

## **What Is Imagination? | What Role Does It Play in Our Lives?**

### **What Is Imagination? What Is Its Role in Life?**

You can have anything you want with all the details and any condition. They will be entirely available to you at once, without the slightest modification, even things that seem impossible. Do not be surprised! These are only a few features of the amazing world of imagination. Therefore, the most basic answer to the question “What is imagination?” could be that it is a world where you can get anything you want whenever you wish for it.

What is the position of imagination among the different faculties of the soul? Imagination is lower in rank than estimation and intellect; however, it is the broadest form of perception. It does not have the limitations of intellectual perception and does not follow any rules. For example, we can imagine something that is impossible to exist from an intellectual perspective, like a ball of water suspended in the sky, or a tree with its roots up in the air and its branches down on the ground, or a river that goes up the mountain instead of flowing down. Whatever we desire in the world, regardless of whether it is rationally possible or not, comes into existence in our imagination.

In order to have a comprehensive answer to the question “What is imagination?” and examine the role and position of imagination in different levels of our existence, we have to say that the imaginal faculty is at a higher level than the sensitive faculty, and as it is more distant from matter, it is more delicate than sense perception. When we see something, we form an image of it in our mind that does

not fade away even when we close our eyes; we still remember it, like the conversation we had with our friend the other day, the elegance of a touched petal, the taste of the food we love, or the scent of a flower that makes us feel good when we smell it.

In fact, imagination is the image of something we have had a relationship with through one of our senses. Even though our connection with that sensory form has been cut off, the image still exists in our mind and can actually be remembered. Imagination is like the kitchen of our soul. We imagine things that we cannot access in real life, mix different imaginal forms, and in the end, we enjoy what we have created in our imagination. In the world of imagination, we fly, take up roles, become heroes or children, grow old, and so on.

What is the focus of your imagination? In fact, our answer to this question and the types of our imagination are what determine our value and show the extent of our inner growth.

### **The Mechanism of Imagination**

As we briefly mentioned in the answer to the question “What is imagination?” our imagination takes on the qualities of the things we are most related to.<sup>1</sup>

According to the old saying, nothing comes out of the sack but what is in it. We also manifest the same things we have created for ourselves in the world of imagination; besides, the imaginal forms we nurture in our minds also depend on

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1. "Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind", Roger Scruton, St. Augustine's Press, South Bend, Indiana, 1998.

2. Quran, 54:49

the general mood and feelings we have. For example, there are times when controlling our behavior gets difficult because we let our lust or anger get the hold of our imagination. Just as sensory forms are the input to our soul, imagination is also absorbed in the soul, and like a photo that imprints on the sensitive screen of a camera, it imprints on the screen of our soul and affects it.

We feed not only on our imagination, but constantly on all the input to our soul, and our growth depends on the value and usefulness of what we feed on. However, since everything in this world is precisely measured,<sup>2</sup> our sensate, imaginal, and estimative dimensions are in due measure and proportion as well. If our soul is fed excessively in these aspects, the lower self and animalistic aspect will overcome our *fitrah*.

Imagination is useful as long as it acts as a step that brings us closer to the beloved of our human dimension, and as an entrance to peace and lasting happiness; otherwise, the faculty of imagination would be nothing but a way to escape from the truth of life and a place for futile and fruitless fantasies. When imagination goes beyond its limits, it turns us into people who live in our fantasies, fall in love, climb the ladder of achievement, fight, or make peace. In the end, the truth of our life will be as low and small as these false fantasies.

### **Imagination, Our Driving Force**

Each dimension of our existence has needs which are in harmony and compatible with it. Just as sensory forms pair with our sensate dimension, imaginal forms pair

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<sup>2</sup>. "We have created everything in a determined measure." (Quran, 54:49)

with our imaginal faculty. In fact, imaginal forms are the things that our imagination desires and finds peace in them.

The other answer to the question “What is imagination?”: It is a driving force that can help us get through tough times and motivate us to move forward on the path of growth. For example, if we have a difficult exam ahead, what motivates us to try and keep moving is to imagine the day when the difficulty of work is over and we see the outcome of our efforts. In fact, imagination magnetically draws us towards itself by creating an image of the future. Moreover, there is a golden rule related to imagination and the proper way to use it: We will not desire something unless we arouse a passion for it in our hearts. To create this passion, the first step is to make our mind and heart get involved in the dream of reaching it, and this is not possible except by imagination and mental imagery.

In this article, we answered the question, “What is imagination?” and talked about the scope, power, role, and importance of our imagination. We explained that by creating desire and enthusiasm, positive imaginations can lift us up on the path of growth, and on the other hand, negative imaginations can drag us to a standstill and stop us from moving. If we focus too much on our imagination, it will be out of balance and our lower self will overcome our *fitrah*, and in such a case, we will definitely stop reaching our main beloved.

If you are interested in obtaining more information about other levels of the human soul, you can read the article, “[What Is Estimation? Its Relation to Illusion and Its Role in Life.](#)”