

*Original Paper*

# The Archetypal Word Association Technique: Identifying an Individual's Psyche (Personality)

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## Abstract

In this short paper, the authors have chosen to focus on Word Association Test method first used by C. G. Jung (1905) as an approach to uncover suppressed (or repressed) ideas strongly tinged with feeling tone which influence an individual's explicit or overt behavior. In other words, it was applied to unearth the individual's basic desires. In their proposal, the authors use the words associated with five archetypal categories, i.e., (i) archetypal settings and symbols; (ii) situational archetypes; (iii) color archetypes; (iv) number archetypes; and (v) character archetypes, from which an examinee can choose the words that come into mind without deliberate thinking, found in the Archetypes List: Pre-AP (Pre-Archetypal) English. With the words selected by an individual, they are freely associated with each other to create an overall archetypal statement that is then used to relate them to the individual's psyche in order to understand his/her personality.

**Keywords:** archetype, archetypal statement, word association

## 1. Introduction to Archetypes

At the mention of the word *archetype*, two individuals come to mind: Plato and Carl (Karl) Gustav Jung. Plato (b.428/427 BC or 424/423 BC-d.348/347 BC), a philosopher of the ancient Greece, referred to archetypes as forms, i.e., pre-existing ideal templates or blueprints. Carl Jung (b.1875-d.1961), a Swiss psychiatrist, referred archetypes to primordial images and/or the fundamental units of the human mind. The term *archetype* only came into English usage back in the 1540's (Harper, 2001/2021). From the Barnhart Dictionary of Etymology (Barnhart, 1988), the term means "original pattern from which copies are made" (cited in Harper, 2001/2021, para. 1). It is derived from the Latin *archetypum*, which in turn is a Latinization of the Greek noun *archētypon*, whose form *archētypos* means "first-molded" consisting of *archē* ("beginning, origin") and *typos* ("pattern, model, or type").

The concept of an archetype (from Greek *árkhō*, which means "to begin", and *típos*, which means "sort, type") can be found in domains, such as behavioral science, psychology (especially in Freudian and/or Jungian psychology) and literary studies (e.g., literary analysis and criticism). An *archetype* can be one of the four following concepts, such as:

- An archetypal statement on a certain pattern of behavior (prototype) that constitutes the so-called "first" form or main model that other statements or patterns of behavior, and objects copy, emulate, or "merge" into (Bradshaw & Storm, 2013);
- A Platonic concept of *pure form* based on the Theory of Forms (also known as Theory of Ideas) – a philosophical theory that has been attributed to the Greek philosopher Plato – explaining that the physical world is not as real or true as timeless, absolute, unchangeable ideas, believed to embody the fundamental characteristics of a thing (see Ross, 1951, for more detail);

- A Jungian idea of collective unconscious, pattern of thought or image that is universally present in an individual psyche (Jung, 1973/2014); and/or
- A literary symbol or motif (that can also be seen in painting or found in mythology) drawn from comparative anthropology and Jungian archetypal psychology that refers to the recurrence of characters or ideas sharing similar traits throughout various, seemingly unrelated cases in classic storytelling, media, and so on (see Bottigheimer, 2006, for more detail).

According to Holzinger et al. (2013), the archetypes are very close analogies to instincts long before any consciousness develops. Archetypes are “impersonal and inherited traits of human beings that present and motivate human behavior” (Holzinger et al., 2013, p. 18). They continue to influence individuals’ feelings and behavior even after some degree of consciousness has been developed subsequently (Holzinger et al., 2013). In other words, **archetypes, or instance**, in Greek mythology, represent parts of the **psyche** that embody the full-blown human experience. Jung has identified 12 archetypes that are present in one’s psyche. These 12 archetypes with their respective shadows are needed to integrate into our conscious reality, where 12 is considered the number of completeness. In the modern psychology, the 12 archetypes are shown in Table 1 (as provided by Oldale, 2020) below: artist, caregiver, everyman, explorer, innocent, jester, lover, magician, outlaw, ruler, sage, and warrior.

Table 1. The 12 Archetypes

Modern Psychological Terms	Jungian Equivalent Terms	Jungian Original Terms
Artist	Father	Anima/Animus
Caregiver	Mother	Child
Everyman	Persona	Father
Explorer	Hero	Hero
Innocent	Child	Magician
Jester	Trickster	Maiden
Lover	Maiden	Mother
Magician	Mother	Persona
Outlaw	Hero	Sage
Ruler	Self	Self
Sage	Father	Shadow
Warrior	Hero	Trickster

In this short paper, the authors are focusing on Jungian archetypes (psychic counterpart of instinct), which are defined as universal, archaic symbols and images derived from the collective unconscious, which, in turn, is a kind of innate unspecific knowledge, derived from the sum total of human history that foretokens and directs conscious behavior.

