

Integrating the ‘*Absent Father*’ Archetype

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“An unconscious father is a force for tyranny, capitalist domination, and gender warfare”.

Robert Bly

The ‘*absent father*’ is a universal archetype, most aptly described by mythology and popularized in our culture through literature and drama. Belonging to one of several “negative” paternal archetypesⁱ it is a complexⁱⁱ driven representation of our solar energy. At its most expansive, it requires us to go on a quest to find and integrate the absent, authentic father early in life, facilitating the building of a solid ego and enabling us to manifest fully in the world. At its most restrictive, we remain the Puer/Puella Aeternus, seeking an external father rescuer to project our unformed solar self.

In this article I am going to explore some of the fundamental meanings of the father archetypes. Focusing on the mythology of the “absent father” archetype, I will discuss ways of overcoming potential blocks to integrating some of the more expansive versions of this archetype. Finally, I will look briefly, at the potential effects of the current transits, on the evolution of the father archetypes.

The Father Archetype

Duality is intrinsic to our understanding of who we are on this planet. Hence it is through the mirror of what we are not, that we most effectively define, who and what we most are. It is therefore through contrasting the Solar Father Archetype, with the Lunar Mother Archetype, that we discover what it represents in our psyche. (See the chart below).

Mother Archetype – an aspect of the Feminine/Eros – Earth	Father Archetype – an aspect of the Masculine/Logos – Heaven
From girl to woman to mother to Crone	From boy to man to father to Senex
Linked to nurturing, being, feelings and the instinctual realm of nature	Linked to action, manifestation, direction, achievement, protection, the mental and spiritual realms
Unconscious realm of emotions - Lunar	Conscious realm of the mind – Solar
Introversion	Extroversion
Attachment - the wish to be loved	Exploration, autonomy, individuation, freedom
Unconditional love	Father’s love has to be won through achievement
Nature and matter	Spirit

Images of holding and containing.	Images of piercing and penetration such as the phallus, spear, knife, and arrow.
The darkness of night as opposed to ---	---the light of the sun
Incarnation in human form – inhabits the instinctual realm	The bridge between the lunar realm of mother and the wider collective
Water and Earth	Air and Fire

Following implantation of father’s seed at conception, we incarnate in mother’s body, totally dependent on her for our very existence, through the umbilical cord, until we take our first independent breath and are born into our chart. From that point on, we seek to fulfill and manifest our current life’s journey, with each planet playing a role in the perfect orchestra of our chart and our life, as we embark on the Solar journey of separation and individuation, immortalized in Campbell’s description of the heroes journeyⁱⁱⁱ. This universal solar journey is unique, yet collectively archetypal for each of us, with our ultimate goal being the completion of the chosen learning for our soul self in this lifetime and a return to the source, where all is one.

To embark on the hero’s journey, we need the father archetype within, to ignite our internal solar fire sufficiently, to leave the comfort of the lunar Neptunian regressive realm of the womb and mother, embarking on the solar progressive journey of unknown potential Saturnian manifestation. In his archetypal role, father within, ideally provides a bridge between various dimensions, including between the earthy and watery instinctual natural realms and the airy and fiery mental and spiritual dimensions. He is also the bridge between our personal and collective conscious and unconscious as well as between our individual self and the larger collective.

To complete the hero’s journey, we are ultimately required to encounter, befriend and integrate the father archetypes as outlined in our chart. Whether we integrate the archetypes at their most expansive or most restrictive, is dependant on: our initial role modeling of the archetypes, the overall nature of our chart, our developmental life stage and our level of awareness and consciousness.

Our initial projection of our individually configured Father archetype, as described by the position of the Sun, aspects to it and its ruler, as well as the IC and planets in the 4th,^{iv} is initially onto our birth father. What we ideally seek is a “good enough” father^v who can allow us to explore a variety of versions of our internal father archetypes throughout our childhood. This enables us to form a strong ego, allowing us in adulthood to “destroy” our birth father^{vi}, thereby successfully integrating the father and mother archetypes within, with all their complexities. “The work of the hero is to slay the tenacious aspect

of the father and release from its ban the vital energies that will feed the universe”.^{vii} This is often illustrated in myths such as *Oedipus Rex*, where the son kills the father to marry the mother, reminding us that both archetypes are inextricably linked.

