

The Retrieval of the Concept of Archetype as an Heuristic Tool for the Sociology of the Imaginary

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This collection of essays gathers together the results of a conference and of nearly two years' reflection in the course of encounters in seminars on this concept. The idea behind the essays came about when, wandering among the deep structures of the social imaginary, we stumbled upon the concept of archetype.

A highly fascinating concept, yet accompanied by somewhat troublesome associations which have, quite reasonably, always kept it beyond the reach of Sociology's toolbox, given the existence of "archetype" wines, "archetype" oils, and of a number of new age groups which have laid hands on this concept in their narrations. Admittedly, certain types of astrological methodologies have applied it in a way very similar to its use suggested by Jung, in the individual psychoanalytical key. In spite of this, we hold that it is a concept which may be usefully retrieved – indeed, some have already begun to retrieve it – as a heuristic lever with which to integrate certain deep dimensions of culture and social behaviour within sociological analysis; no longer, therefore, as an instrument for individual psychic analysis but as an instrument for socio-cultural analysis.

This study is highly innovative, at least in the field of Italian sociology, so we invite scholars who read these pages and find them interesting to contact us to join the debate on this concept, which we hope will prove to be wide-ranging and fruitful.

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