

# James Hillman and Phenomenology: the poetic basis of psyche

João L. Corá S.\*  
Carlos A Serbena\*\*

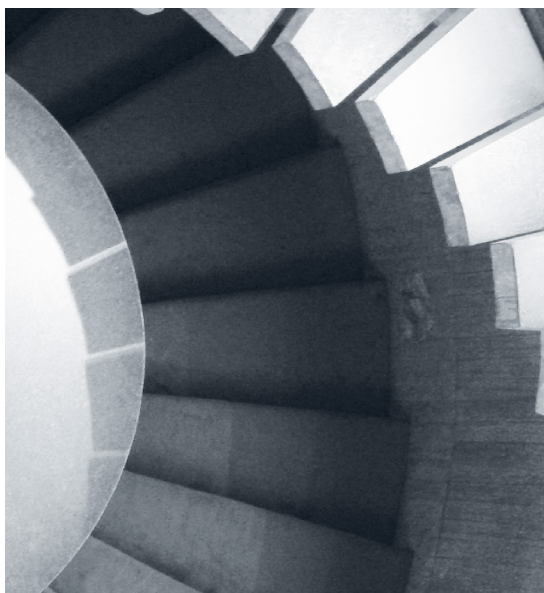
## Abstract

The main objective of this article is to reflect and point to the possible epistemological and ontological horizons of James Hillman's archetypal psychology by approaching it to a possible relationship with phenomenology. In order to fulfill this intention, it is necessary to delimit two starting points, namely: (1) The central motto of archetypal psychology of "stick to the image" and its possible relationship with the phenomenological notion of "back to things themselves"; (2) The postulate of a mytho-poetic basis for the human psyche and the possible approach to the notion of poiesis as presented in Heidegger's phenomenology. Archetypal psychology emerges in a new "post-Jungian" context that seeks to replace an

interpretive, univocal and metaphysical attitude with a phenomenological attitude towards images of the soul. The mytho-poetic basis and "stick to the image", central notions in his psychology, constitute the basis of this possible phenomenological attitude in his thinking. ■

## Keywords

Archetypal  
Psychology;  
Phenomenology;  
Epistemology;  
Poiesis;  
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\* Psychologist (PUC-PR), specialist in Analytical Psychology (PUC-PR). Master in Philosophy (PUCPR). Master student in Clinical Psychology (UFPR). joao\_luis\_cora@hotmail.com

\*\* Electric Engineer (UFPR), Psychologist (UFPR). Master in Psychology (UFSC). PhD in Humanities (UFSC). Associated Professor at Federal University of Paraná. Professor of the Pós-Graduate Program of Psychology from UFPR and he is the coordinator of the Epistemology and interfaces of Analytical Psychology work group in Anpepp. caserbena@gmail.com

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### Introduction

The epistemological context of Jung's work is multidisciplinary and multifaceted, analytical psychology emerges in the midst of a "network" of ideas and theoretical systems, dialogues in its time between the sciences of the spirit and the sciences of nature, being Jung's own conceptions the result of an intense reflection, both empirical, medical and scientific, on the one hand, and philosophical, religious, anthropological, mythological and symbolic, on the other. It will be in this polysemic context that we will see the emergence of Jung's conception of a complex psyche that cannot be explained only in physiological, biological, neurological and/or anatomical terms. On the contrary, Jung develops a new method named prospective and/or synthetic-constructive, with the purpose of focusing on the complexity of the soul from its own symbolic meaning (SHAMDASANI, 2005; JUNG, 2013a; 2013b; 2015).

It will be from the reflection that Jung's analytical psychology has a multidisciplinary background, as well as considering the author's concern with the complexity of the human soul, that some authors such as Roger Brooke (2000) will find in Jung's work, as well as in his worldview (*Weltanschauung*), a possible relationship with a phenomenological perspective. Now, according to Brooke (2009) in his work *Jung and Phenomenology*, we can find possible traces of a phenomenological perspective in Jung from the moment he intends to understand the soul from its singular symbolic meaning, before reducing it to previous and reductive interpretations. When asking himself about the *telos* of the symbol itself, he sticks to the understanding of the unconscious content from its own meaning, thus seeking to remain faithful to a language proper to the soul, as the phenome-

nological motto proclaims, "back to things in themselves", in other words, to turn to the symbolic meaning proper to the psyche (BROOKE, 2009, p. 13; Idem, p. 23-31).

