

THE DOUBLE: AN ARCHETYPAL CONFIGURATION

[1976]

Mitchell Walker

Jung never intended that his conceptualizations were final, or that he was always correct. Rather, he hoped that his tentative interpretations would be developed and revised. In this light, I would like to propose an archetypal concept, the “double,” to account for a soul-figure with all the erotic and spiritual significances attached to Anima/us, but of the same sex, and yet not a Shadow. This figure has mythological examples, and is felt in psychological experience. It is lost if named either Shadow or Anima/us.

I see the Double as that set of characteristics which give rise, ultimately, to our conscious awareness of gender identity as a biological male or female, although the Double is much more (and less) than our paltry social idea of manness or womanness, and is entirely lacking in sexist connotations (these are added on later). It follows from this that the Double and the Anima/us are equal and complementary, and form a whole, androgynous in nature. For example, the Anima contains the archetypal images of mother, daughter, sister, lover. The male Double, then, contains those of father, son, brother, lover. Just as a woman can serve for projection of the Anima, so a man can serve for projection of the male Double, and vice versa for women. The Double, as well as the Anima/us, can be part of what Jung terms the transcendent function.

With this new insight we finally have a satisfactory meaning for Aristophanes' love myth of the round beings, as told by Plato in his *Symposium*:

You must begin your lesson with the nature of man and its development. For our original nature was by no means the same as it is now. In the first place, there were three kinds of human beings, not merely the two sexes, male and female, as at present: there was a third kind as well, which had equal shares of the other two...man-woman (hermaphrodite). Secondly, the form of each person was round all over.... Now, they were of surprising strength and vigour, and so lofty in their notions that they even conspired against the gods...

...Then Zeus, putting all his wits together, spake at length and said: “Methinks I can contrive that men, without ceasing to exist, shall give over their iniquity through a lessening of their strength. I propose now to slice every one of them in two....”

Each of us, then, is but a tally of a man... and each is ever searching for the tally that will fit him. All the men who are sections of that composite sex that at first was called man-woman are woman-courtiers...whence likewise are derived our man-courting women.... All the women who are sections of the woman have no great fancy for men: they are inclined rather to women.... Men who are sections of the male pursue the masculine.... (Plato, 1913, pp. 139-141)

Freud, Jung and other theorists have made much of this myth in extolling the spiritual basis of heterosexual union while ignoring the homosexual aspects. Yet we can see this story as an analogy

regarding the collective unconscious of humanity, thus of Anima/us- and Double-symbology. Then, as Plato intended, we see the profundity of romantic love, as it is stimulated through Anima/us and Double, to be a reunion restoring that wonderful “primal state.”

This suggests that Anima/us and Double are equal in all process mechanisms. Psychically, then, both can serve as “soul guides.” Both can be seen in literature, mythology, etc., and are revealed thereby as involved in the process of individuation. Double appears in mythology in such hero-pairs as David and Jonathan, Achilles and Patroklos, and Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Since this latter myth is so rich in symbology, let us use it as an example.

The *Epic of Gilgamesh* (Sanders, 1960) from the Sumerian civilization of the third millennium B.C. is perhaps the oldest surviving piece of secular literature. It recounts the adventures of Gilgamesh, king of the city Uruk. Gilgamesh was two parts God and one part man, endowed with great beauty, a perfect body, courage and wisdom. As the story opens, he is in the prime of life, yet discontented for lack of a love and a purpose equal to his abilities. For this reason he storms about the town, fighting and wenching, while cries go up to heaven in lament.

When the Gods hear Uruk's lament, they call out to the Goddess of creation, “You made him, O Aruru, now create his equal; let it be as like him as his own reflection, his second self, stormy heart for stormy heart. Let them contend together and leave Uruk in quiet.”

