

BUILDING UP THE INDIVIDUAL IMAGINARY AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN PERSONALITY

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Abstract

The present study outlines the manner of building up the individual imaginary by the development and structuring of what classical psychoanalysis defines as the unconscious. Individual images are created in relation with affective shades, forming together compact groups of images which are merging into deep, inactive structures whose reference is the symbol. Within the relation between the active imaginary (which may be easily activated and the passive imaginary (the unconscious structures) human personality is being built up as an individual ego.

Keywords: *imaginary, active imaginary, passive imaginary, unconscious.*

To analyze the assembly including all cognitive processes and the structures of image characteristic to humans, the term personality has been utilized. In the context in which the imaginary has been defined as the assembly of simple and compound images one has about the world, on also considering that their formation is a complex and continuous process, personality appears as dynamic, complex complex process related directly with the transformation of the individual imaginary. As part of the process of formation of personality, all cognitive and sensorimotor aspects represent a source for image formation.

Looking at human personality from the perspective in which the imaginary plays a fundamental role, a clear vision upon the human psychic may be formulated. The author does not attempt at revolutionizing psychology, but only at discussing the manner in which the structures of image interact and merge, thus forming a unique conglomerate for each of us.

In the case of human person, several interactive variables should be considered for understanding the lines of its development. To this end, the ontic triad: matter-energy-information is adapted at human level, three fundamental elements

being identified: cognition (knowledge), energy (source of activating knowledge) and corporality (the material support). Interaction of these specific elements permits the manifestation of psychic processes. Starting from such premises, the following pattern of psychic processes may be drawn:

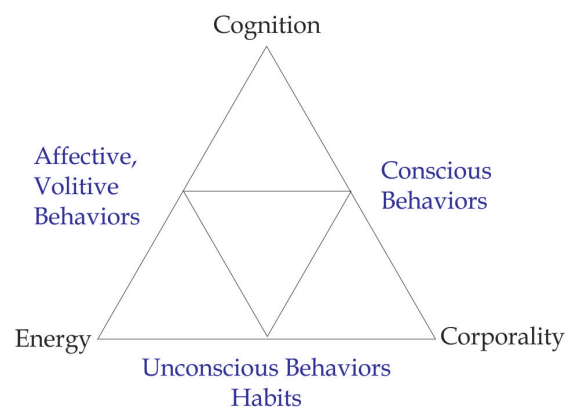


Fig. 1. Building up of the ego as an interrelation

Presented in the following will be exclusively the modalities specific to cognition, defined by the author as an imaginary assembly. Such a relation of identity between image and cognition is established because the main way of taking over, ordering, processing and transmission of information is accomplished by means of the image. The other parts of the cognitive universe, the abstract notions, the language, are only forms and intermediaries of image¹, which explains why the cognitive part of the individual is represented by his/her imaginary. The human imaginary involves the following fundamental components: taking over of the information; its storage and processing and the feed-back. However, considering the complexity and role played by the central component, the other parts are only marginal. The ego as an entity influences

the process of information taking over, as well. Consequently, the whole action is subjective. Schematically, the ego-world relation might be represented as:

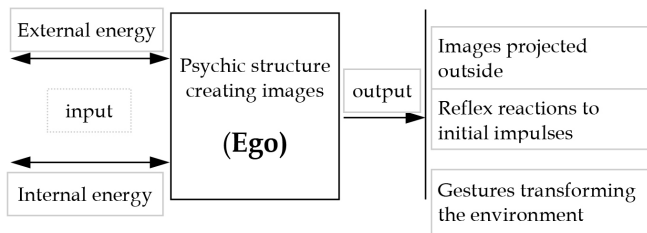


Fig. 2. The ego-world relation

The three fundamental elements forming the human ego are the following:

1. The structure through which the information is taken over – the *input*, which represents the interface between the ego and the energy necessary for supporting the image.
2. The ego, representing the imagistic entity within which the information is formed and structured.
3. The response structure – the *output*, assuring the feed back relation with the world.

