BEYOND THE MYTH OF “SELF-DOMINATION”  
(IMAGINAL PSYCHOLOGY\textsuperscript{1} IN THE PURSUIT OF CULTURAL SHIFT) 

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Abstract: This paper deals with the theoretical concepts of image and imagery as used by the foremost imaginal psychologists. Attributing primary epistemological status to image and imagery, imaginal psychology school developed a new theory of image and imagery, questioning the older thesis on the derivative and secondary epistemological status of the image. Using Jung’s concept of the autonomous psyche of an essentially archetypal nature, Hillman started to question Jung’s concept of the Self as a central archetype symbolizing a sort of disguised traditional monotheism (the Christian God, the Jewish Yahweh etc.) like Freud’s sexuality (id) or central cultural myth (the Oedipus myth). Imaginal psychology defends essential sovereignty and the equality of all images and the resultant polytheist psychology. Jungian studies set out in this direction, giving birth to parallel developments to imaginal psychology in various fields. Derrida’s and Feyerabend’s rejection of an ultimate referential frame was not identical to but corresponds to Hillman’s and Vannoy Adam’s discovery that it is fantasy that rules the psyche.

Keywords: mental image(s); reality; epistemology; post-Jungians, Feyerabend; theory of science.

“The psyche creates reality everyday”, Jung says. “The only expression I can use for this activity is fantasy”. If, as Jung succinctly says, “image is psyche” and if the psyche creates reality, then what creates reality is the image.

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Today we know that imagery is equally important, or more important than the other fundamental mental functions of human personality. Paul Kugler, for example, locates imagination on the basis of human self-consciousness, speaking, memory, dreaming, and writing etc. Without that no art, science or culture would be possible, and, certainly, there would be no humanness (Kugler, 2008, p. 85). Nevertheless, throughout almost the entire history of the West, human imagery has been considered an epiphenomenon and a non-

\textsuperscript{1} In this paper I prefer the term “imaginal psychology” to “archetypal psychology”. James Hillman started using the term “archetypal psychology” in 1970, then five years he later espoused the term “imaginal psychology” and declared himself to be an imagist.
essential secondary product of the human mind. Starting with the tradition of western epistemology (Plato), imagery and image were considered misleading and vague entities and were frequently restricted to art, religion, and eventually to “pseudoscientific disciplines”. But imagery plays a role not just in the subjective but also in the external world of man.

Taking imagery seriously is quite a contemporary phenomenon. The traditions of western philosophy and suspicious attitudes to imagery have overlapped almost since the very inception of western philosophy. Ironically it was Kant who initiated the great liberation of human imagery from subjugation to rationality. His *einbildungskraft* and the romanticist movement of the time enabled imagination to gain legitimate status in the human psyche, psychology and epistemology.

The seemingly unshakable status of the long dominant epistemological principles of rational and material reality had already begun to weaken during the 18th century with David Hume and Immanuel Kant. Nevertheless, neither the romanticist cultural revolution nor German Naturphilosophie² superseded the rationalist and progressivist vein of the 19th century. Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis remained faithful to the reality principle and fantasy/imagery continued to be viewed with considerable suspicion. Jung conceded to subconscious autonomy, independence, knowledge, and creativity, which drew him nearer to the German romanticists and to the imaginal concept of the psyche.

The different attitudes held by Freud and Jung were probably due to their different personalities and also their relationship to philosophy as well. Even though Jung suffered from a love-hate relationship with philosophy (Jarrett, 1981; Jung, 1960), as a youth he had already been completely absorbed in the history of ideas whereas Freud deliberately avoided reading philosophical texts (Kugler, 2008, p. 85). In *Psychological Types* Jung presented quite an extensive commentary on the western history of ideas. Jung considered himself Kantian—contrary to Freud he conceived of images as primary phenomena of the autonomous psyche, i.e. entities similar to Kant’s *a priori* structures.³ But the Kantian subject could not envisage a collective unconscious or unconscious processes. Here the missing link between Kant and Jung is proffered by German romanticists, Naturphilosophie or Schopenhauer.

While Jung did not refer to Hegel,⁴ he often mentioned Schopenhauer. It seems that it is only

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² Ellenberger considers F. W. Schelling to be the founder of that philosophical current because of his assumption about the fundamental identity of spiritual and material nature (“Nature is visible Spirit, Spirit is invisible Nature”). Thus nature is understood as an expression of profound spiritual laws and common spiritual principle (Weltseele). Next to Schelling, there are also Goethe’s concepts of *Urphänomene, All-Sinn* etc. indicating the profound (unconscious) unity of the world and man. Both influences are evident both in Jung and post-Jungians (Ellenberger, 1970, pp. 202-205).

³ Kant’s *a priori* ordering of the psyche anticipates Jung’s archetypes. Kant initially differentiated between pure and empirical knowledge. He asserted that all knowledge starts with experience, but is not derived from it (as was asserted by Locke). Pure knowledge was supposed to rest in universal *a priori* notions (categories). According to Kant such *a priori* ordering must be universal. In Jung’s model of the psyche, archetypes (“primordial images”) determine our experience.

⁴ According to Eckman (1986, pp. 88-89), Jung failed to recognize Hegel as his predecessor: “Despite Jung’s personal antipathy to Hegel’s writing, Jungian thought’s ultimate aims and vision of the universe are actually much closer to Hegel than to Kant, and find in Hegel’s thought a more fitting philosophical ally”. Jung’s philosophical alliance with Kant constitutes some fundamental problems. Kant’s bifurcation of subject and object opened up a gulf between knowing the subject and the passive