Enkidu is created in the wilderness, “innocent of mankind; he knew nothing of the cultivated land.” He lives with the beasts and is met at the waterhole on three days by a trapper who was “frozen with fear. He went to his house with the game he had caught, and he was dumb, benumbed with terror. His face was altered like that of one who has made a long journey.” This suggests the imagery of “the unconscious” as the home of Enkidu, with its wilderness and wild things, The trapper, entering this realm, is shocked by the awesome power and magic of Enkidu, or as Jung would say, his numinosity.

Then Enkidu is “civilized:” he is seduced by a harlot brought by the trapper. With this human contact Enkidu is changed; the wild beasts all flee from him because “the thoughts of a man were in his heart.” Enkidu learns to help the trapper, and then the harlot takes him to Uruk. The archetypal personification is brought into conscious awareness, perhaps by an Anima figure (“It was good advice that she gave.”).

Before Enkidu arrives, Gilgamesh dreams of him. Dreams are significant in the story, predicting each important event before it happens. Thus dreams are seen as a doorway into the darkness from which emanates wisdom and knowledge of what is to come:

Now Gilgamesh got up to tell his dream to his mother, Ninsun, one of the wise gods. “Mother, last night I had a dream. I was full of joy, the young heroes were around me and I walked through the night under the stars of the firmament, and one, a meteor of the stuff of Anu, fell down from heaven. I tried to lift it but it proved too heavy. All the people of Uruk came round to see it, the common people jostled and the nobles thronged to kiss its feet; and to me its attraction was like the love of woman. They helped me, I braced my forehead and I raised it with thongs and brought it to you, and you yourself pronounced it my brother.

Here the Double is near realization for the ego, Gilgamesh. And this nearness is experienced as profound, godly, joyous and “like the love of woman.” Ninsun, in reply, explains the purpose of this figure:

What you have seen, this star of heaven over which you bent as over a woman, this is the strong comrade, the one who brings help to his friend in his need. He is the strongest of wild creatures, he was born in the grasslands and the wild hills reared him; when you see him you will be glad, his strength is like the strength of one of the host of heaven. This is the meaning of your dream.

The Double is a powerful helper, full of magic to aid in an individual's struggles. In order to emphasize this in the story, Gilgamesh reports another dream and Ninsun gives another interpretation, along the same lines. Gilgamesh concludes, "The lot has fallen to me, so shall the comrade be mine."

Enkidu, "whose beauty is like a God," comes to the city and challenges Gilgamesh to a match. In their fight, Enkidu is thrown with a turn and he acknowledges Gilgamesh as the strongest. They are now united in deepest love, and it is then that Gilgamesh feels called to embark on great adventures, "and without doubt what Homer calls a 'fury inspired' by a God in certain heroes is the effect produced on lovers by Love's peculiar power" (Plato, 1913, p. 103). In these adventures the two always help each other, until their *hubris*, or arrogance, finally catches up with them.

If we see the *Epic of Gilgamesh* as a hero myth, Enkidu comes to rescue the hero from his barren life and help him on with his destiny. Qualities of Enkidu, such as that he is covered with hair, signify his contact with less humanly conscious animality. Yet he is certainly not Shadow, but complementary mirror of Gilgamesh's masculine beauty, strength and wisdom. Also, he is certainly not a Self figure, for his equality (almost a younger brother status), his hubris and his death deny that archetypal figure. He is, however, very manly, although loving, warm and often tender. Enkidu brings out the best in Gilgamesh.

The Double often appears with an aura of beauty, youth and perfection or near-perfection. Unfortunately, it is apt to be mistaken simply as a symbol of the ego (which it partially is, the ego resting on the Double), or a symbol of the Shadow or of the Self, all of which it may also be. This haziness is due to the fact that the contents of the collective unconscious are not distinct and separate, but merge into each other, and may be difficult to fix definitively. But psychologists have exploited this characteristic to hide realization of the Double from themselves and others.