The ego viewed as an image-creating structure plays a double role, of both receiver of information and of its decoder and interpreter. The information decoded by the individual ego is of energetic nature. There exist two types of energy activating the imaginary ego: first, it is the external energy decoded and transmitted as both perceptive images and complex information. In this case, the role of the imaginary is not only of taking over the information, but also of creating an imagistic entity and of integrating instantaneously in the already existing structures. The process of information taking over is an active one and, due to the participation of the imagistic ego to the realization of the image we have on the world, it should be viewed as subjective.

The second type of energy is of internal nature; it supports the structure of image in the moment in which the senses are no wholly active, any longer. In such cases, the activated structures of image are more profound, part of them being present in the active memory of the person. Such an image is the dream, the revery, the revelation,

etc. Whichever the type of energy which activates the image, the ego is indivisible and should be analyzed as a whole.

The ego is unitary, indivisible and capable of creating images, which explains the repeated utilization of the term *imaginary* for defining it. The three components of the structure that will take over the initial information will not be presented in a separate manner, instead they will be an integrating part of the same imaginary. Starting from here, the structure of the ego might be presented as:

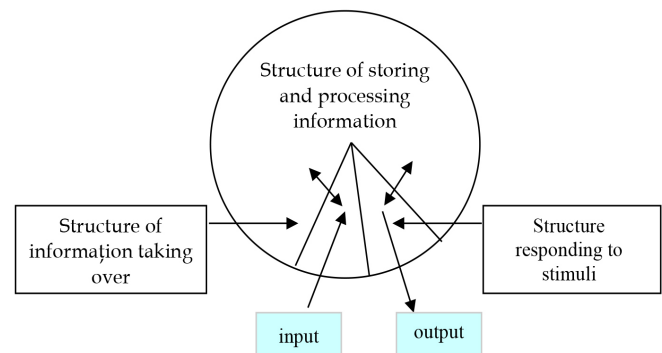


Fig. 3. Structure of the imaginary at the level of individual psychic

Even if the ego is viewed as an entity and each operation is an integrated part of this structure, the specific working modalities will make use of the same definitions applied in theoretical psychology for describing psychic processes, which will not mean that we share the same vision upon their operation ways and that we shall accept the same delimitations among them. For example, we do not believe in the theoretical separation between the cognitive and perceptual processes, once an active cooperation exists between them. Perception and thinking operate simulatenously and in a continuous collaboration by the intervention of thinking upon perception. In a similar manner, memory should not be separated from perception, which actually represents taking over of the information from the environment, and thinking, representing ordering of the memorized information. The human psychic should be viewed as a whole, whereas the informational structure should not be divided into a number of processes, yet considered as an entity in the construction of the human individual as a personality.

One of the most difficult elements in the attempt of describing the imaginary refers to the manner of explaining its operation. The modalities of its formation, development and dissemination are difficult to explain, a first step being analysis of the conscience and its relation with the image structures. In the characterization of Henry Ey, conscience represents the essence of the ego. He stated that: "To be conscious means to live the peculiarity of one's own experience, transposing it in the universality of its *science*. In other words, consciousness should be described as a structure of the relational life of the subject with others and with the world." (Ey 1983) Conscience catches in all its complexity all easily observable elements characterizing an active psychic life. However, the definition formulated by Ey appears as a bit too generous. Is it really true that all information - active in a certain moment of time - may be considered as an expression of our conscience? The problem to be here analyzed is whether the above-mentioned generalization does not restrict the theoretical operating modalities. A too general term takes over numerous functions, whereas a definition formulated by opposition with the unconscious² makes the discourse even more ambiguous. For example, the repressed - and, consequently, forgotten - pieces of information are not very different from the cognitively inactive ones, once they are part of our attention. Whichever its mechanisms, oblivion does not create a new structure of conscience, to be called unconscious or subconscious. We shall restrict conscience to attention, to information active in a certain moment of time. As a matter of fact, we shall define as conscience what has been called consciousness, the fact of being conscious in a certain moment. In this way, conscience represents an image which is active.

