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## Is Carl Gustav Jung's Archetype an Idea in the Platonic sense?

**Abstract:** The present study offers a comparative overview of two fundamental concepts in the philosophies of Plato and Jung, namely the *Idea* and the *Archetype*. The objectives of our research are: (1) to succinctly present the meanings of the Jungian Archetype; (2) to distinguish between the *Archetype in itself* and the *archetypal representation*, concerning the issues of consciousness, experience, and transformation; (3) to demonstrate the ambivalent nature of the Archetype, with reference to studies such as *Christ as a Symbol of the Self* and *Answer to Job*; (4) to conduct a comparative analysis between the Jungian Archetype and the Platonic Idea through three key arguments which we will further discuss in this paper. Broadly speaking, the conclusions we will draw bear both scientific and moral significance. This is because the Archetype can be called an Idea in the Platonic sense only by adopting an arbitrary approach, which requires understanding the Idea as a psychologized transcendental concept – a transcendence of consciousness, rather than of experience.

**Keywords:** Jungian Archetype, representation, Idea, Plato, Carl Gustav Jung

### Introduction

Many philosophical paradigms can trace their ideational *prima causa* in Plato's philosophy. This perspective is aptly encapsulated by the dictum: "Nothing without Plato, and very little after him." When examining the history of philosophy, it becomes evident that Plato's influence was so profound that it has often been said of Western philosophy that it is nothing more than a series of footnotes to Plato's philosophy (Whitehead 1978, 39). What is particularly striking about Plato's system is not merely that it provided a foundational source of nourishment for thought and creative inspiration to those "near" him - his peers and successors, for philosophers in general – but that Platonism was embraced (even) by those outside the realm of metaphysics – by "non-metaphysicists". This remarkable adaptability speaks of the versatility and enduring relevance of Platonic ideas, which extend their influence far beyond the strictly philosophical into extremely diverse intellectual and cultural spheres. And so, we arrive to the Swiss analytical psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, who –

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despite self-identifying as a “non-philosopher” (Jung 2014, 4889) in favour of the title of empirical psychologist – makes numerous references to the *Idea* of the ancient philosopher when defining the fundamental concept of his thought, namely the *Archetype*. Furthermore, certain definitions provided by Jung for these archetypes might lead the reader to the conclusion that the Archetype is semantically equivalent to the Idea.

To clarify the semantic nuances of the two aforementioned concepts, this study aims to undertake an analysis – without claiming it to be an exhaustive one – of what the equivalence between Archetype and Idea means within Jung’s thought. In other words, the purpose of this paper is to explore the conditions under which the Jungian Archetype might be regarded as a Platonic notion, especially in light of Jung’s aspiration for it to be recognized as the fundamental and “demonstrative” concept of an empirical psychology.

In order to support this thesis, we have established the following objectives: (1) to provide a succinct presentation of the meanings of the Jungian Archetype; (2) to highlight the distinction between *Archetypus an sich* - *Archetype in itself* and *archetypal representation*, in relation to the issues of consciousness, experience, and transformation; (3) to capture the manner in which the Archetype can claim an ambivalent nature, referencing two key studies: *Christ as a Symbol of the Self* (Jung 2014, 4040-75) and *Answer to Job* (Jung 2014, 5239-354); (4) to conduct a comparative analysis between the Jungian Archetype and the Platonic *Idea*, based on three arguments which we will discuss in the remainder of this paper. The findings of this study necessitate a thorough comparative and conceptual analysis as its methodological approach.

## **I. What is the Significance of the Archetype in Jung’s Thought?**

Broadly speaking, the Archetype, in Jung’s analytical psychology, represents an innate form that exists *a priori* (Jung 2014, 1813) within the unconscious of all individuals across the world. From this initial definition, we can identify three key characteristics of the Jungian Archetype: 1) its capacity to transcend any specific experience, owing to its *a priori* nature; 2) its hereditary nature, as an innate form; 3) its universality, through the presence of the Archetype within the psychic structure of all human individuals. The Archetype’s particularity of being a universally present form grants it the status of a key concept in analytical psychology, as it largely coincides with what the *collective unconscious* largely represents – a psychological construct that distinguishes Jung in the “eon” of psychoanalysis. More specifically, the collective unconscious is a universal

acquisition, as it is composed of contents that are identical across all individuals and cultures (Jung 2014, 3512). Moreover, the Archetype inherits its hereditary characteristic from the collective unconscious. Unlike Freud's *personal unconscious*, which is shaped by biographical experiences, the collective unconscious does not derive from personal experience; it is innate (Jung 2014, 3511). Thus, the difference between the collective unconscious and the Archetype is merely "hierarchical", analogous to the relationship between genus and species, rather than qualitative, as both entail similar attributes.

