

SIX**THE POWER OF CREATIVITY****Meditation 04: Imagination**

‘Imagination is usually regarded as a synonym for the unreal. Yet is true imagination healthful and real, no more likely to mislead than the coarse senses. Indeed, the power of imagination makes us infinite.’

Naturalist and champion of Yosemite [John Muir](#), *The National Parks and Forest Reservations Sierra Club Bulletin*, v. 1, no. 7, January 1896

Some of us might not think of ourselves as creative, and others of us might struggle to see enthusiasm, or even joy, as an inherent part of our personal makeup. But everyone, surely, knows they have imagination. If people accuse you of having no imagination, it doesn't mean you have none, it just means you don't have the same one as they do. Which is hardly surprising, given that each and every individual human soul on this earth is unique. If you did have the same imagination as them, there'd be trouble.

Our goal is to balance the ecology of the Soul, of which the mind is a part. And imagination resides in the mind. The received wisdom from generations of philosophers and psychologists tends to be that imagination is a bridge between 'unreality', the fantasy of the unconscious, and conscious reality, which is somehow better because it's more real, ie in the physical realm. It is indeed your bridge, but between two sorts of reality – the physical and the non-physical – not reality and 'unreality'. Remember that spiritual and mystical traditions see the non-physical as real, and the physical as illusion.

Most of the time your mind occupies the physical space. You get up in the morning, you lead your daily life; home, family, friends, work, play, getting and spending, eating, drinking, relaxing. You need to pay attention to those physical things; and to more 'cerebral', less physical activities like reading books or newspapers, listening to music, watching TV, having conversations. But all the time you and your daily life are getting on with each other, your imagination is whirring away on a separate track.

There is the idea of separation between the 'reproductive' and the 'productive' imaginations, or functions of the imagination, which goes back to the early days of psychology and appears, for example, in James Rowland Angell's *Psychology: An Introductory Study of the Structure and Function of Human Consciousness*, (1906). Unless I've woefully misunderstood, it is to distinguish between what we would otherwise know as 'visual memory' (we conjure up pictures and experiences of events, things that happened or are about to happen, a sort of re-living) and the more directly creative function which generates all our 'original' ideas, images, words, music, literature, poetry, art, design, architecture. This is the truly imaginative stuff, where people bring things into the world that were apparently never before heard or seen, and that somehow shed light on what we call 'the human condition' – making a stab at the 'meaning of life'.

Which is the part we're interested in, because a) it's the truly creative part, b) that truly creative part is the one with which the majority of people don't identify – they don't see themselves as 'creative', and c) it turns out that the truly creative part is actually not creative at all, in the sense of making something out of nothing, but 're-creative'. I don't mean that everyone who reads this book or begins to achieve balance in their internal ecology will automatically turn into an artist or musician. I do mean that

turning your attention inwards towards your Self (the spiritual, inner, true Self) automatically creates the awareness that enables you to connect to the flow of energy that is ‘dumb life’, and to experience the unique, individual node of ‘smart consciousness’ that is You.

Making that connection, in the early stages at least, uses the imagination. Meditation starts with visualisation, which is another way of saying imagination. You see your Self with the mind’s eye; your imagination is your tool. The real nub of the matter is that you are not imagining something into existence, creating something that was never before heard or seen; you are visualising something that is already there. The more you experience it, the less you will have to ‘productively’ imagine it, because truly experiencing it happens at a level of consciousness below (or above) your mind. In fact, you can’t get there without shutting your mind down, or at least suspending its activity as far as you can.

If you want to take the logical, intellectual route to understand that all the inner power and peace you need to become the balanced, resilient, loveful and joyful individual that you truly are are already there, waiting to be unlocked, consider this. Every human being has an idea of Heaven. The awareness of a place – or a state of being – of peace, happiness, harmony and beauty. We couldn’t come up with such a concept if we didn’t have experience of it at some profound, deeply buried level, way down in the foundations of our awareness.

Which is to say, you can’t imagine what you don’t know, can’t bring into being in your mind something that in some way has not already been part of your own individual or the collective human experience. The relationship between thought and language revolves around a similar idea; you can’t think something for

which the words don't exist. In the realm of imagination, every original idea you or anyone else ever had comes from a combination of what you have done, read, seen or heard, and the accumulated experience of all the generations in human history. In simplistic terms, there's no such thing as a completely original idea. It goes to persuade you, again quite simply, that since you are here working on ways to create (re-create) a more peaceful, powerful You, that peaceful, powerful You has already existed. If it hadn't, you couldn't be engaged in the effort to create (or re-create) it. Give thanks that you have the imagination to show you what's possible.