

**Archetypal Agent: Teaching and Being**

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**Abstract**

The ever-changing nature of pedagogy requires a teacher to equip themselves with various hats throughout the day. A teacher embodies that of a learner, counsellor and disciplinarian, sometimes all within the same minute. Explored through an analytic psychology lens, the following paper inquiries into the archetypal energies of teachers' through reflexive Art based practices. Archetypes are primordial images that exist within the collective unconscious. Awakening to the archetypal nature of education and life reveals the culturally constructed myths and habitually engrained conducts rooted in norms of the past. The following paper explores cultural myths specific to education, their origin, and how they are perpetuated. Archetypal awareness can help awaken us to these mythic ways of being and invite the unfolding of deeper meaning within the teaching vocation, the world at large, and our place within. The following Arts-based research paper resembles a patchwork quilt that fastens the interwoven nature of teaching and being in the classroom and beyond.

*Keywords:* myth, education, archetype, persona, teacher presence, edusemiotics, Jungian psychology, analytic psychology, teacher identity, vocation, teleological.

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**Archetypal Agent: Teaching and Being**

*Archetypes*

means and modes  
sensing and interpreting  
Experience

collective unconscious  
woven in archetype

experiencing the world  
making meaning

primal and transcendental... before and after... conscious and unconscious  
rooting mental structures, yet *they* are void of structure  
archetypes structure structure  
lenses for the psyche... to see... our ever-evolving narrative

archetypes:  
sacred, story, myth, culture, religion  
inseparable  
dream producer, art creator  
unknowable  
though, always operating, shaping  
how we see

- This is a found poem compiled from from Mayes' (2016) book, *Teaching and Learning for Wholeness: the Role of Archetypes in Educational Processes*

**Introduction**

Originating from the Latin word *vocare*, which means ‘to call’, vocations are more than just jobs, they are occupations that require dedication and receptivity (*Merriam-Webster*, 2020). Teaching, as such, is a vocation, for to teach is to be called, called to engage with and be affected by one’s outer and inner world.

Relational in nature, teaching involves continuous analysis and reflection, not only on a personal level but a communal one as well. By connecting with the collective phenomenon experienced by other teachers, and engaging in a form of qualitative inquiry, I was able to illuminate my teaching research and plumb the depths of classroom life through an amplified style of writing: poetic and analytic. Pairing analytical theory with art-based methods of inquiry allowed me to use phenomenological interpretation as a portal, whereby ontology became fluid with artistic dialogue and new ways of being emerged. Concerned with the “re-generation of meaning”, a phenomenological approach mediates perception by unravelling how perceptions of the past ramify current ontologies (Fidyk, 2012). Attending to our archetypal nature can unveil the societal expectations and false perceptions that are entangled within cultural myths. Attuning to the primordial wisdom of archetypes can support the weaving of the teacher as both an experiential and observable subject, integrating our being in and out of the classroom.

**Methods**

Garnered from personal experiences in the classroom, my research has been interpreted analytically and is presented artistically. Qualitative in nature, my research employs a Jungian (analytic) psychology lens that perceives the world as whole and omniscient. Rather than reducing experience to a simplified cause and effect explanation, analytic psychology looks to worldly phenomena for purpose and reason, as it views human experience in terms of the purpose it serves, rather than of the cause by which it arises (Stein, 1998).

Analytic psychology is multidimensional and teleological, as it looks to a personal or collective path inclusive of its past, present and future for orientation (Fidyk, 2012). Taken from Grecian etymology, teleology refers to a perspective that explores reasoning when an end has been reached (Duignan, 2008). Hence, Shaker (1982) emphasizes that the teleological outlook of analytic psychology sets intention on “self-realization, a process identified as the prime characteristic of the life of the psyche” (p. 246). Innately, the self aspires to know itself through the teleological enfolding of life.

Analytic theory has unearthed the existence of archetypal phenomenon. Assuming an archetypal lens, led me to inquire into the cultural myths and stereotypes that surround education. This inquiry has brought awareness as to how our historic and current pedagogical sphere has been shaped by the collective experience, and how teachers can rewrite these myths. Witnessing classroom phenomena through an analytic lens elicited insight into my habits and presence as a teacher and the person I am outside of the classroom, and the interplay between these two existences. While my interpretation of archetypal imagery is specific to my own experience as a classroom teacher, the polysemous nature of archetypes posits that their symbolic essence resonates with arrays of teachers’. Archetypes, as transcendental, live both with and through us, as individuals and as a collective whole.

While conducting my research, I was called to arts-based inquiry and incorporated poetic and visual methods. By composing a selection of poems inspired by my teaching experience, I was able to unearth universal archetypal experiences of classroom life. Nielson (2012) characterizes poetry as both an all-seeing and unifying art form, with poetic inquiry as a way of inquiring “into aspects of... conflicted selves” (p. 22). Reflexively, poetic inquiry has enabled me to better attune to my own teacher patterning. Limiting in nature, reflection is a self-contained activity that reflects

a subjective, one-directional way of seeing and “think[ing] about the world, just as a mirror reflects back what stands before it” (Fidyk, 2012, p. 351). As a reflexive method, poetic inquiry, like the ocean's current, can simultaneously attune one to the push and pull of their internal tide while connecting them to grander collective rhythms; unearthing variances of self in relation to universal phenomenon.

Through writing, Nielsen (2012) suggests that our thoughts become clearer to us; we make discoveries, we come to know and eventually ... it allows someone to “turn [their] story inside out, slowly reveal[ing] connections... that [they] wouldn't come to by another route” (p. 24). Reflexively, poetry invites space for the mind to wander, masticate, ponder, rest and ultimately arrive at a place of *knowing*. Epistemologically speaking, the *knowing* that emerges from reflexive, imaginative wanderings are legitimate forms of knowledge which belong to an integrated cosmos, privy to all beings (Fidyk, 2013).

Archetypes can be recognized across time, space, and culture(s) as they constellate around basic and universal life experiences, including the macro experiences of birth, life, death, marriage and education; and the integral roles that exist within being a mother, healer, partner and teacher (Sharp, 1991). Archetypes are primordial images and instincts that live within the collective unconscious. They are ephemeral in the sense that they are specific to the paradigm and place in which they arise and portrayed within (more to come in Myth and Expectation section). Despite being undefinable, archetypes are culturally universal and can be identified through their symbolic nature, an individual's emblematic presence, or wider collective behaviours, as they psychosomatically connect body and mind (Samuels, Shorter, and Plaut, 1986, p. 26).

Archetypal forms reveal themselves as symbolic manifestations as they arise from the autonomous psyche (Fidyk, 2013). Recognizing these archetypal forms requires nuanced

observation. Affirming epistemologies of imagination, psychologist James Hillman (1999) reminds us that “the aesthetic imagination is the primary mode of knowing the cosmos, and aesthetic language [is] the most fitting way to formulate the world” (cited in Leggo, 2012, p. 142). Poetry encourages wandering within and thus, offers a way to be, feel, hear, see, and experience phenomenon. By offering a vessel for non-binary ethical sensibility, poetic inquiry has created a for archetypal inquiries by kindling contemplation of my inner life in relation to my role as a researcher and educator.

