Archetypal Structures and Interculturality. For a Jungian Approach of the Intercultural Education

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Rezumat

Lucrarea de faţă pleacă de la ipoteza jungiană potrivit căreia dispunem de un repertoriu înnăscut care face pricipial posibilă comunicarea între oameni aparţinând unor culturi diferite: e vorba de experienţa speciei engramată în inconştientul nostru sub formă de arhetipuri. Autoarea aduce trei argumente în favoarea acestei ipoteze: coerenţa teoriei cu ceea ce ştim astăzi, obiectivarea reală a arhetipurilor în producţiile culturii şi argumentul utilităţii teoriei în educaţia interculturală. Bazându-se pe experienţa autoarei în predarea disciplinei Educaţie interculturală la Universitatea de Nord- Baia Mare, lucrarea susţine că teoria jungiană a arhetipurilor permite comprehensiunea şi comunicarea interculturală plecând tocmai de la acel element al spiritului care uneşte şi, în acelaşi timp, diferenţiază culturile

Generally, interculturality presupposes the active communication between persons and groups belonging to different cultures.

From the point of view of the theory of communication, a condition for achieving the situation of communication is the *overlapping of the repertoires* of those involved (transmitter and receiver). A person's repertoire reflects his *inner mood* – his mental structures, codes programs, mnesic engrams.

As a rule, when referring to a person's repertoire we think of his life experience – with the cultural asset and codes assimilated by enculturing and socializing. This type of repertoire forms a *system of personal constructs*. According to the sense that has been established in the psychological literature, the term *construct* makes reference to "mental maps" or models tributary to the experience of each individual. The term was established in psychology by G, Kelly. Considering the relationship with experience, constructs are:

a) *strictly personal*; they form linking networks which *structure, in a hierarchical and bipolar manner, a unique life and linguistic experience,* functioning as predicting instruments. For instance, for some persons the construct good man/bad man can subordinate the construct intelligent/stupid and, therefore, can be subordinated to it. For some persons the same construct may subordinate the construct "reliable/unreliable man", being in its turn in a close relationship with

other constructs, such as "punctual, loyal and affectionate". In both cases, this construct network will influence our expectation towards good and bad people, reliable or unreliable.(cf. Bannister, D., in B.M.Foss,1973, p. 423).

b) Constructs *are open ways of experience categorizing: they are flexible and elastic,* allowing for reorganizations, as the predictions that make them possible are confirmed or refuted by the experience of the subject.

Kelly's theory permits the understanding of a fact which most of the people have inferred from their own experience. The same events experienced together by two persons can be interpreted by each of them, differently. Moreover, two persons may seem in an identical situation, from the point if view of a third person, playing the role of an observer, when, in fact, each of the three, having their own system of constructs through which
he interprets and estimates things, is in a unique situation.

Hence two important consequences of G. Kelly's theory:

- *no person reacts to a stimulus, but to what he <u>interprets</u> to be a stimulus*;
- *two persons who are in the same situation are not, psychologically in the same situation*: each interprets the stimulus situation through his own system of constructs

Kelly's theory explains very well the possible communication jams that originate in the different repertoires of the participants, *even when the transmitter and the receiver belong to the same culture.*

All the more, errors of decoding and message signification are possible in communication between representatives belonging to different cultures. Let us take an example. It is acknowledged that the languages spoken by the primitive communities are lacking in general concepts. The primitive can use more than 60 names for the leaves in his environment, without having a generic name equivalent to the concept of "leaf", common to us. We cannot fail noticing that a child living in such a community and learning speech within this type of language, will have a different perception of his environment from another one, who, learning to speak in a community similar to ours, will use the same name for the leaves of all the species of plants. While the perceptive behaviour of the first child will be oriented through the very language he speaks – towards seizing the details, particularities and differences, the perception of the latter will be oriented towards seizing the similarities, this one being encouraged – long before having formed his adequate logical structures, to ignore particularities. In short, when he is born, the child finds an already elaborated language – including not only grammar structures, but also perceptive and logical patterns, and they will mould his cognitive functions and processes.