Starting from here, it is necessary to follow the modality in which the imaginary operates. As already mentioned, three important structures occur as part of the imaginary, namely: the structure of information taking over from the environment; the structure of information storing and processing and the structure responding to the external and inner impulses. The first one was analyzed when discussing the perceptive

imaginary, while the third will be discussed together with all the other types of imaginary. For the moment, under analysis will be the manner in which the second structure operates.

In our opinion, the imaginary is formed of three types of important information:

- The active information, represented by the knowledge that can be easily activated and whose processing amplifies the given structure. This type of information includes both perceptive images and what includes the individual memory of each person.
- The reactive, or of reaction, information - the one activated when habits or reflex gestures occur. This type of information is not conscious, any longer, however its results may be easily traced by the conscious. In a certain moment of time the information had been active but, being frequently repeated, their activation, each time we make a certain gesture, was no longer necessary. They became habits more difficult to activate.
- The inactive information cannot be activated, any longer, as a result of oblivion, or the never active information which, however, received some attention, yet without being memorized. This type of information is what psychoanalysis calls an unconscious³. In our opinion, the structure of image based on inactive information may arrive here through natural surface mechanisms. The unconscious in itself cannot be the source of certain psychic problems, acting only as an information. It is not the information the one which forces the zone of the conscious, but the association of images with a certain type of energy or emotions. The latter one, which will be called affective nuance, accompanies the image in the moment in which it entered the inactive zone and it will be activated, through association, much easier than the information. This situation entitles us to consider that it is not the unconscious imaginative structure the one that forces the zones specific to active information, but the emotional influence. Among the types of information, the active one is the only that can be willingly controlled. Again in the conscious zone, it is associated, structured and gradually merged, interacting with other images. Gradually, through oblivion, it enters the unconscious zone and gets deposited in compact

structures, defined by their own affective nuance. This can be reactivated through association, remembering, dream, hypnosis, etc. It is only under such circumstances that the inactive information, subjected to complete or partial reactivation, can be modified or consciously approached.

The modalities in which the information operates depend on the energy activating it. When the energy is of external nature, it is utilized the active information and, implicitly, the conscience, similarly with the case of perception. When the energy is of internal nature, the information is mainly inactive, as in the case of dreams. When the inner and the external energies are combined, the three types of information may be superposed, as in the case of dreaming. In no moment of our life the energy is of a single type, being instead combined, whichever the condition of the person, because never the sensing organs are completely inactive and the internal energy can be ever deactivated, which would mean death.

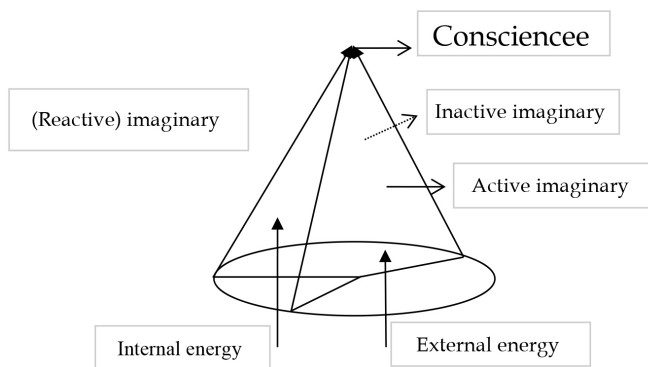


Fig. 4. Types of imaginary and the relation with the environment - tridimensional image

