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## **Imaginary World as A Subject of “Eranos” Intellectual Group’s Research in the 30 – 80s of the XX Century**

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*The article reviews the main ideas and research issues of the scholars of “Eranos” group. It is based on the works of the scholars who worked on the issues of “imagination” as well as the works of the founders of this research field. These are Marie-Louise von Franz, Henri Corbin, Joseph Campbell and Herbert Read. Some research works serve the example of the development of the theory of imagination in the context of psychoanalysis, religious studies, comparative mythology and art history. “Eranos” group was introduced as an alternative to positivism and neo-positivism in humanities and social studies. According to “Eranos” group scholars, the archaic social institutions (primarily myths, religious signs and symbols) are universal and exist in social structures in their new image.*

*The main ideologist of “Eranos” was Carl Gustav Jung who studied the patterns of the collective unconscious, manifested in myths and religious symbols. Sociology of imagination develops in the second half of the XX century. It is based on the idea of universal social imaginary worlds that predetermine irrational mass social acts, violating rational social structures.*

*Methodological value of social research of collective imaginary worlds is topical for modern Russia, where they search for the ways of the country’s modernization and analyze the causes of counter-modernization, neo-conservative social revolution characteristic of the second decade of the XXI century.*

*Keywords: archetype, imagination, tale, symbol, sociology of imagination, myth, mythological thinking, esotericism, Eranos, mundus imaginalis.*

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The beginning of sociological research of imagination is connected with “Eranos” intellectual group’s formation. The scholars of various fields of research took part in the group’s meetings, Carl Gustav Jung being one of their initiators and inspirers. His ideas were in the center of attention of all the group participants.

It should be noted that the development of the issue of imagination in the West was originally interdisciplinary. It was based on Carl Gustav Jung’s concept of the collective unconscious. In addition, the scholars initially aimed to study religious, mystical esoteric experience of the West and the East and systematize them. In this

regard, a great attention was paid to religious and philosophical views of the Ancient East. The main principles of the theory of the collective unconscious were developed by sociologists, anthropologists, art historians, religious scholars, philosophers, and linguists. The study of archetypes, myths, religion, art were in the circle of interest of both humanities and natural science.

This article reviews the activity of the scholars who studied the issues of "imagination". It also summarizes the main ideas and concepts presented in their works. The works of the scholars in the field of psychoanalysis, religious studies, cultural anthropology, and art history were singled out to determine the entire spectrum of ideas and approaches to the study of imagination.

In the light of this research the works of Marie-Louise von Franz (1915 – 1998), Carl Gustav Jung's colleague and follower, are of a great interest. She developed his ideas in the sense of psychological interpretations of fairy tales, myths, dreams and the alchemists' texts. These are interpretations and comment on fairy tales that most of her research works are devoted to. They are "Psychology of a Fairytale. Interpretation of Fairytales" (1970), "The Cat: A Tale of Feminine Redemption, "Archetypal Patterns in Fairy Tales" (1977), "Escape from Witchcraft in Fairy Tales".

Fairy tales being one of the forms of embodiment of the imaginary world and direct mapping of the collective unconscious, it is worth while elaborating how Marie-Louise von Franz comes to their research and what questions fall within the area of her research interests. She explains her particular interest in fairy tales as compared to myths the following way: fairy tales are clearer archetypal images, whereas myths are associated with the cultural collective unconscious of a particular ethnic group, nation. Myths lose their human features as they belong to a specific culture and reflect the people's national character.

At the same time, myths are more accessible to consciousness; they are easier to interpret as they often contain details giving clues for their more precise interpretation. Nevertheless, the study of myths is important as they can provide better interpretation of fairy tales, indicate their implications. Tales have a universal content to a greater extent. It is the language that everyone can understand regardless his / her culture. The tales contain significantly less cultural overlaying, characteristic of myths: "Fairy tales are beyond culture, beyond racial differences. Thus, they easily migrate. They are a sort of international language for all mankind, for people of all ages and all nationalities, regardless of their cultural differences" (Franz M.-L. von, <http://fb2.booksgid.com/content/17/mariya-luiza-francpsihologiya-skazki-tolkovanie-volshebnyh-skazok/1.html>). The differences between the fairy tale and the myth are even in the fact that in myths the hero's nature is more earthly whereas the fairy tale hero is less human, less emotional and does not change.