### Word Association Test

Word Association Test (or WAT for short) is one of the several tools of the Projective Technique used by counsellors, therapists and psychologists to evaluate, assess or profile an individual’s personality traits. Interestingly, there are also many other tools of this technique which includes the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT; Murray, 1943) and the Psychological Situational Tests or Situational Judgment Tests (Weekley & Polyhart, 2005), but it is not within the scope of this paper to delve into this topic. All these projective techniques are used to evaluate an individual’s personality traits.

Briefly described here, the WAT method was first used by C. G. Jung (1905/1969) to find out suppressed

ideas strongly tinged with feeling tone which influence the overt behavior of an individual. In a WAT administration, the examiner or assessor presents a series of words to an individual respondent or examinee. For each word, the examinee is instructed to respond with the first word (i.e., associate) that comes to mind. The aim of administering the WAT is to unearth the individual's basic desires (Keiser, 1980). This method as later amplified by Kent and Rosenoff (1910), who composed a list of commonly used words to elicit the required responses from any individual. Years later, Rapaport (1946) improved the WAT method. In fact, WAT has become an extremely useful tool to uncover the tones, attitudes and areas of problem involving an individual's psychological and emotional state (which can result in what is known as a psychological and emotional or psycho-emotional complex (Note 1)) that is being evaluated. To sum up, the WAT provides a clue to the dynamic content of an individual's personality structure.

### Archetypal Categories of Words

The authors of this paper have selected several lists of Archetypes for review as well as evaluation. They finally came to a consensus that the most appropriate list is the "Archetypes List: Pre-AP (Pre-Archetypal) English" that can be found online at [www.humbleisd.net](http://www.humbleisd.net) (see References for the full detail). On the list, there are five columns of words associated with five archetypal categories: (i) archetypal settings and symbols; (ii) situational archetypes; (iii) color archetypes; (iv) number archetypes; and (v) character archetypes (see Table 2). An examinee is told to circle those words (that the examinee can associate with) that come to mind, without having to involve deliberate thinking. The general instruction is provided as follows:

**Instruction:** Do not rationalize the choices you make. Whatever that comes to your mind first, pick that choice by circling the word.

Specific instruction for each archetypal category is provided below:

*Under each of the five columns, follow the instruction under each column and make your choices by circling the words that you best associate with:*

- Column 1-Archetypal Settings & Symbols: Circle *THREE* [3] archetypes that come immediately to your mind.
- Column 2-Situational Archetypes: Circle *ONE* [1] archetype that comes immediately to your mind.
- Column 3-Colour Archetypes: Circle *TWO* [2] colors that first capture your attention. Do not associate the colors with anything that you like
- Column 4-Number Archetypes: Circle *ONE* [1] number that first captures your attention.
- Column 5: Character Archetypes: Circle *TWO* [2] archetypes that comes immediately to your mind.

Table 2. A List of Words under the 5 Archetypal Categories

Archetypal Settings & Symbols	Situational Archetypes	Colour Archetypes	Number Archetypes	Character Archetypes
• Sun	• Quest	• Red	• 1 One	• Hero
• Moon	• Journey	• Green	• 2 Two	• Loner/Outcast
• Water	• Task	• Blue	• 3 Three	• Underdog
• Sea	• Supernatural intervention	• Black	• 4 Four	• Innocent
• River	• Innate wisdom vs. Educated stupidity	• White	• 5 Five	• Villain
• Fountain		• Brown	• 6 Six	• Terrible Mother or Temptress
• Whirlpool		• Orange	• 7 Seven	• Stepmother
• Threshold	• Fall	• Pink	• 12 Twelve	

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• Magic Weapon	• Battle between Good & Evil	• Purple	• Damsel in distress
• Garden	• Ritual	• Yellow	• Sage/Mentor
• Tree	• Sleep/The Void	• Gold	• Spiritual Earth/Good Mother
• Caves & Tunnels	• Death/Rebirth		• Soulmate
• Islands			• Loyal Retainer
• Desert			• Ill-Fated Lover
• Fire			• Nature Helper
• Circle/Sphere			• Jester
• Egg/Oval			• Scapegoat/Sacrificial Victim
• Triangle/Pyramid			• Giant/Monster
• Yin-Yang			• Serpent

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The interpretation of the archetypes in terms of their respective meanings can be found on the website “Archetypes List: Pre-AP English” (see References for the full detail).

