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Preface

Could it be that fantasy constrains the development of science outshining its route and pointing to themes of greatest impact to the collective emotions?

Could it be that fantasy induces human mind to pursue scientific aims considered only hypothetical until a short time ago?

These are only few of the questions we shall consider in the present book.

Recently science and technology had a spasmodic boost opening the way to new aspects of reality, discovering new physical laws and making patent the complexity of the physical world. This complexity is so high that one asks himself how human mind could understand it in all its subtleties. The answer stems from considering that only a system as complex as the human brain can compete with a system of similar complexity as the physical world.

Fantasy is a product of the human brain and as such it shares its complexity. Indeed it is not clear yet how fantasy contributes to the rationality which is at the base of the scientific thought. Although it may appear inappropriate to think that fantasy plays an effective role in the development of the scientific thought, we are convinced that all the notions, concepts and new ideas firstly thought in a fantastic and emotional setting do remain *in the air* as memes, namely as thoughts floating around waiting to be thought. The role of the emotions in generating knowledge has

been widely considered by psychologists, philosophers and scientists so we shall pay particular attention to this in our book.

Here the analysis of all the scientific items which most impressed the scientific community as well as that of the psychologists, has shown a considerable interest of the latter towards whatever arises from the confrontation between the complexities of our mind and those of the physical world.

We would like to dedicate this book to a great scientist in the centenary of his birth, Professor Fred Hoyle (1915-2001). He was a British mathematician, physicist and astronomer who gave fundamental contributions to the physics of the Stars but was also prone to pursue ideas recognized by the scientific community as highly non conventional. He was a science-fiction writer and his enthusiasm did stimulate the scientific community to better appreciate the importance of fantasy in shaping a scientist's personality.