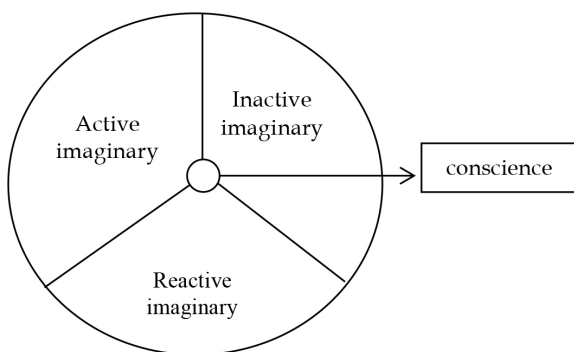


Fig. 5. Types of imaginary and the relation with the environment - transversal section

These types of information also represent types of imaginary, because the modality of – as a transmission form – organizing the information is the image. Consequently, there exist active images, which would constitute the active imaginary, reactive or of reaction images – forming the reactive imaginary and inactive images, forming the inactive or unconscious imaginary. These types of imaginary – represented graphically in Fig. 5 - are activated by the two sources of the above-described energy.

The three types of information occur at the level of each one's ego, however the only information that might be considered as belonging to memory are represented by the active ones. They may be easily activated when required and they can be actively interposed between the environment and the conscience. The conscience takes over only what is offered by the part of active information, whose role is of amplifying the information. This explains why no direct relation exists between conscience and the environment. We do not become aware of a certain situation, involved in such a case being only images, information of one's own ego, which is reflected in the environment. The pieces of information are amplified both by their relating with the external world and by self-construction. The possible intervention of the conscience is reduced to elements of awareness, being restricted by the already existing imaginary assemble, which cannot be left aside. Any information not integrated within this assemble is either non perceived or viewed as meaningless. If a meaningless image has a major importance for an individual, it may create blockages of thought and, consequently, nono-integration at the level of the emotional component.

The intervention of conscience is reduced to the creation of images, its role being of amplifying, controlling and ordering of certain information at the level of the already created imaginary. Active information are structured on the basis of some well-determined causal relations, essential for the realization of the classes of objects, of the body of knowledge, of the image about the world as a whole. Formation of the active imaginary involves the following mechanisms:

1. Image analysis is the process through which the image is followed in detail, on the basis of some already existing images at the level of one's

own imaginary, so that the detailed image appears as a synthesis between one's personal imaginary and the outer world.

2. Comparison is the process through which the image is confronted with the other already existing images at the level of one's own imaginary, which permits both image analysis and its synthesis. Through comparison, the image is placed inside the individual imaginary as a piece in a puzzle.

3. Association is the process through which images are arranged together for providing a unitary image upon the existence and causal relations among images. Association is based on the resemblances among images, among the "emotional shadows", or on their integration in a general image. The association among images assures a horizontal ordering of images, along with their emotional charging, in view of their subsequent more easy or more difficult activation.

4. The generalization is the process under which starting from a limited number of images we obtain a final image regarded as specific to all similar images. Such new images can be obtained only by comparison with an existing image.

5. The abstraction is the process through which starting from the existing imagery new images are formed that departs from the proximity. In the case of abstraction there may be identified properties of objects that can not be identified at a glance. Through this same process the development of the rational imaginary is achieved and the image about the world is ordered vertically.

6. The division and the reassociation is achieved among the existing images from the self. Some images are divided into the constitutive parts and subsequently they reassociate with other parts of images and parts of images. This process can be done by entirely losing touch with the original image, or on the contrary other images can be obtained at another level similar to the first images.

The heuristic processes, problem solving, the scientific discovery are ways to obtain new images, what are not among the already existing image structures. This is done especially based on the processes of division and re-association of images, combined with abstraction. How they operate have as their basis starting the holistic picture of the universe. This is a process that completes an overview on the basis of the existing characteristic images. The process in its simple form has as support a simple an overall image, and the process is the same as completing the puzzle. In the case of major problems, the overall picture is ambiguous, but the process itself is formed simply starting from from an overall image.