The procedure in conducting the Archetypal Word Association Technique is divided into four phases as follows: (1) Word association; (2) Archetypal projective drawing; (3) Archetypal personality; and (4) Establishment of the shadow. In this paper, the main focus is on the first phase, especially creating or writing an archetypal statement by freely associating the chosen words from the different archetypal categories with whatever thoughts come to mind, no matter how embarrassing, illogical or irrelevant they may seem.

### Phase 1: Word Association

- Step 1: Interpret & analyze the 3 chosen words from the Archetypal Settings & Symbols to formulate an Archetypal Statement (AS), i.e., AS#1.

For example, taken from a real case (Note 2) to illustrate here, a client/examinee (identified by the initials AN) chose the three words – (1) Magic Weapon; (2) Garden; and (3) Fountain – in this sequence. From the Archetypes List, the meanings of the three archetypes are provided. By association of three archetypal words, the following archetypal statement is made: “The client possesses some form of extraordinary quality of a hero (given to her by her mentor figure, whoever that person is) and it is something only she can use to its full potential. She prefers a setting like *paradise of innocence* and *unspoiled beauty* (esp., her femininity; also, *fertility, new birth* and *hope*) that gives her a sense of *rebirth, renewal* and *life*” (Chia, 2021, slide 37; words in italic mean that they are also noted in the meanings of other chosen archetypes under different archetypal categories).

- Step 2: Interpret & analyze the 1 chosen word from the Situational Archetypes to formulate another AS#2 by incorporating AS#1.

For example, the same client AN chose the phrase – Innate Wisdom vs Educated Stupidity. From the Archetypes List, the meaning of the phrase is provided. It means AN want to show wisdom and understanding of her situation instinctively as opposed to those supposedly in charge (often shown by a *Loyal Retainer*). By associating this phrase with AS#1, a new archetypal statement AS#2 is created: “The client possesses an extraordinary attribute that she can maximize it to realize her potential if used wisely within her current situation to preserve her *innocence* and *unspoiled beauty* (i.e., *femininity*) in the process of her personal transformation” (Chia, 2021, slide 37).

- Step 3: Interpret & analyze the 2 chosen words from the Color Archetypes to formulate another AS#3 by incorporating AS#2.

For example, AN chose the two colors – (1) Green and (2) White – in this sequence. From the Archetypes List, the positive traits of Green are “growth, sensation, *hope & fertility*, while the positive traits of White are light, *purity & innocence*” (where words in italic mean that they are also noted in the meanings of other chosen archetypes under different archetypal categories; the underlined word light can be found and expanded in the Character Archetypes). The negative traits of Green are “*death & decay*”, while the negative traits of White are “*death*, terror & supernatural” (Chia, 2021, slide 37). By associating these colors with AS#2, another new archetypal statement AS#3 is created: “With the possession of an extraordinary attribute, the client can maximize her potential by using it wisely within her current situation to preserve her *innocence, purity and unspoiled beauty* (i.e., *femininity*) in the process of her personal transformation, and at the same time, be also mindful of the dark personality traits associated with death, decay, terror and supernatural that can be found in the color archetypes of Green and White” (Chia, 2021, slide 37).

- Step 4: Interpret & analyze the 1 word from the *Number Archetypes* to formulate another AS#4 by incorporating AS#3.

For example, the client chose the number 1. From the Archetypes List, “One, which represents ultimate unity, identity, equality; *existence; general harmony, peace, & tranquility*” (Chia, 2021, slide 38). By associating the number archetype One [1] with AS#3, another archetypal statement AS#4 is created: “In possessing an extraordinary attribute, AN is in one mind or singular mindset to maximize her potential by using it wisely within her current situation to preserve her *innocence, purity and unspoiled beauty* (i.e., *femininity*) in the process of her personal transformation, and at the same time, be also mindful of the dark personality traits associating with death, decay, terror and supernatural that can be found in the color archetypes of Green and White” (Chia, 2021, slide 38). The dark personality traits are also known as the Dark Triad, consisting of “a constellation of three socially undesirable personality traits: narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy” (Jonason & Webster, 2010, p. 420).

- Step 5: Interpret & analyze the 2 words from the Character Archetypes to formulate the final AS#5 by incorporating AS#4.