Awareness of the archetypal helped me to recognize patterns that exist within myself, both on a professional and personal level. Researching the archetypal cultivated an exploratory portal to organize and construct meaning, in not just how I experience and see the world, but in knowing my place within it. Thus, the following paper constitutes a patchwork quilt that weaves the interwoven fabric of teaching and living, both inside and outside of the classroom.

### **Research Questions**

Poetically, I have explored the constellation<sup>1</sup> of archetypes within my teaching experience and the profession at large by posing the following questions: *Which archetypes are actively constellated and why? How can an awareness of archetypal energies empower and heighten the consciousness of teachers?* In my attempt to answer these questions, I have come to realize the pragmatic wisdom of archetypal energies and how they can elicit a greater awareness and cultivate a more receptive and embodied teacher presence.

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<sup>1</sup> “This term simply expresses the fact that the outward situation releases a psychic process in which certain contents gather together and prepare for action. When we say that a person is “constellated” we mean that he has taken up a position from which he can be expected to react in a quite definite way. . . . The constellated contents are definite complexes possessing their own specific energy” (Jung, 1969, p. 94)



## Collective Conditions

### Presence

#### *Teacher Presence*

communication  
requires participation  
participate in humanness

face-to-face with relationship  
fusing of a cacophony of voices

Teachers  
necessitate presence

vulnerable  
self-revelatory reciprocity  
conjures courage  
to be

\*Found Poetry compilation from Hufford (2014), article 'Presence in the classroom'

A teacher's presence is mystical and abstract, as it "touches upon awareness, perception, and consciousness itself" (Snowber, 2016, p. 74). Permeable, a person's presence communicates with and is part of the collective<sup>2</sup> experience, while emitting an individual's essence (Hufford, 2014, p. 14). Heidegger (1962) connected presence and being through his concept of Dasein, defined as "the human person as the place where being is" (as cited in McCarthy, 2015, p. 130). Ephemeral, presence is subjective in that it corresponds to each person and their relation with Other(s), during a specific instance in time. The abstract nature of presence led Heidegger to consider poetry to be the most authentic form of knowing, as it expresses the experiential presence of a precise moment, unlike any other craft (Geertsema, 2018). Therefore, it is through this medium

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<sup>2</sup> The *collective unconscious*, an enmeshed and woven psyche surrounds all people and societies, a theory developed by Jung. Within this net our ways of knowing and being as a collective are formed, held, and evolve-sign, symbols, norms, mores, values, heritage and percepts dwell here; indubitably, not all facets are conscious (Samuels, 1968).

of communication and the imaginative process it evokes, that insight into the another is invited (Nielsen, 2008, p. 4).

Elusive in nature, presence is emitted through psyche (mind) and soma (body). Interlaced is an insightful consideration by Estola (2003), who recognizes that learning occurs throughout the body, which she describes as a map in which experiences are interpreted through and remembered upon (p. 712). Relayed through the physical body and made audible by language, presence is a conduit for symbolic archetypal messaging (Ladkin and Taylor, 2010). Borhani (2017) illustrates the expansive permeability of individual presence by eloquently describing presence as an attentive place to integrate and enmesh our mind and body with our surroundings: “animal, plant, air, water, star, fire -- with whom we dwell. Dwelling in place... we become cultural Alchemists of our own lives, changing our world into Worlds as we scribe in journal... and scribble scraps of wonderment into our palms” (p. 105). Recognizing our interconnectedness to the archetypal informs the ways in which our collective narrative has been woven in relation to the individual threads. Awareness of such kinship evokes agency to more consciously attune to the presence emitted by our individual presence. Engendered, presence attends to “companionship... [and] patience... with solitude. It means to adopt a caring, receptive attitude. The willingness to do what needs to be done is rooted in attention to what is, not our projected desires of what should be” (Fidyk, 2012, p. 349). Intuitively rooted, presence reciprocally connects us to our surroundings and establishes how we function on an executive level. As a result, reflexive practices can support our ability to decipher between conditioned reactions and momentary responsiveness.

As teachers, we help to orchestrate the unpredictable educational vessel that contains a dynamic range of affect: the classroom. In doing so, students’ perception of their teacher changes throughout the day; loving and laughing *with* their teacher one moment, hating and laughing *at*

their teacher the next. However, Biesta (2014) reveals that recent studies attribute the teacher as being the most important educational factor related to students' success, prioritized even above curriculum delivery and design (p. 75). Blanket claims, such as the one critiqued by Biesta (2014) above, dangerously project<sup>3</sup> more pressures on teachers without providing them with the support to feel successful (i.e. manageable class sizes and wide-range supports for learning and behavioral challenges). Moreover, these studies fail to address the relational aspects of pedagogy, as they dehumanize the teacher by framing them as a variable that can be controlled as a means to enhance student improvement and efficiency (Biesta, 2014). The ever-changing nature of pedagogy asks an educator to embody a teacher, as well as a learner, counsellor and disciplinarian; sometimes all within the same minute. A teacher's presence adorns many hats and associated archetypal energies throughout the day, thus an awareness of what is needed and when for individual students and the wider class is of mutual benefit to teacher and student(s). Receptive awareness involves an eloquent maneuvering of archetypal activations within the classroom.

Presence in the classroom elicits an awareness of self and other (Hufford, 2014). *Self and self* are key concepts within Jungian psychology and according to Cooper & Olson (1986) that are developed, "through transactions between the person and the world, through the personal, cultural and historical aspects of shared narratives" (p. 80). Recognized as the integrating capacity of one's psychological being, the Self<sup>4</sup> actualizes and unifies one's subjective agency, allowing us to be

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<sup>3</sup> An unconscious and autonomic process where personal and subjective unconscious content is perceived to be in other(s) (Sharp, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> The Self, as the governing authority, consciously and unconsciously, centers and defines one's personhood by unfolding energies and images (Samuels, et. al, 1986, p. 135). Described by Fidyk (2013), describes the Self as, "the representation of a function of coherence, agency and relationship that allows us to perceive ourselves as a single, integrated, subjective embodiment that exists in a fluid and impermanent universe" (p. 391).

perceived as individual (Fidyk, 2013). Whereas, the self<sup>5</sup> is fluid, containing variety and otherness, it unfolds one's becoming. Archetypal symbols emerge from the self and impact the perception and development of one's archetypal Self. Being aware of unconscious projections between a teacher's presence, student(s), and the wider classroom, implores reflexivity of the symbolic and archetypal aspects active within each moment of the classroom. Collective symbols and patterns illustrate the societally constructed myths that collectively bind us to habitually ingrained and outdated ways in which teachers conduct themselves professionally in the classroom, as well as outside of it.

## Literature Review

### Archetype and Analytic Theory

To live in relation with *things* evokes symbolic occurrences. Our human consciousness welcomes analysis of encounters and hence meaning is made. The animated nature of the world communicates through the presence of symbols, which is why Jung looked to the modal nature of symbols to develop and support many of his leading theories. Carl Jung, the Swiss analytic psychoanalyst, theorized that the animated nature of the world communicates through the presence of symbols, which he described as “universal imagery... that controls, orders and gives meaning to our lives” (Samuels et al., 1986, p. 146). Analytic psychology perceives the world as alive therefore the emergence and significance of the symbolic is a primary component.

