

Leadership and the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine: A Jungian Perspective

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Academic Citation: **Prisco R. Hernandez**, “Leadership and the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine: A Jungian Perspective,” Kravis Leadership Institute, *Leadership Review*, Vol. 8, Summer 2007, pp. 102-108

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Keywords: Leadership, archetypes

“They said that he was of all the world’s kings
The gentlest of men, and the most gracious,
The kindest to his people, the keenest for fame.”
—Beowulf—¹

As in all explorations into human creative capabilities, grasping the essentials of leadership is an elusive task. A great artist or musician creates by producing compelling works of art; a great leader creates by causing others to accomplish great enterprises or become a part of these enterprises. Leadership, defined as the ability to motivate, to cause others to willingly follow, has often been viewed as the possession by a person of special, usually intangible abilities, or perhaps a group of virtues that empower the leader with the ability to motivate others to follow his or her direction. Indeed, many attempts to understand leadership are in reality catalogs of the virtues that a specific social group believes a leader must possess. This approach has had a venerable history. The Greeks and Romans hired tutors for young men of the nobility and prescribed books which furnished outstanding exemplars of virtue for them to emulate. During the Middle Ages this tradition continued with books known as “mirrors of princes” which presented young squires with the deeds of heroes from Antiquity, the Christian Bible and legend.² Today we have a plethora of books about leadership dealing both with the business world and the military. More often than not, these leadership manuals seem more like variations on a few true tried themes than novel insights into the mystery of human leadership.³ In an attempt to understand the quality of leadership, and in many cases, to make it “teachable,” all these approaches rely on the identification and analysis of the traits that are thought to enable leadership.

Despite the advent of empiricism, various schools of scientific positivism, and materialistic philosophies ranging from Marxism to sociobiology, the essence of

leadership remains as elusive as ever. Perhaps this is in the very nature of what we call leadership—because leadership is rooted in the human character and acts upon motivations, and these have arguably remained quite stable at least throughout the course of human history. Despite the difficulties, many humanistic thinkers have described the quality of leadership as deriving from a person’s character. Others have attempted to delve into what it means to possess the character of a leader. Character, in this context, is a complex of attitudes, beliefs and tendencies that “make the man.”⁴

Carl Jung distinguished himself among other explorers of the human mind because he recognized the existence and importance of the intangibles. He recognized and valued those aspects of a person’s whole being which tend to be dismissed by modern positivistic science which only recognizes the material world and denies the existence of spirit. Jung understood what many prior thinkers, from Plato through the Christian philosophers had recognized—that humans are a combination of body and soul.⁵ This recognition allows us to understand character as a spiritual attribute and leadership as a function of character.

Thomas Moore and Douglas Gillette have extended Jung’s approach and have identified four essential male archetypes: the King, the Warrior, the Magician and the Lover.⁶ These four archetypes serve as intuitive short-cuts into clusters of virtues and a specific ethos associated with each of them. But more significantly, they serve as vehicles for both the understanding and the modeling of these archetypes in real men. The archetypes also provide the foundation for four very distinct and ultimately complementary styles for masculine leadership.

The most complex and mature of the four archetypes of the masculine is that of the King.⁷ Moore and Gillette see the King as embodying and empowering the mature ordering of things.⁸ Thus, a leader, in order to be true to his calling, would necessarily model the attributes of the King. Ideally, all men in “leadership positions” would also, to a greater or lesser degree embody the ideal King—the father of a family would model the “Wise King” for his family, the leader of a nation would do the same on a much grander scale, but all the essential attributes would be present in the “king’s” character, regardless of the scope of the human “king’s” responsibilities.

In real life, as in legend and myth, the King archetype seldom if ever arrives at the pinnacle of life-enhancing majesty without first participating in the attributes of two other archetypes—the Warrior and the Magician. The King is not born a King. He is born a Prince, with the potential for Kingship. But he must earn his kingship through a path that must involve trials and suffering which in turn lead to experience and maturity. The Warrior is perhaps the most natural complement to the King. Indeed, from the days of the ancient civilizations of Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, the Warrior-King has been a constant in human experience.