In any case Jung established himself within the realm of psychoanalysis through the formulation of the theory of archetypes, supported primarily by their universal, hereditary, and *a priori* nature, as well as through the "objectification" of the unconscious – which ceased to be confined to personally connoted data. Analytical psychology is thus characterised as a *collective* psychology, in contrast to Freud's psychoanalysis, which is understood as a psychology of the *individual*. Perhaps the central innovative element brought forth by analytical psychology does not (solely) lie in the ideological divergence between Jung and Freud. Rather, the great merit of analytical psychology resides in its affirmation of the individual's participation in the collective, through its inner dimension. Ultimately, analytical psychology is a psychology of "bringing-together" (and, why not?), a psychology that affirms a shared *primordial past* through the lens of common and pre-existing forms, which Jung calls *archetypes*.

Indeed, the Jungian Archetype is attributed an impressive and diverse array of definitions, with Jung himself describing and explaining the archetypes by referencing fields as varied as alchemy, psychology, biology, physics, philosophy, and theology. Without enumerating the full breadth of definitions offered by Jung, we limit ourselves to those most relevant to the present study. Thus, in Jung's works, archetypes are defined as: "ideas in the Platonic sense" (Jung 2014, 3587), an "explanatory paraphrase of the Platonic εἶδος" (Jung 2014, 3512), "forms or images of a collective nature" (Jung 2014, 4934), "universal and inherited patterns" (Jung 2014, 1728), "forms without content" (Jung 2014, 3556), and "primordial images" (Jung 2014, 2709; 3068). Regardless of the definitions that Jung formulates to provide convincing explanations regarding the importance of the Archetype, it occupies numerous roles in the economy of his works, particularly during the "formative" phase of analytical psychology.

Thus, in order to designate the universal structure pre-existing within the objective psyche<sup>1</sup>, Jung initially employs the syntagm "primordial images" (Jacobi 1942, 39). By this, he refers to the idea that, beyond individual reminiscences, the psyche also contains latent contents (Jung 2014, 2709) that cannot be explained through personal experience but

rather through hereditary and universal factors. Later, in 1917, Jung refers to the innate structures of the unconscious psyche using the concept of *dominants*, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the universal form. Dominants were for him factors that shape certain experiences or, put differently, they are the precipitate of past experiences (Jung 2014, 2739); forces and actors (Samuels 2005, 20). Therefore, the distinction between *primordial images* and *dominants* lies in the relationship between passive/latent versus active or static versus dynamic. Last but not least, in the study *Instinct and the Unconscious* (Jung 2014, 3089), first published in 1919, Jung introduces the term *Archetype* to describe the *a priori* psychic form. He discusses the *Archetype* in connection with *instinct*, as he considers the two to jointly constitute the collective unconscious (Jung 2014, 3094).

## **II. The Dialectic of Heredity: Archetype or Archetypal Representation?**

In certain works, by using the terms “primordial images” and “Archetype” interchangeably, Jung was accused of advocating the hereditary nature of *archetypal representations* (images) (Jung 2014, 3089). Beyond this accusation (of Lamarckism), Jung associated the *primordial image* with the *Archetype in itself*, not with the archetypal representation. Thus, he defined the primordial image as one possessing an archaic character, and therefore clearly consistent with mythological motifs. These motifs are common to all people and eras – akin to archetypes – and some of them are even recognizable in the dreams and fantasies of the mentally ill (Jung 2014, 2503).

