Foreword

Imagination is more important than information.
—Albert Einstein

This book on archetypal imagination is critically needed medicine in this world where information engulfs us. It also serves as a dose of imaginative soul to help immunize us against the overwhelming expansion of ego-based information technology. In addition to writing this book, James Hollis has done us a great service by emphasizing in it the universal and ancient roots of imagination, which represent a kind of natural health food available to us, at all times, from within. Hollis challenges us to follow Anthony Storr’s prescription from Solitude: A Return to the Self because it fuels the creative imagination and its spiritual, artistic, and therapeutic manifestations.¹ As Joan Chodorow has written, “Jung’s analytic method is based upon the [innate] healing function of the imagination.”² Jung’s concept of active imagination (the same thing as creative imagination) requires a meditative state in which the ego is relaxed. This state of reverie allows access to the vast inner world of ancient, but living, symbols. Once in this state, a person can utilize wu wei (the Taoist concept of “creative quietude”) in order to begin the process of letting things happen in the psyche, which culminates in a creative product or work of art.³

Imagination is the eye of the soul.
—Joseph Joubert

Being alone (all One) with nature is intricately tied to human imagination and the divine, which is the focus of chapter 1, “Religious Imaginings.” Hollis amplifies Jung’s central archetype of the Self—the
numinous Mystery—which is often experienced as inner or outer light in the abyss of darkness. The archetypal and instinctual soul image is at the core of all religious experiences that transform a life of neurotic suffering into one of hope and meaning. Over and over Hollis reveals how healing and wisdom (that is, spiritual knowledge) occur, and he shows how these are related to symbols of transformation and creative, active imagination.

_An uncommon degree of imagination constitutes poetical genius._

—Dugald Stewart

In chapter 2, “Literary Imaginings,” Hollis utilizes two of Rainer Maria Rilke’s poems from the _Duino Elegies_ to illustrate how words create numinous images that provide divine inspiration and celebrate the awesome mystery of life, love, and death. Rilke writes creatively about all things ordinary and extraordinary. Hollis underscores Rilke’s healing message to “praise this world to the angel.” Rilke knew that the spiritual realm alone is the source of ultimate meaning, and his discovery of that truth lives on through his poetry.

_Everything you can imagine is real._

—Pablo Picasso

In chapter 3, “Incarnational Imaginings,” Hollis leads us to an understanding of the painter’s view of eternity. Hollis singles out Nancy Witt, a contemporary artist whose brilliant and imaginative work depicts a visionary world. Through Hollis’s descriptions, we view the active imagination process of a gifted artist. It is clear that Witt taps into the collective unconscious and our common spiritual heritage. We see and learn about her growth and development, and we are stimulated to develop pictures of our own lives and myths and of what lies beyond our coming deaths.
Shakespeare knew, as did Plato, that love and poetry are kinds of madness all tied to soulful imagination. It follows that psychotherapy and soul are “Therapeutic Imaginings,” the subject of Hollis’s fourth chapter. One of Jung’s greatest gifts was to treasure the creative aspects of mental illness. As Jung did, Hollis emphasizes that the creative spark of soul, in the troubled imagination of the psychologically and psychiatrically disturbed, contains healing qualities leading to recovery and renewal of purpose and meaning. As Hollis carefully outlines, the soul has left modern psychology and psychiatry, and it must be retrieved and rekindled before individual and collective healing can occur. Much of chapter 4 concerns the creative, soulful, and healing doctor-patient relationship. The wounded healer knows how to engage the patient’s problem, honor sacred dreams, and activate imagination and creativity, which all help the wounded patient heal. An encouraging development in psychology and psychiatry is evident by the recent focus on joy, inspiration, and hope and caring for the psyche or soul and its unique, creative, and evolutionary nature.  

Alice Walker has said:

Our shame is deep. For shame is the result of soul injury. Mirrors, however, are sacred, not only because they permit us to witness the body we are fortunate this time around to be in, but because they permit us to ascertain the condition of the eternal that rests behind the body, the soul. As an ancient Japanese proverb states: when the mirror is dim, the soul is not pure.

Art is the mirror, perhaps the only one, in which we can see our true collective face. We must honor its sacred function. We must let art help us.
In response to Walker's profoundly true reflection of our condition, Hollis shows us that the archetypal imagination is the way to spiritual re-awakening, creative products (that is, art), and soulful healing. This book is a lovely and timely gift.

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