernaturalism. I realize Jungians are divided on this issue: while some concur, others are more ambivalent, as others still are more virulently opposed or reactionary to such suggestions. But this view was generally accepted by the early followers of the Zurich school. My interpretation that Jung’s theory of the archetypes encompasses a supernatural principle is hardly new to classical Jungians. It is the legitimacy of the concept that is what is most important today. Camps quarrel over whether the archetypes are really (1) cultural phenomena due to socialization practices as psychosocial emergent properties rather than transmitted through genetic or biological instantiations (Roesler, 2012); (2) a priori transcendental mental processes that condition all psychic experience; (3) transcendent *objects* that exist in themselves; (4) transcendent *subjects* or entities that exist as being in-and-for themselves; or (5) fictions based on medieval metaphysics of the *unus mundus* (Hinton III, 2011) that may be further viewed as (6) emissaries of the World Soul (Brooks, 2011). Regardless of these differing contemporary perspectives, the question of the supernaturalism of archetypes remains; and it is a subject that will likely invite perennial debate.

It is true that Jung makes very scant references to the supernatural in his writings, being careful to avoid taking a theoretical position on the topic. But he does commit himself in several passages in his works to the notion that archetypes are ‘autonomous’ ‘entities’ that ‘must have a nonpsychic aspect’ (*CW* 8, 1947, par. 440, p. 231). This implies mind-independence. How could an archetype be an entity or being that persists independent of the psyche with determinate powers of creativity, will, intentionality, dominance, and potency unless it had its own causal organization as an external agency? If it is an autonomous external agency or agent that exists independent of the psyche, then this qualifies as an operational definition of a supernatural faculty *a fortiori* because it has such determinate powers, despite the fact that its presence within psychic resonance is a naturalized phenomenon. When speaking about an archetypal complex, Jung (1916) goes further than just a hint when he says that ‘it is not necessarily obedient to the subject’s

intentions, it may even be of a higher order, more often than not a source of inspiration or warning, or of “supernatural” information’ (*CW* 7, p. 187).

Other allusions to agentic supernatural principles are mentioned in the context of Platonic ideals as ‘eternal ideas ... stored up ... (in a supracelestial place) as eternal, transcendent forms ... an all-pervading vital force’ (*CW* 9i, 1934, par. 68, p. 33); as well as ‘the archetype *determines* the nature of the configurational process and the *course* it will follow, with seeming fore-knowledge’ as determinate teleology (*CW* 8, 1947, par. 411, p. 209, italics added). If the archetype has its own causal powers to determine a course of events that are enacted in the psychological dynamics of human subjectivity, and has ‘fore-knowledge’ of these goal-directed events, then we are certainly veering into supernatural territory. Although Jung does not identify his theories as equivalent to a supernatural explanans, the spectra of supernaturalism – what is sometimes couched as ‘spiritualism’ – is nevertheless inferred in his thesis on the archetypes. Let me explain more concisely why I think Jung’s metaphysical theories encompass a supernatural principle. Let’s start with his own words.

In his 1959 BBC interview with John Freeman near the end of his life, Jung specifically states that the psyche is ‘beyond time and space’ and that ‘I have predicted the Nazi rising in Germany’. He furthermore refers to an afterlife when he says,

[T]here are these peculiar faculties of the psyche that it isn’t entirely confined to space and time ... now these facts speak so that the psyche, in part at least, is not dependent upon these confinements. And then what? When the psyche is not under that obligation to live in time and space alone, and obviously it doesn’t, then in to that extent, the psyche is not subjected to those roles; and that may serve a practical continuation of life, of a sort of psychical existence beyond time and space.

If we carefully scrutinize the implications of these statements, only a supernatural position can account for this, for anything that exists outside of space and time by definition surpasses naturalism; and the ability to predict a future state of affairs transcends the present natural order of being and becoming because it presumes a future enmattered occurrence that has *not yet happened* in our current temporal embodiment. If we accept the premise that the universe participates in and is governed by natural laws, then whatever is possible must transpire within the boundaries of those laws. Anything that is ‘outside of space and time’ is by definition a non-natural category – one that we typically call supernatural, or beyond the confines of the natural world in which we find ourselves situated. These particular verbal disclosures expose the cryptic supernaturalism lurking behind Jung’s metaphysics.

