

are only observing a universal law: Anything that has great power for good can also be destructive if the power is mishandled. If we want to live intimately with the powerful forces of the inner world, we must also respect them.

Alternative Realities: The World of Dreaming, the Realm of Imagination

Our verbal patterns betray many of our automatic assumptions: If one discusses a dream with a friend, the friend is likely to ask something like, "Did that detail *really* happen, or only in the dream?" The implication is that what happens in a dream is not "real." In fact, it would be more accurate to ask, "Did it happen in *dream reality*, or in physical reality? In the world of dreaming, or in the ordinary world?"

Both are genuine worlds, both are realities that truly exist. But the world of dreaming, if we only realized it, has more practical and concrete effect on our lives than outer events do. For it is in the world of dreaming that the unconscious is working out its powerful dynamics. It is here that the great forces do battle or combine to produce the attitudes, ideals, beliefs, and compulsions that motivate most of our behavior.

Once we become sensitive to dreams, we discover that every dynamic in a dream is manifesting itself in some way in our practical lives—in our actions, relationships, decisions, automatic routines, urges, and feelings. We believe ourselves to be in conscious control of these elements of life. But this belief is the great illusion of ego-control. These aspects of our lives are actually determined from a far deeper place. It is in the world of *dreaming* that their root sources are revealed in a form that we can see and understand.

Dreams express the unconscious. Dreams are dynamic mosaics, composed of symbols, that express the movements, conflicts, interactions, and developments of the great energy systems within the unconscious.

The unconscious has a particular capacity to create images and to use those images as symbols. It is these symbols that form our

that create patterns on the screen of the dream-mind, the unconscious also functions during the waking hours. It emits a continual stream of energetic pulses that find their way to the conscious mind in the form of feelings, moods, and, most of all, the symbolic that appear in the imagination. Just as with dreams, the symbolic meanings of the images may be understood by the person who is willing to learn.

The material that flows through the imagination takes many forms, from the frivolous to the visionary. At the bottom of the scale is the *passive fantasy*: This is the fanciful daydream that flits across the mind at odd times during the day or sometimes enters us for long periods of time. Such fantasies are mere entertainments or distractions that add nothing to consciousness.

At the top of the scale is the *visionary experience*, in which Active Imagination and religious encounter merge. Active Imagination is one way of using the imagination constructively to approach the unconscious; there are many other ways, including profound forms of meditation.

Our culture in the twentieth century has a tremendous collective prejudice against the imagination. It is reflected in the things people say: "You are only imagining things," or, "That is only your fantasy, not reality."

In fact, no one "makes up" anything in the imagination. The material that appears in the imagination has to originate in the unconscious. Imagination, properly understood, is a channel through which this material flows to the conscious mind. To be even more accurate, imagination is a *transformer* that converts the invisible material into images the conscious mind can perceive.

The root of the word *imagination* is the Latin word *imago*, meaning "image"; the imagination is the image-forming faculty in the mind, the organ that has the power to clothe the beings of the inner world in imagery so that we can see them. The imagination generates the symbols the unconscious uses to express itself.

A long series of historical and psychological developments over the centuries have produced our current misunderstandings of what fantasy and imagination really are. We haven't the space here to recall all of those developments, but since the prejudice is so pervasive, it is worth while to look briefly at how fantasy and

imagination were understood by our intellectual ancestors, the ancient Greeks.

Our English word *fantasy* derives from the Greek word *phantasia*. The original meaning of this word is instructive: It meant "a making-visible." It derived from a verb that means "to make visible, to reveal." The correlation is clear: The psychological function of our capacity for fantasy is to make visible the otherwise invisible dynamics of the unconscious psyche.

We find here in the psychology of the Greeks a fundamental insight that modern depth psychology has had to rediscover: The human mind is invested with a special power to convert the invisible realm into visible forms so that it can be seen in the mind and contemplated. We call this invisible realm the unconscious: For Plato it was the world of ideal forms; other ancients thought of it as the sphere of the gods, the region of pure spirit. But all sensed one thing: Only our power to *make images* enables us to see it.

