

THE PANTHEON DECK



Created by Ben Ash Blum with Jericho Vincent

Artwork by Aya Rosen

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Pantheon Deck! The deck has many uses, but it is primarily intended as a tool for healing and personal growth. You can use it alone or with a therapist to identify wounded or underdeveloped parts of you and to help them heal and achieve their full potential. The deck is based on Archetypal Systems Therapy (AST), an experimental therapeutic modality that combines Internal Family Systems (IFS) Therapy with Jungian archetypes. In the following sections, we'll introduce the core concepts of AST, AST's pantheon of sixteen archetypes, and techniques for healing and growth that you can use with the cards.

ASPECTS, DRAFTS, CRUMPLES, AND SUBS

In AST, our highest Self is woven together from sixteen archetypal Aspects: a warm, comforting Caregiver Aspect, a tough, driven Warrior Aspect, a smart, critical Analyst Aspect, and a full spectrum of others, some of which you may identify with already and some of which you may not. You can think of the Aspects as different instruments in the symphony of Self that hand off nimbly from one to the other as the music plays, or as differently colored beams of light that unite in a beam of pure white Self-energy. Imagine taking a three-year-old child to the carousel. As you lift her up onto a brightly-painted wooden horse, your warm Caregiver Aspect might coo gentle words of comfort while your firm Coach Aspect nudges her to be brave, your protective Guard Aspect takes note of every possible way she might fall off, and your managerial Steward Aspect, like a subtle clarinet line in the background, thinks through all the different options for lunch.

When Aspects are healthy, mature, and fluent, we experience them as a state of flow. But the manifestation of a particular Aspect inside us is often a far cry from the archetype's highest potential. In AST, an immature, still-developing Aspect is known as a *draft*. Perhaps you have a draft Guard that sees danger lurking around every corner, or a draft Caregiver that is in such a rush to care for others' needs that you disregard your own, or a draft Warrior that bulldozes through all objections when you don't get your way. Though they can cause difficulties in our lives ranging from minor annoyances to utter havoc, each draft is packed with potential. Using the exercises in this guide, you can begin to refine your drafts by freeing them from roles they don't enjoy playing, connecting them to needed wisdom, and helping them develop into the brilliant, mature Aspects they are eager to be.

Sometimes a draft is so wounded that it isn't yet able to contribute much to our functioning. In AST, such a draft is known as a *crumple*. It carries a tightly wadded experience of hardship that must be compassionately witnessed and processed before the crumple is able to smooth out into a functioning draft, identify the archetype it feels most drawn to, and begin the path of development into a mature Aspect of Self. Although we provide instructions here, uncrumpling is most safely done with the help of a therapist. It may call on your other Aspects, such as the Caregiver, the Witness, and the Guard, to give the crumple an experience of comfort, compassion, and safety that it lacked during the events that formed it. The more you develop

your Aspects, the more internal resources you will have to heal further crumples, fostering an upward spiral of healing and growth.

When drafts become crumpled, we lose access to their archetypal powers. To compensate for the loss, stronger drafts of other archetypes often *substitute* in for the crumpled draft. If your inner Caregiver is crumpled by the overwhelming task of self-care in a childhood full of neglect and mistreatment, a draft Jester might substitute in for it to joke away the pain. In adulthood, when opportunities to comfort others arise, you may find yourself responding instead with dismissive jokes. Or perhaps in childhood a great injustice crumpled your moral, fair-minded Magistrate, and a draft Guard substituted in to wall off people who hurt you rather than, as the Magistrate would have, naming the harm and giving them a chance to make it right. Or perhaps your friendly, social Ambassador was held back by developmental delays, and a draft Engineer substituted in to help you navigate social interactions through mechanistic rules and techniques. Substitutes or *subs* can provide very important coping strategies. But as you gain fuller access to the true Aspect, you may find that its subs are relieved to return to their more comfortable native roles.

THE PANTHEON

This section of the guide introduces the sixteen archetypes of the Pantheon Deck. The archetypes are organized into eight arenas: corporeal, familial, social, organizational, societal, cultural, systemic, and metaphysical. Within each arena is a dyad of two archetypes, one whose energy is directed inward and one whose energy is directed outward. For instance, at the corporeal level, the inward archetype is the Guard, who stays on defense to protect the interior, whereas the outward archetype is the Warrior, who goes on offense to attain external goals. At the organizational level, the inward archetype is the Steward, who maintains organizational integrity and keeps things running, whereas the outward archetype is the Leader, who sets the mission and leads the organization forward.