All these are structured so as to facilitate the access to information, access that is only partially in the conscious. When the active information due to non-use tends to transform into passive information there appears a new process by which the information is reduced quantitatively. We call this process the compression process. The image, as it is structured as a result of compression restructures synthesizing and through this synthesis symbolic structures appear. The symbolic development is achieved based on the affective footprint accompanying the image or the image structures. This activates itself much more information than a normal image. But this information can be turned on itself, but often the image load that accompanies it is lost. It is a process whereby the information is compressed being able to activate it only with great difficulty only by the intervention of symbols. Also, activating the image based on the symbol brings with it the entire load of image and thus often the details are forgotten or neglected, achieving trough it interpretative re- directings of the symbol.

The transformation process of the information could be represented as follows:

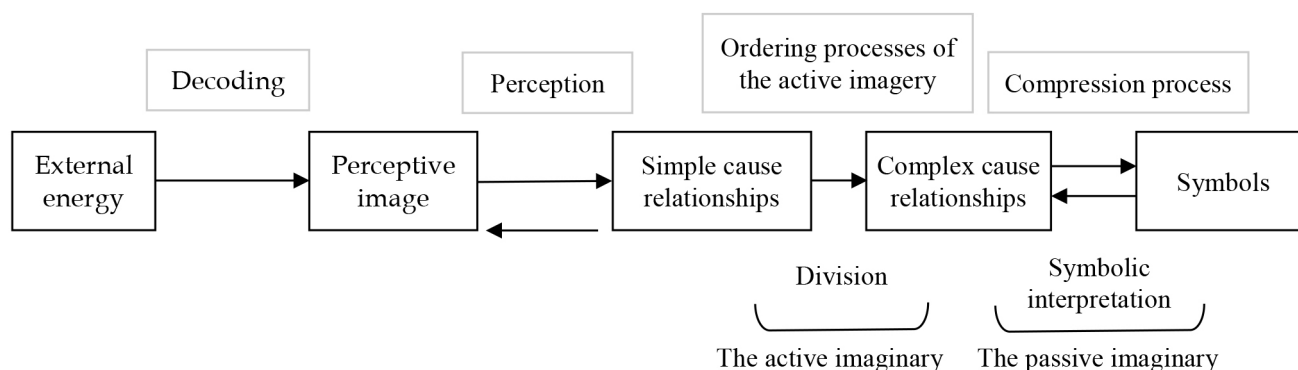


Fig. 6. The transforming of Information

Ordering the information creates a complex interactive cognitive system. Based on the perceptual images a causal imaging system is created. Both the simple and complex causalities form the active imaginary. But the information used less gradually become inactive information. This, through the forgetting system become difficult to activate by the conscience. Through the process of compressing this information becomes more and more consistent and simultaneously occupy less place in the memory. Its reactivation is achieved through the intermediate represented by the notion that symbolizes them through the emotional imprint. The reactivation mechanisms are known: through the dream and its interpretation, hypnosis, revelations, reveries, etc.

The idle imaginary is becomes conscious for the following reasons:

- the main source of energy that acts in these special states of consciousness is the inner order, activating the deep areas of memory too. They become active in some special moments, in which the transition from the special state of consciousness to the normal one, when the surface information is activated.
- the emotional imprint is enabled/activated and associated with other personal experiences in this moment. In these circumstances the state of awareness is partial and new structures image are formed.
- symbols analysis and their development. Through interpretation components of the idle

imaginary can be activated but also new forms of the imaginary can be developed.

The information awareness is not simply transferred in the active side of the memory. The conscience process does not play the role of memory, the two elements being separated. During the dream the internal energy intervenes operating only the passive information - corresponding potential memory. The dreams we remember appear during the transition moment from the wakefulness to that of sleep and in this moment the information is taken over by the active memory. Through this process, the information that normally would not be active reactive themselves.