Saban particularly takes umbrage to my suggestion that Jung equates the unconscious with God and exerts great effort to disabuse me of this view. Let us examine this issue more closely. We have already determined that Jung confesses to his *sensus divinitatis*, his so-called knowledge of God’s existence. In *Psychology and Religion*, Jung (1952b) tells us: ‘It is only through the psyche that we can establish that God acts upon us, but we are unable to distinguish whether these actions emanate from God or from the unconscious’ (*CW* 11, par. 757, p. 468). Here Jung clearly presupposes the ontological existence of God;<sup>6</sup> and since God, in the Abrahamic tradition in which Jung speaks, by definition lives outside of space and time as the original ground and cause of natural existence, we may extrapolate to a supernatural category, as is arguably the case in the history of theology. When Jung continues to elaborate in the same paragraph ‘the indistinguishableness of God and the unconscious’ (p. 469), Saban’s dismissal of



my portrayal begins to flounder. Jung furthermore refers to God (personified as the God-image) and the unconscious as ‘entities’, stating that archetypes have a ‘measure of independence’ (p. 470) to act as agents. Jung is unambiguous in his views: ‘the archetypes in question are not mere objects of the mind, but are also autonomous factors, i.e., *living subjects*’ (CW 11, par. 758, p. 469, italics added). Here, archetypes are reified as independent entities with a degree of subjectivity or agency as personified being, just as God is presumed to be an extant being that manifests itself as an imago in the human mind. These are salient textual references that Saban or other Jungian apologists cannot dismiss with fanciful rhetoric. What does it mean for an archetype to be a living subject? In my opinion, it can be none other than a reified and deified supernatural construct.

Jung attributes all kinds of properties and functions to the archetypes, including their autonomous nature. For example, he refers to the ‘autonomy and numinosity of archetypal processes’ (Jung, 1961, p. 353). In an interview with Richard Evans, Jung states that ‘the archetype is a force; it has an autonomy. It can suddenly seize you; it is like a seizure’.<sup>7</sup> When he evokes their *independence*, is he implying mind-independence? That is, do they impose themselves on the psyche as an exogenous force stemming from an external source? This is surely implied. Furthermore, do they have agency, or possess a sense of agency? I would say that this is assumed, especially when he refers to archetypes as ‘living subjects’. If the archetypes are merely historical resurfacings (such as a return of the repressed) when they visit the psyche, such as complexes or alienated aspects of mind that are dissociated and unconsciously operative, then the whole theory of the archetypes is open to refinement and redefinition, and could be accused of being little more than the Freudian notions of drive, defense, and internal (as internalized) objects within the ‘personal unconscious’ that transpire within our collective societies we inhabit. The collective here is nothing other than the human race, not a permutation of an underlying universal mind that permeates the psyches of all its inhabitants throughout history.

I do not think Jung intended for this conclusion, so therefore the archetypes can only be attributed autonomy on the condition that they are separate ‘entities’ from the subject thinking or experiencing them. In other words, they are agencies in their own right, because they have determinate powers to ingress in the psyche, and/or they emanate from a collective psyche or mind that is the origin or ground of their existence. If they *originate* or come from within the psyche itself, then they cannot be properly called supernatural. If they are mind-independent extant forces/energies (or entities/substances, if you prefer), then we should admit their independent ontological status as real objects populating the universe. Whether we equate them with metaphysical realism or call them supernatural is a fine distinction that we must theoretically address and philosophically work out.