In addition, it is possible to consider a relationship with the phenomenological perspective in Jung from his poetic style of thinking, its hermeneutic/interpretative method and its symbolic and metaphorical starting point, thus bringing it closer to the poetic ontology of Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology (BROOKE, 2000; 2009). On the other hand, according to Brooke (2009) the emergence of a poetic thought in Jung would never have been systematically exposed in a clear theoretical/epistemological system, there is no concern on the part of Jung himself to systematically demonstrate the possible epistemological and ontological relationships with a poetic basis for his ideas.

However, in James Hillman's archetypal psychology there is an attempt to establish a more explicit relationship with this poetic and phenomenological framework, perhaps we can find there more clearly this possible relationship with phenomenology from Hillman's work with the imaginal and the archetypal. As an example, we could mention the first work of James Hillman, his doctoral thesis *Emotion* from 1959, in which he will not only cite authors of phenomenology, as well as objectively use the Husserlian method of "back to things themselves" and the "bracketing out" of the phenomenological *epoché*, but will also use it in order to apprehend the various psychological theories about emotions as "phenomenological appearances" and/or possible meanings about this complex phenomenon of the soul (HILLMAN, 1992).

Archetypal psychology is considered here as a theoretical unfolding of Jung's analytical

psychology, at times we will also highlight Hillman's commitment to deepening Jung's ideas, as well as at other times he will move away from his notions, concepts and perspectives. We can cite as an example the poetic style of Jung's thought, as conceived by Samuels (1989) and Brooke (2009), as a metaphorical, poetic and mythological style, as it will be taken up again and taken to its ultimate consequences on Hillman. By postulating a mytho-poetic basis for the psyche as the foundation of his own understanding of the psyche, he will be proposing a new style of psychology that has its starting point in the poetic basis of the soul (HILLMAN, 1988; 2010).

In this sense, it can be said that Hillman's archetypal psychology, as Samuels writes in *Jung and the Post-Jungians*, is a theoretical unfolding of Jung's analytical psychology and not a split or separation from the latter. In addition, we will see that it will only be in Hillman's archetypal psychology that it will be possible to show more clearly that relationship with phenomenology, since the phenomenological perspective on the images of the soul will replace a metaphysical understanding of the human soul, making phenomenology of great importance to reflect on issues related to the epistemological bases of archetypal psychology (SAMUELS, 1989; TACEY, 1988).

We will give special emphasis here to two central notions for archetypal psychology, namely: (1) The "stick to the image" and the possible relationship with the basic notion in phenomenology of "back to things themselves"; (2) The postulate of a mytho-poetic basis for the psyche and the notion of *poiesis* as presented in Heidegger's phenomenology. However, in the first place, we will seek to demonstrate already in Jung a possible relationship with the phenomenological approach, especially from the presence of a poetic style in his thought, since we can find their important points that seem to converge with the presence of the phenomenology in James Hillman's archetypal psychology.

### Possible relationships between Jung's Analytical Psychology and Phenomenology

Faced with the complexity of the phenomenon of the soul, Jung will understand how necessary is a look at the psyche that has its own dynamics as a starting point, in order not to reduce it to a single one-sided explanation. In his conception, the soul cannot be explained only in chemical and/or physiological terms, since human life itself could not be reduced to the laws of modern science (JUNG, 2013). Due to these and other notes, we see the emergence of a theoretical/critical position in Jung's analytical psychology, having as a *locus* a criticism of the reductive-causal and materialist interpretations in relation to the symbolic complexity of the human soul (SHAMDASANI, 2005, p. 75-76).

In response to the causal-reductive method, its reductionist and causal tendencies that reduce the psychological phenomenon to simpler causal elements, pre-defined structures or concepts closed in on themselves, Jung will develop a new prospective and non-reductive method, named by him as synthetic-constructive method. In general, we can say that the constructive method sticks to the symbol *per se*, that is, it will turn its attention to the complexity and *telos* (purpose) of the symbol from a constructive point of view, amplifying its meaning from itself. The synthetic-constructive method will be exposed in more detail in his works, in particular we will cite here the presentation of the method in *Psychology of the Unconscious* (OC 7/1) in a chapter entitled "VI The synthetic or constructive method".

It is because of his synthetic-constructive method that some authors such as Roger Brooke (2000) find in Jung's analytical psychology a possible relationship with the phenomenological perspective, especially when Jung asks about the meaning of the symbol from within itself, without first reducing it to its elementary causes. In this sense, the constructive-synthetic method will not only avoid materialism and the causalist re-

ductionism, thus moving away from conceptual abstractions and/or merely theoretical, logical, spiritual “explanations”, sticking to the symbolic experience of the soul from its own meaning and sense, something very close to the central motto of phenomenology “back to the things themselves” (BROOKE, 2009; 2000).

In addition to the possible relationship between Jung’s analytical psychology and the phenomenological perspective based on the synthetic-constructive method, we could point to a second possible relationship with Jung’s phenomenological perspective based on his poetic thinking style (BROOKE, 2009; SAMUELS, 1989).