Aspects of the Double

Let me illustrate a few of the qualities and functions that I see in the Double. It is one's deeper support, one's partner, leading on, helping. We see this in many stories, such as the *Iliad*, for example. Achilles would not have raised his weapons for the Greeks, had not Patroklos fought Hector and been slain by him. The Trojans would have been victorious, but that Achilles, as explained by Phaedrus in the *Symposium*, "bravely chose to go and rescue his lover Patroclos, avenged him, and sought death not merely in his behalf but in haste to be joined with him whom death had taken" (Plato, 1913, p. 105.). In the same vein, in the Bible Saul would have killed David, but for Jonathan: "my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of woman" (II Samuel 1:26).

As these myths suggest, the Double can be a soul-mate of intense warmth and closeness. Love between men and love between women, as a psychic experience, is often rooted in projection of the Double, just as Anima/us is projected in love between the different sexes (*CW* 17, par. 338). And as with Anima/us, such love may occur within or without the heroic quest. Furthermore, although the Double is conceived as a type of soul-figure, the sexual instinct may or may not become overtly genitally involved. That is, the Double motif may possess an erotic quality that tends toward manifest homosexuality in its personal engagement, but not necessarily. This understanding follows from imagining that the archetypal psyche in every person possesses an Anima/us and a Double, yet the sexually stimulating

valency accorded to these figures through complex formation differs according to the configuring experience of sexual orientation. In that differentiated sense, I would picture the Double as embodying the *spirit* of love between those of the same sex, regardless of that spirit's role in the genital development of erotic love for any particular person. And this spirit of loving twinship in the Double is what I see as the supportive ground of the ego in its congruent gender identity.

Double fuses the fate of two into one. We see this in Tolkien's *The Return of the King*, in which Frodo could never have made his great and epic trek to Mount Doom without Sam, his faithful servant: “‘So that was the job I felt I had to do when I started,’ thought Sam: ‘to help Mr. Frodo to the last step...’” (Tolkien, 1965, p. 267). In *Robinson Crusoe* the hero would not have survived the cannibals without his companion Friday. Mark Twain several times focused on this Double motif. For example, in his *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, it is Huck and Jim, the black slave, whose fates and affections are mutually bound together towards freedom on the great river. In *The Prince and the Pauper*, the plot hinges on the interacting destiny of two identical boys.

In this way, Double facilitates *rapport*. It creates an atmosphere between friends of profound equality and deep familiarity, a mysterious, joyful sharing of feelings and needs, a dynamic, intuitive understanding. As Confucius wrote in commenting on Hexagram 13, Fellowship with Men, in the *I Ching*,

But when two people are at one in their inmost hearts,
They shatter even the strength of iron or bronze.
And when two people understand each other in their inmost hearts,
Their words are sweet and strong, like the fragrance of orchids.
(Wilhelm, 1950, p. 329)

Such a pleasurable camaraderie easily extends to a sharing of purpose or goal through which difficult tasks are undertaken and fulfilled. The Greeks, for example, exploited this trait in creating their marvelous armies, especially the Spartan. The Theban Sacred Band, composed entirely of pairs of lovers, was reputed to have been extraordinarily victorious. A similar institution is observed in some native American cultures, such as the Blackfoot:

There was another and even closer relationship between boys of the same band, that of partners. Two boys of about the same age became close companions. They played together as children, helped each other in courting girls, went to war together, and offered advice and assistance to each other whenever it might be needed. If a young man was wounded in battle, his partner risked his life to carry him to safety and stayed behind the rest of the war party until the disabled man was able to be helped home. In many instances, this close friendship and mutual assistance between partners continued through the rest of their lives. (Ewers, 1950, p. 105)

But such camaraderie in more diluted form animates most groups of men and groups of women. This archetypal motif is primary to cooperative pursuits, and in our culture is fostered and shaped at an early age.

