ARKHETUPON

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*Evolutions, forms and founding principles
of archetypes*

Project by Jacopo Baboni-Schilingi, coordinated by Samuel Lamontagne and Arthur Perini

This document introduces the prospective phase of the "Arkhetupon" research project. This cross-disciplinary research aims at bringing together researchers from different fields - philosophers, psychoanalysts, artists, physicists, linguists, etc. - who have reflected and worked on the concept of archetype. The prospective phase of this research on archetypal forms and their evolutions intends to enhance the comprehension of the concepts historical, technical and epistemological fundaments.

The "Akhetupon" project rests on the uneasy premise of the word "archetype" not holding the same meaning or implication according to the identifying discipline or field of use. From this premise emerges the need to redefine evolutions, forms and fundaments of the archetype concept, as well as the possibility of discovering new perspectives. This project originates from one major question that can be formulated in two stages: What are the underlying notions and the fundamental (founding) principles of the archetype concept? Can the archetype concept be changed and optimized to a new definition through a research work and a collective debate?

The concept of archetype has spanned the history of scientific and philosophical thought from the classical antiquity until nowadays. Encountered for the first time in the 13th century as "architipe", originating from the greek "arkhetupon", the term can be broken down into two roots: "arkhe", what commands or what is primary, and "tupos", the print or the mark. The written history of the concept claims that it already appears in Plato's writings and, afterwards, in Malebranche, Locke or Condillac's works. The concept gained popularity through Carl Gustav Jung's works and his idea to make it a common and universal object to the whole of mankind.

Through its philological history, the term "archetype" seems to have been conflated into other terms with related semantic fields such as the notions of primary principle, original model, underlying reality or archaic or primordial symbolical representation. Moreover, the term has been used as a substantive just as well as an adjective, sometimes designating the thing itself, sometimes one of its prominent qualities. From Plato to Jung, the debate anchors

the concept of archetype in two distinct dimensions of whom we intend to study the connections and logics: the archetype between existential autonomy and experiential agency. To understand the potential modes of existence, we must adopt the most complex and various paradigms in order to think about the question of archetype's branches.

The history of technical or theoretical scopes of application, explanatory or comprehensive, of the concept of archetype is without a doubt more sinuous. From philosophy to biology, from psychoanalysis to philology and from theology to anthropology, a row of disciplines, with distinct theoretical principles have appropriated the term "archetype" along their respective history. The concept seems to have the strength to include multiple definitions while remaining effective in various contexts. Although the semantic spectrum of the concept of archetype has always accepted the same fundaments or ideas, its involving dimensions and the concept modes of use, transformed through time and across the plurality of thinkers and schools of thought that employed it. These different disciplines thus share the same concept but appropriate it in rival or simply different aims and include it in distinct epistemologies that can be antagonistic or competing.

The concept of archetype thus includes dimensions that are largely pluralized and that are sometime presented as antagonistic. It was developed in the platonic philosophy as an external and autonomous reality to man, which transcends and guides his awareness of the world. In other thinkers' works, the concept also found an empirical or experiential origin, thus connecting diverse human and social temporalities according to an ascendant and immanent logic of appearance. The concept thus conveys ontological, ethico-political and esthetical aspects, and more broadly, a project to reason about the human mind.

These two situations present the different poles between which the concept of archetype was and keeps on being thought. They bring into play different visions of men and of the world that the project "Arkhetupon" aims at analysing through the study of their resistances, their stabilities, their antagonisms and their complementarities in order to grasp their mutual depths. Our initiative intends to question the crucial issue of the human psyche, of the logics of sensations, of perception and action, of these relationships founding principles to existential worlds and of the phenomena of social and cultural

transmission.

Therefore, we think that a better and a deeper understanding of the concept will be obtained by combining plural approaches and by endorsing contacts between different disciplines and different paradigms. To attempt to shed light on this issue, the "Arkhetupon" project would like to solicit actors of largely distinct fields who nonetheless employ the concept in their own way. In cinema, music, anthropology as much as in psychology, philosophy or literature, concepts are shared, even if employed in different ways.

The question of forms and modes of existence such as characters, models, languages, scripts and symbols, appear particularly relevant to us. These questions enlighten a part of the semantic and conceptual network adjoining the concept of archetype. Reflections should feel free to focus on various themes, about environmental, scientific, artistic or technological questions, among others. Those themes shape fertile tracks in order to address in a cross-disciplinary way the horizon points of this research project.

It seems important to present the initial questions in which our intellectual approach is anchored. They remain too broad but will take shape along with the debates. What is the possible division between the transcendent and the immanent visions of the archetype's effectiveness? Is the archetype unique or should it be conceived as plural or diversified; in this case, according to their reciprocal logics of interconnection and of influence, do archetypes maintain hierarchical, organized and determined relationships amongst themselves?