For the Greeks, *phantasia* denoted this special faculty in the mind for producing poetic, abstract, and religious imagery. *Phantasia* is our capacity to "make visible" the contents of the inner world by giving them form, by personifying them. The Greeks took for granted the reality of the inner world, expressed as ideal forms or universal qualities that clothed themselves in the divine images of their gods. For them, *phantasia* was the organ by which that divine world spoke to the human mind.*

In European psychology until at least medieval times, the image-forming capacity called imagination or *phantasia* was thought of as the organ that receives meanings from the spiritual and aesthetic worlds and forms them into an inner image that can be held in memory and made the object of thought and reasoning. In religion, the imaginative faculty was the legitimate path of religious inspiration, revelation, and experience. The fact that information entered the conscious mind through the imagination did not in any wise discredit it, for "an experience of poetic imagination

*The Romans apparently had no word in Latin for this exact idea of poetic, spiritual, or religious imagination that produced a symbolic representation of invisible reality. The word *imaginatio* meant in classical Latin "fictitious," in the sense that the picture is not the same as the external object that it represents. Roman writers came to use the Greek word *phantasia* when they wanted to speak of the inner faculty by which we express the contents of the soul by using poetic or spiritual imagery. Cicero used the Greek characters to write the word.

[was] conventionally regarded as accompanied by a belief in the reality of what is imagined (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

It was perhaps in Elizabethan times that the other, parallel meaning of *fantasy* began to take hold—a fictitious daydream, something fanciful and unreal. The word *fancy* was coined—derived from *fantasy*—to mean something that is made up whimsically in the imagination as a mere entertainment. Unfortunately, this is the misunderstanding of the nature of imagination that we have inherited in the popular mind of our century.

If we think about it even briefly, it should be clear how foolish it is to denigrate the imagination. Humans depend on the imagination's image-making power and its image-symbols for poetic imagery, literature, painting, sculpture, and essentially all artistic, philosophical, and religious functioning. We could not develop the abstract intelligence, science, mathematics, logical reasoning, or even language, were it not for our capacity to generate these image-symbols. This is why Neumann could say what was quoted earlier:

The symbolic imagery of the unconscious is the creative source of the human spirit in all its realizations. . . . And because the symbol-forming process of the unconscious is the source of the human spirit, language, whose history is almost identical with the genesis and development of human consciousness, always starts out as a symbolic language. (Neumann, *Great Mother*, p. 17)

ACTIVE IMAGINATION: THE CONSCIOUS USE OF THE IMAGINATIVE FACULTY

Active Imagination, like the unconscious, has always existed in human life. But as with many facets of our inner life, it took Jung to rediscover the lost art and make it available to modern people.

At first glance, Active Imagination may seem too simple or naive to be taken seriously as a psychological technique: It consists in going to the images that rise up in one's imagination and making a dialogue with them. It involves an encounter with the images. The conscious ego-mind actually enters into the imagination and takes part in it. This often means a spoken conversation with the figures who present themselves, but it also involves entering into

ALTERNATIVE REALITY

the action, the adventure or conflict that is spinning it in one's imagination.

It is this awareness, this conscious participation in the event, that transforms it from mere passive fantasy to *Active Imagination*. The coming together of conscious mind and unconscious mind on the common ground of the imaginal plane gives us an opportunity to break down some of the barriers that separate the ego from the unconscious, to set up a genuine flow of communication between the two levels of the psyche, to resolve some of our neurotic conflicts with the unconscious, and thus to learn more about who we are as individuals.

Because of the popular notion that imagination is fictitious, many people react automatically by thinking that such an experience in the imagination would be meaningless. They think, "I would just be talking to myself." But if we work with Active Imagination we soon confirm that we dialogue with genuine interior parts of our own selves. We confront the powerful personalities who live inside us at the unconscious level and who are so often in conflict with our conscious ideas and behavior. We actually enter into the dynamics of the unconscious: We travel into a region where the conscious mind had not known how to go.

This experience, to be sure, is symbolic. The images with whom we interact are symbols, and we encounter them on a symbolic plane of existence. But a magical principle is at work: When we experience the images, we also directly experience the inner parts of ourselves that are clothed in the images. This is the power of symbolic experience in the human psyche when it is entered into consciously: by its intensity and its effect on us is often as concrete as a physical experience would be. Its power to realign our attitudes, teach us and change us at deep levels, is much greater than that of external events that we may pass through without noticing.

When we experience the symbol, we simultaneously experience the complex, the archetype, the inner psychic entity that is represented by the symbol. When the image speaks, it is with one of our own inner voices. When we answer back, it is the unseen inner part of our own self that listens and registers. It stands before us in the form of the imaginal image.

In Active Imagination I am not so much "talking to myself" as

talking to *one of my selves*. It is in that exchange between the ego and the various characters who rise up from the unconscious and appear in my imagination that I begin to bind the fragmented pieces of myself into a unity. I begin to know, and learn from, the parts of myself I had never known before.

