

Archetype of the Fool - “You’re Going to Make a Fool of Yourself.”



“The Holy Fool is always considered a dummy by the smart, hip people who really know the score. There’s a mysterious blight on the land, nothing will grow and no one knows how to break the spell. The Holy Fool sets out to find the cause, right the wrong, save the people. He’s told he can’t do it, that he’s too dumb, too weak, too something, hearing from all quarters, “That’s not how we do things here,” and “You just don’t understand.” But he goes ahead anyway.”

~Ann

Medlock

Do you have this inner voice of warning that was once protective, and is now self-perpetration (because it judges and inhibits you from living a full life) in your life? The voice that says, “be careful, you will make a fool of yourself,” “you sound ridiculous,” “that is a dumb question, everyone is going to laugh at you, and judge you.” Consider what exactly your warning voice says to you. This is the voice that causes you to conform, dumb down, play it safe, and not question. This voice does not want you to be noticed, to stand out or, for you to rock the

boat. This is the voice of conformity and the dark side of the fool – the one that conforms and then is the real fool, because life stops at what Rumi would call a “mean-spirited road house,” meaning the places of conformity, superficial pleasures and safety, fitting into to the status quo for acceptance by the masses.

To a frog that’s never left his pond the ocean seems like a gamble.

Look what he’s giving up: security, mastery of his world, recognition!

The ocean frog just shakes his head. “I can’t really explain what it’s like where I live, but someday I’ll take you there.”

If you want what visible reality can give, you’re an employee.

If you want the unseen world, you’re not living your truth.

Both wishes are foolish, but you’ll be forgiven for forgetting that what you really want is love’s confusing joy.

Gamble everything for love, if you’re a true human being.

If not, leave this gathering.

Half-heartedness doesn’t reach into majesty. You set out to find God, but then you keep stopping for long periods at mean-spirited roadhouses.

Joseph Campbell talks about the archetype of the light side of the fool: the Holy Fool. The one who is willing to risk ridicule, scorn and rejection to follow the path of Truth and Love no matter what the naysayers have to say. The Holy Fool is unstoppable, not limited, nor cowed into submission by the

rules, structures and norms of the hierarchies of polite society and so is the most threatening and dangerous to the power and control structures of the ego, that rule the world.

The wisdom of the Holy Fool is recognized as dangerous and so in courts in Europe, they were named as the Court Jester and given protection in giving authentic feedback that challenges even the king, in humor only, of course! Anyone who dares to challenge others, or the status quo, without the king's protection to do so, is considered a fool by those who are too afraid to be authentically real to what is truly occurring and would never risk their reputation, neck or pride by being authentic. For a wonderful example of the Court Jester, read the Shakespeare play of "King Lear."

The world both admires and persecutes the Holy Fool. Jesus is one example of being a Holy Fool, but without permission from the hierarchy. He was both revered and followed and persecuted and killed. The split within the people was projected onto him. At a certain stage of development we have all devalued our young soul, lived in a split off and inauthentic way in our defenses that are over-valued. To be the Holy Fool means to have reconciled that split within oneself even though others will continue to project their inner splits on to you.

John Shelby Spong says in his book *Resurrection: Myth or Reality*,

"Simon had seen in Jesus a rare personal integrity that was displayed in the courage to be himself in all circumstances. When the masses came to hear Jesus and even to laud him, his head was not turned by their acclaim. When the forces of hostility closed in upon him, his face was not hidden in fear and his spirit was not embittered with rage. Jesus seemed to be free of the need to be defined by the responses of others. Simon yearned to possess that freedom."

Jesus also seemed to know how to be present to others. He engaged each moment and each person with the intensity of eternity. When he was with one called the rich young ruler, who carried the signs of earthly power, and when he was with the woman taken in adultery, with no power except the plea for mercy, the attention, the gaze, and the presence of Jesus to that person was portrayed as total. That person was perceived as being the only person in Jesus' life at that moment. In that manner he seemed to challenge with his very life the hierarchy of values by which human beings judged one another. To Jesus, each person bore God's image, each person was worthy of God's love, and therefore each person had the potential to grow into the full life of God's spirit."

If we look carefully at this passage, we will discover the qualities of the Holy Fool:

- Integrity displayed in the courage to be oneself in all circumstances
- Freedom to:
 - not need affirmation and acclaim
 - not give in to fear
 - not be embittered by rage
 - to not needing to be defined by the responses of others
- Being fully present to another human being – and self
- Being free of judging others (and self) by values usually used
- Seeing people (including self) as bearing the image of God - believing in their innate goodness and divinity
- Worthy of God's love and so lovable
- Having the potential to grow into the full life of God's Spirit

Another example in literature is the story of Alice in Wonderland. The Tim Burton movie “Alice in Wonderland,” a sequel to Lewis Carrolls’ books, caught me by surprise. It is a tale of the heroine’s journey – and how often do the arts depict the Heroine’s journey?!

In this movie, Alice’s fear of being trapped by conformity propels her on a journey to discover the Holy Fool within herself. The movie opens with the now grown-up Alice at a garden party. The landed gentry are gathered, all so very proper in their adherence to the tradition, rules and protocol of Victorian England. They are symbolically dressed in white, to cover up their dark side. Outwardly they pretend to be “nice.”

Alice does not know that she is about to be proposed to by the utterly revolting, pompous and condescending Lord Ascot. She finds herself being ushered to the pavilion in the garden where Lord Ascot gets on his knees and proposes marriage in front of the gathering. Alice panics.