In this deck, archetypes have been gendered according to their typical representation in mythology, particularly Ancient Greek mythology. We have made this choice because these myths continue to have significant influence on our culture and our inner lives, but their patriarchal biases cannot be ignored. In Ancient Greece, inward archetypes were largely represented by women in part because women were required to stay home and care for children and outward archetypes were largely represented by men in part because men were granted the freedom to explore, lead, and conquer. Like Ancient Greece, our culture tends to value outward capacities over inward capacities, stereotypically male traits over stereotypically female ones. In AST, by contrast, self-actualization for women and men alike always involves a balancing of inward and outward energies. Everyone pursuing AST is understood to contain a full complement of all sixteen inward and outward Aspects, whose genders are entirely up to the individual. You might find it most natural to think of all your Aspects as sharing your gender. Or you might find it more natural to think of your Warrior Aspect as female, your Caregiver Aspect as male, and your other Aspects as a motley assortment at different points on the gender

spectrum. Drafts may even transition genders as they develop into mature Aspects. Do what works for you.

CORPOREAL DYAD

Guard - Artemis (inward)

The Guard detects threats, both actual and potential, and takes all appropriate steps to keep us safe. Her relations to others and the world are rooted in hard-won trust. She sets boundaries with discerning precision, walling off dangerous territory in otherwise friendly relationships and allowing through only those of our vulnerabilities that can safely be shared. When attacked, she can respond with devastating sharpness to drive back a threat to a safe distance, but her mature presence is more often calming than alarming, communicating risks with a cool competence that helps us feel secure.

Warrior - Heracles/Ares (outward)

The Warrior pursues the objective that has been given to him with single-minded focus, driving through uncertainty, adversity, and resistance to achieve his aim. Because his time for deliberation and his awareness of wider context are limited, the Warrior relies on loyalty to other Aspects of ourselves (and of other people) to ensure that his cause is just and worthy. Brave and tough, a mature Warrior is nonetheless forthcoming when he is wounded, stuck, or in trouble, knowing it serves the best interests of the team to get help.

FAMILIAL DYAD

Caregiver - Demeter (inward)

The Caregiver offers warm, caring comfort to help us return to grounded emotional regulation and secure belonging. While her capacity for sympathy is enormous, she can also put problems in proportion with gentle, loving irony. Around the Caregiver, nothing feels hopeless or impossible. She offers boundless belief in our potential and affirmation that we are worthy. But a mature Caregiver recognizes that her capacity for care is not infinite and must be thoughtfully allocated between ourselves and others.

Coach - Poseidon/Chiron (outward)

The coach lovingly challenges us to be our best self and achieve great things. When we mess up, the Coach calls us out without shaming or discouraging us, honoring our best intentions and the effort we put in and helping us examine the places we fell short so we can do better next time. In the presence of the Coach, we always know how much we are capable of. A mature Coach never forces his own agenda on us, instead spurring us on to achieve our own goals and become the kind of person we want to be.

SOCIAL DYAD

Intimate - Aphrodite (inward)

The Intimate seeks ever deeper pleasure and intimacy—not necessarily sexual. Whether she manifests in a young child snuggling with parents at story time, a student locking eyes with a close friend at a shared moment of awe at a concert, a middle-aged hiker gazing at a gorgeous vista with a yearning for communion, or a retiree meeting the new arrival at the nursing home and feeling his heart beat harder than it has in fifty years, the Intimate dissolves the boundaries between us and allows us to melt into joyful connection.

Ambassador - Hermes (outward)

At home in the realm of interpersonal skepticism, difference, disagreement, and even conflict, the Ambassador moves with lightness and frequent playfulness through the boundary zones of mismatched beliefs, attitudes, needs, and goals that separate us from others. A consummate host, he makes everyone feel liked and heard. His deft social lubrication makes everything flow more smoothly. But the mature Ambassador is no mere glad-hander. Honest and authentic, he forges genuine connections and lays the foundation for lasting relationships.

SOCIETAL DYAD

Magistrate - Hera/Dike (inward)

The Magistrate is fair, honorable, and no-nonsense. In moral and ethical disputes, she knows exactly who owes what to whom, but she is unflaggingly warm, flexible, and understanding about making sure it happens. The mature Magistrate's dignified righteousness is neither stuffy nor punitive. Although she has deep respect for societal norms around sex, friendship, business, and other areas of ethical ambiguity, her highest allegiance is to her own highly nuanced sense of right and wrong.

Jester - Dionysus (outward)

The Jester is a moral innovator, seeking to question and even subvert the community's norms—but always in the service of deeper truth. The mature Jester expertly tunes his mockery so as to illuminate rather than wound. His edgy comedy exposes hypocrisy and illusion. His playful tricks reveal hidden insights. His subversive spirit attracts like-minded rebels who object to the status quo. Funny, clever, and provocative, the Jester often treats heavy matters with a lightness that belies the deep moral seriousness at his core.