To clarify the distinction between Archetype and archetypal representation/image – and thereby eliminate any confusion or accusations – Jung makes it explicit in his 1946 essay *On the Nature of the Psyche* (Jacobi 1942, 40) that: “The archetype as such is a psychoid factor that belongs, as it were, to the invisible, ultraviolet end of the psychic spectrum. It does not appear, in itself, to be capable of reaching consciousness. [...] everything archetypal which is perceived by consciousness seems to represent a set of variations on a ground theme” (Jung 2014, 3169). Elsewhere, Jung writes that the Archetype is: “a possibility of representation which is given *a priori*. The representations themselves are not inherited, only the forms” (Jung 2014, 3587). Moreover, referring to primordial images as “the inherited possibilities of human imagination” (Jung 2014, 2709) – synonymous with archetypes – Jung asserted that it is not the representations that are inherited, but only the *possibility of representation* (Jung 2014, 2709). Therefore, the distinction between the *Archetype in itself* (Jung 2014b, 5032) – akin to Kant’s concept of the *thing-in-itself* (Stevens 2006, 77) – and the

*archetypal representation* lies in the fact that what is inherited is not the representation itself but merely the *potential* for representation. In this sense, the Archetype represents a *tendency* to organize memories and imaginary contents, and this organizing tendency is inherited, not the content itself (Goodwyn 2023, 28). In other words, the *form* is inherited, while the *content* is not. Jung points out in another of his studies: “archetypes are not determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form” (Jung 2014, 3587).

The distinction between the Archetype in itself and the archetypal representation necessitates examining the Archetype in reference to three aspects: 1) consciousness, 2) dependence on experience, and 3) transformation. Considered a “psychoid factor” (Jung 2014, 3169) – and thus unrepresentable – and “soul-like” (Jung 1989, 397), the *Archetype in itself* is imperceptible. However, the archetypal image or representation – that is, the manifestation of the imperceptible Archetype in an archetypal image or symbol (Jacobi 1971, 75) – can be perceived through consciousness. In this regard, Jung explains: “A primordial image is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and is therefore filled out with the material of conscious experience” (Jung 2014, 3587). Thus, the archetypal representation is the possibility of “entering into relation” with the Archetype, which in itself is imperceptible. The archetypal representation is the “material” form that the Archetype in itself takes once it collides with consciousness – an aspect clarified by Jacobi (1971, 75) as follows: “For as soon as the collective human core of the archetype, which represents the raw material provided by the collective unconscious, enters into relation with the conscious mind and its form-giving character, the archetype takes on «body», «matter», «plastic form» etc.; it becomes representable, and only then does it become a concrete image-an archetypal image, a symbol”.

Last but not least, through its encounter with consciousness – thus through consciousness and perception – the Archetype is transformed in accordance with the individual consciousness in which it emerges (Jung 2014, 3513), as it “blends” with the personal data of the individual. In doing so, it becomes a non-hereditary archetypal representation. In other words, the *Archetype in itself* is *immediate* and therefore not subject to conscious processing (Jung 2014, 3513). However, archetypal representations are *mediated* by personal complexes, which causes every archetypal experience to merge typical “aspects” with personal ones (Kast 2020, 122). In this respect, Antony Stevens (2006, 79) speaks of the Archetype as a synthesis of the universal and the individual, the general and the unique.

Therefore, the distinction between Archetype in itself and archetypal representation is rooted along three coordinates:

1) From a psychological point of view, the Archetype in its pure state is an unconscious content, and therefore cannot be directly

represented or perceived. However, when the Archetype manifests through images or symbols, that is, as archetypal representations, it becomes conscious and, consequently, perceptible. In this regard, Jung observes: "Archetypes are typical forms of behaviour which, once they become conscious, naturally present themselves as *ideas and images*, like everything else that becomes a content of consciousness" (Jung 2014, 3183). Similarly, Jacobi (1971, 66) elaborates in detail: "Only when the archetypes come into contact with the conscious mind, that is, when the light of consciousness falls on them and their contours begin to emerge from the darkness and to fill with individual content, can the conscious mind differentiate them. Only then can consciousness apprehend, understand, elaborate, and assimilate them."