If we radicalize this theory, it results that between persons belonging to different some cultures communication is not possible.

But we know that such a conclusion is not justified. Why?

The present paper is built upon the <u>hypothesis</u> *that we have an innate repertoire which makes the communication between people belonging to some different cultures on principle possible: this refers to the experience of the species engrammed in our subconscious.*

2. Archetypes – innate "repertoire'

Biology has been long operating with the idea that, during the evolution of the species, the behaviours which were successful from the adaptive point of view have settled, becoming instinctive behaviours. In this perspective, the hypothesis according to which the specifically human existence (historical and cultural) was itself able to select the psychic events long time repeated along the generations and settle them as characteristics of the species. It is just what C.G.Jung sustained, without having the advantage of knowing the results of our contemporary science – an ethology in itself – but *observing* his patients of different cultures and races: namely that the long protohistory of the homo species has operated, just at the *psychism level, hereditary transmissible structures.* He named these structures *archetypes.*

The archetype is the *psychic "counterpart"* of the instinct, consisting in seizing the situation that triggers the instinctive behavioral model. From the biological point of view this is about physiological circuits, but from the psychological point of view these paths of the vital energy have been trodden by repeated *mental processes* of our ancestors. When these "remains of primitive humanity" resulting from the "entire differentiations and evolutions" are reactivated during the experience of the present-day civilized man, they exert on him an irresistible attraction: he lives, in a unique way, a universal experience which was experienced by his ancestors. The archetypes are *forces of the human soul*, indicating a kind of "transcendence of life".

Jung distinguishes two categories of archetypes: some of them universal, common to all cultures and the other which are common to a people, to a culture or to an epoch. He has discerned, on the basis of his psychiatric experience corroborated with the comparative study of the cultures, several universal archetypes which he called: Persona, Shadow, Anima, Animus, the Old Wise Man, the Great Mother, the archetypes of the Self.

As *typical forms of human experience*, the archetypes determine the fundamental human relations, for instance, between parents (father, mother) and child, man and woman, group and leader, etc., as well as primary situations such as

those of birth, death, marriage, illness, spiritual metamorphosis, etc. These relationships and situations are objectified differently in different epochs or cultures, in each life. Hence the happiness and unhappiness, suffering and joy, success and failure in life, Jung believes.

The archetype represents an *ambivalent* power of the subconscious soul. The subconscious is nature and "the powers of nature always have two faces" (Jung,C.,G., vol 1.,p. 112): a creative and a destructive one. Correspondingly, the archetype has a bright face and a dark, frightening one. Due to their contradictory character and to the force they exert on the individual, archetypes are perceived by him as *nouminous*, that is mysterious, inexpressible, frightening, transcendent.

For instance, the "ambiguity of the anima representative of the subconscious can destroy a man…but anima has also a positive aspect" Jung,C.G., Humanitas, 2001, p.195); the old wise man can appear under the guise of a celestial, spiritual guru, wise and sagacious, or can take the Mephistophelian expression (Jung, C.G., Humanitas 2001, pp. 190 – 194), the maternal imago can inspire the sheltering embrace, the consummate protection and understanding or, on the contrary, the devastating possession. The Self can appear as daimonion, guardian angel, inner man, god, mandala, God, but it can bring "to the surface his other side, called devil", etc.

Summing up, the archetypes are:
- *a priori structures of the subconscious; they engram the repeated experiences of our ancestors;*
- *ambivalent powers of the subconscious soul;*
- *prerational forms of "thinking" and feeling;*

eternal forms devoid of specific content. They acquire content according to the culture and experience of the individual

Archetypes are hereditary possibilities of representation; hence the plasticity of the archetype, its possibility of expressing itself – symbolically and imagistically – differently in different cultures. Archetypes lie at the basis of culture; they are *elements of the spirit.* Archetypes set up the *unity* and the *diversity* of cultures.

