Imagination, imaginaire, imaginal. Three concepts for defining creative fantasy

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Abstract

This paper comparatively presents three notions related to the concept of creative fantasy. These three terms (imagination, imaginaire, imaginal) have been developed by the French school of research on the imagination (recherches sur l imaginaire), which is little known in the Anglo-Saxon academic field. As such, the terms don’t even have convenient translations and linguistic equivalents. Briefly, imagination is fantasy conceived as a combinatory faculty of the psyche. French rationalistic philosophes saw it as a misleading and rather weakly creative ability. L imaginaire is the resourceful and inventive aspect of fantasy, as conceived by the Romantics and then theorized by psychoanalysis and contemporary French philosophers. L imaginal, or mundus imaginalis is a concept defined by Henry Corbin in order to designate fantasies as self-sustained, ontological beings.

Keywords

Fantasy, imagination, imaginaire,mundus imaginalis, Plato, Kant, Gaston Bachelard, Gilbert Durand, Henry Corbin

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