2) Acknowledging that no archetypal representation has a hereditary basis, with only the possibility of representation being inherited, with each representation being unique to every individual whose psychic life intertwines the archetypal/pattern with personal experience – it is crucial to recognize the idea that Jung's Archetype functions only in relation to life itself (Jung 2014, 5033). Thus, it is dependent on experience, and without it, it remains an empty form. Here, we encounter a (deliberate or serendipitous) echo of Kant's correlation between the intellect's concepts and sensible intuitions: "*Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind*" (Kant 1868, 82) – *Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind*. In other words, in a world devoid of human beings, *the Archetype would not be possible*, as it manifests only within the framework of the human psyche. Thus, the Archetype is not merely an idea that exists independently of the object – the individual; on the contrary, its existence is contingent upon the existence of the object itself. It is within the object – serving as a *subject* that triggers psychic phenomena – that the Archetype finds both its manifestation and representation.

3) Archetypal experience entails the actualisation of the Archetype in itself through the encounter between the archetypal and the personal. Thus, it encompasses both an *unchanging nature*, as an imperceptible and unconscious factor – the Archetype in itself – and the *possibility for transformation*, from its collision with the personal content of the consciousness in which it manifests.

### **III. The Ambivalence of the Archetype: A Jungian Hypothesis**

Jung provides extensive analyses and explanations of the concept of the Archetype; however, we shall focus here on an aspect of particular relevance both for expanding the scope of understanding this concept and

for achieving the aims of the present study, namely *the problem of the ambivalence of the Archetype*.

According to Jung, the Archetype has the characteristic effect of seizing the psyche with a kind of primordial force and compelling it to transcend beyond the human realm and eliciting emotional responses that can manifest as both benevolent and malevolent (Jung 2014, 2714–15). Any “encounter” with the Archetype is inherently emotionalizing because it “summons up a voice that is stronger than our own” (Jung 2014, 7215). Such a superior power, perceived as a force existing within the soul of the individual is identified by Jung with God, whom he approaches as a *working hypothesis* of his “empirical” science. He describes God as “an absolutely necessary psychological function of an irrational nature” (Jung 2014, 2715)<sup>2</sup>. The *necessity* of this psychological function lies in the fact that “the idea of an all-powerful divine Being is present everywhere, unconsciously if not consciously, because it is an archetype” (Jung 2014, 2715). Furthermore, Jung contends that the existence of God is an insoluble problem because reason, as an intellectual function, cannot grasp the *irrational*, which he designates as a psychological function and as analogous to the *collective unconscious* (Jung 2014, 2715). In this framework, Jung refers to and equates the innate layer of the individual by (and with) the irrational tripartite structure – the collective unconscious – God. He also highlights the similarity between God and the unconscious in that: “Both are border-line concepts for transcendental contents” (Jung 2014, 5352).

In discussing the psychological parallelism between God and the unconscious, Jung refers to the *God-image* as being *the Archetype of the Self*, as he himself states: “the God-image does not coincide with the unconscious... but with this special content of it, namely the archetype of the Self” (Jung 2014, 5353). The Self, within Jungian psychology, is a notion designed to articulate an entity that is fundamentally unrecognisable, one that cannot be fully conceived because it surpasses the boundaries of human understanding (Jung 2014, 2882).

Moreover, the God-image, the Self, associated by Jung with Christ (Jung 2014, 4041) or with the *God within us* (Jung 2014, 2882), does not correspond directly to the Christian Christ but, rather, to the Gnostic Christ – who encompasses two opposing dimensions<sup>3</sup>, namely good and evil. Thus, in *Christ as Symbol of the Self* – a study with strong Gnostic resonances – Jung asserts that “the Antichrist would correspond to the shadow of the self, namely the dark half of the human totality” (Jung 2014, 4046). In Jungian thought, the shadow represents evil, the Antichrist, and “the inferior part of the personality” (Jung 1989, 398). One of the Gnostic sources that influenced Jung's Gnostic approach to the Christological problem was Valentinus, who affirms that the mother of Christ gave birth to him with a certain shadow (Jung 2014, 4045).