ORGANIZATIONAL DYAD

Steward - Hestia (inward)

The Steward is the COO of the inner pantheon, handling the day-to-day administrative complexity that sustains an organization (or the self understood as an organization). The

Steward is at home in the world of calendars and to-dos, schedules and plans, recipes and travel itineraries. She stays joyfully on top of all that needs doing to maintain the countless interlocking systems of our lives, delegating expertly to other archetypes in accord with the strengths of each.

Leader - Zeus (outward)

The Leader is the CEO of the organization or the self, composing and promoting the inner mission statement that gives communal purpose. A master of identifying opportunities and prioritizing the most promising ones, the Leader sets the agenda for the other Aspects to follow. He performs the same function in the outer world, rallying others to his mission and pointing the way toward achieving it. A great Leader inspires and motivates, giving purpose and direction to all who follow him.

CULTURAL DYAD

Analyst - Athena (inward)

The Analyst prizes rational discourse, fluently arguing her points within a body of existing knowledge using reason, fact, explanation, and logical justification. A careful, systematic thinker, the Analyst offers powerful critiques of problems and inconsistencies. She delights in expertise, building an exhaustive knowledge of a field of inquiry. While she enjoys sharing her expertise with others, a mature Analyst is humbly deferential to others in fields where she has not yet achieved mastery, including emotional, intuitive realms where her analytical tools falter.

Visionary - Apollo (outward)

The Visionary makes meaning of our lives and our world with stories, songs, poems, visions, and other creative expressions. When we have a powerful experience we want to share, the Visionary uses metaphors, imagery, and other artistic devices to evoke an experience in the receiver that conveys the rich essence of the original. Aesthetically sharp and brilliantly expressive, the Visionary can bring to life a vision of future possibilities for ourselves and the world that enchants and compels.

SYSTEMIC DYAD

Healer - Asclepius/Hygeia (inward)

The Healer is concerned with maintaining the healthy functioning of physical, psychological, and communal systems. To diagnose and heal wounds at the individual and at the communal level requires sympathetic warmth and a deep understanding of how these systems function.

Whether a short-term painkilling fix that makes us or others feel better right away or a longer-term surgical intervention that heals more deeply at the expense of some short-term pain, the Healer is skilled at determining what remedy is appropriate to the diagnosis.

Engineer - Hephaestus (outward)

The Engineer seeks to augment the function of systems at all scales: extending the capacities of the body with physical tools, of the mind with apps and algorithms, of romantic relationships with new relationship models, of society with novel social structures. He delights in the fine details of construction—the subtle mechanism, the elegant solution, the careful joinery that holds the whole together. Although his mechanistic reasoning offers a helpful lens in a variety of domains, the mature Engineer is aware that it is no substitute for human relationality.

METAPHYSICAL DYAD

Witness - Persephone (inward)

The Witness is fully present in the moment, experiencing reality with unfiltered emotional openness, making space for whatever might arise, and holding it without judgment. She expresses her own emotional experience with a transparent sincerity that makes her impossible not to love. Her empathic spaciousness is quietly, unintrusively wise. Often obscured by trauma and conditioning as we age, the Witness's reclamation is a central concern of many Eastern spiritual traditions, which foster it in meditation.

Theorist - Helios/Prometheus (outward)

The Theorist is responsible for our fundamental worldview and sense of reality, the master story that defines our universe. Often adopting one from religion or science in childhood, the Theorist gradually takes on more responsibility for figuring things out himself. He finds patterns in our lived experience of reality and organizes them into a conceptual structure, devising theories that tie together far-flung ideas to create something original. Curious and exploratory, he ventures boldly into new intellectual territory.

TECHNIQUES

Find a broad flat surface, perhaps a tabletop or desk, with room to lay out as many as a dozen cards. This is called the *field*. Within the field, you will lay out different Aspects, drafts, and crumples to illustrate and transform their relationships with each other. The techniques offered here are just to get you started. As you gain experience working with your inner pantheon, you will discover your own uses for the cards.

Invocation

Pick an archetype whose energy you want to bring more of into your life. Place the Aspect card at the top of the field. In your view, what is the highest possible expression of this archetype? What are some of its qualities? What people from your life experience have best embodied this archetype's energy? When have you most powerfully embodied it yourself? Imagine yourself in that moment of power with the people who influenced you standing behind you, feeding their own power into you. This is a visualization of your own Aspect. Try picturing yourself dressed in a unique way or carrying a certain object to mark the image so you can easily visualize it again.

in the future. How might this powerful Aspect of you show up in challenging situations from your life? During the invocation process, you may find yourself encountering a problematic version of the archetype that does not seem worthy of aspiration. This is a draft. Place a draft card under the Aspect card to represent it. If you still feel able to see around the draft to the Aspect's good qualities, name how the Aspect avoids the draft's faults and slide the draft card to the side. But if the draft is so dominant in your system that it blocks your access to the Aspect, you can try working with it using one of the techniques below.

