

THE Everlasting Archetypes

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“Every form you see has its archetype in the placeless world; If the form perished, no matter, since its original is everlasting”
—Rumi (Translated by R.A. Nicholson in 1898)



Did you ever wonder why indigenous people throughout the world practice parallel rituals, tell similar stories, and have lifestyles and customs that speak to the entire human condition? Why do most tribes have musical instruments, dancing, singing, and make use of power animals and other allies? To begin to let light onto the subject, let us first explore the theory of the everlasting archetypes.

Archetypal psychology is not a new concept. According to the psychiatrist Carl Jung (1875-1961), archetypes present as characters, images, plot patterns, rituals, and settings that appear throughout time and in all cultures. As he studied the ancient Greek philosophers, Jung seemed to develop his own

archetypal vision. He saw the archetype as the first pattern that is imprinted on our brain during our learning process as we grow. Jung also thought that all the archetypes resided in the collective unconscious, which he saw as a level of consciousness that was like an energetic river flowing through our minds.

The early Greek philosopher Plotinus (circa A.D. 204-270) conceived of the Creator of the universe as a radiating energy much like the sun emanating light, something that went beyond existing as a material body. Plotinus thought that the Creator contained all realities in its basic design or pattern, just before its actualization in our minds and in our universe. These concepts roughly correspond to the Jungian idea of the collective

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unconscious, a repository of the totality of human learning in which the essential archetypes reside (Gilbert, 2011).

In our time, neuroscientific research has identified areas in the brain that account for many of the principles underlying archetypal psychology – areas that generate intense visual, imaginative, holistic, and creative perceptions of inner and outer realities. According to researchers, like Newberg and Waldman (2006), the brain is designed to give us our various traits that cause us to perceive and react to the world in uniquely personal ways. Accordingly, the archetypes are defined as the original imprint on the many different kinds of mirror neurons in our brains. In theory, mirror neurons are impressions of human patterns that we observe, and these impressions shape our behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and imaginings (Winerman, 2005).

Archetypes & Healing: Using Imagery

In my holistic nursing and transpersonal counseling practice, I work from the perspective that the archetypes are the absolute *essence* before manifestation into an image or action – a formless energy, full of information and ready to represent all the possibilities of our perceptions, actions, feelings, and behaviors. I see the archetypes as evidence of our shared humanity, formed from the same creative forces. Rooted in the deepest psychological layer of humanity, archetypal patterns are accessible to every one of us.

That said, we can look back over time and cultures and see certain archetypal patterns that are recognized as serving humanity throughout history, in ways of healing. For example, native cultures, like all cultures, pass along their values and beliefs through the human patterns of song, dance, ritual, prayer, and storytelling. Additionally, the archetypes such as mother, father, and warrior appear in every culture. Even without a written history, knowledge of the archetypes can lead us to a culture's ancient behaviors, vision, and truths, because their archetypal traits are the same as ours.

When a nurse who is skilled in archetypal philosophy sits with a client, they can identify what archetypes are at work in the client's life and help them to understand the developmental options that each archetypal expression presents. However, before we can help others in this way, we must first know and understand our own archetypal selves. This is accomplished through personal development and self-reflection, which are core principles of holistic nursing: "The nurse's self-reflection, self-assessment, self-care, healing, and personal development are necessary for service to others, growth/change in the nurse's own well-being, and understanding of the nurse's own

personal journey" (AHNA & ANA, 2013, p. 8). Self-healing itself is a significant goal of holistic nursing.

In order to understand how to be an instrument of healing, the nurse must undertake a personal journey. This journey not only involves the outer world but also a meditation and contemplation of the inner life. "They [nurses] endeavor to integrate self-awareness, self-care, self-healing, and self-responsibility into their lives by incorporating practices such as self-assessment, meditation, yoga, good nutrition, energy therapies, movement, creative expression (e.g., art, music) and lifelong learning" (AHNA & ANA, 2013, p.20). In the same way, we encourage clients/patients to consider all aspects of themselves when they do their own self-assessments (Keegan and Dossey, 2009). When nurses are well versed in archetypal psychology, they can observe indigenous healing rituals and see how the healer is working for the good of their patient, because it is the same healing process for all cultures.