Jung uses the words ‘suprapersonal’, ‘transpersonal’, ‘transsubjective’ and ‘transcendent’ when describing the collective unconscious; and because archetypes are housed in and arise from the collective, they belong to this category. Presumably Jung used these terms for a reason. He was emphasizing the Über-dimension – the grandness, the above- or over-arching organization and quality to their existence that is beyond the mere individual. That is one reason why he referred to an ‘objective psyche’. Was he hoping to avoid the language of the supernatural when selecting these terms, because of their connotations to a spiritual or heavenly realm that is equated with theology? I cannot say. Here, I concede to Saban’s point that these terms do not necessarily mean supernaturalism. Yet this language, while open to interpretation, does import the *via mystica* into his theorizing; and here we must unpack its meaning. Let’s face it: Jung is mystical, but this label is not meant to disparage him. Rather, the pursuit of the numinous is a transcendent function – one designed to achieve an elevated state of consciousness, itself the

personification of the ideal: the ultimate projection of our valuing soul. Perhaps this is an aesthetic supplement attached to the spiritual feelings psychologically invoked in the moment of our encounter with the numinous; regardless, it is the lived phenomenology or subjective qualia that matters. But this does not mean we can logically equate the experiential quality of the *via mystica* with metaphysical realism, that transcendent realm Jung points toward when positing the archetypal collective.

Does the collective unconscious serve as a type of godhead? Does it have the function of a divinity principle? Some would simply settle for the transcendent. But I take ‘transcendentalism’ to mean different things in the history of philosophy. I think of the transcendental as formal faculties (activities) of mind, whereas the transcendent is a realm or place that is beyond mental activity – such as the thing-in-itself, the Kantian noumena. There is a certain quality of ascendance – or sublation (*Aufhebung*), to use Hegel’s language – that occurs when the psyche surpasses itself, when it forms unifications and synthetic operations that lead to higher-order achievements or occasions as emotional mediation, or aesthetic and spiritual meaning that attains a form of valuation and affective satisfaction reason or the intellect alone is impotent to manufacture. Here is where the numinous properties of affective experience transcend the ordinary, for personal experience is elevated to the level of another dimension or domain. Perhaps this merely is a signifier for the Other as Beyond; but this otherness often imports an aura of divinity, something that is otherworldly. Perhaps this is the psyche in communion with the universal, as abstract or concrete as that may be; but the unification of affect, image, and thought inherent in an archetype that attains a numinous organization is the spiritual dimension I wish to emphasize here in Jung’s thought.

Is the collective unconscious and archetypes in Jung’s theoretical system tantamount to an alternative discourse on God?<sup>8</sup> If so, then I am referring to the supernatural. If they are merely hypothetical and metaphorical, then they would not necessarily have the same ontological status as mind-independent reality, which is what we attribute to the God construct. At least, this is the operational definition I wish to attribute to the God posit – namely, that we are referring to certain properties and functions of aseity. In other words, is an archetype its own source, cause, or mode of self-governance? Does it have the state or quality of being completely independent, unalterable, and uncaused by the human psyche? Is it self-derived or self-originated – in other words, a being from-and-of itself, and/or a being in-and-for itself? Conversely, does the psyche possess a so-called *sensus divinitatis* (the faculty to sense and believe in the archetypes), or is this implanted in us by them? Although I do not particularly like the language of supernaturalism based on its historic connotations, contemporary derision, and its antithetical relation to the natural, in true Hegelian spirit I am merely highlighting the dialectical polarity that supernaturalism signifies to scientific naturalism.

### The psychoid conundrum

In my earlier critique of Jung’s metaphysics (Mills, 2013), I was especially perplexed by his use of the term ‘psychoid’, which he leaves *undefined*. The notion of the psychoid has no formal text; it remains unsupported. It has no argument, and is therefore meaningless in itself when used as a quasi-theory, something that lacks a conceptual framework. In my opinion, the concept of the psychoid is a mythic invention. It has no logical or rational justification at its foundation. It is merely an invented term used to capture ambiguity with a slight twist of sophistication couched in unfamiliar language dressed up to appear profound. In fact, we could say the concept of the psychoid is the most unintelligible

aspect of Jung's philosophy, thereby reflecting his confusion and obscure thinking on theoretically bridging the gap or parallax between the psyche, soma, and the physical world – something that became sort of an intellectual fetish or fantasy object for Jung. When Segal (2014) says rather pejoratively of Jung that 'as a thinker he was an embarrassment', he may have had this notion in mind.

