

**Precis of Roberts Avens's *Imagination is Reality: Western Nirvana in Jung, Hillman, Barfield, and Cassirer***  
**by Anthony J. Damiani**  
**Book Notes V09BN**

3-LETTER CODE: PSY

TOPIC: Archetypal Psychology

SUBJECT: Imagination

SUBSUBJECTS: Fantasy, Mundus Imaginalis, Jung, Hillman, Cassirer, Coleridge, Barfield

ORIGINAL LOCATION & FILE NAME (of PDF used for typing): PSY imagination is reality B 3p.PDF

CONTENTS:

**Coleridge's concept of imagination**

**Mythological/archetypal images as essences of psychic life**

**Barfield's scheme of consciousness**

**Imagination as intermediary realm between conscious and unconscious**

**Hillman's definition of soul**

**Mundus imaginalis; images as psyche itself**

**Cassirer's symbolic universe as humanly created realm of meaning**

**Avens' proposal to reorient Cassirer's concept**

**Hillman: all consciousness depends on fantasy images; reduction to the imaginal**

**Jung: primordial images arise from depths of body**

**Mythical image is the thing, fuses phenomenal and real**

**Personifying; epistemology of the heart**

**Imaging as potential Western mode of liberation**

BOOK QUOTED FROM:

- Roberts Avens, *Imagination is Reality: Western Nirvana in Jung, Hillman, Barfield, and Cassirer*

AD HANDWRITING: Typewriter typed, no AD edits

COMPLETENESS: Full Paper, precis of a small portion of a book

PUBLISHABILITY: No, already published

DATE ASSOCIATED WITH THIS PAPER: 1982 0417

RETYPE AND REFORMAT by IT 2022

NOTES:

- **RETYPE BOOK NOTES presented in class (V09BN).**
- This is **1982 04/17c, Imagination is Reality Book Notes, and the third entry associated with this date. 1982 04/17a = Alchemy; Archetype of Self Class. 1982 04/17b = “Psychology: Monotheistic or Polytheistic?” Book Notes. 1982 04/17d = Jung’s Archetype of the Self Paper.**
- This is a precis of a small portion of *Imagination is Reality: Western Nirvana in Jung, Hillman, Barfield, and Cassirer*, by Roberts Avens.

## **PRECIS OF ROBERTS AVENS'S *IMAGINATION IS REALITY: WESTERN NIRVANA IN JUNG, HILLMAN, BARFIELD, AND CASSIRER***

[File PSY imagination is reality B 3p.PDF Begins]

From Avens, Imagination is Reality

The Romantics promoted imagination to the rank of the primary creative agency of the human Soul.

“Coleridge disassociated primary or creative imagination from reproductive imagination or fantasy.”

Fantasy or reproductive imagination is a handmaiden to perception.

Imagination for Coleridge is basically vital and can lead to a deeper discovery of the truth of the world, and in it one can see the embodiment of a universal significance, that is, a deeper meaning than it.

He also considered the creative imagination (c i) as the threshold between the Self and the not-Self, and the way of grasping unity in multiplicity, or [looks like: imaginative] knowledge that I am that.

He makes a comparison of liberation by vision, which is a Western version of nirvana, and even refers to it as the noetic vision (sic), and claims that in its acutest form it is a noetic vision.

They insist that the mythological or archetypal images constitute the very essences of psychic life, that they are the psyche, and their preoccupation with man as a harp. For instance, Barfield's [Note: The typed paper mistakenly says 'Garfield's'.] scheme of things is a form of consciousness that has contracted from the periphery into individual centers, a form of consciousness that has contracted from the periphery to an individual center, helping bring about a free subjectivity.

They do not believe in being reabsorbed into some kind of primal undifferented stuff -- this is their interpretation of course of Eastern doctrines, or in other words, how self consciousness emerged from mere consciousness.

They are considering the imagination as an intermediary realm between the conscious and the unconscious, which embodies the first images and constitutes the common matrix of myth and language, etc.

We can imagine nothing or perform nothing that is not already formerly given by the archetypal imagination of the gods.

“Essentially by Soul, Hillman means, ‘the imaginative possibility in our natures, and experiencing through reflection, dream, image and fantasy, that mode which recognizes all realities as primarily symbolic or metaphorical’, -- that is Hillman's definition of Soul.”

The material substance of the mirror is not the substance of the image -- the substance of the image is simply the place of its appearance.

In terms of archetypal psychology, the mundus imaginalis is the realm of psychic reality, identical with the images contained therein, or the images are not in the psyche as the container, but are the psyche.

The place of the psyche is identical with the place of the imagining, and it is irreplaceable.

For Cassirer, symbolical universe is essentially confined to a humanly created realm of meaning from which all experience of things in their immediacy is precluded.

Avens proposes to reorientate Cassirer's symbolic universe within the realm of the archetypal imagination, freeing it from its humanistic connotations, and connecting it with the psyche which is the only reality he wants to speak about -- for him the psyche is simply the world.

Because for Cassirer, what the thing is apart from its symbolic formation is an irrelevant and false problem and for him the symbol is what unifies the universe of the first cultural forms.

Hillman: "All consciousness depends on fantasy images. All we know about the world, about the mind, the body, about anything whatsoever, including spirit and the nature of the divine, comes through images and is organized by fantasies into one pattern or another... Because these patterns are archetypal, we are always in one or another archetypal configuration, one or another fantasy, including the fantasy of Soul and the fantasy of Spirit."

All metaphysical and ontological claims according to Hillman, will be reduced to the images which they express. This is their reduction to the imaginal that they are operating with.

For according to Jung, the primordial images and symbols arise from the depths of the body and express its materiality -- every bit as much as the structure of consciousness.

Or to put it differently, the mythical image does not represent the thing, but rather replaces the thing's immediate presence, it is the thing, and maybe we could add, fuses the phenomenal with the real.

As this amounts to "the spontaneous experiencing and visioning and speaking of the configurations of existence of psychic presences."

"Personifying is the spontaneous activity of the Soul, a way of being in the world and experiencing the world as psychological field, a way of knowing what is invisible and hidden. He even wants to call this an epistemology of the heart."

Personifying or the diversity or autonomy of the psyche from dominion by any single power (in other words egocentricity) is the Soul's response.

Avens' proposition is that imaging is potentially the Westerner's mode or way of liberating himself from the delusional ego.

[File PSY imagination is reality B 3p.PDF Ends]