Basing on numerous studies and analysis of fairy tales, Marie-Louise von Franz concludes that all the fairy tales describe the same psychological phenomenon – the Self, which is very difficult to understand. This proves the existence of a huge number of fairy tales. The archetype of the Self, according to Carl Gustav Jung's conception, is defined as a self-regulatory psychic activity, supporting the Ego's self-consciousness, its continuity in time. The Self is defined as the image of the purpose of life. She refers to the fact that according to Jung "the Self contains the psychic content of an individual, and, paradoxically, it is a regulating centre of the collective unconscious. Any individual and nation have their own ways of understanding and interacting with this psychic reality. Different fairy tales usually present an average picture of different phases or stages of such interaction" (Ibid.).

Fairy tales have therapeutic healing function as they make it possible to maintain people's conscious attitude in balance. A human feels the need to identify him/herself with the hero of a fairy tale or a myth. It is necessary for him / her to survive with a hope for a favorable outcome projected in such a story. The fairy tale encourages a person, it gives a life-affirming example a person wishes to follow.

In her research Marie-Louise von Franz also considered the issue of femininity in fairy tales. Analyzing such fairy tales as "Sleeping Beauty" and "Vasilisa the Beautiful", she suggests that numerous female characters in them compensate for the lack of manifestations of the feminine origin in religious ideas of the people of Christian culture of the West.

Marie-Louise von Franz gives special attention to the alchemical texts analysis. Her works on this subject are "Alchemy. An Introduction to the Symbolism and the Psychology" (1959), "Alchemical Active Imagination" (1979), "Aurora Consurgens: a Document Attributed to Thomas Aquinas on the Problem of Opposites in Alchemy" (1957). In "Alchemical Active Imagination" she considers the history of alchemical teachings development regarding the conceptions of the collective unconscious and active imagination suggested by Carl Gustav Jung. According to the author's conception, alchemy was divided into two directions – extravert and introvert – from ancient times. The alchemists themselves did not separate the psyche from the substance. If the matter under the analysis was observed by them as if from the outside, extravertedly, then it involved the substance. If the approach was introverted, as if from the inside, it referred to the collective unconscious. Marie-Louise von Franz considers the main motive of the alchemists' activity to be the desire to learn more about the spirit. This relates to the fact of the existence of one's own dreams practice in the alchemical tradition.

She supports Jung's idea that the alchemists could gain new knowledge from the sphere of the unconscious, without belonging to any tradition in their activities. She also introduces the concept of "active imagination" as the alchemists made their discoveries in this process namely. Active imagination implies a conversation with a person's own complexes he / she seeks to embody in his / her imagination and fantasies. Human nature is such that when confronted with the unknown (in this case with the mysteries of nature) his / her unconscious imagination begins to project hypnotic archetypal images. The alchemists meditated on the materials they worked at, and each of them made archetypal actions with the materials, playing and fantasizing with them.

Henry Corbin, a French philosopher and Islamist, was one of the first researchers of the "imagination" issue. The area of his interest was the Islamic philosophy of Sufism and Shiite Gnosticism. The scholars' main works were "Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi" (1958), "The Man of Light in Iranian Sufism" (1961), "The World of Imagination" (1964), "History of Islamic Philosophy" (1964).

Henry Corbin's great attention was devoted to the study of the "imaginary worlds" in the Islamic philosophers' teachings, in particular, in the texts of Sohrawardi, a Sunni Sufi, theologian and mystical insight doctrine founder, Ibn Arabi, a theologian and Sufism theorist, Averroes, a philosopher.

