Being Many In The One
Mytho-Logos of Concurrent

** Approaches to Presentations and Workshops **

This Text Presents a Concept of:

Archetypal Analysis

Engaging more Inclusive Knowing by Investigating Archetypal Dynamics of Forms, Concepts, & Activities

The work on this website derives from a general intention to promote thinking and understanding in broader or more inclusive terms than are typical of 'ordinary attitudes.' A sense of method for activating such perspective is offered here under the title archetypal analysis. However, the perspective of archetypal method is not easily defined because it is not about definitive knowing. As a method for 'including more' than is typically 'taken into account,' it involves 'knowing variously.' To facilitate understanding this approach to increasing complexity of awareness, this text offers an outline of related contrasts between thinking styles. Thus it begins by examining some contrasting pairs of terms for characteristics of how reasoning is applied. These can also be considered as 'cognitive strategies' for how to engage various capacities of brain and mind. I promote archetypal method in association with the perspectives of 'extra-ordinary understanding' and 'mythical knowing' described in other texts on the **Presentations and Workshops** page of this site.

Modes of Thinking Exclusively and Inclusively

Reduction and Non-Reduction:
The term reduction is applied in philosophical discourse to designate a mode of thinking that seeks to 'reduce' the description of a phenomenon to the most concise logical expression possible. In scientific terms, that means a description that supplies enough information to infer all properties of the item so described. This mode is particularly useful in chemical and physical analysis of properties of matter where it promotes conceptual and theoretical economy—the goal being to explain as much as possible as concisely as possible. Much of the complexity of a thing is thereby 'implied' by the logic of an effectively reductive theory. Thereby, in chemistry the traits of water are implied in the reductive description "H_2O."

In a more general sense, reduction narrows description of a thing to its simplest, fewest parts or status sufficient to identity it. This might be called 'ordinary reduction' since it involves an economy of language usage typical of informal social discourse. In both contexts reductive thinking tends to impose discreetly distinct, thus in effect singular status upon objects and actions. The logic of such reductive identification is perhaps most effectively developed when applied in progressively sequenced 'lines of reasoning' whose validity depends upon self-consistency. Thereby, one status or condition must logically 'lead to' the next, as in "1, 2, 3, 4" or 'arm swings hammer > hammer hits nail > nail penetrates board.' Reduction is understood in this regard as dependent upon self-consistent, progressive reasoning and thus reflects the model of mathematical or formal logic. It thus implies an exclusive condition of accuracy and explanation: in the terms of formal reason, things cannot be otherwise than as described or the reasoning is false. Thus there is the sense that reductive reasoning can only be 'right' or 'wrong.' Self-contradiction is error.

Non-reduction is a less common term. In some instances it is used to indicate how one thing or status cannot be reduced to another. A familiar example is the assertion that human consciousness, or mind, is not reducible to the biological functions of the brain—even though mind appears to derive from brain functions. In this view both mind and brain can be described as distinct event though mind seems to depend upon brain for its existence. This distinction derives from applying self-consistent logical analysis of both mind and brain in ways that suggest genuine differences between them. Thus, though there is a logical case for reducing mind to brain, there is also arises one for non-reduction. In relation to such examples, the notion of non-reduction is used here to indicate an overall condition of reasoning not constrained by a standard of linear or absolute self-consistency. Non-reductive reasoning can be rational yet not entirely linear or self-consistent. That is, non-reductive reasoning can accommodate 'reasonably coherent inconsistency.'

Linear and Constellative:
The term linear is used to suggest reasoning that is necessarily progressive, making associations and deductions in terms of rational or causal sequences that imply a complete or conclusive explanation of phenomena. Linear reasoning tends to be reductive in so far as it is used to assert exact determinations of 'how things are.' Thus it relates to reductive reasoning. It also manifests in the use of hierarchical ordering whereby separate entities are arranged in orders of priority. Such linearity implies that 'one thing follows another.'

The term constellative is used here to pose a contrasting mode of logical association. Rather than arranging factors in 'lines' or sequences of hierarchical order of importance or causation, a constellative mode 'thinks in clusters' or constellations. In the linear mode a beehive would tend to be viewed as organized 'from the top down,' with the queen as the logically primary element. Regarded in the constellative mode, a bee hive would be seen more as a set of factors (queen, eggs, workers, comb, honey, log) among which there are many various, concurrently interactive relationships that do not necessarily constitute a linear sequence. Thus it would not be reasonable to define these in terms of a single hierarchy of importance or sequence of causes and effects. This mode relates to non-reduction since it poses a complex of logical relationships without imposing a singular definition upon them.

