

Imagination

Reality leaves a lot to the imagination. **John Lennon**

What is now proved was once only imagined. **William Blake**

A rock pile ceases to be a rock pile the moment a single man contemplates it, bearing within him the image of a cathedral. **Antoine de Saint-Exupery**

One day Gandhi stepped aboard a train as it started to move, and one of his shoes slipped off and dropped on the tracks. Unable to retrieve it, he calmly took off his other shoe and threw it back along the track to land close to the first. When an amazed passenger asked why he had done that, Gandhi smiled and said, 'The poor man who finds the shoe lying on the track will now have a pair he can use.'

With the eyes of his imagination, Gandhi saw a man with bare feet, saw him coming across a lone shoe and desperately searching for the other, and saw the disappointment on his face when he didn't find it; seeing these things, Gandhi did what he could to help.

By virtue of the imagination, things can also be presented with a certain depth. The imagination produces things as a synthesis of both meaning and presence. It does not merely reproduce things as "bare facts." The imagination creates new perspectives for the facts it has found. It gives them a "background," a "landscape." It presents the world as related to the human, as touched by the heart and mind. **Gerald J. Bednar**, Faith as Imagination

Reading is not as passive as hearing or viewing. It's an act: you do it. You read at your own pace, your own speed, not the ceaseless, incoherent, gabbling, shouting rush of the media. You take in what you can and want to take in, not what they shove at you so fast and hard and loud that you're overwhelmed. Reading a story, you may be told something, but you're not being sold anything. And though you're usually alone when you read, you are in communion with another mind. You aren't being brainwashed or co-opted or used; you've joined in an act of the imagination. **Ursula Le Guin**

If you always imagine God in the same way, no matter how true and beautiful it may be, you will not be able to receive the gift of the new ways he has ready for you. **Carlos Valles**

So you see, imagination needs noodling — long, inefficient, happy idling, dawdling, and puttering. **Brenda Veland**

Getting your imagination captured is almost the whole of life. The minute the eyes of your heart are enlightened, the minute your imagination gives you the picture of your path, your goal, your aim — it is as good as done. The way to become the architect of your fate, the captain of your soul, is to have your imagination captured. **Rufus Jones**

A big stone on a deserted beach is a motionless thing, but it sets loose great movements in my mind. **Joan Miro**

While reflecting on these bounties, we can try to understand the greatest threats to human flourishing today are wealth inequality, environmental degradation, and dogmatism. Imagination is the “ancient operating system at the root of cognition and culture.” According to Asma, it forges and expands actions in everything from hunting to performing to athletic activities and to conversation. It resuscitates perception and action and serves as a workspace to foster valuable behaviors, tools, and narratives. **Stephen T. Asma**, *The Evolution of Imagination*

The soul without imagination is what an observatory would be without a telescope. **Henry Ward Beecher**

We all have an obligation to daydream. We have an obligation to imagine. It is easy to pretend that nobody can change anything, that society is huge and the individual is less than nothing. But the truth is individuals make the future, and they do it by imagining that things can be different. **Neil Gaiman**

The thinking mind is best controlled by the imagination. **Carson McCullers**

A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination. **Percy Bysshe Shelley**

I believe in the goodness of imagination. **Sue Monk Kidd**

There is the strange power we have of changing facts by the force of the imagination. **Virginia Woolf**

I believe in the power of the imagination to remake the world, to release the truth within us, to hold back the night, to transcend death, to charm motorways, to ingratiate ourselves with birds, to enlist the confidences of madmen. **J.G. Ballard**

You can't depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus. **Mark Twain**

For Reflection and Discussion

A Do any of these quotes especially speak to you? If so, consider sharing or journaling your reaction and reflections.

B Was imagination prized as you were growing up? In what ways was it nourished and discouraged?

C Are there action items that occur to you as you think about the role of imagination in your life?

D How does your experience of All Souls affect your understanding and experience of imagination?

—Mary Beth Hatem, for covenant groups at All Souls, Unitarian (DC)