Without delving further into detail, we observe that, within the Jungian paradigm, Christ represents the opposites of good and evil and the necessity of their unification. For this reason, the Self is referred to as the “archetype of wholeness” (Jung 2014, 5352–3) or “the totality of the personality” (Jung 1989, 398). Furthermore, Jung asserted that the God-image as totality – conceived as the union of opposites, good and evil – is identical to the image of the Self as totality. This parallel lead Jung to argue that the individual inherits the problem of opposites and their integration, as well as the quest for wholeness, from this primordial, divine image. Consequently, by noting that, in Jungian thought, Christ psychologically illustrates the archetype of the Self, which is associated with the God-image and encompasses dimensions of both good and evil, we can clearly see that Jung’s central Archetype possesses an ambivalent nature alongside the imperative for achieving totality.

Moreover, the problem of divine ambivalence and the necessity for totality is further explored by Jung in *Answer to Job* – a pivotal work addressing the substance of evil and reflecting the author’s affinity for Jewish and Gnostic influences. Specifically, in referencing the Old Testament *Book of Job*, Jung argues that the need for totality arises from Yahweh’s inherently ambivalent – antinomic rather than divisive – nature, wherein he is “both a persecutor and a helper in one, and the one aspect is as real as the other” (Jung 2014, 5253). Here Jung examines the existence of a shadow God, defined as “the inferior part of the personality” (Jung 1989, 398). Therefore, of a God who, in a state of unconsciousness, projects onto Job his own fears regarding Job’s potential unfaithfulness, subjecting him to injustice. Recognizing Yahweh’s ambivalent conduct – unjust to humankind while desiring love and worship – Jung observes that Job “realizes God’s inner antinomy” (Jung 2014, 5261).

Thus, in both works, Jung demonstrates that the ambivalent aspect of the psychological Archetype resonates with the ambivalent divine image – whether Gnostic or Old Testamental. By addressing the problem of divine ambivalence, Jung implies that evil, alongside good, originates from God. These claims challenge the theological doctrine of *privatio boni*, which posits that evil is merely the absence of good.

#### **IV. Is the *Archetype* an *Idea* in the Platonic sense? A Comparative Analysis of the Jungian Archetype and the Platonic Idea**

In many of his writings, Jung consistently reaffirms his position as a researcher within the domain of psychology, a statement through which he adamantly proclaims himself as a psychologist and not a philosopher<sup>4</sup>, contrary to the views of some of his critics (Jung 2014, 4889). Furthermore,



he asserted that his psychology is fundamentally empirical and not a philosophical theory (Jung 2014, 3562). With this he delineated the distinction between empirical psychology and philosophy as following: "Facts are facts and contain no falsity. [...] To my mind it is more important that an idea exists than that it is true. [...] [There] is no way of establishing the truth or untruth of a transcendental statement other than by a subjective belief" (Jung 2014, 8553). More precisely, Jung explained that his methodology is phenomenological, directed towards phenomena and occurrences, hence towards facts (Jung 2014, 4890). Finally, he stated that "the collective unconscious is neither a speculative nor a philosophical but an empirical matter." (Jung 2014, 3552).

What constitutes then Jungian *empirical psychology*? The author elucidates this by addressing the problem of experience. In other words, Jung's empiricism involves the analysis of the unconscious by transcending the constraints imposed by theoretical prejudices (Jung 2014, 3563). He asserted that analytical psychology is inherently experimental, emphasizing that an experimental science undermines itself if it reduces its scope to purely theoretical constructs (Jung 2014, 3564). Thus, Jungian empirical psychology entails the presentation and analysis of experimental material independently of preconceived theoretical premises, which are to be only subsequently formulated.

Nevertheless, given that the Jungian Archetype is theorized (also) through reference to philosophical paradigms, Jung's psychology cannot be entirely detached from the realm of philosophy. Beyond the author's claim to empiricism, the "birth" of the Jungian Archetype as a theoretical concept has its conceptual roots in philosophy. This connection is evident because: (1) the Archetype is theorized using a lexicon derived (in part) from philosophical discourse; (2) the explanations through which Jung elaborates the Archetype reveal clear philosophical resonances. Thus, despite its empirical aspirations, Jungian psychology intersects substantially with philosophical thought. Moreover, Jung draws closer to the realm of philosophy through the very definitions he provides for the concept of the Archetype. In this regard, we review some of his explicitly philosophical definitions, such as: "ideas in the Platonic sense" (Jung 2014, 3587), "explanatory paraphrase of the Platonic εἶδος" (Jung 2014, 3512), and "forms without content" (Jung 2014, 3556). Particularly noteworthy are the former in which the Archetype is identified as an Idea in the Platonic sense or as an explanatory paraphrase of the Platonic εἶδος.