If, as I suggest, the Double is at the root of ego identity, it may lead one to significant self-realizations. This is the symbolic meaning of its presence in the hero myth. For many the Double can unlock creative processes. I believe this was the case in certain famous collaborations, for example, between Gilbert and Sullivan, Picasso and Braque, and Marx and Engels. As a source of strength and inspiration, the Double can be a great driving force in a person, and collectively in the growth of arts and

sciences. As Lamb explains in his introduction to Plato's *Symposium*, "Love is here treated with a sense of its universal importance," of how "we may pass with ever wakening and widening powers to the best and freest activity of our faculties, the contemplation of invisible, eternal verity" (Plato, 1913, pp. 76-77). In ancient Athens it was believed that two lovers, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, sparked the flame of Democracy (Theucydides, 1954, pp. 399-403). In modern times the work of many artists, such as Gertrude Stein, Oscar Wilde, Andre Gide, and so on, may be regarded as the product of self-growth stimulated by the Double.

As is to be expected, however, such growth occurs only to those who recognize the inner urgings of the Double and allow themselves to follow in this direction. In order to grow through the Double, one must be open to its function as inner soul-guide.

The Variation of the Youth-Adult

The manifest Double may not always be of the same age or the same level of experience and maturity as the ego representative. In fact quite often in literature we find a somewhat older person bound through the Double with someone younger. This is the case with Harmodius and Aristogeiton. However, the dynamic energy motivating such pairs still involves a mutual sharing of responsibility and action, an equal give-and-take in the heroic quest and as persons. For this reason I refer to all such pairs as archetypal "partners."

When the age difference becomes pronounced, for example when one member of the pair is an adolescent while the other is a mature adult, the numinous power of shared strength inherent in the Partners often shifts to powers of initiation, guidance and inspiration still within the sensibility of a mutual bond between moral equals. In this case we find an older person guiding a younger one into adulthood, while in return the younger person inspires new strength in the principles or the particular quest of the older.

Because this pattern is different from that of the Partners, while still an aspect of the Double motif, I call it the "youth-adult." The Youth is the one who is immature, who is moving or questing, while the Adult is the one who knows, who has become mature or who has wider experience or more depth. These images are inherent in us constituting a part of our unconscious potential which may be actualized during times of personal growth, or due to complexes, or other factors. At such times, the Youth and Adult will be stimulated in us, and can lead to the kind of psychic change symbolized by the passage from youth to adult.

The Youth-Adult archetype is particularly significant in education, manifesting itself between student and teacher. This Double motif was called "paederastia" in ancient Greece, and was institutionalized in several of the city-states. Oscar Wilde has described the Youth-Adult in his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

Talking to him [the youth] was like playing upon an exquisite violin. He answered to every touch and thrill of the bow.... To project one's soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music of passion and youth; to convey one's temperament into another as though it were a subtle fluid or a strong perfume; there was a real joy in that.... (Wilde, 1970, p. 44)

In such a relationship, the student may gain loving guidance and stimulation to self-growth. The teacher may achieve deeper (self-) understanding reflected in scholarly or artistic expression: "Relationships of this sort were incendiary to the splendid proliferation of genius in the creative arts in both ancient

Greece and Italy” (Weinberg, 1972, p. 130). Such love has been associated with Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo, Shakespeare, and Bacon (Garde, 1964).

The Youth-Adult archetype may shade off into two others, the Youth leading to the Puer Aeternus (or Puella Aeterna), and the Adult becoming the Senex (or Crone). This shading is due to the thematic proximity of these various motifs, and may result in an experiential combination of archetypes or a shift from one to another. A common situation is one in which the Youth-Adult evokes the Puer. This occurs in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in which the initial relationship with Lord Henry dissolves into a condition of Dorian alone as the profligate young beauty.

Thus, as well as leading to psychic growth, the Youth-Adult may lead to a permanent state of psychic immaturity. This can result when one becomes trapped in the seductive power of the Youth, the negative side of the Puer Aeternus, for example. Such was the fate of Aschenbach in Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice*. The Puer remains forever undeveloped, as he remains forever attached to the Great Mother. He provides access to the original Self and its inspirations, while simultaneously blocking the path to individuation (von Franz, 1970). This marks a distinction between the Puer and the Double, the former concerned with timeless adolescence, the latter with the strength to individuate. It is because of this involvement in ego change that often in myth the Double (as Partner or Youth) figure dies (or disappears) in the middle of the tale, imparting a fateful momentum to the ego symbol. For example, in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Enkidu’s death is a logical extension of his function, symbolizing a new maturity and bringing about a more sublime realization on the part of the hero.