When people ask me if Active Imagination is "real" or if dreams are "real," I always think of a detail in the story of Don Quijote de la Mancha. Don Quijote said he was seeking the "bread that is made from better-than-wheat." He meant, of course, the Host, the bread that is eaten as part of the Christian ritual. The Host is made from wheat, yet it is also fashioned from the archetype, from the body of Christ, from spirit, from better-than-wheat.

In the same figurative sense I can say that Active Imagination is "realer than real." It is not only real in the sense that it has a practical and concrete bearing on our physical lives, it also connects us to a world of forces that are superpersonal and transcendent. It allows us to participate in shaping the flow of the principal streams of energy that join together in each of us to form the long-range patterns of our lives, our relationships, and our attitudes. It affects us on the level of realities that go deeper, and affect us more profoundly, than any local event in our daily lives.

By comparison with these huge inner forces, and the long-range contours and directions that they establish in us, the worries and decisions of daily life turn out to be mostly ripples on the surface of a huge river of life that moves slowly and inexorably toward its goal. Dream work and Active Imagination attune us to the larger vision of life, to the direction of that huge river. They pull our minds briefly off the ripples and local crosscurrents that preoccupy us most of the time.

We therefore come to sense that dream and imagination connect us to a level of existence that is not only "real" in the external sense of reality, it is more than real.

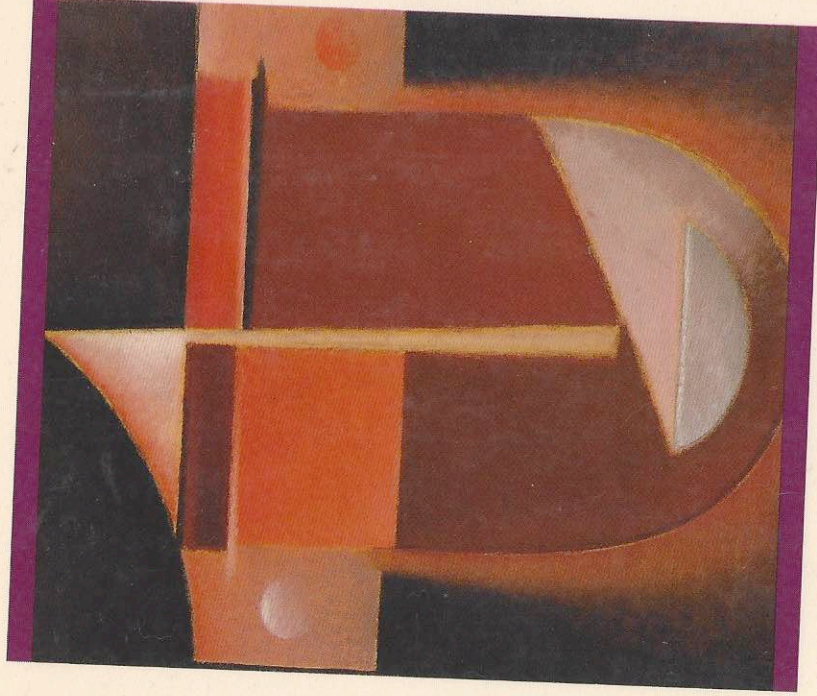
The Archetypes and the Unconscious

The concept of *archetypes* comes up frequently in dream work or Active Imagination; therefore, it may be helpful to discuss this important concept now, early in our material. Then, as examples of archetypal images appear in our discussion, we will be in a better position to understand their significance. We will look now at the basic ideas contained in the concept of the archetypes; later, as we go through specific dream examples and practical steps, we will have a chance to deepen our understanding of the subject.

The idea of the psychological archetypes is one of Jung's most useful and provocative contributions to modern thought. It has wide application outside the area of psychology and has influenced many scholars working in such areas as anthropology, cultural history, mythology, theology, comparative religion, and literary interpretation. This is because Jung has demonstrated that the archetypes appear in symbolic form, not only in the dreams of individual people, but also in mythology, cultural patterns, religious symbols and rites, and all products of the human imagination, such as literature and art.

The idea of archetypes is an ancient one. It is related to Plato's concept of ideal forms—patterns already existing in the divine mind that determine in what form the material world will come into being. But we owe to Jung the concept of the *psychological* archetypes—the characteristic patterns that pre-exist in the collective psyche of the human race, that repeat themselves eternally in the psyches of individual human beings and determine the basic ways that we perceive and function as psychological beings. Jung became aware of the existence of the archetypes when he observed that the symbols that arise in people's dreams often correspond exactly to images that have appeared in ancient myths, art, and religion, from times and places of which the dreamer could not possibly have known. He began to sense that there are

INNER WORK



USING DREAMS &
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PERSONAL GROWTH

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