The overarching symbolic nature of the world is what led Jung to develop archetypal theory. I have enlisted edusemiotic methods of exploration alongside poetic inquiry to explore the

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<sup>5</sup> The self incorporates the entire range of psychic phenomena. The self is the vessel that encompasses all that we are and our infinite potential. Fidyk (2013) explains that self, “as a central organizer in the psychological space of every human being from which our subjectivity and its accompanying ‘otherness’ emerge” (p. 391). That being said, the whole of one's personality can only ever be made partially conscious, as facets of ourselves are innately hidden. These hidden aspects form the personal unconscious (Samuels et. al, 1986).

archetypal constructs of the teacher. Edusemiotics recognizes the expansive quality of education and understands that learning occurs through the study of signs and symbols (Olteanu & Campbell, 2018). It also challenges binary and reductionist forms of education and views learning as an organic process that transpires within one's natural environment. Essentially, edusemiotics supposes that lifeforms learn and make meaning by interacting with the signs and symbols that transpire within our life (Semetsky, 2017).

Contained within the classroom are the conscious and unconscious underpinnings that surround the teacher and student relationship. Archetypes reside in the unconscious realm until consciously recognized. Semetsky (2017) addresses the elusive nature of archetypes when she explains that archetypes "cannot be directly represented in consciousness: they need a specific medium" (p. 279). The classroom acts as a canvas in which archetypes reveal themselves; the medium in which they are actualized is the relational dynamic that exists between teacher and student. The essential energetic imagery of the *Teacher* is archetypal, as it communicates the basic and symbolic life experience of learning with guidance within a school environment. When acutely observed, the nuanced patterning of a teacher's presence (attributes, symbols, and situations) compiles archetypal constellations such as the: *Nurturer, Fool, Expert and Authority* (explored below). The external behaviour of a teacher's presence acts as the conduit for archetypal energies and solicits natural analysis within educational research. Archetypal imagery contributes to the individual *persona(s)*<sup>6</sup>, that a teacher displays throughout their day. Limitless in form, the *persona* was considered archetypal by Jung (Sharp, 1991). While attuning to the archetypal patterning of

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<sup>6</sup> *Persona* originates from the Latin word for mask. While an archetype is broad and timeless and can be recognized by universal markers cross-culturally, a *persona* is specific to an individual's identity. Many *personas* will and can be worn throughout a person's day and lifetime. The *persona* acts as a sort of protective shell, as they can be utilized as a natural defense method. Jung described the *persona* as, "that which in reality one is not, but which oneself as well as others think one is" (Jung, CW 9i, 1969).

my own teaching experience, I have identified four teacher archetypes that frequent my own teaching presence. When contextualized within my individual experience they can be considered persona(s), however, when collectively analyzed within the context of the larger teaching profession they are archetypal.

Societal norms condition certain archetypes and personas by projecting praise upon certain attributes, while rejecting others. In turn, this compounds the issue of conditioning and creates cultural myths. When societal conditioning dictates the archetypal expectations of teachers, distance grows between their teaching persona and their non-teaching persona, which can inhibit the cultivation of presence (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). Similarly, being too tightly bound to a teaching persona can result in one losing sight of oneself outside of the classroom, leading to emotional distance (Sharp, 1991). Consciousness of archetypal activation within the classroom allows for a more intentional presence to be fostered. Promoting a deep listening and intuitive knowing of archetypal energy can better meet the needs of the student, teacher, and wider classroom dynamic (Snowber, 2016, p. 74).

Archetypes emit the communicative potential of cultural artifacts and interactions. Semetsky (2017) suggests that “different objects and events in our life carry cultural, psychological and social significance and represent symbolic texts to be read and interpreted” (p. 278). Ontologically, our reality is shaped through experience with our surroundings. As ecological philosopher, David Abram (1996) suggests, humans are shaped by “the places (we) inhabit, both individually and collectively. Our bodily rhythms our moods, cycles of creativity and stillness, and even our thoughts are readily engaged and influenced by shifting patterns in the land” (as cited in Nielsen, 2008, p. 97). Inquiring, archetypally, into the patterning of my classroom life, through an analytic psychological lens, has offered me a vantage point to recognize the ways in which our

individual and collective rhythms have been shaped by the environments in which we dwell. Leggo (2012) recognizes the beholder's imagination as their most familiar place. Yet, familiarity often begets comfort as it results from conditioning and preconceived expectations. Therefore, reflexive practices, such as poetic inquiry, offer a way to see past the confines of comfort, as they cultivate a safe, subtle space to explore and wander the infinite of otherness. Poetic inquiry soothes the discomfort one can experience while traversing the unknown while unwinding the teleologic threads of meaning held within our individual and collective existence

### **Myth and Expectation**

Humans are conduits for myth and have channeled their transmission throughout the ages. Jung (1969) depicts the origins of myth by explaining that “the primitive mentality does not *invent* myths, it *experiences* them. Myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche” (p. 154). Constellated by societal responses to archetypal enactments, myths are portrayed at both the personal and collective level (Samuels, 1986). However, for the purpose of this paper, I will narrow my investigative scope to the collective cultural myths specific to the context of education, namely their origination, compilation and reproduction.

Cultural myths endorse a set of ideals: images, parameters, rationalizations and expectations; all of which are archetypally rooted, become normalized within a paradigm and are therefore perceived as commonplace (Britzman, 1986). Unconsciously projected onto a pedestal, teachers are held to demigod-like expectations, conditioned and projected by societal norms. The far-reaching expectations of teachers include (but are not limited to): being expected to have mastered the content and delivery of our subject matter, remaining open-minded and considerate of student response, having control of our students (and wider classroom) and making space for discussion, movement and collaboration (Biestsa, 2015). Unless projected expectations are made

conscious, teachers can further perpetuate these assumptions and cast them upon themselves, resulting in feelings of inferiority when they fail to live up to quixotic stereotypes. Feelings of inferiority can begin to swell in the realm of the shadow.

The *shadow*<sup>7</sup> exists within all of us. As individuals and as a society, the tendency to reject aspects of one's personality or to renounce traits of a collective group is repressed and held within the shadow (Colman, 1995). Accordingly, collective interactions, such as classroom experiences, also pertain to the shadow. Misconceived, shadow moments are often perceived as 'bad', however, they often result in turning points, as these moments of *darkness* offer times of honesty and insight (Chambers, 2004). Rodgers & Raider-Roth (2006) emphasize that vital learning moments occur when the "teacher-student relationship falls apart" (p. 276). Hufford (2014) concurs, reminding us of the educational value of conflict within the classroom (p. 15). The human experience is a complex arrangement of the seen and unseen; fruitive and dormant, light and dark, conscious and unconscious, all of which are bound within the archetypal. Coming to recognize darkness, contradiction, conflict and the paradoxical elements of the shadow as integral to human experience invites greater wholeness of being.