Dark Aspects of the Double

Every archetype has its destructive features. The Double, being a multifaceted archetype (or a group of closely interrelated archetypes, just as the Anima includes the great mother and the feminine soul-guide), has several dark aspects. One of these involves the Puer Aeternus, as we have just seen. Another is the Shadow. That is, aspects of the Double, such as a tendency toward homosexual expression, may be rejected by the ego and fall into the Shadow personality. This is due to the similarity of Double and Shadow in relation to the ego; each is a source deeper than the conscious personality. While the Double is typically the fount of conscious ego-identity, the Shadow is typically that of morally inferior ego-identity. Therefore it is to be expected that rejected aspects of the Double will tend to collect in the Shadow-unconscious. On the practical level, as misogyny often shows a negative-Anima projection (*CW* 9i, par. 141), so homophobia, fear and hatred of “homosexuals,” can be the projection of negated Double-aspects from the Shadow.

At the same time, in a culture which condemns overt manifestations of love based on the Double, a particular burden falls on those who experience such feelings. Not only must they struggle against moral and social prejudices, but also against the Shadow-evil imparted through collective censure. Mixing Double and Shadow produces ugly stereotypes such as the lisping but vicious pansy that are too often internalized by the victims. It is because of this that some psychologists have interpreted homosexual love as arising out of Shadow.

The negative side of the Partner is the “competitor,” the mythical figure of the same stature as the Partner, but who is committed against the hero’s success. Whereas the Partner strives to enhance the ego, the Competitor desires to supplant it. An example of the Competitor is Hector in the *Iliad*. Just as Achilles and Patroklos are bound together in love and guidance, so Achilles and Hector are united in hatred and vengeance. As Achilles says to Hector at their fateful meeting, “Lions and men make no truce, wolves and lambs have no friendship--they hate each other forever. So there can be no love between you and me; and there shall be no truce for us, until one of the two shall fall and glut Ares with his blood” (Homer, 1950, p. 260).

The negative archetype always contains the force of the positive, including the drive toward individuation. The Competitor presents a challenge to overcome and thus provides an image of oneself to grow into. However, the image is posed in a negative context, as a threat. Because of this, it is often easily projected, and can become a major factor in stimulating interpersonal aggression and competition. Furthermore in a society such as ours, in which aggression and competition are encouraged in so many ways, negative-Partner projection will be thereby stimulated. This can lead to hostility and resentment, either overt or covert, between those of the same sex in general. We might call such a situation a Competitor complex. Or, since in terms of men often the prime competitor is the father, we could in such cases place this phenomenon under the Jungian heading of father complex, but rather for the son than for the daughter (and vice versa for women). One can see this complex on the collective level as stimulating such manly pursuits as war. And further, fixation on the Competitor archetype can detrimentally block the constructive impulses inherent in the Double motif. For the person who blindly spurns those love-overtures of the Double pointing to further realizational possibilities, the rebuffed archetype may take revenge through transformation into this negative. That is the theme of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Such also could have been the fate of Gilgamesh and Enkidu, if at their first meeting they had not recognized the love-force between them.

Conclusions

In conclusion, awareness of the Double expands our understanding of diverse human phenomena such as homosexuality, group bonding and war. Recognition of the Double simultaneously enriches and simplifies our vision of the psyche. We can see the field of Anima/us and Double as containing the source of sex-role identities, projections and complexes. It is the center of this field, then, which gives rise to the significant archetype of the Androgyne, and it is this Androgyne which in turn may lead us to a more differentiated vision of the entire psyche.

Just as the Anima/us appears to us as a mysterious source, so too does the Double. Yet it is this Double which has been, and continues to be, a significant factor in social and cultural phenomena. If we are to continue elaborating consciousness into more subtle awareness, we must give this archetype its rightful due, and learn to see its potentials for individual and society.

Copyright © 2006 by Mitchell Walker