Robin McCoy Brooks (2011) nicely critiques the concept of the psychoid, which Jung refers to as both an archetype and a function. She persuasively argues that Jung misappropriated Kant's notion of a borderline or boundary concept when employing this term, and concludes that Jung fails to make this a coherent theoretical construct. Jung (1947) designates the psychoid as a sort of 'Archimedean point' (*CW* 8, par. 437, p. 228), a 'non-psychic structure' that is 'transcendent' (*CW* 8, par. 417, p. 213); what Ladson Hinton III (2011) interprets is 'neither mind nor matter' (p. 377). In fact, Jung says the psychoid 'forms the bridge to matter in general' as 'spirit and matter confront one another on the psychic plane' (*CW* 8, par. 420, p. 216). For Jung, the psychoid is 'irrepresentable' (*CW* 8, par. 417, p. 213; par. 420, p. 216; par. 840, p. 436), like an archetype that cannot be known in-itself. The irrepresentability of this construct adds another cloud of *mysterium* when attempting to discern its meaning. For Brooks (2011), the psychoid ultimately refers to a 'synchronistic emissary between world soul and the individual' (p. 500) – what I more modestly suggest is a 'liaison between mind and body' (Mills, 2013, p. 31). Let us see if we can unpack this concept to make it more intelligible.

Beginning with his suggestion of a 'threshold' between physiological processes and 'psychic events', Jung tries to establish a comparison between organic organizations and degrees of perceptibility 'to the psyche in general'. This is where the 'psychoid' first makes its textual appearance (*CW* 8, 1947, par. 367). Drawing on Hans Driesch's use of the term as 'the elemental agent discovered in action' (par. 368, p. 176) – which Bleuler reappropriates as a biological category that explains 'subcortical processes' that are largely 'adaptive functions' belonging to reflexes and self-regulatory organic mechanisms that are 'the purposive, mnemonic, and life-preserving functions of the body and central nervous system' – Jung sets out to define his own use of the term. He largely does this through modes of negation (*via negativa*): namely, that the psychoid is (1) not a thing (it is referred to as an adjective rather than a noun); (2) that no 'psychic quality' is implied, only quasi-psychic processes, such as those belonging to reflexes; and (3) 'it is meant to distinguish a category of events from merely vitalistic phenomena on the one hand and from specifically psychic processes on the other' (par. 369, p. 177). Here, Jung does not successfully articulate what he intends this term to signify. In the paragraph that follows his abstruse introduction of the psychoid, he drones on about the unconscious in an abstract manner that fails to connect the psychoid with its subject-matter, instead meandering into a discussion on instinct and will. Perhaps this is where we may find a clue to the mysterious properties the psychoid connotes.

Here we may venture to say that the psychoid, like the archetype, is actually a *semiotic* designation for a symbolic meaning relation that represents a link between mind and body. On one hand, Jung uses the term as a bridge between physiological processes inherent to our embodiment, such as self-regulatory mechanisms and instinctual motivations that impel the organism to act; on the other hand, he requires a mediatory function or intercession to make the transition to the purely psychical sphere – a higher order level and internal organization that the soul experiences in its qualitative activities. The psychoid is proposed to stand for a term that may accomplish this conduit, yet it is insufficiently developed. What is missing is an explanation of an agentic function.

Although Jung (1947) hints toward an unconscious ego at play (*CW* 8, par. 369) functioning as an unconscious will, he pulls an Hegelian move by making the ‘psychic’ ‘an emancipation of function from its instinctual form’ (par. 377). This is precisely what Hegel (1817/1827/1830/1971) does, beginning with the ‘Anthropology’ section of the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, where the feeling soul sublates itself by acquiring consciousness of itself as an experiential being separate from its embodied reflexive sentient and desirous nature. Here, Jung imports the concept of freedom as an ontological factor that is self-instituting and distinct from our corporeal drives, yet he lacks a coherent conceptual scheme. He tends to equate the notion of ‘will’ (as advanced by Schelling and Schopenhauer independently) and the Hegelian notion of *Geist* when he refers to the attainment of a “‘spiritual’ form’ (par. 377), which is conceived as some form of ‘energy freely disposable by the psyche’ (par. 379). Here Jung is clearly importing the *centrality of freedom* as a psychic function, yet his obfuscation leaves us in turbid tides. Shortly following this paragraph in his essay, Jung gets to the heart of the matter:

Volition presupposes a choosing subject who envisages different possibilities ... psyche is essentially conflict between blind instinct and will (freedom of choice). Where instinct predominates, *psychoid* processes set in which pertain to the sphere of the unconscious. (*CW* 8, par. 380, pp. 183–184)

Here, the border concept becomes clearer. Psychoid processes transpire within instinctual organizations, but we still do not know whether the psychoid is self-derived or a modification of instinct. Is it an emergent property that becomes a more sophisticated organizational system of embodied desire and drive, such as an epiphenomenon; or is it self-initiating, with dominance over its original embodiment executed through volition? Jung’s introduction of the existential notion of choice seems to position his argument toward the psychoid having causal efficacy over its original corporeality.

We need to go back to the notion of a ground and seat of action – namely, that of *agency* – when we attempt to discern what Jung meant by the psychoid. He is quick to align with his early mentor Eugen Bleuler when dismissing Driesch’s notion of an ‘elemental agent’ behind the act of action, a concept which he remarks is ‘more philosophical than scientific’ (*CW* 8, par. 368). Yet I believe this is exactly what Jung is after when he introduces the psychic functions of will, spirit, and freedom from instinctual determinism. Here, the psychoid becomes an agentic function of freedom within the archetype; but it remains unclear whether it is the psychoid or the archetype itself that has agency. Perhaps the psychoid is merely a modified form or differentiated part or self-state of the archetype, therefore it is assigned an agentic function that can operate in quasi-autonomous fashions. But when Jung (1951/1973–1975) refers to ‘the psychoid and essentially transcendental nature of the archetype as an arranger of psychic forms inside and outside the psyche’ (*Letters II*, p. 22), he is clearly evoking a creationistic element that encompasses a supernatural divinity principle. This is enough evidence to conclude that Jung is introducing a form of *transpersonal supervenience*, where higher level properties attributed to the psychoid archetype supervene on lower level properties of the psyche. Not only is Jung referring to the archetype as existing ‘outside the psyche’, hence affirming metaphysical realism; he also gives it the status of an *arranger* as divine Agent, not merely an impersonal agency.

Brooks (2011, p. 505) perspicaciously hones in on the sundry problematics Jung introduces in his philosophical foray into explicating the existence and function of the

psychoid in archetypal process, including pointing out its ‘self-constellating’ nature corresponding to a God factor (see *Letters II*, p. 258–260). Earlier in his essay ‘On the Nature of the Psyche’, when discussing the division between the ‘organic-material substrate’ and the ‘spiritual’, Jung gives the ‘will’ causal determinism over the mind/body duality by appealing to ‘a supraordinate authority, something like a consciousness of itself’ (*CW* 8, 1947, par. 380, p. 183). Once again Jung’s cryptic supernaturalism creeps into his theorizing. Based on the ambiguity of his writing, however, it is unclear whether Jung is making a *categorical* distinction or an *ontological* one. But the notion of a supernatural metaphysics is further insinuated in his series of references to an ‘all-pervading world-soul’ or *anima mundi*, which Jung says ‘is a natural force which is responsible for all the phenomena of life and the psyche’ (par. 393, p. 196). Although Jung situates this *anima mundi* within the realm of the ‘natural’, a world soul is hardly a reality apart from an ideological abstraction unless it is qualified as having transcendent psychic properties, as Jung frequently affirms. He also frequently refers to the psychoid and archetypes in general as possessing ‘nonpsychic’ properties and values (par. 437, p. 228). In his *Supplement* to his essay, he continues to elaborate that ‘we need an Archimedean point ... there are sufficient reasons for believing in its objective reality’ (par. 437, p. 228); he goes on to say in the next sentence that ‘This reality ... lies outside our body’s limits’. Here is direct textual support that Jung is committed to a mind-independent reality. Such a God’s-eye view of totality – the Archimedean point – is hardly epistemologically justified, let alone defensible. And here, once again, we see the link between the supernatural character of the archetypes and God.