We believe that there are three types of memory: **the short-term memory**, which preserves **the image** for a short period of time and without which we could not have the perceptive image, the **active memory** that uses the information that can be activated when needed (this can vary as duration, from a case to another) and **the passive memory** representing the forgotten or the unconscious information, that can be reactivated with difficulty. However during the sleep a large part of the memory can be reactivated by switching passive images into the very short-term memory. During the dream the short-term memory and the passive one are activated. During the transition from one state of consciousness to another the transfer of information from passive to active memory can be made through the short-term memory. These

are mechanisms that we consider specific for activating the passive imaginary.

These specific ways to structure the image cause a reconsideration of the theories of the unconscious and the conscious and hence the theories about the human personality. Thus we will achieve a comparison between the psychoanalytic theory and what we argue about the imaginary. Psychoanalysis considers the unconscious to be of a pulsating informative nature, strongly influencing the human personality. The information reaches these areas through repression (S. Freud 1915), or there has always been there under the form of collective unconscious (C. G. Jung 2014). This information can be enabled only in extraordinary states of consciousness, but through different symptomatic states we can infer certain unconscious informative items. If we look at the idle imaginary elements from the perspective of the information the pulsating effect of the forgotten area is lost. The emotional imprint specific to some images that became inactive is transferred most often at the level of active the information.

There is no other information censorship for the inactive information but our own active imaginary, which for reasons of compatibility or utility does not activate the information. In general the active imaginary has its own protection mechanisms and refuses any image that might disrupt it. There is no radical break between the active and inactive imaginary, the transition from one level to another being made gradually, organically. There are exceptional cases which result from the incompatibility between the new information and existing imagery. But these incompatibilities if they have a strong negative emotional imprint can cause trauma.

Psychoanalysis bases its efforts on the endeavour to unlock the passive imaginary and to return to its active region in order to be able to act on it. The problem in this process is given by the state of compaction of this one and the difficulty of decoding and reactivation. The responsiveness to any form of suggestion and predisposition towards interpretation makes the reactivation phase to determine new forms of the imaginary.

The two theories, psychoanalytic and one that we want to develop can be summarized in the following diagram:

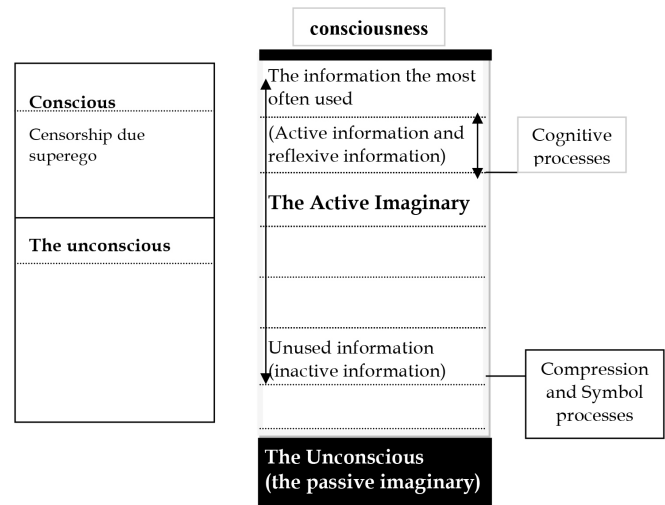


Fig. 7. The State of Conscious

Due to the analysis carried out above we have reached another important issue that of the personality and integrity of the individual ego. The imaginary structure is an important part of the human psyche representing the whole integrated cognitive system and the perceptual one. The human personality develops within its own image structure so that nothing can exceed these limits of the imaginary. The behavior, the attitudes, the reactions are limited by the image that we have of the world. Therefore, as the receptive side is limited by the constituent imaginary, the reactive part is also a construction of the image of the world.

