

The black Western Archetype- Isha Mckenzie-Mavinga 2012

I have built the idea of black Western archetypes around the ‘influence of culture’ on archetypes. (‘Fanon suggests that the racist contents of the collective conscious are imposed by white culture’) in Vanoy Adams, M. (1996 p.165). I am using this concept of black Western archetypes to assist an understanding of the link between culture and internalised racism.

Jung portrayed elements of his own shadow through racist imagery in his dreams, made conscious in his descriptions of Africans as savages. Needless to say he believed that if the shadow archetype is made conscious, it has the potential to be modified as it connects to the ego status and collective consciousness. In recognising this potential, I am proposing that black Western archetypes can inhabit racist bits of the collective shadow, that become conscious through exploring individual shadow elements of internalised racism. Going along with Jung’s hopes for archetype modification raises possibilities for transformation of the negative impact of racism through working with black issues in the therapeutic process

The Western archetype of Lazy black boy has significantly pervaded the lives of black men and impacted the history of underachievement of black boys in the British education system and the low status of black males in the labour market. black men still strive against this archetype by dropping out of the race for work or overworking at the risk of neglecting their families. The emotional aspects of this phenomenon have been rarely addressed. The ‘Step and fetch it’ archetype emanating from the historical role of the female house slave has been played out collectively in the subservient type roles of black domestics in the labour market. Behaviour related to this Archetype often becomes apparent with burnout symptoms from overwork and stress due to striving against institutional racism.

Negative archetypes portrayed in racist stereotyping of African heritage peoples can impact on the collective psyche and black family relationships causing internalised racism. Internalised racism can be likened to the dynamic of internalised sexism. A woman may act according to the role that she has been assigned by dominant male role models and patriarchal society. Black people may act according to the roles that they have been assigned by a society saturated in racism and racist images. They may act in accordance with white Eurocentric dominance inherited through slavery, colonisation, and Westernisation and through living in predominantly white communities. For individuals, internalised racism can manifest in a variety of self-demeaning or self-harming ways, such as derogatory language about skin colour and self-image directed towards the self or other black people. In its extreme, internalised racism can manifest in defences that distort concepts of identity and produce self harm based on skin colour. If these harmful elements are not addressed they can result in low self-esteem and depression. Using an understanding of internalised racism and the concept of black Western archetypes, therapists can support clients to re-integrate positive images from their heritage and develop an identity congruent with our multicultural world.

Metaphorically speaking the ‘black Western archetype’ is an attempt to colour in Jung’s concept of archetypes. This adding or addressing of the colour dynamic may present a challenge to the collective unconscious and negative socially conditioned responses to black people. I am therefore proposing that therapists work with the assumption that these negative elements have become part of the cultural nature of archetypes in the Western world, as a type of collective shadow. Dalal, F. (2002, p151), ‘The meanings of black’ being predominantly negative). Jung (1972) proposed that ultimately the archetype should be exposed. In a therapeutic context this would involve the therapist in naming the archetype as

they reflect on their client work and assisting clients to explore and understand the way archetypes impact on the unconscious. Jung's perspective of the defences around archetypes gives clues to their pervasiveness and invisible influence. Likewise defences around black Western archetypes can be perpetuated by stereotypes pervading both the Eurocentric black psyche and white psyche.

The concept of black Western archetypes has been offered as a means of understanding how racism as a cultural phenomenon imposes itself on the psyche. It is my hope that the intention behind a negative gaze can be deflected and that a distorted mirror can be re-framed. Therapists must realise that working with black issues in the therapeutic process is not about being politically correct. It is about challenging individual assumptions and prejudices and risking exposure to the often hidden territory that lies beyond oppressive stereotyping.

Dalal, F. (2002). *Race Colour and the Process of Racialization*. Hove and New York: Brunner Routledge.

Jung, C. 1875-1961, part 1. The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious. In *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung* Vol, 9, ed Sir Herbert Read, (et,al) (1972). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Mckenzie-Mavinga (2009) *Black Issues I The Therapeutic Process*. Palgrave Macmillan

Vanoy Adams, M. (1996). *The Multicultural Imagination*: London and New York: Routledge.

Pointers for therapists (including trainees and trainers).

- .Provide the opportunity for clients to choose an appropriately experienced, gender, racially and sexuality aware therapist.
- Develop the ability to understand the context of homophobia, racism and gender oppression.
- Become informed about the impact of heritage and cultural history influenced by slavery and colonialism.
- Be willingness to address and process the transferred dynamics between therapist and client and use the process to empower the client.
- Gain an understanding of archetypal stereotypes that may be re-enacted within the black client's behaviour.
- Accept difference or similarity between client and counsellor in a non-collusive dialogue.
- Sensitively challenge the client to explore their upbringing in the context of their cultural background and living in Britain.
- Gain knowledge of and work with an understanding of interracial, inter-gender and same race and same gender experiences that impact on the therapeutic relationship.