According to Brooke’s (2009) analysis the poetic style of Jung’s thought is possibly related to the poetic ontology proposed by Heidegger, considering the German philosopher’s assertion that modernity assists the “escape of the gods”, thus relating the mythical figures to the idea of forgetfulness of being in modernity. In the conception of the phenomenologist, only the poet would be able to find the “trails of the fugitive gods”, being the *poiesis* the necessary activity in the face of the forgetfulness of the Being within the rationalism and materialism insurgent in modernity (HEIDEGGER, 1936, p. 94 apud BROOKE, 2009, p. 29).

According to Jung within the modern perspective “the gods have become diseases” (JUNG, 2002, p. 43), that is, the mytho-poetic narratives wear a new rationalist and diagnostic guise, losing sight of the metaphorical reality of soul and the perspective that the images are allusive and not concrete and literal realities (BROOKE, 2009, p. 29-39).

In the conception of Brooke (2009) and Samuels (2002), the poetic style of thinking in Jung is related to one of the two epistemological horizons of his work. On the one hand, a scientific and natural horizon of understanding, empirical and focused on “facts”, on the other hand, a poetic, imaginary, mythological perspective. We could bring this epistemological tension closer to the issue of Jung’s dual personality mentioned

in his autobiography *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, corresponding there to his personalities Num. 1 and Num. 2, each with their own needs, their own way of being and seeing the world (*Weltanschauung*) (BROOKE, 2009, p. 21-24; JUNG, 2016, p. 99; SAMUELS, 2002).

According to Samuels (2002), this dual perspective will foster the emergence of a wide variety of practices and theoretical productions in analytical psychology since Jung’s death in 1961, including James Hillman’s post-Jungian school of archetypal psychology. Furthermore, the poetic style of thought will emerge from Jung’s emphasis on sensitive experience and the meaning of the subjective experience of the soul, and poetic language will appear in his writings on religion, philosophy, mythology and alchemy, directly corresponding to the figure of personality number 2 in *Memories* (BROOKE, 2009; JUNG, 2016).

Ultimately, according to Hillman (2019) the poetic style of thought is given through metaphors, in a poetic and imaginative way, understood by him as a more “accurate” way of reaching the depths of the human soul. Jung’s poetic style will be the basis for the later postulate of a mytho-poetic basis for the psyche. On this particular point, Hillman (2019, p. 163) will comment: “His theory of images announced a poetic basis of mind, and active imagination put it in practice, even while Jung went on using scientific and theological language for explanations”.

Poetic thought goes back to the Greek word *poiesis* which means the act of creation, which is the poetic perspective that enables sensitive involvement with the world in its materiality. Jung’s poetic style of thinking points to an intertwining and/or transformation between psyche and matter, soul and body, thus opposing a Cartesian conception that is distant from the world (BROOKE, 2009, p. 27).

Ultimately, the poetic perspective will first appear in Jung and will later unfold into James Hillman’s archetypal psychology thinking. The work of *poiesis* will imply a return to an imme-

diate and phenomenological relationship with the world, being a way of appropriating themes from a work with the imagination. As we will see later, the poetic basis of the mind will seek to elucidate that archetypal and primordial experience, *poiesis* being the condition to access the archetypal images of the psyche (HILLMAN, 1988, p. 28).

### James Hillman's Archetypal Psychology and Phenomenology

Although Hillman's Archetypal Psychology has its roots in Jung's Deep Psychology, it will still have its own unique nuances and singular characteristics. Among the possible similarities and differences between the psychology of Hillman and Jung, we can mention in particular the fact that archetypal psychology is primarily concerned with the imagination, the image and the manifestation of these images in the culture itself, thus emphasizing an imaginal perspective in relation to the classical idea of the unconscious, as well as the manifestation of images in culture in relation to unconscious dynamics in the individual (TACEY, 1998, p. 219). It should be mentioned that in relation to modern psychiatry in the 19th century, Hillman's psychology is opposed to a strictly medical and empirical perspective that would confine the psyche to the manifestations of positive science (HILLMAN, 1988, p. 22).

Still on the differences in relation to Jung's classical analytical psychology, the term "archetypal" will replace the "analytic" since, as Hillman (1988, p. 21) will rightly point out, the notion of archetype will reflect the "theoretical depth of the latest works of Jung, which try to solve psychological problems beyond scientific models". Secondly, because the emphasis on the archetypal is related to a movement of archetypal psychology that looks at the patterns of the imagination and how they manifest themselves in both subjectivity and culture, thus becoming a worldview that encompasses all planes of human life as imaginal, going beyond the strict psychother-

apeutic practice within psychology offices and clinics (Idem, *Ibidem*).