Integrating the shadow is not to deny the weight of its happenings. While the abundance of intrinsically rewarding classroom moments within my teaching experience is infinite, these can be overshadowed by the more time-consuming aspects of the vocation. Whether it be grading assignments, planning lessons, sending emails or creating and refining assessment, teaching is a

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<sup>7</sup> An elusive and far reaching concept, the Shadow, was conceptualized by Jung and Freud, however, came to recognize their difference in perceptions. . Candidly referred to by Jung as the, "thing a person [or collective] has no wish to be" (CW 16, para. 470). Freud recognized the *shadow* in individual terms only, and failed to see its collective application (Samuels, 1986). Misconceived, the *shadow* is commonly associated with the negative aspects of life. Just like archetypes, the *shadow* contains both light and dark aspects that have been repressed by consciousness (Sharp, 1991).



job that is never done. It should come as no surprise that teacher attrition rates report roughly 50% of educators exiting the profession in the first five years (Glazer, 2018). Historically, teaching ability was thought of as innate rather than acquired, and little attention was given to inner life of the teacher. Internal and unconscious aspects are worthy of being heard and affirmed, for much can be gleaned from a teacher's inner landscape (Britzman, 1986).

Psychologist and philosopher Erich Neuman (1969) coined the term 'New Ethic' in his book, *Depth Psychology and a New Ethic*, which anticipated the transitory phase of education. This 'New Ethic' predicted an evolving perception of the teacher, characterized by relational learning and cooperative autonomy, that would lead to a dynamic ethical development of students. Conversely, Neuman's (1969) 'Old Ethic' depicts the social image of the teacher being projected as an authoritarian, similar to the model painted in Debrah Britzman's (1986) analysis of the myth that portrays the teacher as a disciplinarian. Savage (2018) explains that these perceptions of the teacher exist because of "codified and rigid practices that are internalized by students" (p. 12); this is reinforced by Britzman (1986) who believes that the archetypal images of 'teacher' are saturated by a teacher's inherent educational experiences (p. 443). Like sponges, teachers acquire the reactions and responses they have witnessed as both former students and residing members of the larger profession. Moreover, Mayes' (2016) theories criticize educational institutions for using an authoritarian model that molds student consciousness, to conform to accepted social norms. While Neuman's 'New Ethic' was anticipated half a century ago, the more recent aforementioned publications, still question the preservation of mythic stereotypes, that are symbiotically entwined with the authoritarian perceptions of the teacher, leaving us to ask: *will the myth ever shift?*

### **Myth and Paradigm**

Paradigm theory is expansive and while it extends the parameters of this paper, the evolving perception of the teacher alludes to the ongoing paradigmatic shift. While this shift transpires, the image of the teacher grounded in Neuman's 'Old Ethic', characterized by rigid and punitive associations, continues to lurk in the shadows of modern education. Heard before are the criticism of the dual and fragmentated nature of positivist and post-positivist paradigms. While paradigms of the past are limited in nature, when interpreted teleologically, paradigms have progressed so that *new ways of being and knowing* can unfold. To enact these *new ways of knowing and being*, I advocate for pedagogical values that affirm paradigmatic progression rather than those that reside in critique; in doing so, I align my stance with Leggo (2012), who maintains that,

to engage in a kind of apologetics or defense that revels in the ideologically sanctioned idolization of certain privileged forms of rational and analytical and expository argument. Instead, I engage in testimony, in witness, in presenting poetry and prose that linger with a language educator's delight in the revelry of words" (Leggo, 2012, p. 142).

Stagnant criticisms of past paradigms perpetuate the value systems in which these models have been founded upon: polarity, objectivity, and causality (Kuhn, 1962). Instead, the "revelry of words" articulated by Leggo (2012), can offer a non-binary approach to research that welcomes wandering the unknown in order to unearth new sensibilities. A world framed with duality calls for poetic inquiry's "radical unknowing in the face of orthodoxies and fundamentalisms" (cited in Seidel, 2017, p.158). Writing has bridged my agency in being a teacher researcher, and a person, which is fittingly supported by Okri's (1997) reminder to "weave transformations in our life as well as our work" (as cited in Seidel, 2017, p. 155).

### **Archetypes Actualized**

The four teacher archetypes explored through art-based methods include: *The Fool*, *Expert*, *Nurturer* and *Authority*. By drawing from my own teaching experience, I brought tangible

form to the elusive essence of these archetypes, by composing a poem and drawing a visual interpretation of each, with the intention of representing the wholistic nature of each constellation: the light, the dark, the liminal, the universal.by

Tangible, visual modalities broaden interpretation(s) and relay the universal nature of archetypes. The collective, eternal and animated nature of imagery restores and enlivens our consciousness (Fidyk, 2012). Windborn (2015) explains that “Aesthetic Encounters” evoke metaphoric understanding, as they connect us to our primitive levels of understanding, and elicit heightened aesthetic and emotional experiences that evoke, “strong bilateral brain response[s] and more involvement of the emotional centers” (p. 99). Aesthetics portrayals activate experiential centers, as they engage experiential consciousness that has been shaped by imagery of our past (Winborn, 2015). Visual and poetic research modalities catalyze emotional responses of ‘Aesthetic Encounter’, by conveying my individualized personal experience(s), while connecting viewers to their own subjective archetypal affiliations.

Paradoxically universal, yet distinctly undefinable, archetypes present themselves somatically through the body’s presentation. When activated, archetypes inform a teacher’s somatic centre by symbolically revealing themselves through a person’s posture, poise, manner and intonation. The reflexive process of drawing each archetype invited awareness as to when an archetype had been activated within my own teaching presence, helping me to access greater embodiment within my own physical form. The creation of poetic verses widened the confines of my analytic mind by welcoming an experiential wandering of the archetypal that allowed me to recognize when the archetypal had become constellated. Conveying insights through poetic verse allowed me “to communicate [my] understanding more powerfully to the readers of the research” and affectively annotate the nuances of each archetype (Faulkner, 2019, p. 5). Moreover, poetic

inquiry invited what poet, Jane Hirschfield (1997) referred to as “new spiritual, emotional and ethical understandings” into my research (cited in Leggo, 2012, p. 153). Specifically, poetic inquiry offered a new way of seeing, not only within my classroom role as a teacher, but how it blends with the person I am outside of school. This makes sense, to St. Georges (2019), who claims that adopting art-based practices can heighten awareness of “the ways we attend to one another, ourselves and to the world” (p. 716). By using arts-based practices to witness, recognize and explore the archetypal nature of the teacher, I became more empowered to become the author and authority of my own becoming inside, and outside, of the classroom.