Conversely, Plato himself defined his Idea through references to eternal archetypes. More precisely, ideas are explained by the ancient philosopher as eternal and immutable archetypes, existing beyond the level of human consciousness. Being non-spatial and residing within a

suprasensible realm, these eternal archetypes possess the capacity to create the sensible world through participation – albeit only as a copy – to the world of Ideas. This theory was openly criticised by Aristotle in *Metaphysics* (987b 10-15), who focused on its weak point, namely the impossibility of defining the concept of participation in forms: “Only the name ‘participation’ was new; for the Pythagoreans say that things exist by ‘imitation’ of numbers, and Plato says they exist by participation, changing the name. But what the *participation* or the *imitation* of the Forms could be they left an open question” (Aristotle 1908, 14).

Therefore, we recognize that Plato’s Idea is transcendent, immutable, and perfect, whereas Jung’s Archetype has an existence grounded in experience, is subject to change, and is imperfect. Considering these contrasting qualities of the Idea and the Archetype, the question arises: Is Jung’s Archetype an Idea in the Platonic sense? To address this inquiry, we propose a detailed analysis of the two concepts, which embody qualitatively opposing characteristics. For the purpose of a clearer comparison, we have structured our exploration into three arguments, as follows:

*a. The Argument of the Functional Non-Transcendence of the Jungian Archetype*

The transcendence of the Platonic Idea lies in its characteristic of preceding any experience. In this sense, the Idea exists before experience, as an eternal, pre-existing transcendent form (Jacobi 1971, 49-50). Being transcendent, and thus situated beyond any experience, the Idea also possesses the attributes of atemporality and aspatiality. In other words, “Platonic Ideas are not abstractions or constructs of a thinking subject (the result of I, the Ego or the thinking Transcendental Subject), but are real entities, existing independently of there being a thinking or seeing subject: they are «things»” (Dal Maschio 2015, 53). In contrast, the Jungian Archetype can only be discussed in relation to the thinking subject and experience, for it promotes “basal experiences of life” (Samuels 2005, 19) and “entered into the picture with life itself” (Jung 2014, 5033). Whereas the Platonic Idea is transcendental, existing above the world and beyond the horizon of experience, the Jungian Archetype manifests itself within life, within experience, thus within time and space. Consequently, situated within the world and discussed within the horizon of experience, the Archetype has, from a functional standpoint, the characteristic of non-transcendence. Furthermore, independent of the interpretation of archetypes as structures that come into action concomitantly with life – thus existing through experience, through “concreteness” – these archetypes are, in a general definition, “impressions of ever-repeated typical experiences” (Jung 2014, 2714) and “deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity”

(Jung 2014, 2713). Thus, the Archetype is fundamentally bound to experience and human life, differing significantly from the Platonic Idea, which exists independently of the experiential realm.

However, *can the Archetype be synonymous with the Idea in the Platonic sense?* The answer concerns the issue of the “psychologization” of transcendence. Thus, in its form as such, the Archetype can be thought of psychologically—conceptually in analogy to the Idea. In this regard, Jolande Jacobi’s explanation (1971, 50) is pertinent: “the «archetype as such» (not perceptible) [...] transcends the area of the psyche; it is beyond apprehension «psychoïd». Like the Platonic Idea, it precedes all conscious experience. Here, of course, «transcendental» must be taken not as a metaphysical concept but empirically as signifying «beyond consciousness.»” In other words, the notion of the transcendent must be understood psychologically (and empirically) as “beyond consciousness,” not as a metaphysical *beyond*. Therefore, the similarity between the Idea and the Archetype implies an empirically—psychological approach to transcendence, which means understanding the Archetype in itself as an imperceptible form that surpasses the domain of consciousness. Positioned beyond consciousness, the imperceptible Archetype is located in the unconscious. Thus, we observe that the Platonic Idea can only be thought of by analogy with the Archetype in itself under the condition that the former is re-semanticized psychologically, that is, approached within the paradigm of psychic life.