Exclusive and Inclusive:
These terms are used to elaborate the distinction between logical reasoning that asserts discreet, singular states of being and that which poses logical differentiations that can also be reasonably understood to overlap. Exclusive status thus tends to depend upon assuming exact and absolute conditions of distinction Exclusive status has definitive boundaries, as in 'water is a molecule consisting exactly of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom.' No other condition of matter can be 'water.' A contrastingly inclusive description would describe water as that chemical formula plus a variety of conditions, including 'liquid' and 'ice,' all of which can be determined to be logically valid yet not 'the same thing.' The exclusive mode is more reductive, the inclusive more non-reducitve.

Oppositional and Relational:
Thinking in the exclusive terms of 'reduction to essence' along 'singular lines of reasoning' tends to generate strong distinctions and contrasts. It emphasizes difference and conflict as ways of knowing 'what is what.' That promotes what is referred to here as oppositional thinking because it tends to sort the status of things into opposing categories such as solid or liquid, true or false, correct or incorrect, good or bad, black or white. A contrasting mode could be termed relational in so far as one tends to think in

terms of likeness, similarity, connectedness, interactivity, and reciprocities. The oppositional mode can be considered dualistic because it tends to pose binary choices for status. Thus it favors reduction whereas the more relational mode identifies status 'as interactivity,' tending towards inclusive non-reduction.

Binary and Triangulatory:
The relatively exclusive, fixed categorization of oppositional thought suggests understanding that relies upon various binary contrasts, from hot versus cold to freedom versus slavery. These concise distinctions are easy to apply, but they also tend to 'leave out' much detail or overlap between the phenomena they are used to differentiate. There is only one choice with binary oppositions and thus there is always a tendency to imply a priority or preference when using binaries. White tends to be understood as superior to black. Thus binary thinking not only reduces to opposed pairs but often implies a singularly primary condition.

In contrast, one can think in associations of contrasts that are more multiple—as in threes or fours. This can be termed 'triadic,' triangulated, or triangulatory thinking. The distinction intended here is that when one thinks or associates in terms of more than two points of reference one is more likely to generate less oppositional, non-linear sets of logical relationships. Triangulated associations imply more complex potential for indirect, interactive influence or cause and effect by including more 'points of relationship.' Thus it favors non-reduction.

Judgment and Analytical Assessment:
The notion of judgment involves a sense of final determination of correctness, guilt, or value. To judge implies imposing an opinion about whether something is right or wrong, good or bad. Thus judging tends to be necessarily reductive. Standards for judging derive from cultural and social references or personal bias. Thus the standards for 'passing judgment' vary. What is good in one society is not necessarily so in another. However, to judge well or 'fairly' is often associated with thorough consideration or 'hearing the case from all sides.' Judgment is thusly differentiated from assessment in that it 'comes after' analysis. To employ logic in a broadly reasonable manner thus requires 'suspending judgment' while performing an analytical assessment of whatever conditions might have to be eventually judged. Such non-judgmental analysis would thereby associate with non-reduction.

Left Brain and Right Brain:
One of the most overtly obvious distinctions made about the structure and functions of the brain relate to its bilateral hemispheric diversification. There are, in essence, left and right brains connected by a band of neural fibers termed the *corpus callosum*. In the broadest terms, these two brain regions are distinguished by their 'mode of thinking,'

That is, the left hemisphere is described as processing data sequentially or in a more linear fashion. The right hemisphere is described as performing more simultaneous processing, thus generating multiple sets of association that aspects of the left brain's more linear modality must subsequently 'sort out.' There are various other ways in which the functional regions of each hemisphere are said to interact or cooperate in generating coherent cognitive activities. But this right-left distinction about modes of processing seems relevant to those made between relatively reductive and non-reductive, exclusive and inclusive applications of logic.

Thinking Like the Brain:
All the above contrasts are obviously made to suggest 'different ways of thinking' and these must presumably all 'take place' in the mind and brain. Consideration of scientific studies of the brain and its functions that generate cognitive activity, or mind, readily discovers a fantastically diversified, malleable, and interactive set of 'faculties.' It is not difficult to assume, considering the empirical evidence, that 'to think like the brain' is to think variously and concurrently. That is, to think in all the above ways all at once—while being able to emphasize one quality of thought or reasoning in relation to the others at any given moment.