As seen before, that double perspective in Jungian thought between the poetic, imaginary and metaphorical style, on the one hand, and the scientific, empirical and natural style, on the other, will have repercussions on theoretical practices and productions in analytical psychology after Jung's death in 1961. We can consider here that the poetic style, Jung's emphasis on the meaning of the singular experience of the soul, the metaphorical and imaginary language that would correspond to the mystery of personality number 2 in *Memories*, will be retaken by Hillman when postulating a mytho-poetic basis of psyche as a fundamental point for his own understanding of the psyche (BROOKE, 2009; SAMUELS, 1989; JUNG, 2016; HILLMAN, 2019).

Archetypal psychology will base its assumptions on that poetic perspective intrinsic to Jungian thought, which becomes increasingly evident, on the one hand, from its relationship with the imaginary, when considering metaphorical and mytho-poetic language as basic constituents of the psyche, as well as considering Hillman's criticism of a literalist language in psychology, excessively scientific, concrete and materialist, especially his criticism of the reductionism of the imaginal aspect of the psyche to *physis*, the Greek word for nature, that is, the opposition to a reduction of that poetic apprehension to an excessively objective and physical literalization in psychology (BROOKE, 2009, p. 21-24; SAMUELS, 1989, p. 82; HILLMAN, 2010).

Among the possible relationships with phenomenology, we could briefly mention Hillman's understanding of "archetypal" as a phenomenological view of phenomena (TACEY, 1989). Despite the nuances and differences pointed out in relation to classical analytical psychology, the idea of archetype from which the name "archetypal psychology" comes from is Jung's (HILLMAN, 1988). The archetypes defined here as the "*archai*" (original forms), basic structures and/or patterns of the psyche, appear in culture,



art, religion, social habits and myths, as well as in dreams and psychopathologies. Archetypes are like “the perspectives we have of ourselves and the world”, as they are “self-evident”, in short, “all ways of talking about archetypes are translations from one metaphor to another” (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 33).

In this sense, although archetypal psychology sticks to the Jungian concept of “archetype”, it still structures its own understanding of the archetype as an archetypal quality of experience, thus thinking about the archetypal not only through individual behavior or the soul within an “individual”, but rather the archetypal character of the world (HILLMAN, 1988). The postulate that archetypes are phenomenal implies a consideration of the archetypal as an adjective and/or qualities of human experience, adopting here a phenomenological attitude towards archetypal experience, in other words, the “stick to the image” (Idem, p. 51).

Furthermore, we must mention that archetypal psychology moves away from an understanding that seeks to rationally “understand” what the archetype “is”, as if we were dealing with an intrinsic quality of things, a “substance” that must be “unhidden”, such as the Kantian “thing-in-itself”. According to Hillman (1988, pp. 22-23) archetypes do not “transcend” the empirical world, on the contrary, they are phenomenal, that is, qualities of human experience that manifest together with the world in their own happening, in its immediate appearance, as a phenomenological perspective, thus considering it as a consequence of an interaction between observer and image (BROOKE, 2009, p. 31; SAMUELS, 1989, p. 74).

As we will see below, Hillman’s relationship with phenomenological thought will be pointed out by several commentators of his work who have stated that Hillman’s archetypal psychology proposal is phenomenological to the extent that he moves away from an apprehension of psychology as a modern and positive science, turning to an understanding of the experience

of the soul from its own language, fantasies and images. In addition, Hillman’s relationship with phenomenology arises, first of all, from the replacement of a “metaphysical” perspective by a phenomenological conception of the phenomenon of the soul (TACEY, 1998). Second, we extract from its central ideas, such as the notion of *anima mundi* and the postulate of a mytho-poetic basis of the psyche, proximities with the phenomenological perspective of Heidegger and Husserl (CASEY, 2016).

### James Hillman and Phenomenology: “Stick to the Image”

In *Twisting and Turning with James Hillman*, Tacey (1998) writes that James Hillman’s post-Jungian “turn” is a direct consequence of the need for a review of Jungian concepts, for a new postmodern context. In other words, the “epistemological unfolding” is a reinterpretation of classical theory from a new postmodern theoretical context marked by diversity, pluralism, multiculturalism, relativism and perspectivism. In this sense, it is not only a matter of a merely “theoretical” change, but rather the emergence of a new conception that moves in a “new” spirit of the time (*Zeitgeist*) (TACEY, 1998, p. 219).