We believe that the relationship between the man and the universe is continuous and that due to this interactive relationship a stable construct is achieved. This is commonly defined as being the human personality and presented as a bio-psycho-social system through which the individual enters in relationship with the environment he lives in. But through this definition the cognitive aspect of the personality is marginalized. Even if the psychological aspect includes cognitive elements they constitute only a secondary form of manifestation of the personality for not introducing it in the psychological system. We can consider that the cognitive development creates a level of

personality which is complex and through the role it has it must be considered as a priority form of this one. The cognitive aspect of personality is what I called „imaginary”. It represents a complex cognitive whole that is structured starting from the perceptual level and ending with the theoretical one.

That is why we can not separate the personality as part of response of the system called „I” at the interaction of the environment, from structure as information of this one. We can not run away from our own images, that we reached at through personal construction and the taking over from the environment of the collective image. We are directly related to the imaginary, so the separation between our identity and the image structure can not be achieved. When asked „What is the self?” Or „Who am I?” the answer is almost impossible to give. I am my image of the world and therefore what I build as exterior self-reflects in the construction of my own personality. No matter how much we would like to determine theoretically an objective egotic entity this is impossible. However there is a possibility of intervention on the individual’s personality. The changing of the collective imaginary structures. Based on the generalization that all achieve that our own image of the world is similar to the one next to me, we can try to modify it. But unknown image elements can create unwanted reactions, so that the intervention to be carried out only after a deepening of the imaginary of the other.

There is also a specific inertia of the ego that does not allow the new information to be integrated. Any information different from the existing imagery at a certain time can not fit into it. It takes repetition for new elements to become part of the self. That is why the psychological intervention in changing the imagery of a person must be carried out only when we think the we have fully understood the world of image of the one next to me and the imaginary of the other is ready. The changes of image and implicitly those of personality are inertial, they being able to be achieved only gradually. Although the individual imaginary has a stable structure, within certain limits, it is in constant evolution. Its becoming can not be suddenly achieved, but gradually, the inner

transformations overcoming the inertia of the self. In case of any sudden changes that can not be integrated ther appear psychiatric disorders, the imaging self trying through these disturbances to preserve its integrity.

The human being is represented at the informational level by a complex of images. They are part and parcel of the individual’s personality and through them we can integrate into the universe. Its representation is a synthesis between energy taken from outside and its own structure of image. Depending on our personal representation of the universe we can adapt to its transformations. That is why the image structure of each one is the essence of any active state assets or of any internal or external change.

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Endnotes

1. Jean-Jacques Wunenburger in *Filosofia imaginii* (Polirom Publishing House, 2004, pp. 45-69) provides a summary of the manifestations of the image integrating elements belonging to the unconscious, verbal, matrix (cipher) making a generalization of how to generate images. In this context we believe that image is the foundation of the whole cognitive system.
2. C. G. Jung, defines conscience as “function or activity which maintains the mental content relationship with the ego. The consciousness does not identify itself with the psyche because it represents the whole psychiatric content and are not all necessarily directly related to the ego, ie re not reported to the ego, in such a way as to receive conscience” (C.G. Jung, *Tipuri psihologice*, Humanitas Publishing House, București, 1997, p.

458). The role of consciousness is to integrate those specific functions of the psyche that do not belong to the unconscious. Therefore the definition of unconscious is given as opposition conscious. "The unconscious is, in my opinion, a border psychological idea that covers all contents and psychological processes which are not conscious, ie are not reported noticeable to the ego" (C.G. Jung, *Tipuri psihologice*, Humanitas Publishing House, București, 1997, p. 458).

3. The term of unconscious itself is difficult to describe. Initially, Sigmund Freud in his work *Câteva observații asupra conceptului de inconștient în psihanaliză* (1912) (*Opere Esențiale*, vol 3, Trei Publishing House, București, 2010, pp. 25-33) defines the unconscious as an unknown structure that underlies a component that is acting beyond the limits of human consciousness and which can be revealed through dreams, trauma and information with certain emotional charge. It has a charge of image, so it is information.