Anthropologist Angeles Arrien (1940-2014) studied archetypes. In her book, *The Four Fold Way*, she identified four archetypes that are found in all shamanic traditions. According to her, indigenous people considered it important to be balanced in four archetypal areas: Warrior/Leader, Healer, Visionary, and Teacher (Arrien, 1993). When we embody these archetypes, it helps us live in harmony, finding balance with our environment and our own inner nature. Angeles Arrien was also a tarotist who wrote extensively about Tarot cards which depict archetypal artwork. The use of imagery in healing has been well established. In this article, I use a specific type of imagery characterized as archetypes and based on a Tarot card model to facilitate the understanding of our human response to the healing process. To visually explore the meaning of these four archetypes and important principles for leadership in our time, I have chosen illustrations by Will Worthington from *The Druid Craft Tarot* book and deck by Philip and Stephanie Carr-Gomm (2004).

WARRIOR/LEADER ARCHETYPE:

Show up and Choose to Be Present

The Warrior/Leader archetype represents change and action. This archetype symbolizes service to the community, drawing on courage and skill to defend and care for others while paying attention to power, presence, and communication (Arrien, 1993). Nurses as warriors/leaders are aware of their skills and special talents and aim to take on certain important assignments. They speak up and take decisive action, clearly communicating their intentions. By showing up to claim this mission, they show strong presence and personal power.

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The warrior archetype depicted in the artwork below (Image 1) is a reflection of the Druid tradition, a nature-based indigenous practice of ancient Europe that has been traced across thousands of years. The warrior charioteer is in control and will guide her horses to victory. One hand firmly holds the reins at her solar plexus (Carr-Gomm & Carr-Gomm, 2004), while the other hand holds the spear that points to higher consciousness. Above the shaft between the horses is the Druid and Wiccan Wheel of the year, representing the four elements of earth, fire, water, and air (Carr-Gomm & Carr-Gomm, 2004). The black and white horses represent the forces of yin and yang, the masculine and feminine polarities of our world.

Another example of the warrior archetype is a story from the 16th century. White slave traders and gold miners caused problems around several small African chiefdoms in the state of what now is called Ghana. The chief and his priest organized the Asante union, an alliance of the independent tribes into a powerful political and military state. They also created a constitution, centralized the military, and started a new dynasty. These leaders showed up and put their willpower into this enormous task which saved their nation (Quintana, n.d.).

HEALER ARCHETYPE:

Pay Attention to What Has Heart and Meaning

The way of the Healer archetype pays attention to love, gratitude, acknowledgment, and validation during the process of harmonizing opposing factors such as health and illness. Thus, the nurse as healer can be seen as an alchemist in the process of uniting and combining different aspects of the self to achieve healing and wholeness.

In Image 2, we see Brighid the Goddess of Flame and the Holy Well, but also today's woman or man of service. This image was named in honor of the Fferyllt, Druid alchemists. She represents a healer mixing the alchemical brew of material powers found within the elements to create harmony, balance, and transformation in a process that is erotic, medicinal, alchemical, and philosophical (Carr-Gomm & Carr-Gomm, 2004).

Image 1. The Warrior



Image 2. The Healer



We see herbs hanging from the ceiling and we know her. She may not have been called nurse, but she represents our Great Work of tending to the restorative needs of the tribe.

Many modern-day healing rituals and medicines come from the indigenous people of North and South America. Because they have a close relationship with nature, like the Fferyllt, much of their knowledge and many of their techniques include plants and herbal remedies. They include smudge, a purification procedure in which the plant's aromatic smoke helps cleanse an area of negative thoughts, feelings, and spirits. Importantly, Native-American healing must consider the holistic dynamics between the spiritual forces as a part of the Universal Spirit (Johnson, n.d.).

VISIONARY ARCHETYPE:

Tell the Truth Without Blame or Judgment

The way of the Visionary is to communicate orally and/or by the written word in a way that is inspiring, strong, and well-timed. Nurses embodying this archetypal principle will be familiar with and open to the creative forces available. They know how to let these forces flow through them and manifest into the healing session, directing this flow through their higher consciousness and authenticity of actions.