How can the evolution of scientific thought be understood by combining multiple levels of analysis, as they seem to be presented through the constant work of the different research fields on man and his modes of living? Between the universalism of an efficient archetypal symbolism and the particularism of an idiosyncratic experience analysis, what new paradigm could a concept of archetype be liable to provoke? Can we face up to the limits of theoretical or practical knowledge models?

Two models can potentially appear. The first one has a horizontal level of organization and existence between archetypes. This model seems to introduce a targeted "archetypal level" upon which the research could be specifically focused. It introduces the notions of co-presence and of complementary coincidence of these entities. The second one has a vertical model, where different archetypes

would be organized according to a domino effect. The latter seems to lead us towards a differentiation of archetypes according to their levels of abstraction or in return to their concreteness with a view to study and analyse them. It introduces relationships of causal and successive connections in a unilateral manner.

By questioning the polysemy at the heart of the recognized premise, we hope to open the way to a fundamental reasoning on the history, the present and the future of this concept. To make clear, throughout our exchanges, the concept's instable state is an essential and necessary stage to a deep reworking of the terminological and conceptual tools shaping the project's stakes. The prospective work presented here can be seen as the opening of a dialogue between various institutions' representatives, in order to let the conclusions particular to each contributor shift in a constructive way and to favour the maturation of ideas and conjectures through a collective path.

A dynamic team, headed by Jacopo Baboni Schilingi, supports the organization of this in-depth cross-disciplinary research. J. Baboni-Schilingi is a musician, a composer and a theorist of hyper-systemic music. He is in charge of the "Arkhetupon" project. His experience in coordinating international artistic and academic projects during the last thirty years makes him the right person to organize the "Arkhetupon" project. Arthur Perini and Samuel Lamontagne, both master students at l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales of Paris, help him with the methodological organization of the project. They are in charge of the project's communication and documentation.

The "Arkhetupon" project consists of three stages: a) a set of interviews that will be recorded and uploaded online on a dedicated website; b) an international conference with papers, presentations and round-table discussions, with eventually the publication of conference proceedings; c) a theoretical book written by the future scientific committee members, forming a research report to the whole of conclusions and advances resulting from this collaborative work.

The dedicated website is also a way for the team to open up the debate to the largest number of people and to mark its presence on digital spaces. The different contents (videos and texts) will be open to constructive criticism and to dialogue in order to make use of the potential ideas for the progress of the "Arkhetupon" research project.

Interview framework

· What would be your definition of an archetype? What does this terms refer to in your disciplinary field?

· Does the word "archetype" have an accurate definition or rather has a spectrum of significances? In other words, do you perceive an archetype as a limited image or model or rather as a stream of meanings that can have different branchings or ramifications?

· Is an archetype (accurate or spectral) an image or a static and definitive model or can it evolve in time, perfectible or alterable?

· When does the concept of archetype appear in your disciplinary field?

· Do you think there is a deficiency of vocabulary and of range of concepts around the concept of archetype?

· Are archetypes human representations based on observation and experience (ascending model) or could you perceive a pre-existent archetypal reality similar to Plato's "theory of Forms" (descending model)? In other words, is the concept of archetype entirely empirical and/or arbitrary or do you think there is a more metaphysical perspective?

· In our research framework, we had to consider using declensions of the word "archetype" by having recourse to prefixes such as "PRE-archetype", "SUB-archetype", "META-archetype", etc. Considering the etymology of the word "archetype", do you think that this direction is well thought?

· If we limit ourselves to a given disciplinary field, should all archetypes be classified in the same category or do you make a distinction between different archetypal levels? If there is an actual distinction between levels, what is the nature of interactions between these different levels? Is it hierarchical? Chronological?

· Do you think that the concept of archetype can refer to totally different concepts in other disciplinary fields, or even be in contradiction with the concepts related to your expertise domain?

· Do you think it is worth doing a research around this concept and considering new terms, concepts and definitions, or are you satisfied with the current possibilities offered by the term "archetype" and the notions attached to it?

Practical Informations

For more details, you can contact us.

· Jacopo Baboni Schilingi, organizer and supervisor

Mail : jbs@baboni-schilingi.com
Phone number : +33 6 10 82 60 57

· Arthur Perini, coordinator

Mail : arthurperini.pro@gmail.com
Phone number : +33 7 83 28 20 23

· Samuel Lamontagne, coordinator

Mail : samuel.lamontagne@yahoo.fr
Phone number : +33 6 88 77 44 21

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FOUNDATION

Website : http://baboni-schilingi.com/index.php/arkhetupon

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