In the article "The World of Imagination" he introduces the concept of "mundus imaginalis" which implies an intermediate world between the material world and the spiritual cognized world. Henry Corbin analyzes an intermediate state between dreaming and wakefulness. He also points out the difference between "imagination" and "the imaginary" in western and eastern (Islamic in this case) traditions. According to him, impossibility to use the word "imaginary" is

associated with the fact that in the western common understanding it implies something unreal which is outside of being, beyond the existence. In the eastern tradition the subject of Henri Corbin’s interest has the status of the real: “This world, fully objective and real, where everything existing in the sensory world has its analogue, but not perceptible by the senses, however. This world is referred to as the “eighth climate”, the eighth region” (Corbin H., <http://www.delphis.ru/journal/article/mir-voobrazheniya>). He analyzes Suhrawardi’s text “The Crimson Archangel” narrating about the space where a visionary is. Another concept comes here. It is the concept of the “land of No-where” (“Nâ-Kojâ-Abâd”) which is both a long space and the space outside. One can enter such a space in a specific way: “It surely cannot relate to a change of local position, a physical transfer from one place to another place as though it involved the places in a single homogeneous space... It is a matter of entering, passing into the interior and, in passing into the interior, of finding oneself, paradoxically, outside, or in the language of the authors, “on the convex surface” of the Ninth Sphere – in other words, “beyond the mountain of Qaf”. The relationship involved is essentially between the external, the visible, the exoteric (Greek *ta exo*, Arabic *zahir*) and the internal, the invisible, the esoteric (Greek *ta eso*, Arabic *batin*), or between the natural world and the spiritual world. To depart from the where, the category of *ubi*, is to leave the external or natural appearances that enclose the hidden internal realities, as the almond is hidden beneath the shell” (Ibid.).

Henry Corbin suggests that Suhrawardi’s texts describe the process of entering into the interior, into the spiritual world, which becomes all-encompassing, containing everything that was previously external and visible. He also briefly describes the existing worlds in the Islamic tradition as well as their corresponding

organs of cognition: the first is sensual and based on senses, the second, being the subject of the scholar’s analysis, is supersensory and based on imagination, and, finally, the third is the universe of pure Archangel Intelligences and intelligence.

Analyzing Islamic religious texts, Henry Corbin formulates the idea that the description of the imaginary world is characteristic of any culture of all peoples.

Henri Corbin distinguishes between “active” (metaphysical) and “passive” imagination (a man’s feelings and experiences which are spontaneously transformed in a dream, have a secondary character in relation to the world of wakefulness, fantasy as free manipulation with the data from external experience is allowed).

He terms the organ, which makes the entry into the “mundus imaginalis” possible, “active’ imagination”. The organ facilitates transformation of internal spiritual states into external phenomena – visions which, in turn, symbolize these internal states. Imagination is a spiritual power, entirely independent of the physical body. Imagination should perceive and reproduce the symbols that lead to inner consciousness; otherwise it does not fulfill its function resulting in spiritual crisis and decline, to what, according to Henri Corbin, the Western world has faced.

In his research “Man of Light in Iranian Sufism” he dwells upon a process of visionary perception in full details: first perception is focused on the images generated by the sensual world, and namely by the organs of sight, then they take a symbolic form by involving imagination. He also develops the conception of the structure of “man of light”, his resources of entering the space of another world. Perception of space by an eastern and western man and a man’s psycho-spiritual three-dimensionality are in the focus of his analysis as well. A day of consciousness is an interval between a light night

of super-consciousness and a dark night of the unconscious.

Henri Corbin also raises the issue of wrong interpretation of the concept "image". He suggests that the true meaning of images is lost in the modern world; their perception is reduced to the sensual level only. The art and imagination of the Islamic world differ from their Western variants since they imply, as the scholar repeatedly emphasizes, the reality of the presence in the other world and the opportunity to speak about this world.

These Henri Corbin's ideas were actively developed by his disciple Gilbert Durand (1929-2012), a French anthropologist, philosopher and religious scholar who studied functions and forms of imagination. Another follower of his theories was Michelle Maffesoli (1944), studying the problems of the imaginary from the sociological point of view. Gilbert Durand, in particular, clearly specified his teacher's concept "l'imaginaire" and introduced the concept of the "anthropological trajectory". He also developed a typology of myths (the myths of diurn, the myths of dramatic and mystical nocturn), associating them with a person's psychological states.

Many members of "Eranos" group studied the myths. For example, Mircea Eliade (1907 – 1986) was interested in the concept of "time" in myths and history, the differences in the perception of time by a modern man and a man of archaic traditional society ("The Myth of the Eternal Return"). He studied the importance of the ritual, compared mythological and religious consciousness ("The Aspects of a Myth"). He also analyzed the relationship between religion and art, focusing on how the works of art perform a mythological function ("Symbolism, the Sacred and the Art").