Redrafting

Place the target draft at the center of the field with its Aspect at the top of the field. What are the draft's behaviors? What are its qualities? What emotional age does it seem to be? Do you feel open to it? If you find that negative feelings toward the target draft get in the way, try the Unwrapping technique below to make space for your Aspects to shine through more clearly. Then identify the target draft's most pressing emotional needs. One by one, bring in Aspect cards that can fulfill them: the Caregiver for comfort, the Coach for guidance, the Leader for purpose, and so forth. Take time with each Aspect to channel the Aspect and speak directly from it to the target draft. What lessons can the draft learn to come closer to its Aspect? If you find that the draft is not interested in becoming closer to its Aspect, it may be a sub. Try the Sub Reassignment technique below.

Unwrapping

This very common technique is used to establish a clearer channel of healthy Self or Aspect energy toward a draft or crumple. Place the target draft or crumple at the center of the field. Notice your feelings toward it. Discern draft energies that "wrap" around the target: judgment, dislike, impatience, resignation, fear, desire to fix, or even awe, loyalty, or helpless gratitude. For each one, identify what draft it originates in, or use an Unknown card if you can't identify it. Lay the wrapper cards in a circle around the target. For each one, affirm that the draft has something important to convey, but ask if it would be willing to step aside for now to allow you to work with the target. If so, slide the draft card off to the side and move on to the next one. Wrapper drafts are often subs attempting to fulfill emotional needs in the target that they aren't well-qualified to fulfill. You can optionally try the Unsubbing technique with the wrapper drafts to bring in the genuine Aspects that the target actually needs. For example, an insecure crumple may be criticized by a draft Analyst that is subbing as a Coach. Bringing in a healthy Coach Aspect to guide the crumple frees the Analyst to ease her criticism.

Unsubbing

Drafts that have correctly identified their archetypal arena may struggle, but they generally enjoy their work and want to get better at it. If a draft is stuck in a role that doesn't bring it much satisfaction, it may be a sub. One by one, lay out Aspect cards next to it to let the draft explore which role it might enjoy playing more. When you find the appropriate one, slide it sideways underneath the draft card to make a cross with the name of the Aspect sticking out. Before the draft can take on its native role, its duties as a sub must be reassigned. Place the Aspect card for its original archetype next to it. If you haven't yet invoked this Aspect, use the Invocation

technique to connect to it. Imagine a dialogue between the Aspect and the draft, discussing the archetypal duties the draft has taken on. Can it begin to trust the Aspect to take over? The draft may be subbing for multiple Aspects. Once you have finished with one, bring in Aspect cards for the others and repeat the process. When the draft is ready to focus on its native archetype, slide its Aspect card out from underneath it and place it above the draft. Try the Redrafting technique to help it come closer to its Aspect.

Dialoguing

Dialoguing is a technique for addressing a conflict between two different voices inside of you. Bring in two draft cards to represent the two voices and place them side by side, at a distance that captures how comfortable they seem with each other. Above them place their mature Aspect card(s), which integrate gracefully with each other. What do the drafts have to say to each other? Where do they work well together and where do they get stuck? In the places where they get stuck, can they resolve their differences, calling on the harmonious connection between their Aspects? One or both drafts may turn out to be a sub; try Unsubbing. Move the drafts closer as their differences begin to resolve.

Uncrumpling

Crumples should only be contacted directly when there is a strong emotional container for the work, such as in session with a trained therapist. Uncrumpling requires a strong Witness, so be sure you have already invoked your Witness Aspect. Pick a crumple card whose size roughly corresponds to the emotional age of the target crumple and place it in the middle of the field. Use the Unwrapping technique to establish an open channel to the crumple. The crumple will soon have to open up about its painful experiences to the Witness. Before it embarks on this difficult process, see if it would like the support of other Aspects: perhaps the Caregiver to offer comfort or the Guard to offer safety. Bring their cards in a circle around the crumple. When it is ready, bring the Witness near. What did the crumple experience? What does the Witness see? When the crumple has been fully witnessed, see what aftercare it needs and bring in the appropriate Aspects to provide it.

FINAL THOUGHTS

We hope you enjoy experimenting with the Pantheon Deck and discovering the archetypal powers within you. AST and the deck are both in an early phase of development and your feedback could help us make them safer and more effective for everyone. We would be grateful to you if you would share your experiences with us. We wish you deep healing and transformative growth.