In the absence of ‘good enough fathering’, we are thrown into the extremes of the positive and negative father archetypes, seriously at risk with either, of creating a powerful father complex, with our archetypal configurations searching for mediation via an unformed ego. (*See chart below*)

A strongly idealized father protector role model, combined with a strong Sun/Venus/Uranus aspect or Venus in the 4th house, may delay us embarking on our solar journey, with little to encourage us to seek the father within, when the external father appears to be unproblematic. However, with a powerful Sun/Pluto or Sun in Scorpio configuration, role modeled through a destructive father, the ‘devil father’ complex is easily configured in our chart, blocking us from fully embracing our own power, consumed by our fruitless and self destructive attempts to slay the father within.

Positive Archetype – Expansive level of expression	Negative Archetype – Limited level of expression (Complex)
The Strong, Courageous and Loyal Protector of his children	The Unavailable/Absent father
The Creator and abider of fair, rational and civilised Laws to protect his offspring	The Destructive father
The instigator and maintainer of Order and Discipline	The Envious father
The maintainer of Self control, Morality and Obligation	The Terrible father
The fearless holder of Authority and Command	The Devil father who abuses his power seeking to control others in his disconnection from the lunar realm of feelings and compassion.
The bountiful Provider through Manifestation	The Narcissistic Egocentric father
The holder of Boundaries	
The Rational thinker and source of mental inspiration	
The authority who validate norms and finds meaning in life	
The Enlightened Father and Educator	
The Senex or wise old man as judge, priest, doctor,	

<p>sage, magician or elder - holder of insight, wisdom and morality.</p> <p>God the father as instigator of life and protector of all who connects us to the divine within us.</p> <p>The Provider of the Seed who explains our origins</p> <p>The Kindly King who is father and grandfather</p>	
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Absent father archetypes

Despite being commonly viewed as a negative Father archetype, in the absence of the ‘good enough father’, the emotionally or physically absent or unavailable birth Father, combined with natal Sun in aspect to Jupiter, Uranus and/or Neptune or any of the latter planets in the 4th house, offers us the most potential. At its best, this archetype requires us early in life, to embark on a journey within, to discover and ignite our solar light, powerfully illustrated by the myth of Parsifal and the Holy Grail^{viii}. Leaving mother’s realm behind when he saw the Knights riding by, the fatherless Parsifal, set off on the Heroes journey, searching for the unknown Holy Grail. He ultimately discovered, with maturity, that his search was an internal solar quest for divine meaning at the service of something greater. In asking ‘whom does the grail serve’, Parsifal woke the elderly king, discovering the latter was his grandfather. Handing over the throne and his daughter’s hand in marriage, the Senex king enabled his grandson to become the Father, uniting with the lunar realm of the feminine.

The mythology of Zeus, is more visibly connected to the Puer Aeternus absent father, who is unavailable due to insufficient fathering in his own childhood. Zeus was the son of Kronos, who like his own father Ouranos, became the devouring father, swallowing his children in the knowledge that they would eventually overthrow him. Despite having innumerable offspring from his various affairs, Zeus fled after their conception. Powerful Sun/Jupiter aspects or Jupiter in the 4th combined with a physically absent birth father can in their most restrictive expression result in a refusal to integrate and manifest the mature father archetype, preferring instead to remain in the realm of the potential. At its most expansive this configuration can be expressed as the integration of the expansive joyful life enhancing inspirational spiritual father who supports all in shining their light.

The myth of Ouranos is more commonly associated with the absent rejecting sky father who refuses to integrate the earthly instinctual realm, despite being married to Gaia, mother earth. In his revulsion and rejection of his imperfect earthly Titan children, Ouranos imprisoned them deep within Tartarus. However, his younger Titan son Kronos, castrated his father with a sickle provided by his mother Gaia. Throwing his father’s genitals into the ocean resulted in the birth of Aphrodite. Here we are in the realm of the Promethean sky father represented by the Sun in aspect to Uranus or Uranus in the 4th house. At its most restrictive it represents the idealization of a strongly Promethean sky father, whose perceived goals can never be reached, delaying his offspring’s ability to

manifest in the concrete earthly realm. At its most expansive, it represents the expression of the Promethean solar light, which is deeply connected to the progressive evolution of consciousness in the individual and the collective, grounded in the energy of Saturn in the chart. Kronos' courage in castrating/limiting his father, resulted in the birth of perfect beauty from the oceanic realms.

The absent father archetype can also be associated with the Neptunian, Melusine like father, who has never fully incarnated, feeling more at home in the unboundaried oceanic realms of the imagination and the divine. Sun/Neptune aspects or the Sun in the 12th combined with a father who never feels fully present, can lead to a resistance to incarnating and manifesting in the world. Preferring to swim in the unboundaried waters of unsubstantiation, the Sun Neptune individual may find themselves in the realm of addiction in their search for the spiritual father.^{ix} At its most expansive this configuration can be expressed in the creative expression of the solar light by the artist and mystic.