Another "Eranos" group member, Paul Radin (1883 – 1959), introduced a new term "trickster". It denotes a hero with a contradictory,

dualistic nature and character, one who belongs to the real world and the sacred world at the same time, displays various qualities of human nature, both positive and negative.

It is worth while paying attention to Joseph Campbell (1905 – 1984) who studied myths. In particular, his ideas influenced George Lucas, a creator of a modern myth. His most popular works are "The Hero with a Thousand Faces" (1949), "The Masks of God" (1959-1968), "Myths to live by" (1972), "The Mythic Image" (1974).

In his book "The Myth to live by" he researches a man's psychological feature determined by the fact that he primarily subordinates his whole life to mythological thinking, and only secondarily to economic needs. He analyzes myths and legends, speaking about the danger associated with the loss of mythical thinking: "These are myths on which morals of society are based on; and these are canonized religions that become the religions. Since the impact of science on myth inevitably leads to the loss of moral equilibrium, we should ask the question whether it is possible to prove a life-affirming nature of myths by highly scientific means and, critically weighing the archaic content of ancient legends to avoid false interpretation and myths denial at the same time" (Campbell 2002b). He also dwells on the negative impact of maintaining the dogmatism of the old beliefs, which are not consistent with the data of science, and on the necessity of creating new, modern myths. Joseph Campbell defines the significance of myths. According to him, they help a man to know the inner spiritual world and, at the same time, the world around him / her. "Concentration on one's dreams and inherited myths distracts the mind from the modern world, reinforces the senses and way of thinking which are archaic and unfit for the life nowadays" (Ibid.). That is why he emphasizes the need for the dialogue between the external and the internal by means of symbolic forms.

In this research he relates mythological images with a man's internal spiritual state, his / her consciousness (the myth of Eden). According to his conception, mythology is viewed as the expression to sharp insights. He also analyses the characteristics of the Eastern (Hindu and Buddhist) art and its relation with myths and religious practices.

In his other work "The Mythic Image" Joseph Campbell dwells upon the myth as the macrocosm, and the sleep as the microcosm. It is the myth through which a man feels his / her unity with the world cosmic universe since this is the experience through which he / she is able to develop a sense of personal identity as well as identify his / her individual psychic processes and states with the principles of cosmic order. He argues that myth and dream are of one and the same nature as they both are born from a man's inner world, which consciousness cannot come to know when awake. "Mythic forms can be viewed either as the ones that point outward to the mysteries of universal significance or as function of strictly limited – even ethnic or even personal – characteristics" (Campbell 2002a).

Art critics participating in the conferences of "Eranos" group also touched on the problems of "imagination". Imagination in the field of art was studied by Rene Huyghe, whose works are little-known to the Russian readers. It is worth while mentioning his "Dialogue avec le visible" ("The Dialogue with the Visible") in which he suggests that priority of visual images is characteristic for the western civilization. Works of art have functions that make it possible for a person to communicate with the world.

Similar views can be considered in a more detailed way in the works by Herbert Read (1893 – 1968), an English literary and art critic, poet, art exhibitions organizer. His main works, related to the issue of this article, are "Art and the

Unconscious" (1968), "Art and Society" (1945), "The Meaning of Art" (1968), "The Philosophy of Modern Art" (1952).

In the article "The Dynamics of Art", one of the few translated into Russian, he suggests that art is a form of symbolic conversation, and the work of art relates to the field of visual cognition. "Art is a symbolic form of conversation and its elements are not linguistic, but perceptive" (Read H., <http://castalia.ru/eranos-perevody/1496-gerbert-rid-dinamika-iskusstva-1952.html>).

His view on a personality and an artist's characteristic features are close to Marie-Louise von Franz's and Henri Corbin's conceptions as he compares an artist with a mystic and an alchemist while speaking about their psychological similarity. He writes: "Only the artists, who have a wealth of perception and commitment to expression, are aware of a formal meaning of a certain "constellation" of events in the field of events. Great intuitions come in the minds set in a state of abnormal watchfulness by constant exercise of one's talents. This is a fact that probably explains psychological similarities between artists and mystics" (Ibid.).

