

Precis of Edward S. Casey's "Toward an Archetypal Imagination"
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Book Notes V09BN

3-LETTER CODE: PSY

TOPIC: Archetypal Psychology

SUBJECT: Imagination

SUBSUBJECTS: Fantasy, Active Imagination, Archetypal Imagination

ORIGINAL LOCATION & FILE NAME (of PDF used for typing): 1982 0410 JNG Anima 08F.PDF (pp. 1-4)

CONTENTS:

Two features of imagination: autonomy, creativity
Distinction between fantasy and imagination
Active imagination
Archetypes as regulators
Ordering of archetypes (archetypal topography); quaternity structures; complex configurations
Three types of imaginative experience: fantasy, active imagining, archetypal or visionary apperception
Archetypal imagination; mundus imaginalis; access to archetypal structures and configurations
Archetypal essences are presences, not names; demand sphere of Ideas, which transcends realm of psyche

ARTICLE QUOTED FROM:

- Edward S. Casey, "Toward an Archetypal Imagination," *Spring 1974: An Annual of Archetypal Psychology and Jungian Thought*

AD HANDWRITING: Originally typewriter typed by jf from AD's dictation or per his instructions, few AS edits

COMPLETENESS: Full Paper, precis of an article

PUBLISHABILITY: No, already published

ALTERNATE VERSIONS: 1982 0410 ALCHEMY 08F.PDF (pp. 2-5)

DATE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PAPER: 1982 0410

RETYPE D AND REFORMATTE D by IT 2022, UPDATE D by IT 2025

NOTES:

- **RETYPE D BOOK NOTES presented in class (V09BN).**
- This is **1982 04/10b, “Toward an Archetypal Imagination” Book Notes, and the second entry associated with this date. 1982 04/10a = Alchemy; Imagination Class.**
- This is a precis of “Toward an Archetypal Imagination,” an article by Edward S. Casey in *Spring 1974: An Annual of Archetypal Psychology and Jungian Thought*. See also http://www.escasey.com/Article/Toward_an_Archetypal_Imagination.pdf.
- This paper is read and discussed in WG Class 1982 0410a.

PRECIS OF EDWARD S. CASEY'S "TOWARD AN ARCHETYPAL IMAGINATION"

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Jung stresses two features about the imagination, one its autonomy, as the mother of all possibilities, and the other, its creativity. These two are linked together in the formation of symbols, and it pervades all psychic acts. Fantasy draws together and mediates every act of the psyche. It is the universal solvent of mind. We can refer fantasy to what is merely a subjective figment of mind. In contrast, imagination is said to be an image-making, form-giving creative activity.

Jung: "Fantasy is mere nonsense, a phantasm, fleeting impression, but imagination is active, purposeful creation... a fantasy is more or less your own invention, and remains on the surface of personal things... but active imagination means that the images have a life of their own and that the symbolic events develop according to their own logic."

Now active imagination we can perceive as a two-fold movement and synthesis. First, a general movement from the unconscious to the conscious, or from primary to secondary processes. Synthesis here implies a change in psychic level, a change in the kind of awareness (reflective) with which the psychic contents are apprehended. Secondly, subsequent elaboration and unfolding, here the synthesis proceeds primarily at the conscious level, as the contents delivered in the first synthesis are expanded and unfolded to reveal aspects which had not been apparent initially. Your special attention is focused on the amplifying of this material from the unconscious, you concentrate on it, observe its alterations objectively, and follow the transformations carefully. If we do this, we will convert what is purely possible, the merely phantasized, into the psychically real. So active imagining invests the fantasy with an element of reality. The ultimate source of this psychical reality is found in the primordial images or archetypes which inform and pre-form the imaginative activity. So active imagination is a kind of spontaneous amplification of archetypes, and an unleashing of their potentialities. To imagine actively is to make archetypal patterns psychically real and effectual in the psychic life of the imaginer.

What will introduce and maintain order within the experiences induced by active imagining? What is the organizing principle? Certain collective unconscious conditions which act as regulators of creative or imaginative activity, and which call forth corresponding formations by availing themselves of existing conscious material. These of course are the archetypes themselves.

What regulates the regulators? How do archetypes impart patterns to particular imagined contents? In my opinion there must be at least a minimal ordering of all experience. Archetypes must be ordered among themselves, and we can refer to this as an archetypal topography. The first proposal is to conceive this in terms of the specific structures of fourness, or quaternity. The second, the positing of more complex configurations. This might be one approach as to how the archetypes are arranged among themselves. The quaternity or mandala structures are indicative of the first. The archetype clusters into groups of four is valid for the psyche as well as for the cosmos. The imaginative activity therefore or imagination itself must be tetradic in nature. This quaternity always expresses a totality. The second proposal is to recognize that plurality attaches to imagination, and this neither devalues nor negates it. On the contrary, it establishes it. For imagination is immeasurable, in the sense that it is innumerable. For it is full of innumerable things. Any such complex numbering there will always be partial and provisional for no such schema can be definitive. For in the end they are both numberless and immeasurable.

There are three types of imaginative experience, and for each there is a different method of analysis. The first we might call conscious everyday fantasizing, the second, active imagining, and the third archetypal or visionary apperception. The first is treated by phenomenological approaches, the second by depth psychology, the third by mysticism.

Starting with the second, if active imagining begins with a concerted elaboration of fantasies, it ends with a breakthrough, which is the disclosure of a world not of its own making. If this is true, we cannot claim that active imagining is itself the ultimate kind of imagining. Crucial as it is, it is an intermediary, and we must go beyond that in order to analyze the imaginal component of human experience. We are talking about (3) – archetypal imagination. Now where is the proper place for this type of imaginative experience, that is, the visionary imagination? The place is the place of visions, the scene on which visionary events and symbolic histories appear in their true reality. Now the visionary imagination is potentially present at every level. It can be found in the imaginative transformations of even the most mundane objects into a denizen of the mundus imaginalis. Such imagining posits real being, real imaginal being, but in such a way as to surpass the empirical existence characterizing the objects of natural appearance and the purely personal experiences that is the focus of so much psychological analysis. What is told through the imaginative projections, personifications and identifications is the story of the imaginer himself. Hence its potential value for therapy but also its limitations and dangers. But the advantage is that it affords a first glimpse into this extra-personal domain. For the archetypal region visionary imagination is required, which by its very nature transcends active imagining, what Paracelsus calls “true imagination”. Of its *modus operandi* we know very little. But this is the plane of the archetypal structures themselves, in their joint configurations. True enough, we do not know the archetype in itself, or by itself alone. In the experience of visionary imagining, the method which discloses the order inherent in the content of such imagining reveals the presence of whole clusters of archetypes, and it is within these groupings that individual archetypes can be known. In other words, we know the reason principles only as related to each other and not as they are in themselves, and it is through this imagination that we have access to the gods. They are presences and not names; they are the archetypal essences, the eternal hexeities of names. Now these are ontologically inadequate. They demand the supreme sphere of the Ideas, the eternal exemplars that give the universe its formal character, and these provide being to all that is. Now such meanings that they give cannot be condensed into images but remain the objects of thought, or of the active intellect, and these go beyond that realm referred to as the psyche.

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