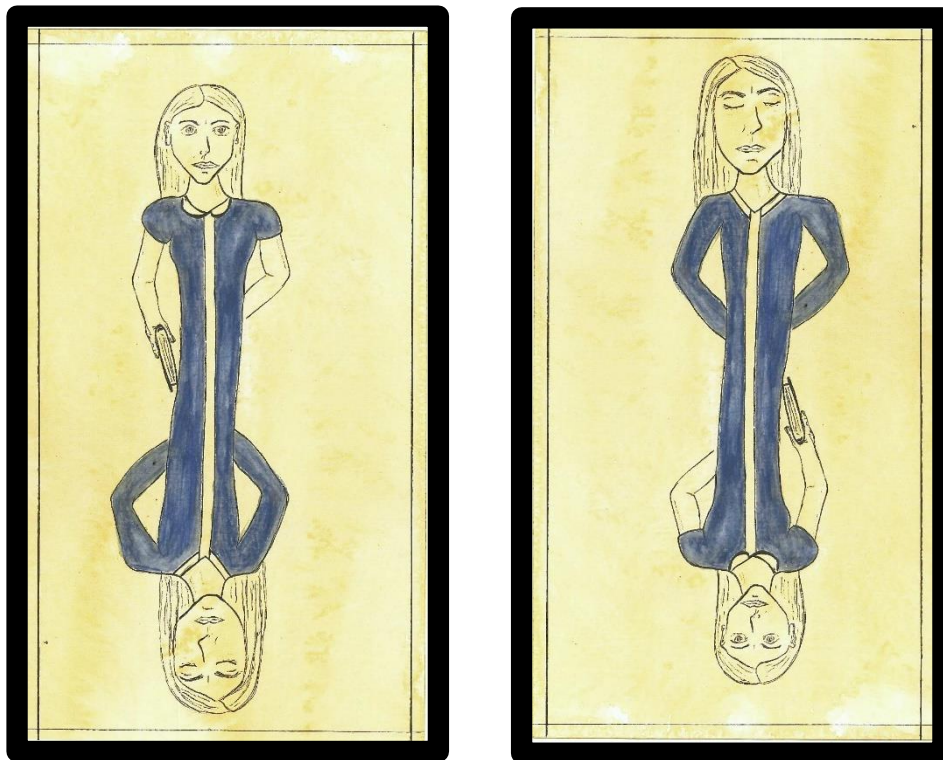
### **Theoretical Framework**

Teacher archetypes live in relation with and to one another, for they project and share similar shadow aspects. Analyst Toni Wolff’s framework of the Feminine ‘quadrant’, within her paper *Structural Forms of the Feminine Psyche*, offered insight into the associations between my four researched archetypal forms: *The Fool, Expert, Nurturer and Authority*.

Perpendicularly, the four archetypes lie on two intersecting spectrums. Together, these two spectrums cross one another, and form a quadrant (see diagram in Figure 1). One spectrum houses the *Nurturer and Authority* archetypes, which stretches from the Northern pole of the personal realm, to the Southerly impersonal, while the intersecting spectrum that spans East to West houses *the Fool and Expert* archetypes, and represents the realm of knowing to unknowing.

Derived from centuries of cultural norms, values and expectations, cultural myths reside within and beyond our current reality. Identifying archetypal connotations in relation to collective myths, has revealed the conditions in which these myths have been spawned, and has helped me recognize the times in which they become activated within my own teacher presence.

Art Actualizations



*Teacher as Expert*

kept within the confines of the classroom  
I know something about something  
perhaps even just a little more than *them*

impressions of an expert  
glasses, acumen, calculations  
*Expertise* elicits  
stacks of books, wakeful nights, tired days  
devotion  
dwelling in unknown  
endeavours masked by  
myth

vulnerable  
no, where to hide  
when being tried

anterior to teenager(s)  
 ones who can feel so sure  
 in knowing  
 can leave me second-guessing mine

yearning eyes  
 admire, acquire  
 unbeknownst  
 navigate the reciprocity  
 of studenthood

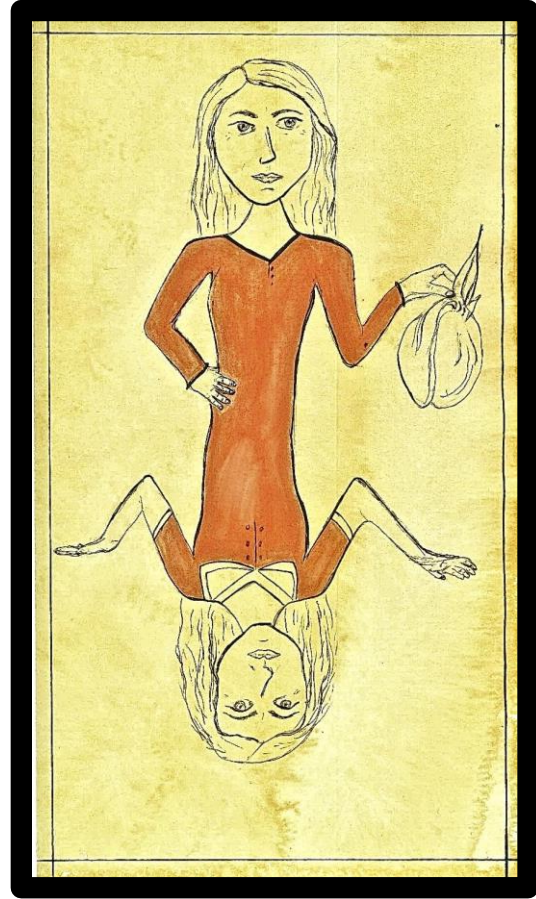
student and expert  
 two sides  
 one coin

### **The Expert**

Teaching involves acquiring expert levels of knowledge within a short time span, for a wide array of subject matter. Yet, expertise takes time, practice, and support, all of which are in short supply in the early years of teaching. The *Teacher as Expert* myth can portray knowledge and learning as being finite and unchanging to students, educators, and wider society (Mayes, 2016). The '*Teacher as Expert*' is suggested to be the farthest-reaching education based cultural myth by Deborah Britzman (1986). The associated expectations surrounding knowledge attainment can engulf a new teacher, making them feel like an amateur instead of an expert.

Contrarily, *The Expert* archetype can also lead to confidence and conviction in front of a class, which is commonly experienced when a teacher is graced with a teaching assignment grounded in their specialty. When a teacher feels rooted in subject matter that engenders their passion, it can alter their teaching state by allowing them to have more time and space to envision creative ways of teaching, rather than dedicating time to comprehending the material. Expertise of subject matter also enhances a teacher's ability to manage their classroom. Conversely, when a teacher's understanding is questioned this can threaten their authority as the leading *Expert* in the room. Adversely, the overly assured knowing of *The Expert* can lead to ignorance on behalf of the teacher and an overall lack of empathy for the learner.





*Teacher as Fool*

lighthearted  
playful  
release  
relieved

reciprocate roles  
act the student  
let them shine

foot in mouth  
publicly apologetic  
eyes Amiss  
met with the staring  
of students

caught in the wrong  
a premature request  
mistakenly Shooshed  
vindications follow