The post-Jungian “new world”, as it will be known, will seek to replace ideas of unity with notions of diversity, the archetypal “knowing” will be replaced by an idea of archetype as “openness”, uncertainty and “not-knowing”. Furthermore, the soul will gain an element of fugacity, the metaphysical and static postures in psychology will be replaced by a phenomenological perspective, by the idea of movement and continuous transformation (Idem, *Ibidem*).

James Hillman’s Archetypal Psychology is a psychology oriented by hermetic postmodernism, referring to the Greek God Hermes, thus being a psychology that replaces nouns with verbs, ideas of substance with “style”, fixation with change, notions of progress and development with an idea of continuous and unending refinement of the soul, the “*soul making*”. In particu-

lar, it is worth mentioning, the replacement of a metaphysical conception in psychology by a phenomenological perspective in the face of images of the soul (Idem, Ibidem).

On the other hand, the presence of a phenomenological perspective in James Hillman will not appear in his work in an objective and systematic way, being only commented and illustrated in some passages. As in *Philosophical Intimations* volume 8 of the Uniform Edition of James Hillman's writings, where Casey (2016) outlines the increasingly notable presence of Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenology in James Hillman's notions and ideas. Describes how Hillman's thought will gradually emerge as phenomenological from its "descriptive subtlety" of the images, from the deep distinction between the images it examines, "carefully describing their likenesses and differences in filigree" (CASEY, 2016, p. 16). In addition, it brings this attentive "listening" closer to images from within themselves to Heidegger's phenomenology as presented in *Being and Time*, pointing to the "stick to the image" motto of archetypal psychology as a call to a phenomenological description of the phenomenon from within itself. In Casey's (2016) words:

His earlier shibboleth, "stick to the image", was already a call to phenomenological description: to the patient delineation of images just as they present themselves, following their lead rather than imposing one's preconceptions on them, presuming to know just how they should appear (p. 16-17).

On the other hand, as Casey (2016) writes, Hillman will give phenomenology, as he understands it, its own "flexion" (the original English term is *twist*), stating that the phenomenologist must pay full attention to the way in which perception, imagination, culture and history present themselves. Hillman will define his own phenomenological attitude as *notitia*, that is, an attitude

of total attention to the qualities of things as they present themselves, in order to form a true notion about things from themselves. In Hillman's own words:

It is a matter of paying attention to things in a scrupulous and solicitous way, picking out their presented features just as they appear. At stake here is a grasping of what is there and of what there is—and doing so without any sacrifice of precision (HILLMAN, 1989, p. 101, apud CASEY, 2016, p. 17).

In this sense, phenomenology, in the way Hillman understands it, replaces the free association of Freud's psychoanalysis, and its prescription becomes an "attention to the world in its immediate presentation", this attention to what is immediately presented is the condition to access the phenomenon in a precise and genuine way, to apprehend what is there, as it appears, thus exploring its deep psychological dimensions (CASEY, 2016, p. 17).

Taking as a starting point that images are *sui generis* activities of the soul and the own psyche manifesting from itself, that is, "the psyche in its imaginative visibility" (HILLMAN, 1988, p. 27). Understanding that images are the primordial data of the soul, then we should not interpret them, give them an "external" meaning to their own presentation. It will be in this sense that archetypal psychology prescribes total attention to the world in its immediate appearance, this is the guideline that underlies its central motto, the "stick to the image".

The archetypal image "has no referent other than itself", it does not represent anything, it cannot be read as signifying anything other than itself. Nothing waits "under" the image to be "uncovered", the image is irreducible (HILLMAN, 1988, p. 27). The image is not a substance, but rather a perspective, the very act of imagining, the way it is seen and not a "thing-in-itself" (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 27). In this sense, the "stick

to the image”, the central motto of what we could call a possible “method” in archetypal psychology, will seek to stick faithfully to the image itself as a possible perspective, as a way of imagining the world and things.

In other words, it can be said that the “stick to the image” will be understood precisely as that attentive and focused description of the image, as that phenomenological attitude of *notitia* elaborates by Hillman himself, as commented by Casey (2016), while an attitude of full attention to the phenomenon in its immediate appearance for an accurate description of its psychological qualities. The “stick to the image” presupposes sticking to one’s own imaginal perspective before any external interpretation of the image itself, just as the phenomenological motto of “back to things themselves” will seek to describe the phenomenon from within itself by placing “bracket out” any judgments and/or knowledge prior to its own appearance (ZAHAVI, 2015);

Ultimately, it is possible to affirm a relationship with phenomenology in Hillman’s thought through the attitude of being attentive, with care, to the things of the world around, thus considering the “stick to the image” as a condition of possibility to deepen the dimension psychology of life. For Casey (2016) it is only with this phenomenological stance towards phenomena that we become psychologically “intimate” with the things of the world. Now, the notion of “psychological intimacy” with things and the world resonates with Hillman’s conception that the world is “souled”. In other words, by “souling” the world, the psyche is not restricted to the interior of the subject, but takes place in the relationship with the world. According to Casey (2016), the concept of *anima mundi* is close to Husserl’s phenomenological conception of the “lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt*), as well as Heidegger’s conception of “Being-in-the-world” (*Dasein*). In the words of Casey (2016, p 17): “With the notion of the soul of the world, phenomenology and depth psychology join forces [...]”.