The magician depicted below (Image 3) represents the visionary archetype. He stands before a great portal at Stonehenge, revealing to us that he is a shaman who is capable of traveling through gateways to bring back knowledge and healing (Carr-Gomm & Carr-Gomm, 2004). There are four magic tools at his alter which symbolize the four elements but also his personal talents: heart, intellect, intuition, and his own earth-nature. Like the nurse-healer, he maintains an authenticity and truthfulness and has developed his inner vision and intuition. Like the nurse who has gone through periods of training, he has learned to create synchronistic events by using tools and his own creativity, which can only happen if one has learned to stand in truthfulness and suspend judgment.

Shaman is a word that anthropologists took from the language of the Tungusic peoples of Siberia. It is a broad term

Image 3. The Visionary



Image 4. The Teacher



Reprinted with permission. Archetypal images from *The Druid Craft Tarot book and deck* illustrated by Will Worthington. The authors of the book, Philip and Stephanie Carr-Gomm, have been initiated into both Druidry and Wicca.

(like doctor or nurse) that is used to refer to a great variety of non-Western indigenous cultures who were previously known by terms such as “witch doctor,” “medicine man,” “sorcerer,” “magician,” and “seer.” The main characteristic of a shaman is their ability to enter an altered state of consciousness to acquire knowledge and power to help others (Harner, 1990).

TEACHER ARCHETYPE:

Be Open to Outcome, Not Attached to Outcome

The way of the Teacher is a wise leader who draws from their own experiences in assisting others through their life's challenges. Teaching is a natural, intuitive part of nursing that involves honoring the individual and taking on the role of healing partner and facilitator. Holistic nurses “detach themselves from the outcomes – or ‘let go of the ego,’” knowing that “the individual's own healing process produces the outcomes” (AHNA & ANA, 2013, p. 13). They have learned through contemplation – the great inner quest – to access wisdom and power. Through thoughtful care of the mind-body-spirit, they have earned the exterior qualities of self-containment, and thus, reflect a natural self-confidence.

In Image 4, the Teacher archetype can be seen in the Hermit – the wise man of old, the scholar of the Great Work, like Merlin, and the Druid sage (Carr-Gomm & Carr-Gomm, 2004). This archetypal principle invites us to take an inner journey, reconnecting and engaging with archetypal energies that are necessary for individual growth that includes healing and self-development. On this inner vision quest, the Hermit is learning to understand the archetypes in his own wounding. The mature Hermit, by virtue of his work, has developed openness and a nonattachment that helps him discover the human assets of wisdom and objectivity. Once his journey has produced personal healing, he is ready to teach what he has learned. As nurses embody the hermit/teacher archetype, we must go deep within for our own healing and learn from our inner experience. We can then go out with our lantern of light-consciousness to teach and heal our world.

In ancient Christianity, the term hermit was applied to a Christian who lived a hermetic life out of religious conviction. In the Old Testament, 40 years of wandering the desert was meant to bring about a change of heart. Other religions, such as Buddhism and Taoism also have hermits (Porter, 1993). Wisdom traditions throughout the world use the concept of isolation in personal healing. For it is in states of quiet introspection and contemplation that dark unknown parts of ourselves are revealed and explored before we can experience wholeness and self-actualization.

Bridging Our Ancient Origins

These important universal archetypes inspire us to stay connected with nature and to bridge ancient origins to contemporary times. No matter who we are now, we are all people of the earth, connected to one another by our common humanity. When we learn from indigenous peoples who lived in harmony to the earth, we are learning from our oldest selves (Arrien, 1993).

One way for the nurse to use the archetypes is to think of them as inner and outer guides on the journey of self-discovery. These energetic forces each exemplify a way of being in the world, and their attributes are available to be expressed through the nurse's personality. Accordingly, we experience the archetypes as a result of our own predominant perspective. For instance, spiritual seekers may embody saints, gods, and goddesses, while academics and other rationalists may conceive of the archetypes as the invisible patterns in the mind that control how we experience the world. Scientists often see the archetypes as holographic impressions of the universe. Scholars of psychology study archetypes by examining their presence in art and literature and by comparing them to images that have existed throughout time. Worldwide, we find the archetypal symbols in our imagination, dreams, fantasies, and in the world of the arts, myth, legend, literature, and religion. Each archetype is expressed on many different levels, and the expression and interpretation are dependent upon the physical, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual development of the individual nurse.

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