*b. The Argument of the Qualitative Imperfection of the Archetype*

Starting from the well-known Platonic Idea, which possesses the quality of being perfect, we highlight another qualitative difference between it and Jung’s Archetype. Thus, in the paradigm of the ancient philosopher, the Idea belongs to the intelligible world as opposed to the copy, or material object, which participates to the Idea and belongs to the sensible world. The copy participates functionally to the Idea, in the sense that any form of knowledge based on the senses does not represent knowledge of true reality. Therefore, reality is composed only of Ideas/Forms – the only real entities (Dal Maschio 2015, 53) – while the objects in our experience having only the attribute of being mere imperfect copies of the Idea. In other words, the Idea is the only true and perfect reality, and evil/imperfection belonging to the copy in the sensible world, which cannot participate substantially in the same way to the Idea that dwells in the intelligible world and not in the material one.

In analytical psychology, on the other hand, the Archetype carries the characteristic of imperfection. This imperfection is evident in Jung’s work through the theorization of good and evil as substances. In other words, in Jung’s vision, the Archetype is ambivalent, presenting immanently (in its

nature) two substantial–antinomical principles, good and evil, which must be unified in order to achieve the totality, the individual balance. Without delving into these aspects, we briefly point out that, in Jungian psychology, the substantiality of evil does not imply the independence of evil in relation to good and thus a duality, but the co-participation of good and evil, under the same purpose, in the self-realization of the individual. For this reason, it can be observed that the Jungian Archetype, despite its imperfection, contains within itself the quality of reaching “perfection” in an individual – subjective sense, which coincides with the process of self-realization. We refer only briefly to certain particularities of analytical psychology – which will be further detailed in an appropriate thematic context – as our aim in this work is not to show how opposites are unified in Jung’s psychology, but to outline the semantic-ideatic differences between Platonic and Jungian thought.

The imperfect nature of the Archetype in relation to the Platonic Idea is also expressed by Jolande Jacobi (1942, 42) as follows: The archetypes are also akin to what Plato called the «idea». But Plato’s idea is a model of supreme perfection only in the «luminous» sense, whereas Jung’s archetype is bipolar, embodying the dark side as well as the light.”

Therefore, based on the analyses above, we conclude that the Jungian Archetype is the imperfect objective–ontological form, in opposition to the Platonic Idea, the perfect, objective–ontological form. Moreover, the imperfect character of the Archetype coincides, rather, from a qualitative–semantic point of view, but not functionally, with the meaning of the Platonic copy. This argument can also be supported by the fact that the Jungian Archetype has its representation and, therefore, existence in the sensible world, limited by time and space, opposed to the supra-sensible, perfect reality.

*c. The Argument of the Structural Inconsistency of the Archetype*

While the Platonic Idea is immutable, the Jungian Archetype possesses the quality of changeability, of modification and actualisation, under the influence of personal experience within the consciousness in which it arises. Psychologically, the Archetype in itself, in its form, retains the characteristic of immutability, since it is unconscious, and therefore imperceptible and unrecognised. However, once activated and consciously perceived, the Archetype undergoes transformation, becoming *represented* and *perceptible* (Jacobi 1971, 51), thus becoming an archetypal representation perceived through the participation of consciousness. The Archetype can only be “known” as an archetypal representation, and as the effect of the Archetype in itself, which remains merely a hereditary potential for

representation and an unconscious structural/organising factor. Regarding the mutable nature of the Archetype, Jung provides a significant explanation: “It has a potential existence only, and when it takes shape in matter it is no longer what it was. It persists throughout the ages and requires interpreting ever anew. The archetypes are the imperishable elements of the unconscious, but they change their shape continually” (Jung 2014, 3687).

Furthermore, it is essential to acknowledge the distinction between the Archetype in itself and its archetypal representation, a difference rooted in the issue of heredity. The Archetype in itself is hereditary, whereas the archetypal representation – or the represented Archetype, as Jacobi terms it (1971, 50) – is not. Thus, the Archetype in itself, existing beyond the bounds of consciousness, remains immutable since it is not consciously apprehended. In contrast, the Archetype in its dimension as an archetypal representation – and hence consciously realized – undergoes transformation and incorporates the subjectivity of the personal material present in the consciousness of the individual who serves as the object of the Archetype’s influence.