converse  
chipper chitter chatter  
mine and theirs

entangled in the  
lively  
dynamic of  
classroom

### **The Fool**

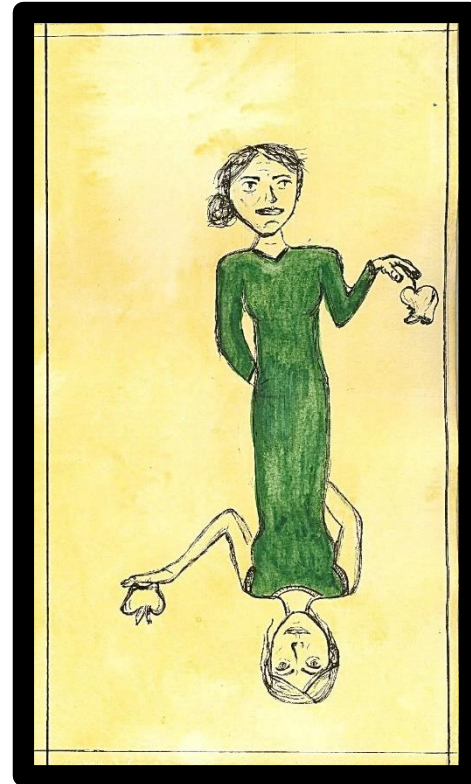
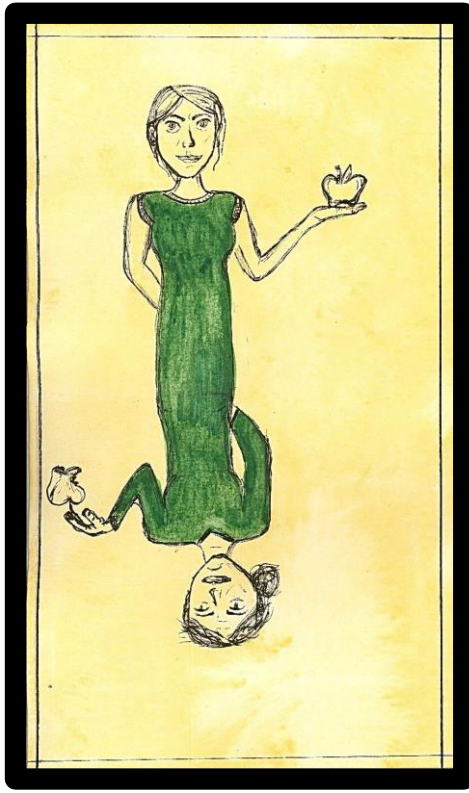
A unified whole exists on a continuum containing variations bound by polarity, a teacher holds the binary attributes of both *The Expert and The Fool* (Matthews, 2009). Being on display, alongside the trial and error nature of the teaching profession, can beckon an innate foolishness within a teacher. *The Fool's* archetypal energy can present itself unknowingly (such as when the teacher is surprised with an unfamiliar word while reading aloud), which acts as a reminder to students that not knowing is okay and part of the learning process itself. However, a teacher's presence can be constellated by *The Fool* covertly by intentionally emitting *Foolish* energetic attributes by changing one's vocal quality to be lyrical or comical. A teacher may access this archetype as a tool to lighten and loosen the atmosphere in order to create a more fluid environment, conducive for communal and social learning.

Archetypally, *The Fool* embraces mistakes and unknowns, which are key to the learning process of both teacher and student. Aptly, Arts-Education activist Elliot Eisner (2002) encourages teachers to “work at the edge of uncertainty, [and] to cultivate uncertainty as an educational value” (cited in Seidel, 2017, p. 154). To cultivate this, Eisner recommends teachers



be willing to enter the space of the unknown and embrace uncertainty, as it can call forth profound truths in a common place way (Bala, 2010). Contrary to *The Expert*, *The Fool* welcomes mistakes because of the growth they elicit (Seidel, 2017, p. 156). Symbolically emitting spontaneity and the unexpected, *The Fool* archetype therefore emits connotations to that of an outsider (Bala, 2010). Due to the isolating nature of teaching, teachers can feel that they are in fact an outsider, as they spend their days apart from adult society in youth-filled classrooms (Britzman, 1986).

Willingness to entertain *The Fool* can help overcome the dominant teacher myth that portrays the teacher solely as *The Expert*. Mayes (2016) recognizes the resistance that can arise when a teacher presents such a paradox: *Expert and Fool, as* contradiction agitates the preconceived mythic underpinnings of education (p. 76). Teachers, however, are multifaceted beings, and consciously embracing a dynamic range of archetypal energies, brings balance to the classroom sphere and helps alter the stereotypical teacher mould that preserves collective pedagogical myths.



*Teacher as Nurturer*

room set  
details attended  
tea, board, desk  
driven by my dominant drive

circumnavigated by feeling  
Better judgement narrowed by  
teacher purview  
blinded by  
the moment

minutes fly by  
warnings given  
habits persist

theirs and yours  
cyclically entwined  
wrapped and bound

natural order of things forgotten  
 ensuing consequences unfold  
 discipline disciplines

inviting freedom

relational respect goes  
 hand in hand  
 within the classroom community  
 boundaries make us good neighbours

### **The Nurturer**

*Loco Parentis* is an oath that teachers pledge, which regards the teacher's position to that "of a caring parent.... [in] their duty of care" (Alberta Teachers Association, 2020). The *Loco Parentis* oath demonstrates the nurturing aspects implicit to education. In relation to the student, nurturing the social, emotional and mental facets of our students is as much our "duty" as teachers as it is to provide them with academic nourishment. The palatable nature of education becomes obvious when analyzing the language that surrounds pedagogy, which can evoke edible imagery: devour a book, chew on new ideas (Mayes, 2016, p. 56). A vessel of sorts, *The Nurturer* creates a nourishing space for students to not only masticate concepts, but to grapple with and question them as well (Wolk, 2009).

Albeit a wide-ranging archetypal role, *The Nurturer* has often felt the most natural teacher role for me to fulfill. Identifying as a female teacher, this is perhaps due to my maternal energy, which has associations to the *Nurturer* archetype. Like any archetype however, there are dark aspects within *The Nurturer*. While the affirmative pole of maternal energy has been associated with the qualities of a 'good' mother, such as empathy, sustenance and freedom, opposing this pole sits the 'bad' mother, which denotes energies such as apathy, deprivation and control (Samuels, et. al., 1986). While stereotypic extremes exist on either end of the spectrum, both

‘good’ and ‘bad’ facets are necessary for a whole existence. For example, the disciplined essence of the ‘bad’ mother is needed to bring balance to the outlandish freedom that can often run wild under the carefree attitude of the ‘good mother’. It is through reflexive practice that a teacher can recognize which archetypal attributes to adopt and when to best apply them.

Drawing from my own experience of being surrounded with intelligent and engaged students has led me to realize I may give them the benefit of the doubt too often. Although the archetypal energy of the *Nurturer* calls on me to care deeply about my students’ lives and foster relationship with them, which has led to moments of effortless classroom management. Reflexive practices have equipped me with the ability to recognize when I have become constellated by this energy. Awareness of archetypal constellation has revealed my propensity to deviate towards this energy during times of high-energy antics, where I tend to provide students with endless warnings instead of delivering appropriate consequences. My Nurturer inclinations are most noticeable when I default to my instinctive uplifting intonation or am overcome by a higher pitched tone of voice. Awareness of these markers is the first step towards participating in the conscious and effective delivery of archetypes, such as *The Nurturer*.



*Teacher as Authority*

silence magnifies slightest  
whisper(s)  
Centre circumnavigated by  
teacher Presence

the room knows  
Serious. Serious. Serious.  
something went astray  
teacher talks slow  
articulating every consideration

selfish accords

I question  
 intentionally malevolent?  
 she knows not  
 conspired by mob mentality  
 a pack of coyote pups  
 baring teeth at a farmer's flock

overbearing repaid with:  
 slow to feel--stiff relations--composure  
 visceral tensions slice the spectrum of stares  
 acute, side-eyed  
 struggling  
 to meet my gaze

solemn, regretful?  
 who am I to say?  
 adolescent angles can be acute

by the end  
 we've come  
 full circle  
 a revolution for  
 revelation

actualization of gratitude  
 stamped and sealed  
 with a

thank you

### **The Authority**

Being in a position of authority draws parallels to that of a conductor; lose that sense of conductor-like control, and a teacher can feel like they are being sucked into the orchestral cyclone of their classroom. Deborah Britzman's (1986) article depicts a teacher's responsibility to control large groups of students as a form of "mob control", citing that the myth of the 'good teacher' connotes teachers with having all-encompassing classroom control, rather than a strong understanding of pedagogical theory (p. 447). Mayes (2016) associates the socially constructed myth of authority with the sennex, a trite and lifeless know-it-all character who demands absolutes

from their oppressed students (p. 77). *The Authority* archetype recognizes time as linear and finite. Within my own teaching practice, I recognize this persona's presence at its strongest when time is of the utmost concern. Not a minute can be wasted. Side conversation is stagnant, and rigidity fills the air. Acuity of hearing is at its finest, perhaps even magnified, as paranoia begins to present itself, and the slightest whisper echoes throughout the stifled airwaves of the classroom. The impulsive reactivity of *The Authority* archetype can leave a teacher to speak before thinking or react instead of responding, leading to feelings of shame over being too harsh, and can stifle creativity within the classroom (Mayes, 2016).