Consciously integrating the absent father within, enables us to be at less risk of spending a large portion of our life, projecting our father complex onto external people and things including money, work, a boss, our sibling, our intimate other, the priest or our friends. It also allows a balance to occur with the lunar maternal realm, enabling the integration of all four elements^x leading to incarnation and manifestation. For both genders, it also allows a greater integration of the anima and animus, ultimately leading to the internal marriage/conjunction, enabling the external marriage to take place, if so chosen. However, as with the Heroes journey, integrating the absent father is often challenged by conflicts and complexes, visible in the natal chart.

Potential challenges and tasks on the journey to integrate the 'absent father':

1. The release of ancestral and family complexes related to the father archetype. This can be visible in the chart with Sun in the 4th 8th and/or 12th house in aspect to Jupiter and/or Uranus in particular. It can also involve an unaspected Sun. The journey becomes one of reclaiming the Solar Light on behalf of the individual and the ancestors, enabling healing to take place retrospectively as well as freeing oncoming generations.
2. Unblocking a suppressed repressed or disassociated Mars. This may be visible with a Mars that is in conflict with the rest of the chart or a Mars that has conflicting aspects, combined with an early environment that was inimical to the expression of anger. For example a Mars in Pisces with a Sun in Aries or a Mars in aspect to both Saturn and Jupiter. Mars, together with the other planets, services the Sun, offering the Solar light the libido to take action in the world as well as setting boundaries against possible intrusions to our individual life force and Solar light. The hero needs to be a warrior to survive the trials and hence he has to be prepared to engage his life force. With Solar consciousness, he has greater choice in how he manifests his energy.^{xi}

3. The release of a suppressed repressed or disassociated Venus. This may be visible as Venus in aspect to Saturn or Chiron in a chart that is very airy or fiery combined with an environment where there was little respect and value given to Venus. If we are unable to access our self-value we struggle to shine our Solar light. Hence the importance of reconnecting to our internal Aphrodite.
4. Reconnecting to a disconnected Jupiter. Growing up in an emotionally, intellectually, physically or spiritually restrictive environment combined with a very Virgoan or Capricornian chart can lead to a disconnection from natal Jupiter. Without access to Jupiter it is difficult to find meaning and joy in life, opting for restriction rather than expansion. Through reconnecting to what brings meaning in life, we are more likely to re-discover the true purpose of our solar journey.
5. Re-discovering and enhancing our ability to play. Saturn or Chiron in the 5th house combined with an upbringing where play and enjoyment were sacrificed require adult engagement with our inner child and our fiery creativity. Through the world of the imagination we create a new enhanced reality can be created.
6. Grounding ourselves in our body through our Moon and Saturn. Neptune or Pisces on the Ascendant or the 1st house or missing Earth in the chart or challenging aspects to the moon combined with a traumatic upbringing can result in difficulties in incarnating on this earth plane. What is required is engagement with Saturn and the material world as our Solar light seeks manifestation in form.
7. Understanding past life issues to the best of our ability. Aspects to our South node indicate issues to do with the past life that is most relevant to this incarnation.^{xii} Understanding and integrating these issues into our North Node direction, enables us to pursue our Solar journey more freely in this lifetime.

The above for most of us is a lifetime process, with major transits to the Sun and the IC/MC inviting us to cross necessary thresholds on our journey of integration.

(Example chart: Maria Callas Dec 2 1923 7.07am New York NY Placidus Asc 9 Sagittarius 31')

The chart of Maria Callas is an interesting example of a Solar journey, which required the integration of several father archetypes, including the absent father, with her natal Sun in aspect to Jupiter, Uranus, Pluto and Chiron, which was in the 4th house of father^{xiii}. We know from public records that her parents had an acrimonious marriage with her father having numerous affairs. In 1937 when the opera singer was 14, Maria's parents separated and she moved back to Greece from New York, with her mother and older sister. In the summer of 1937 she started studying singing and her first public debut was on April 11 1938 when Tr Saturn in her 4th house was in an exact trine to her Sagittarian Sun, square Pluto and almost conjunct Chiron. This threshold crossing transit, invited Maria to integrate her father archetypes and manifest her Sun in the world as required by natal Sun in Sagittarius conj Jupiter on the ascendant.^{xiv} With Tr Neptune in her 9th squaring natal Mercury in Sagittarius in the first, she was truly expressing the realms of the gods through her voice. Her natal Sun/Jupiter was no longer solely the external

philandering wounded Promethean father. Her journey of internalizing her own divine father within, had started and continued throughout her life, enabling her audiences to also connect with something divine, through her musical expression. It could be argued that her reputedly unsettled love life, particularly with Aristotle Onassis who married Jacqueline Kennedy whilst in a relationship with Maria Callas, was an unconscious un-integrated expression of the archetypal absent Jupiterian and Uranian father within. Equally, this may have been a conscious choice, to maintain the freedom that was such an intrinsic core part of her Solar self.