To illustrate the phenomenological relationship with images and how “stick to the image” appears in clinical practice, we will take an image from a patient’s dream as an example. A. dreamed that he was in an old mansion with “medieval” stained-glass windows that looked like mosaics of different colors. The mansion was completely dark except for the only light that came through those stained-glass windows. The darkness caused in the dreamer a double sensation of anguish, “suffocation” but at the same time mystery.

To put into practice “stick to the image” we must stick to the way images appear in dreams without interpreting their “symbolism”, but rather asking ourselves about the “action” and/or the way in which the dreamer relates to these images in the dream. It should be noted that the dream image is not restricted to the “old mansion” literally, but rather to the entire dream scene, that is, each of the aspects of this imagery scenario, acts, sensations and interactions of the dreamer, must be understood like an image. In this sense, we will take the entire context that involves the dream (including the dreamer’s description) as an image, avoiding an interpretive posture of the meaning “underlying” the image (RUSSELL, 2013, p. 459-460).

The dream image of the old mansion points to something mysterious and enigmatic, the feeling that there is something hidden to be revealed in the dreamer’s psyche. However, as one enters the image, the emotion that emerges from the dark is the fear of what can be found there, the fear of the “unknown”. The few points of light that are limited to medieval stained-glass windows cause a feeling of “suffocation” on him, in addition to the anguish regarding the eminence that there is something in the dark.

The imaginal scenario of the old mansion seems to reflect with some precision the dynamics of the psyche of the patient in question, since he complained of great difficulty in having a spontaneous and creative attitude towards the world and the relationship with others, often



feeling his life as a “blank slate, without colors”. It is important to emphasize that just as the fear of the unknown in the dark generates anguish in the dreamer, the patient A. has episodes of anxiety during the day followed by a deep feeling of meaninglessness and emptiness, especially when he is alone and without “nothing” to do. We can say from the dream image that something remains veiled and/or unknown in the darkness, as he enters this dark place, he is suddenly taken by that feeling of anguish pointing to a difficulty in looking at and/or delving into those mysterious aspects of his psyche.

### **James Hillman and Phenomenology: The Mytho-Poetic Basis of the Psyche**

The “poetic basis of the mind” is a thesis presented by Hillman in 1972 in the *Terry Lectures* at Yale, establishing from this point an inextricable relationship between psychology and imagination. It can be said that the poetic basis of the mind has become a necessity of the very nature of the psyche. It will be in this same sense that we can affirm that a deep and fruitful study in psychology must turn to work with images (HILLMAN, 1988, p. 32).

His starting point for the conception of a psyche constituted of images is Jung, we can affirm that he will follow in his footsteps from two central statements, namely: the statement that “psyche is image” (JUNG, 2002, p. 55); therefore, we should remain “faithful to the image” (JUNG, 2011, p. 33). This double affirmation becomes the central axis of a possible “method” in archetypal psychology, that is, take the image as a starting point and remain faithful to that imagery substrate that constitutes the soul (HILLMAN, 1988).

On the other hand, we have already noticed in his historical-biographical trajectory that Hillman will have numerous contacts with art and poetry, thus gradually building his mytho-poetic and aesthetic perspective of the psyche from there. We can mention here the experience with Van Gogh’s paintings when he was studying lit-

erature at the Sorbonne in Paris, as well as the passion for James Joyce that led him to move to Dublin where he was editor of *Envoy*, a literature magazine (RUSSELL, 2013).

It is also notorious the presence of literature and art, in addition to the reading of philosophers and novelists who deal with the issue of beauty and aesthetics, as a means to establish a bridge between truth and beauty. In his years of study in Dublin, he will have contact with Shakespeare, Plato and John Keats, from the latter he will extract the famous statement found in *Re-visioning Psychology* “Call the world if you like, the ‘valley of soul making’” (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 25; RUSSELL, 2013).