In summary, the Archetype in itself, the unfilled form devoid of biographical content, is immutable, akin to the Platonic Idea. However, unlike the Idea, which exists independently of the thinking/observing subject and experience, the existence of the Archetype is contingent upon the observation of archetypal experience by the individual. As demonstrated, the Archetype relies on an observing subject and exists as long as there is a subject to perceive its activity or action. In other words, the Archetype – formally immutable – can only be analysed as an archetypal representation through its eruption into the human psyche. An activation perceived as an archetypal event, hence an archetypal experience, which is dependent upon the existence of a subject. Consequently, the parallelism between the *Archetype in itself* and the *archetypal representation* endows the Jungian Archetype with a degree of inconsistency, in contrast to the Platonic Idea, which remains immutable and exists in and of itself, independent of any subject or certifying experience. In Platonic philosophy, as previously discussed, only the imperfect copy is mutable, while the perfect Idea is not. In Jung’s framework, however, the Archetype is inherently imperfect, which – beyond the inconsistency introduced by its interaction with consciousness – also entails a mutable nature. Thus, the Archetype is, by its very essence, changeable due to its imperfection. This quality aligns it, from a qualitative perspective, more closely with the Platonic notion of the copy of the Idea than with the Idea itself.

## Conclusions

A researcher of universal *a priori* structures, Jung established himself within the psychoanalytic tradition through the theorization of the concept of the Archetype in a manner that both impresses and confounds. Perhaps the most exalted definition Jung offers for the Archetype is that of an *Idea in the Platonic sense*. However, upon further reflection, this definition reveals a contradiction that Jungian scholars perceive as a form of unsettling restlessness, like an ambivalence, one might say. If Jung is correct in asserting that the human being is, par excellence, an archetypal and therefore ambivalent entity, does this imply that Yahweh is the primary source of ambivalence? Such a hypothesis, however, requires an entirely different framework for discussion.

Returning to the definition of the Archetype as a Platonic Idea, we conclude by asserting that Jung's Archetype is not synonymous with the Platonic Idea. Thus, the thesis proposed in the introduction of this study has been discussed primarily through the lens of three arguments that elucidate the evident distinction between the Archetype and the Idea. Beyond the sections necessary for a comparative approach to the Idea and the Archetype, we have demonstrated that the major difference between Plato's fundamental concept and Jung's lies in three opposing aspects: (1) transcendence versus experience; (2) immutability versus change; and (3) perfection versus imperfection and ambivalence.

The significance of the results obtained in this study bears both scientific and moral imperative for the domain of philosophy, given that the Archetype can be termed an Idea in the Platonic sense only if the Idea is understood as an empirically psychologized transcendental concept. In other words, Jung's Archetype can be perceived as a Platonic Idea only if the Idea is reinterpreted psychologically, as transcending consciousness and preceding experience, akin to Jung's Archetype – situated *a priori* in the depths of the collective unconscious. Finally, the Archetype can be viewed as a Platonic Idea only by detaching the Idea from the suprasensible realm and “relocating” it within the deep layers of the psyche, in the collective unconscious, thereby placing it within the framework of analytical psychology. Through this arbitrary approach, the Archetype can represent the Platonic Idea, but reimagined empirically. The question thus remains open: *Is the Archetype an Idea in the Platonic sense?*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> In analytical psychology, the unconscious psyche designates the collective unconscious.

<sup>2</sup> Jung does not discuss God from a dogmatic point of view.

<sup>3</sup> The issue of opposites is presented, in particular, by Jung in his writings *Psychology and Alchemy*, *Alchemical Studies* and *Mysterium Coniunctionis*.

<sup>4</sup> “It is certainly remarkable that my critics, with few exceptions, ignore the fact that, as a doctor and scientist, I proceed from facts which everyone is at liberty to verify. Instead, they criticize me as if I were a philosopher, or a Gnostic with pretensions to supernatural knowledge.” (Jung 2014, 5191)

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