At this point I was hooked on the movie. How many times, as a woman have I felt anxiety at wanting to say “no,” when convention and common sense tell me to say “yes” I was a fool to say yes, and yet not brave enough to be the Holy Fool and say “NO.” And how many times have I acquiesced and violated the truth of who I am for the sake of what others expect and want before I could discern the difference between Truth and conformity out of fear.



Luckily, Alice catches a glimpse of the white rabbit. She desperately and clumsily excuses herself, follows her guide and falls down the rabbit hole into Underland. What ensues is an adventure of the soul, with all the characters in the story representing the archetypes in her own unconscious; the simpy, sappy, passive White Queen; her sister, the aggressive Red Queen with her evil henchman; the ethereal Cheshire cat, the

blue hooka-smoking caterpillar, the fatuous empty headed Tweedledum and Tweedledee and the greatest delight of all for me, the archetype of the fool – the Mad Hatter. It takes a Fool to defy cultural norms! And it is the Mad Hatter that shows Alice how to be the Holy Fool.

Alice has to confront her fear, represented by the fearsome Jabberwocky. After a series of adventures, she rides into battle on the back of, what I think, is a representation of her own instinct, a marvelous, many toothed, furry monster. The key to her courage has been to befriend this monster. Alice slays the Jabberwocky by befittingly cutting of it’s head – the symbol of rules, roles, beliefs and conformity. She has transcended the duality of her own fear-based ego and finds herself back in the pavilion with the snotty Lord Ascot still on his knees. Alice has found her voice, her courage and her conviction to follow her heart and not her head. In a moment of new found inner power, she tells Lord Ascot “NO, I do not want to marry you!” What a fool! She is losing power, prestige, money, acclaim, acceptance and inviting scorn, rejection and poverty in doing so. Her journey into the unconscious has brought enough courage and insight to allow herself to embrace the archetype of the Holy Fool.



The movie ends with Alice setting sail for China to be a trade ambassador for England, following her heart and her true purpose in life. The symbol of her metamorphosis, the blue caterpillar, turned to blue butterfly flutters towards the audience with the message of being true to one's inner guidance not the outer demands of others. Alice has found her true "Yes," and her true "No."

"What if we choose not to do the things we are supposed to do? The principal gain is a sense of an authentic act – and an authentic life. It may be a short one, but it is an authentic one, and that's a lot better than those short lives full of boredom. The principal loss is security. Another is respect from the community. But you gain the respect of another community, the one that is worth having the respect of."
~Stanley Keleman, *Myth & the Body - A colloquy with Joseph Campbell*

Exercises:

Carefully examine the qualities of the Holy Fool and then consider for yourself whether you are living in this way, or recognize how you are compromising yourself and living in the dark side (unaware) side of the fool, and rationalizing this position. Remember this is not an exercise in judgment but one of acceptance and awareness only. How have you conformed in order to be safe, to avoid being shamed or shunned, to win acceptance and inclusion? When in your life have you rebelled out of shame and anger. This is to live the life of the fool.

When have you chosen to conform out of Truth and rebel out of Truth? This is to live the life of the Holy Fool – the one who changes the world, from the inside out.

- Notice all the ways you have compromised yourself for safety and see if you can take some small risks.
- Do you have the:
 - *Integrity displayed in the courage to be oneself in all circumstances*
 - *Freedom to: not need affirmation and acclaim*
 - *not give in to fear*
 - *not be embittered by rage*
 - *to not needing to be defined by the responses of others*
 - *Being fully present to another human being – and self*
 - *Being free of judging others (and self) by values usually used*
 - *Seeing people (including self) as bearing the image of God - believing in their innate goodness and divinity*
 - *Worthy of God's love and so lovable*
 - *Having the potential to grow into the full life of God's Spirit*
- See if you can find other stories and examples of the Holy Fool and study the qualities, dynamics and processes that they live in this energetic state of consciousness.

- Consider and study the Trickster animals, like Brer Rabbit and the Coyote in the myths of the different cultures.
- If you do not have a Tarot deck, the original and, I think, the most authentic is the Rider Waite deck. The Holy Fool picture is at the beginning of this writing. Study the symbolism of the Holy Fool and find out what the symbols mean. The white rose, the pomegranates on his robe, his staff, the edge of the precipice, the mountains, the white dog...
- Which Saints were Holy Fools? Study the life of someone like St. Francis Assisi and how he challenged the Holy Roman church's hierarchical structure, for example.
- Google Carolyn Myss and read about what she says about the archetype of the fool/clown/jester

*“To become—in Jung’s terms—individuated, to live as a released individual, one has to know how and when to put on and to put off the masks of one’s various life roles. ‘When in Rome, do as the Romans do,’ and when at home, do not keep on the mask of the role you play in the Senate chamber. But this, finally, is not easy, since some of the masks cut deep. They include judgment and moral values. They include one’s pride, ambition, and achievement. They include one’s infatuations. It is a common thing to be overly impressed by and attached to masks, either some mask of one’s own or the mana-masks of others. The work of individuation, however, demands that one should not be compulsively affected in this way. The aim of individuation requires that one should find and then learn to live out of one’s own center, in control of one’s for and against. **And this cannot be achieved by enacting and responding to any general masquerade of fixed roles.**”*

~ Joseph Campbell, Myths to Live By

Spong, John Selby. Resurrection: Myth or Reality? HarperCollins Publishers: New York, New York. 1994

The Essential Rumi, New Expanded Edition Paperback – May 28, 2004 by [Jalal al-Din Rumi](#) (Author), [Coleman Barks](#) (Translator), [John Moyne](#) (Translator)