However, if we want to understand Hillman’s postulate of a mytho-poetic basis of the psyche, we will first need to stick to his definition of image as the primordial datum and basic constitution of the mytho-poetic psyche. Images are fantasy data, they are “the raw materials” and, at the same time, “the finished products of the psyche”, as well as a “privileged mode of access and knowledge of the soul” (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 29). The auto-originating activity of images is like an organ of the psyche, that’s what Hillman (2010) calls the soul’s poetic basis, the “imaginative and auto-sustaining substrate”, the “inner place”, the condition of possibility of all subjectivity, experience, ego and/or consciousness (p. 27).

Hillman’s (1988, p. 28) consideration that “the mind is in the imagination rather than the imagination being in the mind”, implies that images constitute the very movement of psychodynamics, that is, they are themselves the configurations of the soul, they the very perspective we call reality. Even our subjectivity is based on the lines of the imaginal, images cannot be reduced to mere “representations” of the world, but rather the poetic substrate of our being in the world.

According to Hillman, a psychology of images will operate a change of *locus* within the psychological discipline itself, displacing it from a per-

spective previously grounded in *logos*, that is, in a type of rationalist, causalist, mechanistic and materialist science, to then ground in *eros*, considering that a psychology of the imaginary starts first from the heart, like “Michelangelo’s *immagine del cuore*” (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 64). By assuming a mytho-poetic basis for psychology, its roots become the heart, emotion, *eros* and imagination, starting from the premise that “imagination is not merely a human faculty”, but rather the source that promotes the creative activity of soul images (HILLMAN, 1988, p. 29).

The image is no longer a mere representation of the senses and becomes a “*sui generis* activity of the soul” (p. 29), the image is not a mere product of “art”, but its very condition, not being subject to an empirical analysis, much less to be programmed, controlled or “interpreted”, since the images are themselves significant and expressive (p. 31). Ultimately, the image must not be reduced to elements, basic structures limited by the consciousness, but rather thought of as essentially poetic, that is, self-creative, spontaneous acts of creation that generate themselves at every moment (p. 32).

If, as we have seen, the image of fantasy, in a poetic/creative act, constantly generates itself, then it is understood that the soul itself is constituted by a creative activity of *poiesis*, as we will find in Heidegger’s poetic phenomenology. The soul creates images all the time, in other words, the poetic imaginary constitutes the very structure of experience, as we will see in Heidegger’s phenomenology, where *poiesis* will be presented as an act of creation of being, that is, a mode of expression of the depths of being and the ‘original’ condition of possibility of its existence (HEIDEGGER, 2007).

As we see in Heidegger’s phenomenology, poetic language, from the Greek *poiesis* meaning the act of creating, will be considered by the German philosopher as an original mode of expression of being, thus poetics a phenomenological perspective par excellence (BROOKE, 2009, p. 21-24; SAMUELS, 1989, p. 82; HEIDEGGER, 2007).

In Heidegger’s conception, poetic language (*poiesis*) is the “dwelling of man’s essence” (HEIDEGGER, 2005, p. 38). In this sense, there is a differentiation between an “every day” language with its value of sign, phonemes, rhythm, syntactic, grammatical and logical structure, and poetic language while, in the words of Heidegger (p. 28): “illuminating-veiler advent of one’s own being”. The poet as a practitioner of *poiesis* becomes the “shepherd of being”, just as the shepherd ‘guards’ the sheep, the poetic saying (*poiesis*) will reveal the being, dwelling between the divine and the mortals, the gods and men (HEIDEGGER, 2005, p. 51).

Poetry is not considered here as an abstract and rhetorical expression, much less a *mimesis*. On the contrary, poetic saying expresses the unspeakable of things, being a profound and authentic way of talking about the reality of man. In this sense, *poiesis* is a project of clarification of the Being of beings, in other words, it makes possible the realization of Being by uncovering it and launching it into the world as a form. Therefore, *poiesis* is related to the truth of beings, it is the project of opening the Being of beings (HEIDEGGER, 2007, p. 58-59).

Ultimately, the poetic language is original and makes possible the unveiling of the meaning of Being. In other words, *poiesis* is in the very essence of language, and the latter, if considered only from its “everyday” function, as a technical and scientific language, becomes “inauthentic”. We see that this same distinction also appears in Hillman, as he proposes a poetic, imaginal and metaphorical language as a condition of possibility to access the depths of the soul, as opposed to a literal, strictly logical and scientific language (HILLMAN, 2010 HEIDEGGER, 2005).

Therefore, a psychology of the image moves away from a causalist, empiricist and/or descriptive type of psychology, adopting in its place a seeing through the “heart” (HILLMAN, 1988, p. 29), that is, a thought of the heart, the name of his work *The Thought of the Heart* of 1981, also corresponding to what Hillman will

name elsewhere as “epistemology of the heart” or “feeling thought”, as a unique way of accessing the images of the soul (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 65). The conception that Poetry is ontologically fundamental to human beings, not only to express their being but also to give them a sense and meaning, as Heidegger (2007) writes, seems to be the ontological basis of an approach that see the soul as originally constituted by a kind of mytho-poetic activity.