*The Authoritarian* myth maintains hierarchical power dynamics (and struggles) between teachers and students, as it implies unbounding control and assumes that "students are incapable of leadership, insight, or learning without a teacher's intervention" (Britzman, 1986, p. 450). Intertwined within this myth are the students' expectations for the teacher to maintain control of the classroom in a traditional authoritarian manner. As Britzman (1986) explains, "unless the teacher establishes control there will be no learning, and, if the teacher does not control the students, the students will control the teacher... This power struggle equates learning with control" (p. 449). Unconsciously, *The Authority* myth attempts to normalize and preserve societal constructs of order, control and uniformity within the unpredictable nature of the classroom, at both the school and larger institutional level (Britzman, 1986).

Mythic projections, that construe the teacher chiefly as *Authoritarian*, contort the multilayered facets of teachers. As a result, archaic and hierarchical ways of being stagnate the classroom, discrediting the students' potential for developing their own executive functioning (Phelan, 2011). In order to interrupt, alter and move beyond these mythic ways of being, we must first become conscious of the habitual narratives that are portrayed within the classroom. While a

sense of authority is key to the learning environment, the question of balance remains: *How can we have students respect authority from a non-authoritarian approach?*

Archetypally, *The Authority* archetype is one that I have struggled to assume in the early years of teaching; research and experience have since offered me more comfort in adopting the role. Through reflexive practices, such as journal writing, drawing, and poetry, I discovered the archetype's origins in *Authorship*. Embracing a sense of *Authority*, teachers become empowered to direct the 'living curriculum' of their classrooms; like that of an author, they write the classroom's narrative in real time (Aoki, 1993). Tasked with composing and maintaining respectful boundaries of the classroom, teachers adapt their presence to the fluctuating nature of the environment. The role of *The Authority* compels steadfast adaptations; a teacher's *Authoritative* energy can take students to task solely with their presence. When authority is respected, a stare, proximity, name acknowledgement, or a subtle gesture, can get students back on track.

Therefore, relationships are pivotal to the order of a classroom. A teacher's presence acts as an environmental container in which relationships are founded, thereby the classroom community is oriented around *The Authority* of a teacher, as they are the ones that compose and maintain the boundaries that comprise the classroom's expectations and relationships. Consistency of relationships and individual accountability fosters trust amongst the members of a classroom community, consequently, these facets established and maintained classroom order (Rodgers & Raider-Roth, 2006). As philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1999) maintains, "community is certainly more than a sum, yet is truly a sum of ones" (p. 241). Kierkegaard's (1999) insightful account alludes to the reciprocal (un)conscious communications between the individual and the collective narrative. The intricate dynamic between the whole and its parts denotes relational trust and accountability as vital to the integrity of the classroom.



While being *The Authority* figure bestows responsibility on the teacher to deliver expectations, boundaries and discipline, it also compels them to conduct themselves in a conscious way that alters the mythic portrayals of the teacher, instead of perpetuating them. Accordingly, establishing trusting and accountable classrooms, founded in *Authorship*, can help dissolve and rewrite the cultural myth of the *Authoritarian*.

### **Archetypal Reflectivity**

Archetypal reflectivity invites awareness, attention of and access to archetypal energies. Mayes (2017) suggests that “By tapping into the archetypal wellsprings of [our] sense of calling through reflectivity on [our] practice... [we are] better armed... to transform [our] classroom into a temenos, a sacred space abounding in the archetypal graces of teaching and learning (Mayes, 2017, p. 60). Reflexive activities, such as written or visual forms can evoke archetypal reflectivity, by reminding an educator of their “sense of calling as a teacher, one’s pedagogical practices, and how one’s role...fits into the larger narrative of one’s life” (Mayes, 2017, p. 60). By connecting teachers with primordial wisdom, archetypal reflectivity sparks a dialogue that can offer teacher’s insight and enrich their role in the vocation.

Like a reverberating wave in the ocean, individual habits impact collective tendencies. Archetypal reflectivity allows teachers an osmosis-like consciousness that allows them to circumnavigate the micro and macro, evoking what Thomasson (2017) refers to as “a reciprocal act of vulnerability”, which enables teachers, “to be open to receive that which is being offered” (p. 156). Receptivity of archetypal patterning can potentiate change for the teacher and the wider class. Archetypal awareness cultivates an intuitive teacher knowing that informs what is needed

for their students and class in any given moment, whether it be in the form of a directed, stricter energy such as that of *The Authority*, or the playful dynamic of *The Fool*.

The timeless nature of archetypes reveals that “our journeys across the centuries are often very similar, merely played out in varying contexts, cultures and time zones” (Nielsen, 2012, p. 23). As personal narratives are enacted and repeated on either side of the globe, so too is our fractaled and mereological existence mirrored within the life we live inside and outside of our classroom. Seemingly, the patterns that radiate a teacher’s presence inside their classroom also exist in their life outside. Recognizing the interconnected nature of the self can potentiate a more whole existence. The unifying nature of this connectedness is recognized by Mayes (2017) when he states that a “sense of Ultimacy is the most powerful of all human motivations, the true Center of all psychic functioning, and we search in vain for health and peace until we each access it in various ways” (p. 10). Mayes (2017) refers to Ultimacy, as a sense of higher order, namely the infinite variations of the *Divine*. Pursuit of Ultimacy, summons a weaving of our teacher selves and our out-of-school existence. This does not mean that a teacher is to exist solely in their teacher persona(s) outside of the classroom, but rather come to recognize the intricacies of the interwoven archetypal patterning that exists within themselves as a teacher and who they are outside the school environment.

Magnanimously rooted, teaching necessitates that a teacher attends to their students before themselves. Teaching has become a vocation whereby teachers need to be reminded to reference their central being in order to better serve themselves and, subsequently their communities. Psychosocial theorist Erik Erickson’s (1995), believed that one’s authentic self exists “wholly by the laws of its own being” (cited in Ladkin and Taylor, p. 65). Erickson’s claim has led me to question his interpretation of wholeness. Reflexivity elicits the observation of oneself from many

angles; poetic inquiry into the archetypal has offered me this. Ebbing and flowing, like a wave in the ocean, reflexivity illuminates one's natural tendencies in relation to the whole, just as the individual wave is oriented within the wider ocean. Poetic reflexivity evokes what Hirschfield (1998) describes as "free[dom] to turn inward and outward, free to remain still and wondering amid the mysteries of mind and world, [and] arrive, for a moment, at a kind of fullness that overflows into everything" (cited in Fidyk, 2012, p. 358). This intricate reverberation between the micro and macro, enables one's ability to exist wholly by the laws of their own being, free of extrinsic expectation, and invites a being and becoming, while on the pursuit of wholeness.