The Warrior’s virtues are ascetic and self-sacrificial. The Warrior appears at his fullest when he consciously renounces life and its pleasures. The Warrior is one who has accepted death and fate and is thus free to act with a valor born from renunciation and

acceptance.⁹ His acceptance of death allows him to transcend reality and conquer normal human fear. He is thus, beyond ordinary human cares; in a sense, he is divine. To become a Warrior, a man must gain victory over the self, only then can he be assured of victory in battle. The extreme development of the warrior is seen in groups such as the ancient Persian Immortals, the Sacred Band of Thebes, samurai monks, and medieval orders of chivalry. It is also seen in pacifist groups that practice asceticism and are not afraid of martyrdom such as Christian martyrs, the Jewish Maccabee brothers, Gandhi and many of his followers. These groups vowed to renounce the world as other men know it and embrace death and even painful torture in the service of the ideals espoused by their inner Warrior. More recently, Japanese kamikaze pilots volunteered for certain death in light of the Warrior ideal. This may also be the motivation of some contemporary suicide bombers.

But the warrior's focus on conflict is narrow—victory in battle. Even though this purity of mind can be virtuous when in the service of a noble ideal, it does not embrace life. It serves to protect, not nurture; to win victory, not cultivate, to destroy, not create. This limitation becomes clear when successful warriors are called to take upon themselves the responsibilities of Kings. This is a common occurrence when leaders of armies gain victory in war and must become rulers in time of peace. Some can make the transition; others do not. The difference is illustrated by the post-war careers of Douglas McArthur and George Patton. McArthur was able to successfully move from Warrior to King, taking the place of Japan's Emperor and becoming in William Manchester's memorable phrase, an "American Caesar."¹⁰ Patton, on the other hand, fantasized in public about being shot by the "last bullet of the war" and committed many blunders in his post-war administration of occupied Bavaria more appropriate to a swaggering adolescent than to a mature statesman. Perhaps fate was kind to him when he died in a traffic accident without further tarnishing his remarkable reputation.¹¹ Siegfried, the heroic figure of Germanic lore, and Hector, mighty warrior of Troy, must always die young—in their warrior prime.

An alternative path to Kingship leads through the Magician. The Magician is the man of subtle mind who wants to penetrate beneath the surface of things, who wants to probe the mysteries of nature and the mysteries of the human spirit. His thirst for knowledge leads him on the path of wisdom and this in turn gains him respect. It is common for magicians to be separated from the common folk who toil in the world. Knowledge requires long hours of solitude for study and meditation. Most often, the Magician becomes a seer, and advisor, a shaman, a counselor to kings—Merlin, not Arthur.¹² But in some cases, the Magician gains the position of King. He may then combine the attributes of the King and the Magician as a Magician-King. Historically, King Solomon illustrates this style of leadership. According to the Biblical narrative, Solomon had a dream in which he asked Yahweh for the wisdom to rule his people well rather than riches or long life for himself. This selfless quest for a gift that would serve others if he were to become King was pleasing to God who, not only granted him his wish, but gave him long life and riches too.¹³

Another well-known example from myth is King Arthur as an older man. Arthur began life as a young warrior who found himself the "Promised King." As he grew older he

exercised his duties under the influence of Merlin—the Magician—and increasingly came under the influence of this archetype. Towards the end of his life, Arthur epitomized the Wise King under whom other warriors could act and strive for the good, even leading an active search for the “Holy Grail”.

A remarkable example of a leader who combined the attributes of the Warrior-King and Magician-King is the Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius.¹⁴ Alone among a series of immature, weak, and morally depraved leaders, Marcus Aurelius was a conscientious man who embraced the study of Philosophy at an early age and took his responsibilities seriously. He wrote his profound *Meditations* while on campaign against the barbarians in the wilds of Dacia.¹⁵ Marcus Aurelius arrived at Kingship through the path of both the Warrior and the Magician.