### Final considerations

The possible relationship between James Hillman’s archetypal psychology and phenomenology should not be restricted to the points emphasized in this article. However, we demarcate here a possible approach to a phenomenological perspective in James Hillman from two specific points, namely: (1) The central motto of archetypal psychology “stick to the image”, that is, that careful description of the images that aims to rediscover the psychological depth of the world and things, and the possible relationship with the central phenomenological notion of “back to the things themselves”; (2) The postulate of a mytho-poetic basis for the psyche, that is, the conception that a poetic, metaphorical and imaginal language is the condition of possibility to access the depths of the soul, and the possible relationship with the creative act of poiesis as an original mode of expression of the truth of being in Heidegger’s phenomenology.

If the soul is essentially constituted by images and imagistic perspectives, then archetypal psychology will adopt as its motto “stick to the image”, this because, contrary to being an inter-

pretive posture that will seek to reveal a “hidden meaning of the soul”, or even to define what “is” the image substantially, the “stick to the image” has the intention of giving full attention to a description of the images from their own way of being. This attitude towards the images will be defined here as a phenomenological attitude of *notitia* in Hillman that will aim at the precise description of the psychological qualities of the phenomenon from an attention focused on the images from themselves, just like the basic notion of the phenomenology of “back to things themselves” through the “bracketing” (*epoché*) of external judgments and interpretations to the phenomenon itself.

Furthermore, the soul, as understood by Hillman, has a mytho-poetic basis, the images are the original substrate of human experience. Thus, the psyche can only be understood from an equally poetic, metaphorical and imaginal language. It will be in this sense that *poiesis* will emerge as the condition par excellence for the genuine expression of the depths of the soul.

Poetic language (*poiesis*) has its *locus* in the heart, Michelangelo’s *imaginne del cuore*, as a condition of possibility to apprehend its imaginal movement, the becoming of the soul. If only a poetic language is capable of genuinely expressing the imagetic perspectives of the soul, revealing the psychological dynamics of the psyche and its archetypal bases, then a poetic ontology, such as we will find in Heidegger’s phenomenology, becomes a condition of possibility to access the imagery dynamics of the soul.

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## Resumo

### *James Hillman e a Fenomenologia: a base poética da psique*

O principal objetivo desse artigo é refletir e apontar para os possíveis horizontes epistemológicos e ontológicos da psicologia arquetípica de James Hillman ao aproximá-la de uma possível relação com a fenomenologia. Para cumprir com tal intento, torna-se necessário delimitar dois pontos de partida, sendo eles: (1) O lema central da psicologia arquetípica de “ficar com a imagem” (*stick to the image*) e sua possível relação com a noção fenomenológica de “voltar às coisas mesmas”; (2) O postulado de uma base

mito-poética para a psique humana e a possível aproximação com a noção de poiesis tal como apresentada na fenomenologia de Heidegger. A psicologia arquetípica surge em um novo contexto “pós-junguiano” que busca substituir uma atitude interpretativa, unívoca e metafísica, por uma atitude fenomenológica em relação às imagens da alma. A base mito-poética e o “ficar com a imagem”, noções centrais em sua psicologia, constituem a base dessa possível atitude fenomenológica em seu pensamento. ■

**Palavras-chave:** psicologia arquetípica, fenomenologia, epistemologia, poiesis, James Hillman

## Resumen

### *James Hillman y la Fenomenología: la base poética de la psique*

El objetivo principal de este artículo es reflexionar y señalar los posibles horizontes epistemológicos y ontológicos de la psicología arquetípica de James Hillman acercándola a una posible relación con la fenomenología. Para cumplir con esta intención, es necesario delimitar dos puntos de partida, a saber: (1) El lema central de la psicología arquetípica de “adherirse a la imagen” (*stick to the image*) y su posible relación con la noción fenomenológica de “volver a las mismas cosas”; (2) El postulado de una base mitopoética

para la psique humana y el posible acercamiento a la noción de poiesis tal como se presenta en la fenomenología de Heidegger. La psicología arquetípica surge en un nuevo contexto “pos-junguiano” que busca reemplazar una actitud interpretativa, unívoca y metafísica por una actitud fenomenológica hacia las imágenes del alma. La base mitopoética y el “adherirse a la imagen”, nociones centrales en su psicología, constituyen la base de esta posible actitud fenomenológica en su pensamiento. ■

**Palabras clave:** psicología arquetípica, fenomenologia, epistemologia, poiesis, James Hillman

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