3. Probing the Hypothesis

Provide the hypothesis we have started from – namely that there is an experience common to the species engrammed *a priori* in our subconscious and projected in the products of culture – is valid, the theory of archetypes offers us solid landmarks of comparison and communication between cultures. The advantage of approaching the diversity of cultures in the light of the archetypal

structures objectified in them lies in the fact that, in this way, we can identify both the unity and the differences between cultures, avoiding any hierarchy.

The problem is how can we validate this hypothesis? The philosophers have been long asking themselves about the way in which we might find out whether a piece of knowledge is true of false. From the philosophical point of view there are three criteria of truth: the coherence of the new pieces of knowledge with what we already know their correspondence with the facts and utility. According to my conviction – although Jung is marginalized by the present-day authors of psychology treaties – his theory of the archetypes fulfils these three conditions.

The psychologists, who see Jung as a kind of "mystic" endowed excessively with imagination, claim to be experimentalists, come to psychology from biology and forget too easily that the theory of the archetypes is logically coherent with the evolutionist theory biologists have been operating with, undisturbed, for a long time.

The most important validity criterion of the hypotheses is, undoubtedly, their correspondence with facts. The first who endeavoured to probe his hypothesis in this way was Jung himself. Unfortunately, his work is too often regarded as the result of the work of a scholar, and less as the result of the work of a researcher. Today we can agree to the fact that a hypothesis which cannot be validated directly can be, nevertheless, validated indirectly, *through the observable effects* produced by the existence of the phenomena it (this hypothesis) implies. The most important discoveries of physics and astronomy in the last century were based not on the direct observation of the cause-phenomena but on the observation of their effects. In this respect, if Jung's hypothesis corresponds to the facts, then the effects of his theory should be the objectifications of the archetypes on the level of some diverse cultural productions, and these effects should be observable for anyone who desires to search into the matter. Jung's work offers innumerable examples in this respect. The tables I have proposed below can be a stimulus for the reader to identify other symbols of the same archetypal structures, from the many existent ones, in myths, fairy-tales, religions, literary works and folklore from all over the world.

Finally, Jung's work proves to be *useful* for the intercultural education of the youth. For the last three years, within the seminar *Intercultural Education*, I have trained the undergraduates from the philological branches of North University in exercises of identification of archetypes on the level of different cultural productions. The following 3 illustrations synthesize some of the rich material obtained in the work with the students. Of course, what is important from the educative point of view, is not so much the result as the process itself: the documentation, the identification of archetypal correspondences beyond the variety

of their cultural objectification, the exercise of comparing cultures on the basis of archetypes, all these have intrinsic educational valences.

Table no. 1 The archetype of the **Shadow**

THE SHADOW		
We bear our own history within us: the primitive and inferior man with his emotions and avidities. **The shadow hides behind the Person, that is behind the *mask* we are endowed with by education**		
Aspects of the soul experience synthesized by the archetype	**Illustrations: objectifications of the archetype in the culture. Ambivalence of the archetype**	
	Positive illustrations	**Negative illustrations**
- instinctuality **- the primitive, animalic, puerile, inferior** of the man, - the **"deficient"** part (the fool, the stupid, the dwarf of everyone – the part where **the feeling of inferiority,** the fear of ridicule, etc., are rooted - **the spiritual evil**, the hatred, the irrationality, - the shadow of the man is another man, the shadow of the woman is another woman	Positive deities with a hybrid appearance (reminding the animal from the man): - **Ganesha** – the elephant god and god of wisdom – in Hinduism - **Hanuman** – the monkey god faithful ally of Rama (in the Indian mythology) - **the dwarfs** helping the characters from the fairy-tales *in Romanian culture:* - **Obedience of the Earth** (Brancusi) *In the Romanian fairy-tales:* the jade who becomes a winged horse	- the frightful creatures half human-half animal from mythology: the Minotaur, the Sphynx - the mermaids and the Bacchantes - the vampire, the were-wolf - **the Trickster** (the fool) in the Indian mythology - **Shiva's demon** (the supreme destructive force of the universe) *In Christianity and in the Romanian fairy-tales:* - **the devil**; - dragons, dragons' mothers, hags, glabrous men, etc.
	Ambivalent illustrations: - **the nymphs, Pan** and **Dyonisos** at the Greeks symbolize the obscure spiritual forces (instinctuality, irrationality) associated with pleasure; - **the elves** in the northern mythology - **the gods of the war: Ares (Gr.), Mars (Rom.), Wotan** – the association of the masculine beauty of the hero with the supreme aggressiveness - *In the Romanian fairy-tales* - **Pacala and Tandala** (the funny village fool)	
The shadow can be individual or collective. **The collective shadow is"in the deepest sense the invisible reptile tail man is still dragging along"(Jung,C.G.,1963,p.264)**		