The Magician-King is not as common as the Warrior-King. There are fewer magicians in the world. The Magician prefers to use the mind rather than the body. And the magician’s mind is a subtle mind, a scholarly mind. It requires years of cultivation and discipline. Much like the Warrior, the Magician must retreat from active involvement with the world, but instead of retiring to hone his body and mind for combat in the manner of the Warrior, the Magician retreats into a realm of reflection and contemplation. Wisdom cannot be obtained by force; it must be earned by long schooling reflection and sacrifice. That is why the archetype of the Magician, even the Magician-King cannot of itself exemplify the fullness of Kingship.

This brings us to the fourth archetype of the mature masculine—the Lover. The Lover poses a problem when taken in the context of leadership. The Lover represents the unrestrained embrace of the life-force, of Eros, of pleasure, of life itself. It is life-affirming and creative but eschews order, sacrifice, and rational knowledge. It is not easily reconciled with the orderly world of the King, is the polar opposite of the ascetic Warrior, and is suspicious of the knowledge of the Magician.¹⁶ May we then conclude that there is no place for the Lover in the spiritual makeup of the leader? Given the importance of all archetypes to a mature and balanced human existence it would be wise to reconsider the paradoxical relationship of the Lover to the other archetypes. Can there be a Lover-King?

If a leader is enthusiastic, connects with his followers and is capable of inspiring men and women to accomplish the impossible, in short, if a leader is charismatic, he is partaking of the energy made available by the Lover. It is the Lover who injects the life-blood of motivation into a disheartened group of soldiers; it is the Lover who can inspire his followers to superhuman effort because he shares in their cares and difficulties. When Alexander refused water in the wasteland of Dagestan because there was not enough for his men, he was accessing the Lover.¹⁷ When Shakespeare’s Henry VI declaims his famous St. Crispin’s Day oration he speaks as the Lover-King.¹⁸ When the Lover combines with the Warrior the result can be the self-sacrificial act of jumping on a grenade—accepting death so that others may live. When the Lover combines with the Magician we see the results in the enthusiastic birth of religious orders such as the Franciscan movement or the followers of the Buddha. When the Lover combines with the King it energizes his life-giving and organizing activities, the “kingdom” comes alive

with life-energy and vitality, it flourishes, it becomes “Camelot.” It appears that the Lover is essential to good Kingship, to good leadership after all. It is equally apparent that the other virtues resident in the Warrior and the Magician need to rein in the Lover’s oceanic exuberance and desire to transcend all limits in order to allow his energy its life-giving role without creating chaos in the realm.

What can we learn from the examination of the archetypes of the mature masculine as they relate to leadership? First, leaders, in order to fulfill their function properly, should embody the best qualities represented by the mature masculine archetypes. When men do this, they model these archetypes for their followers and their example inspires them on the path of virtue. In addition, the archetypes furnish us with a short-cut, an intuitive way to grasp the essence of a grouping of attributes that connects directly with the unconscious mind. Instead of patient intellectual analysis of each individual attribute of leadership, the ethos of each archetype is immediately accessible through a complex of cultural resonances. These archetypes are emotional and spiritual pictures that have an immediate effect on individuals and groups.¹⁹ This effect is readily apparent when one compares the phrase “The Good King” with “a king who is good, generous, noble, etc.” The first phrase is incomparably richer in context and seems “alive” compared to a listing of adjectives to describe a particular king. The “Good King” also seems to partake directly from its connection with the archetype. It evokes an instant, almost visual, image that has an immediate appeal. This may be why the epic epithets in the old Greek and Norse epics so moved their listeners.²⁰

Archetypes are, by their very nature, universal and indestructible. They will not be denied. They are not irrational forms of thought; rather they are supra-rational, beyond the parameters of logical thought. Hence their power to move, to affect, to influence. Suppression of an archetype only results in denial of attributes and spiritual resources that we, as humans, need. Therefore, the mature male leader will, of necessity, model in various proportions the attributes inherent in the four archetypes of the mature masculine. Of these, the King is the leader *par excellence*. But the King is of necessity, the oldest most mature of the archetypes. The road to Kingship takes an aspiring leader through the path of the Warrior or the Magician. These two in turn remain fierce or sterile without the attributes of the Lover. Thus, if we follow Moore and Gillette’s elaboration of Jung’s mature male archetypes, the mature human leader models the King and allows aspects of the Warrior, the Magician and the Lover to shine through his Kingship in a way that protects, guides, and inspires his followers.