Ordinary and Extra-Ordinary Thinking:
The work on this website is concerned with elaborating how the above qualities of 'ways of thinking' are contexted by cultural, social, and psychological tendencies. In short, the idea behind much of this writing is that social order, along with the development of personal identity in relationship to social standards, tend to favor emphasizing reductive, linear, exclusive, oppositional, binary, judgmental, left-brained traits of thinking. That preference is associated here with a practical need to 'reduce the complexity of things' to a more manageable, commonly understood set of references. Thus these traits characterize the more typical dynamics of what can be termed ordinary thinking. That being the general case, there appears some potential deficit of emphasis on the contrasting modes. An inherent and significant disparity between the dominance of the reductive modes, with their relatively narrowed perspectives upon self and world, and the broader contrasting perspectives of the more inclusive 'cognitive strategies' might thereby be an intrinsic concern that human cultures must mediate. The terms used here for this general contrast are ordinary versus extra-ordinary thinking.

Archetypal Perspective and Method

Given this orientation, archetypal perspective is posed in relation to the relatively extra-ordinary cognitive modes emphasizing non-reductive, constellative, inclusive, relational, triangulatory, assessment oriented, right-brained traits of thinking. In keeping with these traits, archetypal analytical method seeks to compose logical distinctions

about likeness and difference among complex associations of factors. Instead of 'going straight to the point' it tends to seek out ancillary, tangential, background, and obscured associations that correlate to the composition of, origins for, and meaningful significance of 'an entity.' The archetypal modality 'thinks in webs,' suggesting three-dimensional maps, radial interactions between 'nodes' of identity, and indefinite mutualities of ambi-valent 'back and forth' influence—rather than in lines, sequences, and formulaic conclusions. In musical terms one could call this 'fugue thinking' in contrast to 'melodic thinking.' Thusly figured it constitutes a 'poly-vocal' and contrapuntal articulation of the relatively indeterminable effects of concurrently manifesting and mutually modifying factors. It does not 'narrate the actions of' so much as 'plot the interactivities of' a set of references.

Thus archetypal perspective 'looks' at phenomena variously, through multiple references, logics, and theories concurrently. As analytical method, it seeks to associate and organize how contrasting, even contradictory factors 'converge' upon a nexus or node of selected significance to 'constellate its identity.' Such a focus can be a general concept like Love or a more particular phenomenon such as a given individual's personality. Understanding thereby emerges from a 'constellative map' of archetypal traits that characterize the notion or entity focused upon. Thus archetypal analysis is not constrained to 'make self-consistent sense' of how a thing or event 'is the way it is' but rather seeks to elaborate the range or 'field' of associated factors, some mechanistically causal, some symbolically resonant, that contribute to 'composing that entity' physically, conceptually, and dynamically.

Such description cannot constitute definitive representation and is ever prone to potential 'rearrangement.' Archetypal factors of origin and composition do not 'fit together in just one way. Notions of Love, Heroism, or the composition of interpersonal relationships in a marriage are so complex these can be arranged or 'read variously' and yet validly so. The archetypal view can offer no conclusive certainties because it examines the realm of irreducible interactivity among multiple, discontinuously inter-related factors. Thus an archetypal analysis of water includes its diverse physical traits (as vapor, ice, liquid, snow, hydrogen and oxygen) along with its tactile and symbolic associations (soothing, unpredictable, cleansing, feminine, pure, etcetera).

To practice this mode of logical analysis requires 'suspending judgment' since to impose standards of value and priority necessarily constrain the broadest range of analytical association. Yet that very trait of archetypalizing makes it suitable for an unbiased assessment that proceeds judging value and hierarchy.

Archetypalizing Our Way Beyond Simplistic Attempts to 'Be in Control'

Archetypal perspective so described is clearly intrinsic to human consciousness. But the reductive influences of social standardizations and the impulse in individuals to assert a seemingly self-consistent personality tend to obscure this inherent cognitive strategy of mind. Social order and identity depend upon simplistic orientations that promote a sense of 'being in control.' As important as these concerns are, they also impose dangerous restrictions upon human awareness. There is a natural tendency to come to 'believe in' those pragmatic and reassuring reductions. That can restrict human ability to respond to conflicts and changes in environments. It also tends to dramatically reduce the subtlety and richness of human experience. It is thus necessary to make overt efforts to activate and affirm this mode of knowing. Such endeavor can be thought of as the 'practice of archetypalizing' experience and understanding in order to elaborate aspects that ordinary perspective fails to acknowledge. If one desires to approach understanding of the radically interactive, thus irreducible traits and dynamics constituting self and world, one must venture beyond a sense of secure definitions and predictable control.

Further comments upon archetypal method are available on the **Mytho-Logos** page.