For example, as in the case of AN, the client saw “herself as a *Loyal Retainer* (confirmed again by her choice made in Situational Archetype) like a servant (servitude) who is heroic herself and sees her duty in protecting the others and reflect her nobility. The client, being an *Innocent*, trusts in faith & optimism (underlined phrase is related to the light found in the Color Archetypes), keeping exceptionally high ideals & aspirations, and a belief in hard work and doing the right thing” (Chia, 2021, slide 38). This AS#5 becomes the final archetypal statement in the analysis and it can be briefly summed up as follows: “She (AN) is a person, who possesses the *heroic quality* to serve and protect what is *good, pure, innocent, beautiful, harmonious & peaceful* (ideals & aspirations) and a belief in diligence and *doing things right* with the *hope* for a better life with full *trust in faith and optimism*” (Chia, 2012, slide 38).

## Phase 2: Archetypal Projective Drawing

- Step 1: Ask the client to draw all the words s/he has chosen to put them in form of a drawing. Take note that not everyone is able to draw every word s/he has chosen. If the client is unable to draw, s/he can draw something symbolic to represent the chosen word.
- Step 2: Provide the color pencils based on the Color Archetypes for the client to color the drawing (only use color pencils based on the 2 selected colors, and not any other colors).
- Step 3: Label the drawing to associate each artifact with the archetype. An example of this archetypal drawing done by another client, GC, is shown in Figure 1 below:

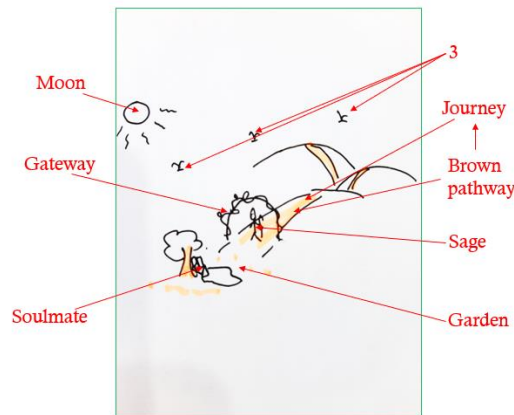


Figure 1. Archetypal Projective Drawing

In short, the archetypal projective drawing (as shown above) is based on the client's choice of words that she has picked from the Archetypal Word Association Test (like the Jungian Word Association Test).

### Phase 3: Archetypal Personality

- Step 1: Complete the following required information from the Archetypal Statements to answer the client's issues of interest (see Pearson, 2019, for detail): (a) Goal? (b) Fear? (c) Problem? (d) Response to Task? (e) Gift? (f) Pitfalls/Shortcomings? and (g) Addictive Quality/Addiction? The information provided helps to identify one among the 12 archetypes that best describes the client's psyche or personality, i.e., "the totality of the human mind, conscious and unconscious" (Amoroso et al., 2018, p. 601).
- Step 2: Check the information and identify the specific archetypal personality found in Jung's twelve archetypes based on the research done by Pearson (2019) of the Center for Archetypal Studies and Applications (see References for detail).

### Phase 4: Establishment of the Shadow

This is the last phase the goal of which is to establish the client's shadow. The shadow, which is also known as the *id* (according to Freudian definition of shadow), shadow aspect, or shadow archetype, is either an unconscious aspect of an individual's personality (but the conscious ego does not identify in itself) or the entirety of the unconscious (i.e., everything of which a person is not fully conscious). In short, the shadow is the unknown side or the psychological term for "everything that we can't see in ourselves" (Jeffrey, 2019, p. 1). In this paper, the authors' preferred the Jungian definition or term of shadow, which includes everything outside the light of consciousness and it can be either positive or negative. As many of us tend to reject or remain ignorant of the least desirable aspects of an individual's personality, the shadow is often largely negative. However, there are also "positive aspects that may also remain hidden in one's shadow, especially in people with low self-esteem, anxieties, and false beliefs" (Young-Eisendrath & Dawson, 1997, p. 319). It is not within the scope of this paper to delve into this topic of shadow.

## 2. Conclusion

The Archetypal Word Association Technique, like the Jungian Word Association Test, should not be used alone but in complement with other personality assessments, such as Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991) and Lüscher Color Test (Lüscher, 1971), for the purpose of triangulating the results gathered from all the various tests administered. Its results can be used to check against the findings from other personality tests done. In this way, it potentially offers a better gauge in understanding the human psyche (personality).

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### Notes

Note 1. A complex is a core pattern of emotions, memories, perceptions, and wishes in the personal unconscious organized around a common theme, such as power, status, recognition and wealth (Schultz & Schultz, 2009).

Note 2. The authors want to thank Dr K. H. Chia for the permission to quote the case for inclusion in this paper. Permission was given in consultation with the client, whose name and identity are kept private and confidential.