

# Are Epicurean Gods Compatible with Carl Jung's Collective Unconscious and Archetypes?

Post by “Eikadistes” of September 5, 2024 at 6:42 AM

## [Quote from Cassius](#)

Twentier since you seem to have read into this, any comment on Joseph Campbell and his work? (I've heard of him but know virtually nothing.)

I love Joseph Campbell; his approach to mythology helped provide me with personal orientation when it came to spiritual propositions and religious idea. He shares a tremendous in common with Jung, both of whom admire non-traditional spiritual influences, both of whom I would contextualize within the Freudian tradition of psychoanalysis. In general, the approach of each of these thinkers is grounded in the proposition that there is a common, psychological territory through which all humans travel, and that Freud and Jung, among others, could map that territory.

There is something of a double-edged sword here that keeps nagging me from the back of my mind, and I think that is, that, on one hand, the general notion of the "collective unconscious", if we are to mean that common, psychological territory we share (for example, the fear of death), then that is totally coherent with Epicurean Philosophy, and, in my mind, presents us with more accessible ways to interface with ideas like *prolepseis*. On the other hand, I think that Epicurus would be very critical of the ways that Freud, Jung, and Campbell relied on metaphor. That group of thinkers attempted to provide us with dream analysis, which Epicurus, I think, would have cautioned against (if not necessarily rejected). They also laid the foundations for the idea of personality typologies, which are by no means objective, or even always useful. Joseph Cambell's heroic archetypes are often so general and numerous that they (with respect, because I love Joseph Cambell) seem to me *not* to have value as predictive tools, scientifically or medically.

A lot of these ideas are ground-breaking and brilliant in that, in the post-Darwin era, they contextualized human psychology within evolutionary theory. They were bold enough to explore taboo, and provided rational explanations for religious experiences, for criminal behavior, for alternative sexuality, and were willing to admit common value with Dharmic traditions.

But the specific *features* they designate on their *psychological maps* to define the *territory of the human mind* are sometimes moreso grounded in by cultural metaphors than neurology and psycho-biology. They can still be meaningful, but without relying on frank vocabulary, some of these ideas, as I see it, get robbed of their usefulness, again, as objective, psychological tools.

Clearly psychoanalysis has value ... but so does the placebo affect ( in a significant way). That does not mean that the objects of one's belief are real, only that belief, itself, is powerful.

I find the greatest correspondence between these thinkers and Epicurus to be in their attempt to ground the religious experience within the context of being an animal, and in generally evaluating the similarities of human beliefs and behavior across cultures. *Archetypes might be a useful way to understand prolepseis*, but there are differences, and Jungian archetypes would not necessarily align with Epicurean archetypes. They also had soft spots for Plato and tantric, Indian practices, so that demonstrates a difference in terms of inspirations, as well.