What we are really discussing is an emergence of agency that develops from the *teleonomy* of the organic body and the *teleology* of the psychological agent. In a previous work (Mills, 2010, pp. 134–136), I differentiate between teleonomy, teleology, and psychic agency. Teleonomy is a particular form of finality operative in organic regulatory processes such as instincts and bodily functions that are oriented toward achieving various biological aims and motivations, are largely economic and conservative in nature, are nonintentional and impersonal, and are oriented toward adaptive ends informed by evolutionary pressures. Teleology more properly conforms to a complex motivational psychic system that is purposeful, goal directed, and ultimately under the influence of unconscious agency. Unconscious teleology is a more sophisticated psychic order that is marked by intentionality and degrees of freedom in its constitutional structure, motivations, and aims, which are derived from the presubjectivity of the unconscious ego. Jung is conceptually using the psychoid function, I suggest, as a means to bridge the organic pulsional body with the psychic register; but the breach from embodied organic process to psychic organization remains unarticulated in his theoretical system.

Jung confers agency on the archetype without elucidating how this is constituted or develops. This unarticulated area of Jungian theory may provide opportunities for philosophical refinement. From my research, I have come to understand agency as a purely formal function characterized by the ability to process and bind information, and to translate and transmit such information through suitable natural (organic) avenues to be registered, encoded, and executed through goal-directed aims and objects that disclose the teleology underlying all mental actions. This is derived from a biofoundation as teleobiology, or bioteleology as natural scientists may prefer to conceptualize the matter. Here agency becomes an *information processing system* that initiates action.

In my system of psychoanalytic metaphysics (Mills, 2010), psychic agency is an emergent organization as the epigenesis of unconscious expression from within its original desirous, aperceptive, and sentient corporeality, only to become more differentiated and

refined through *unconscious schemata* that assemble into higher-order agentic structures responsible for instituting psychic action. Unconscious schemata are the building-blocks of psychic reality, responsible for generating the refined properties and organizational systems of conscious experience: ‘A schema is a desirous-apperceptive-ideational unit of self-experience that is teleologically oriented and dialectically constituted’ (Mills, 2012, p. 204). In my theoretical system, unconscious schemata serve this psychoid function in their determinate modes of activity. Schemas may be arguably compared to Jung’s notion of archetypes, with the exception that they derive from natural embodied origins.

By way of analogy, archetypes could be conceived as unconscious micro-agents, yet they would have to fall under a more general structural organization that centralizes the executive functions of agency. Perhaps this is what Jung had in mind when he posited the collective unconscious. But, given our critique of this concept, the archetypal collective in Jung’s system is tantamount to a supernatural entity or supreme force that directs and crystallizes psychic experience from its own macrocosm. This is why I believe Jung’s project of the collective unconscious is ultimately a form of *cosmic emanationism* derived from a First Reality. In my system, the transcendental features of mind are conditioned on a priori structures that make psychic experience possible and are ultimately derived from an impersonal unconscious agency acting as a *unifying unifier* that is not in itself unified – for it is pure flux, an invariant dialectical process of becoming, a formal presubjective agency that is not itself a personal agent.

I realize that orthodox Jungians will likely bemoan my analysis of Jung’s pivotal concepts that define the historical landscape of his theoretical legacy; but I believe that critique and progressive development will only add to philosophical enrichment. I am in agreement with Christian Roesler (2013), who believes that ‘more scepticism would be helpful for developing the concepts of analytic psychology’ (p. 288). After all, we are drawn to Jung’s theories for a reason. Why not improve them?