Current Transits and the Father Archetype – what are we required to do?

In a meaning permeated cosmos as defined by Richard Tarnas^{xv} our interaction with the archetypes affects their evolution, as their interaction with us, affects ours. Pluto in Sagittarius invited us to take back our projections of the divine father from humanly created religious institutions. With Pluto in Capricorn, we are now invited as individuals and as a collective to take personal responsibility and power back from collective structures which we have projected paternal authority onto, including financial and educational institutions. Maturity and authenticity are required as we are challenged with the consequences of breaking the fundamental Saturnian laws of nature in all aspects of our structures, including our environment. This was symbolically illustrated to me by the return home to Hawaii, albeit for a brief time in August, of two wooden sculptures of the Polynesian god Kū to be reunited with the existing sculpture in the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. Watching the three 600 – 800 pound wood carvings of Kū standing majestically side by side, I considered the significance of their current reunification. Kū was the primary god of male endeavors including fishing, farming, canoe- building, war, gathering and healing. His Logos was balanced, by his wife, Hina’s Eros. In representing masculinity Kū also represented the Father within each of us, in all his facets. Translated, Kū means “to stand, to be present”. With Uranus in Aries squaring Pluto in Capricorn, I wondered if the Promethean sky god is encouraging us to have Martian courage and take action in owning our internal Father solar archetypal power in its most positive life enhancing expression.

*“the father archetype...determines
our relation to man, the law and the state, to reason and the Spirit and the
dynamism of nature . . . the father . . . represents authority... He . . . is the creative
wind-breath . . . the spirit... the
atman”
Carl Jung*

Booknotes

ⁱ I am addressing the term as meaning “universally recognised characteristics of a transcendental nature” which according to Jung are an intrinsic part of the collective unconscious.

ⁱⁱ Using the term ‘complex’, I am referring to the emotionally charged bundles of energy that form around conflicting aspects in our charts.

ⁱⁱⁱ Joseph Campbell, ‘The Hero with A Thousand Faces’ Fontana Press

^{iv} In Psychological Astrology, the 4th is considered the house of father as he is the less visible of the parents
^v As in ‘good enough parenting’ described by Winnicott. Although we can and often do, project the father archetype onto father substitutes throughout our childhood and adulthood, the core essence of the archetype remains deeply entrenched in our birth father.

^{vi} By this I am referring to our need to pull back our internal archetypes from actual father, often described in mythology and literature through the actual slaying of the father as in Kronos with his father Ouranos.

^{vii} Joseph Campbell, *ibid* Pg 352

^{viii} This is a solar myth, deeply connected to Leo, ruler of the Sun.

^{ix} Marian Woodman aptly described this at a seminar at Pacifica Graduate Institute in 2007 as the “search for the spirit” through drinking spirits.

^x Fire, earth, air and water.

^{xi} To avoid using s/he, I have used *he* to mean both *he* and *she* when referring to the Heroes Journey

^{xii} For further information on the connection between past lives and the nodes please refer to the extensive work by evolutionary astrologer Steven Forrest

^{xiii} Dependant on her correct time of birth, which according is rated A by Astrodatbank

^{xiv} It is also interesting to note that the transiting North Node was conjunct natal Jupiter at the time and conjunct natal Pluto/quincunx natal Sun at the time of her visit to her father in the USA in Sept 1945, inviting her to integrate Plutonian 8th house issues related to the Father archetype.

^{xv} Richard Tarnas ‘Cosmos and Psyche’, Viking Press

Bio

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Margaret who is a Clinical Social Worker and Psychological Astrologer has been working in the USA and Ireland for over 20 years with individuals, couples and children. She also teaches astrology seminars and courses internationally and offers supervision to astrologers and therapists. Margaret writes a regular Astrology article for Positive Life Magazine in Dublin and has had several articles published in Astrology publications in the US and Europe. Margaret is the book reviewer for the ISAR journal and is currently based in Hawai’i with regular trips to her birth home in Ireland.

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