Table no. 2 The archetype of the **Great Mother**

THE GREAT MOTHER		
A dangerous archetype both for woman, when it takes hold of her personality – this one imagining that she is capable of an infinite capacity of protection, love, understanding – **as well as for everybody within her reach** becoming her helpless and dependent "children" (cf.F.Fordman,1889,p.94)		
Aspects of the experience synthesized by the archetype	**Illustrations: objectifications of the archetype in the culture. Ambivalence of the archetype**	
	Positive aspects	**Negative aspects**
- maternal experience - the relationship with the mother, nurse, grandmother, aunt, mother-in-law, step-mother - **the maternal (protective/po ssessive) aspect** of any woman, - **the relationship with the motherland** or institutions such as the church, the university	Positive, maternal, feminine deities: - **Demetra** (goddess of vegetation and mother of Persefona); - **Kybele** – Phrygian deity – "the great mother of the gods" - **Goddess Hathor** in the Egyptian mythology - **Parvati** in the Indian Mythology -**Virgin Mary** in Christianity, mother of Jesus (symbolizing the rejuvenated mother) - *In the Romanian fairy-tales:* the prince's (the hero's) mother, Holy Friday, Holy Wednesday	**- the old witch;** - the jealous, merciless, vengeful and fearful nature of the goddess **Hera** (especially towards her husband's children by other women) at the Greeks; *- In the Romanian fairy-tales:* **wicked godmother, the fiery mare (dragon's mother), devil's mother, the old hag**
	ambivalent: - **Niobe** the loving, narcissistic, haughty, defying mother - **Iocasta** the mother leading the man to blindness when merging with his Anima, becoming his mistress and wife - **Afrodita** – the beautiful mother hindering her son's relationship/marriage to another woman - **Thetis** – symbolizing mother's success and failure in ensuring the hero's invulnerability	
Other symbols of mother's archetype - **mythical:** the paradise, the dream garden, the heavenly Jerusalem - **elements of nature and the cosmos**: the moon, the sky, the earth, the sea, the stagnant waters, the spring, the forest, the garden, the rock, the precipice, the tree; - **animals:** the cow, the hare; - **containers:** the cooking pot, the oven, the flower as a vessel, the font, etc.		