¹ *Beowulf*, trans by Michael Alexander (New York: Penguin, 1973), p. 151.

² This Medieval tradition is that of the nine worthies which usually comprised David, Joshua and Judas Maccabeus, Alexander, Hannibal and Caesar; Arthur, Charlemagne and Roland.

³ Many military books have been enthusiastically adopted by the business community, mainly the *Art of War*—a book by the ancient Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu. For a good modern translation of the *Art of War* see Ralph D. Sawyer, ed. *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993).

⁴ Character is, of course a quality shared by both men and women, but in this article we are dealing exclusively with leadership among males.

⁵ "... Freud's attitude to the spirit seemed to me highly questionable. Wherever, in a person or in a work of art, an expression of spirituality (in the intellectual, not in the supernatural sense) came to light, he suspected it, and insinuated that it was repressed sexuality. [...] When we speak only of the outside—and that is what Freud did—we are considering only half of the whole ..." Carl G. Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. by Aniela Jaffé trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), pp. 149 and 152.

⁶ Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover, Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*, (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

⁷ "The King energy is primal in all men. It bears the same relationship to the other three mature masculine potentials as the Divine Child does to the other three immature masculine energies. It comes first in importance and it underlies and includes the rest of the archetypes in perfect balance." Moore and Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, p. 49.

⁸ "... the King archetype comes close to being God in its masculine form within every man. It is the primordial man, the Adam, what the philosophers call the Anthropos in each of us. Hindus call this primal masculinity in men the Atman: Jews and Christians speak of it as the imago Dei, the "Image of God." Moore and Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, p. 49.

⁹ This acceptance of death is evident in the Native American war cry: "Today is a good day to die!" Moore and Gillette, *King Warrior, Magician, King*, p. 78.

¹⁰ William Manchester, *American Caesar: Douglas McArthur 1880-1964*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1978).

¹¹ "Instead of engaging in further campaigning, he was to undertake the occupation of northern Germany ... It was hardly a glamorous job. Downcast, he wished he had been killed by the last bullet of the last battle." Martin Blumenson, *Patton: The Man Behind the Legend 1885-1945*, (New York: William Morrow, 1985), p. 269

¹² Moore and Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, pp. 100-101.

¹³ *1 Kings* 3: 4-15.

¹⁴ Moore, Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician, King*, p. 78.

¹⁵ Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, trans. by George Long (Danbury, Connecticut: Grolier, 1980).

¹⁶ "The Lover energy is thus utterly opposed—at least at first glance—to the other energies of the mature masculine." His interests are the opposite of the Warrior's, the Magician's, and the King's concerns for boundaries, containment, order, discipline." Moore and Gillette, *King, Warrior, Magician, Lover*, p. 126.

¹⁷ Arrian, *The Campaigns of Alexander*, trans. by Aubrey de Sélicourt, (New York: Penguin, 1958), pp. 338-339.

¹⁸ William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: Bantam, 1988), pp. 83-834.

¹⁹ "The concept of the archetype ... is derived from the repeated observation that, for instance, the myths and fairytales of world literature contain definite motifs which crop up everywhere." Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 392.

²⁰ The immediate appeal of the poetic image of the King is apparent in this passage from the Anglo-Saxon epic, *Beowulf*: “The Master of the Danes, Lord of the Scyldings, shall learn of your request, I shall gladly ask my honoured chief, giver of arm-bands, about your undertaking, and soon bear the answer back again to you that my gracious lord shall think good to make.” *Beowulf*, trans by Michael Alexander (New York: Penguin, 1973), p. 62.