He argues about the artist's ability to find a form for imagination. The form, according to Herbert Read's idea, is between a man and nature, and the artist is a person who is able to give nature a form before mastering it. The artist conceives a form. He is capable of seeing nature as a form and feels it as a form. Speaking about the role of art, he claims that it gives a concrete existence that is beyond rational reasoning and that is possible only owing to a certain play of imagination. According to his conception, the artist turns the primary material of the unconscious into the forms of art, that is the art is a path from fantasy, imagination to reality: "Forms of art have their value only till they are archetypical, and in this sense they are predefined; they are vital only as long as they are transformed by the

artist's sensitivity and therefore free. The artist produces these dynamic energies within his own psyche, his peculiar features and virtue being the ability to direct such forces to the matter: he can "recognize" them as forms of stone or metal, space dimensions, intervals of time. In this sense the artist has turned into an alchemist making those "wonderful stones", crystal forms of art from the primary material of the unconscious" (Ibid.).

### Conclusion

Overview of "Eranos" group's major concerns and ideas suggests that the direction of humanitarian studies, associated with the discoveries in the field of psychoanalysis, has been changing since the first half of the XX century. It makes it possible to study a man's inner world previously inaccessible for scientific research. As practitioners the scholars have managed to collect a great amount of factual material. They worked out not only theories but began to study what was no way subject to the analysis and classification before, and namely fairy tales, dreams, myths, and a man's spiritual experience. This is precisely why Carl Gustav Jung's ideas were basic for various subject areas of the Humanities. Moreover, interest in esoteric teachings of the

East, which provided much material for thought and research, became popular that time.

One of the pertinent areas of the scholars' activity at that period is social cognition of imagination. Henry Corbin was one of the founders of this problem. It is he who introduced the concept of "imager". His ideas were later developed in the mainstream of sociology by Gilbert Durand and Michel Maffesoli. It is his works that are fundamental for the development of the holistic sociology of imagination.

Many scholars were one way or another concerned with the issues related to the imagination, studied its various aspects. At the initial stage Carl Gustav Jung's ideas were applied to the research of myths, fairy tales, and religion, the search for points of coincidence. Great attention was paid to the study of archetypes in fairy tales and myths. Marie-Louise von Franz's researches are good examples of this. Later such scholars as Mircea Eliade, Paul Radin, and Joseph Campbell continued their research in the context of ideas of psychoanalysis, but they were also interested in how myth and mythological thinking are formed and exist in real time. They were interested in the possibility of actualization of the world of imagination, study of practices and tools of entering into this world.

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## **Воображаемый мир как предмет исследования интеллектуальной группы «Эранос» в 30 – 80-е гг. XX века**

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*Статья посвящена обзору основных идей и проблематики исследований ученых, входивших в кружок «Эранос». В качестве репрезентативных выбраны труды тех ученых, которые занимались проблемами изучения «воображения», основоположников данного направления исследований: Марии-Луизы фон Франц, Анри Корбена, Джозефа Кэмпбелла и Герберта Рида. На примере некоторых научных трудов представлена разработка теории воображения в контексте психоанализа, религиоведения, сравнительной мифологии и искусствоведения. Группа «Эранос» выступила как альтернатива позитивизму и неопозитивизму в гуманитарных и социальных исследованиях. Ученые – участники группы «Эранос» – полагают, что архаические социальные институты, прежде всего, миф, религиозные знаки и символы, являются универсальными и существуют в современных социальных структурах в новом облике.*

*Главным идеологом «Эранос» был Карл-Густав Юнг, который исследовал структуры коллективного бессознательного, проявленные в мифах и религиозных символах. Во второй половине XX века возникает социология воображения, которая базируется на идее универсальных социальных воображаемых миров, предопределяющих нерациональные массовые социальные действия, нарушающие рациональные социальные структуры.*

*Методологическое значение социальных исследований коллективных воображаемых миров актуально для современной России, где ищутся способы модернизации страны и анализируются причины контрмодернизации, неоконсервативной социальной революции, характерной для второго десятилетия XXI века.*

*Ключевые слова: архетип, воображение, сказка, символ, социология воображения, миф, мифологическое мышление, эзотерика, Эранос.*

*Научная специальность: 24.00.00 – культурология.*

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