Table. No. 3 The archetype of the Syzygia

S Y Z Y G I A (the Anima – Animus pair)		
In the Jungian Sysygia we find 3 elements: **a. the amount of femininity of the man (Anima)** and **the amount of masculinity of the woman (Animus) b. the ancestral experience of the man with the woman and of the woman with the man c. the archetypal image of the opposite sex** The relationship Anima – Animus is a collective event, comes from the instinct which has nothing individual; this is why often the relationship is set up above people, who do not even know how this happened to them		
Aspects of experience	**Illustrations**: objectifications of the archetype in the culture. **Ambivalence of the archetype**	
	Mainly positive illustrations	**Negative illustrations**
-the pair, the experience of being part of a **couple – the** masculine feminine **unit** **- the relationship** between man and woman - the parental **dyad** **- the divine couple** **- the couple nation, motherland** (maternal symbol) – **state** (paternal symbol)	- all the **exemplary couples** of gods: **Poseidon – Amfitrita)** and of mortals from the *Greek mythology: Ulysses and Penelope; Hector and Andromaca, Orpheus and Euridice,etc;* - *in Egyptian mythology:* the generating couple **Geb** and **Nut** (the Earth – the masculine element and the Sky – the feminine element) - *in the Chinese mythology:* **yin** (the cold, wet, lunar feminine principle), **yang** (the warm, solar masculine principle) – both making up the two halves of the **Tao**; just as **Afrodita** and **Hefaistos** from the Greek mythology, **yin** and **yang** represents the contradictory unity between the principle *water* and the principle *fire* - *in the Hindu mythology:* **Rama** (the seventh embodiment of Visnu) and **Sita his wife** - *in the Romanian culture: "The Kiss" of C.Brancusi* - *In the Romanian fairy-tales: Prince Charming and Fair Ileana; the royal couple, the hero'/heroine's parents*	Intensification of the evil when it **splits in pair** and the *amplifying force of the couple interferes: In the Romanian fairy-tales* **dragon – dragon's wife devil – devil's wife**
	Ambivalence; - Cronos (the father who devours his children) and **Rheea** (the mother who tries to protect her children from the aggressiveness of the father) **- Zeus** (the strong, lady-killer and unfaithful man) – **Hera** (the faithful, proud and vengeful woman) **- Hades** (the man of the darkness who keeps the woman his prisoner) **- Persefona** (the child woman, dependent on her mother, who never offers herself entirely to her man) **- Afrodita** (the goddess of love) – **Ares** (the god of war): the contradictory unity between love and hatred; **- Afrodita** and **Hefaistos**: perfection and physical infirmity, infidelity and ability; **- Menelaos – Helen of Troy/Paris – Helen of Troy,etc** - *In the Romanian fairy-tales:* Fair Ileana/the princess and the dragon (who keeps her prisoner)	

Conclusions

The way of understanding and the practices in intercultural education are deeply influenced by the psychological research in the field.

Along its short history, *intercultural psychology* has known two paradigms: the comparatist paradigm and the relativist paradigm. While in its comparatist stage practising intercultural psychology supposed the comparative analysis of the results by applying the same tests to various ethnic populations, relativism emphasizes the right to difference and in its radical forms it is hostile to any comparison between cultures.

Both approaches have had contributions to the development of the knowledge in the field, as well as limits. Thus, for instance, comparativism cannot avoid the groundless forming of hierarchies among cultures, whereas the relativist approach misses the unity, the general-of-the-human-nature.

This paper proposes on the basis of the Jungian theory of archetypes a way of approaching interculturality which has the advantage of going beyond the limits of both comparativism and relativism, while still preserving what they have positive.

In Jungian acceptance the archetype is ambivalent: neutral from an ethical point of view, it is at the same time universal and particular, nature and culture, possibility and reality.

As an a priori *possibility* of the collective unconscious mind, the archetype is objective, trans-individual, and, in its deepest forms, universal. It has a double nature: in its quality of psychical counterpart of the instinct the archetype is closely connected to nature, while in its quality of element of the spirit it is at the basis of any culture. It suggests the general-of-the- human-nature and constitutes a ground for upholding the idea of unity and relationship between people and cultures.

On the other hand, the concrete *realization* of the archetype in the symbolic productions of an appointed culture depends on place and time, and this, beyond unity, makes diversity comprehensible.

Based on the author's experience in teaching *Intercultural Education* at the North University of Baia Mare, the present paper upholds the thesis according to which *the Jungian theory of archetypes allows of intercultural comprehension and communication starting from that very element of the spirit that unites and at the same time differentiates cultures.*

Translated by prof. Elena Mihali

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