### **Weaving Conclusions**

A single minute in the classroom can beckon a teacher's intuition, understanding, and determination. The subjectivity evoked within the aliveness of our modern classrooms requires a teacher to attune their presence to their surroundings. A teachers' presence is both bound and supported by the archetypal patterning of our collective existence. When we attending to the symbolic, we bridge the personal and collective, and can therefore better prepare, perceive and respond to moments in the classroom. Allowing culturally constructed myths to narrate our ways of being results in a disconnect between inner and outer life, and our teacher and non-teaching self. Recognizing the primordial wisdom of our collective archetypal nature can help unravel the expectations and false perceptions that are project mythic stereotypes upon educators.

To witness oneself in relation to the collective fabric can unravel the subjective confines of the psyche freeing oneself from its: struggles, provocations, habits and notions of subjective judgements. Inquiry into the archetypal, has formed a poetic looking glass, fostering an exploration of my presence that "suspends individualism, and openly engages with others, [as] a kind of empty

mirror [that] can usher in a discovery or recovery of the world (Fidyk, 2012, p. 351). Tangentially, Leggo (2012) believes that poetry can provide a way to understand our many centres by providing a reflexive measure to speculate and know. Reflexive inquiry orients one's many centres and bridges them with their collective nature (Fidyk, 2012). Archetypal consciousness offers an omniscient high ground, a central vantage point, that reverses the ordered chaos of the world and alchemizes individual meaning.

The teacher's relationship with self informs their presence and acts as a central keystone for the classroom community, that conducts the rhythm of the classroom, and provides the pulse for the students' engagement and learning (Rodgers, 2006). Referencing oneself within and in connection to the whole welcomes agency of one's personal narrative that reverberates outward, impacting the classroom and wider community, and capacitates greater unity. St. George (2019) explains that the individual's inward journey is an "integral symbiotic process of both one's personal evolution and collective growth... [D]evelopment of relational connectedness [between] what [they] know, learn and share honors [their] connection with Others and benefits the whole community: family, friends, schools, neighbourhood, ecosystems and so on" (p. 712).

Reflexive practice has welcomed a teleological untangling of the collective narrative that has, paradoxically, prompted the stitching and weaving of my being as teacher and beyond. Initiated by the reflexive, I have come to embrace a space that recognizes a person as an infinitely whole and ever becoming. Moreover, poetic inquiry has led me to experience a palpable interweaving that Fidyk (2012) eloquently refers to as "a 'reconciling force', between the outer and inner landscapes wherein an unconscious dimension of language effectuates and enriches subjective life" (p. 348). Reconciling a consciousness that recognizes the connection between our

collective, archetypal nature and our inner life can empower teachers to respond to their calling with a newfound unified integrity.

*woven*

supported and held in  
the net of existence

ephemeral and palpable

connects  
the whole  
ones

who be

you—they—me  
part-whole-we

breadth brings brevity  
eternity stories individuality

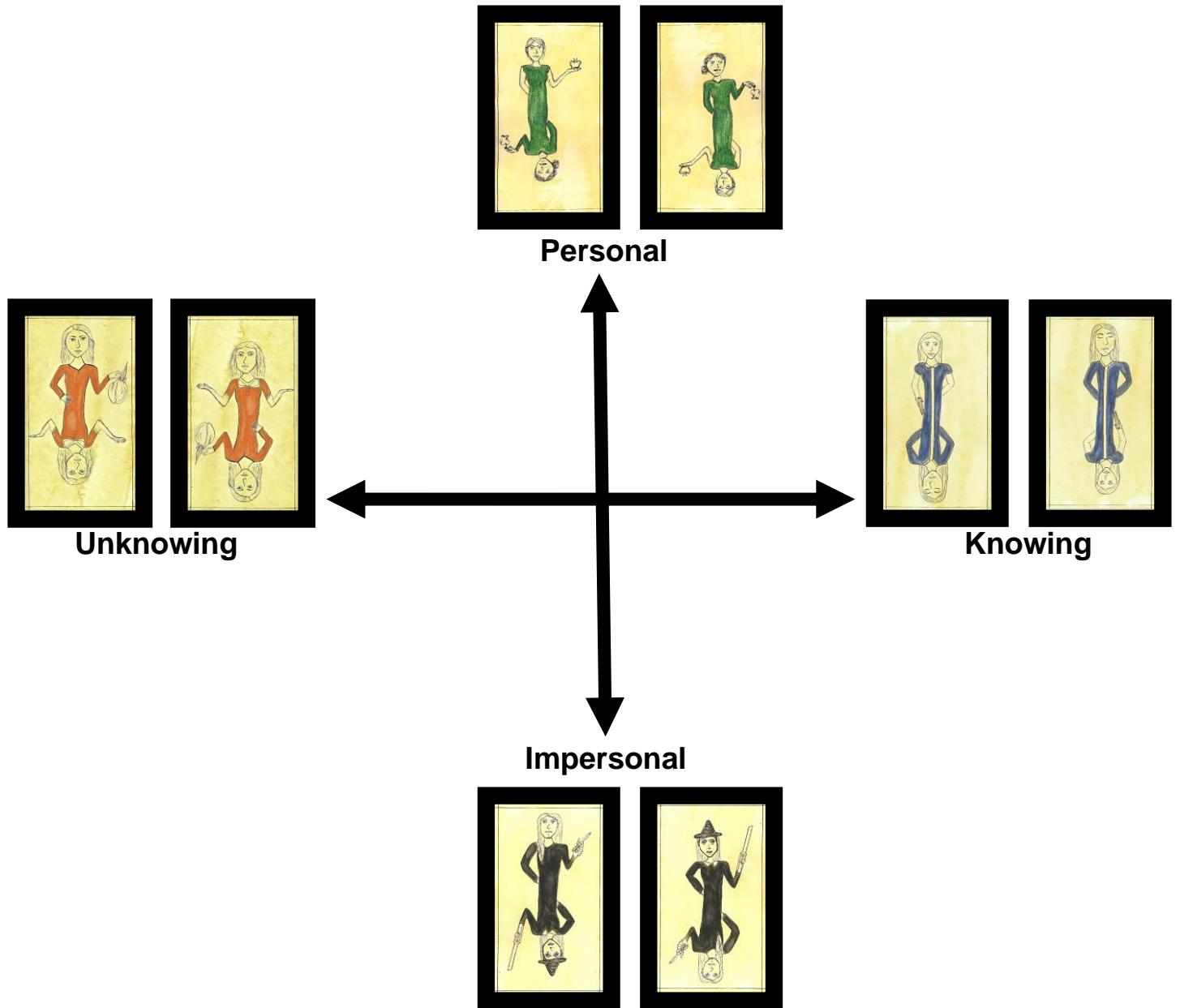
write to reveal  
crumble to create  
grieve to appreciate

pause to perceive  
feel to sense

beckons  
becomes

becoming

Figure 1



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