## Notes

1. A nice example of how Jung’s thought is compatible with Schelling’s (1800/1978) is captured in the following: ‘nature begins as unconscious and ends as conscious’ (p. 219). This could easily be applied to the notion of the collective unconscious. Schelling continues to describe an unconscious transcendentalism that permeates the world: ‘objectively, the self is conscious in respect of production, unconscious in regard to the product’ (p. 219). What he means here is that our unconscious (as objective universality) largely determines the contents of consciousness, despite the fact that we are consciously free.
2. Note that Saban relies on secondary sources when making connections between Schelling and Jung rather than engaging Schelling’s original texts that elucidate an unconscious will that cognizes as the origin of mind and world, hence the creation of subjective and objective poles of experience stemming from generative activity through unconscious freedom (see Mills, 2002, pp. 44–49 for an overview of Schelling’s philosophy of the unconscious). Most embarrassing is Saban’s unexpected comment at the end of his critique that ‘both Schelling and Jung ... do not in themselves point to transcendentalism’, when this was Schelling’s entire metaphysical project. For both Schelling and Jung, the unconscious is its own cosmos.
3. Following Saban, if we grant that Jung held a Kantian view that the *Ding an sich* was unknowable by the psyche and insisted on this epistemological limit, then he too was a critical realist like Kant who believed that something exists behind the veil of the noumena – but we can never know it directly. This position can also be said of the unconscious in general, as most of us would agree. If this is the case, then we must ontologically posit the existence of entities that can only be made known through their appearances. Then what is the unknown object that we posit? For Jung, it is the archetypes. If we can conclude that the archetypes exist as an object (what Whitehead would call an eternal object, or a Platonic ideal form, what Jung aligns more closely with), then they persist independent of the mind; for, following Kant, we can only conceive of



- and perceive objects as phenomenal appearances that emerge from behind the curtain of the 'really real'. This ultimate realm of reality, which we cannot know directly, I suggest, is conceived as a mind-independent reality and would be there no matter what, as our finite minds cannot grasp them anyway, and hence their ontological existence is presupposed.
4. In *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, while discussing his childhood fantasies and ambivalence about God, Jung (1961) disclosed his 'dark and terrible secret' that 'God could be something terrible' (p. 40). As he explained, this emotionally disturbing and anxiety-ridden experience fueled his introversion and proclivity to internalize and contain inner experiences rather than speak about them openly. He concludes: 'My entire youth can be understood in terms of this secret. It induced in me an almost endurable loneliness. My one great achievement during those years was that I resisted the temptation to talk about it with anyone. Thus the pattern of my relationship to the world was already prefigured: today as then I am solitary, because *I know things and must hint at things which other people do not know*, and usually do not even want to know' (pp. 41–42, italics added). This may arguably point to the seeds of Jung's attraction to Gnosticism.
  5. See John Freeman's (1959) BBC interview with Jung, *Face to Face*, where he pointedly asks Jung: 'Do you believe in God now?' – to which Jung spontaneously answers: 'I know. I don't need to believe; I know'.
  6. Recall Jung's (1926) view in 'Spirit and Life': 'God is a psychic fact of immediate experience, otherwise there would never have been any talk of God. The fact is valid in itself, requiring no non-psychological proof and inaccessible to any form of non-psychological criticism. It can be the most immediate and hence the most real of experiences, which can be neither ridiculed nor disproved' (*CW* 8: par. 625, p. 328). This is an omnipotent predication conditioned on the warranted self-assertability of subjective experience. The mere fact that Jung denies that the personal experience of God is exempt from nonpsychological (hence logical, rational, scientific) criticism merely underscores his presumption of the very object that is presupposed in experience, which is none other than a tautological self-instantiating premise based on lived phenomenology believed to be beyond rational scrutiny. Here the ontology of God is assumed, which acts as the predicate basis for the experience of God to manifest. In other words, even if the God-image results from projections of the psyche or emanations from the self, it still must necessarily rest on the predication of God's real (not mythic) existence.
  7. Interview in Zurich with Dr. Richard I. Evans, Department of Psychology, University of Houston, August 1957, reported in *The World Within: C.J. Jung in His own Words* (Wagner & Wagner, 1990).
  8. In 'Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies' (*CW* 10, pars. 589–90), Jung refers to this phenomenon as 'changes in the constellation of psychic dominants, of the archetypes, or 'gods' as they used to be called.' Cf. 'Answer to Job' (*CW* 11, 1952b, par. 31): 'God is Reality itself and therefore – last but not least – man'.

### Notes on contributor

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