

Imagination

“Imagination is the image-making faculty that allows us to see and experience things that aren’t ‘immediately present to the senses’” (Arthur 42)

“The human mind is capable of forming mental images of things not actually present. The faculty of conceiving the images is...naturally called Imagination.” J.R.R. Tolkien *On Fairy Stories*

Imagination as “image making”

Genesis 1:26 – Humanity made in the image of God

- Living markers – representatives
- Endowed with the power to create

Genesis 2:19-20 – The creative authority/power of humanity

Colossians 1:15 – 17 – Jesus Christ is the “image of the invisible God”

- “For by him all things were created...”

Imagination - Reflects our being made in God’s image

- Therefore is represents an important place of connection between humanity and God...
- Our ability to create – to construct meaning

Imagination as Creativity

“The characteristic common to God and man is apparently that: the desire and the ability to make up things.” (Dorothy Sayers – *The Mind of the Maker*)

“We ‘image forth’ our ideas, giving them substance and structure through various creative mediums, including language, art, and even scientific experiment. We incarnate thought into form so that others can see what we see.” (Arthur 46)

Imagination as the “minds eye”

“The imagination is not somehow divorced from reason or the intellect: it’s one of the primary ways we learn...It includes the ability to ‘see’ what isn’t physically present, but this inner sight is a way of knowing and understanding in its own right”

“The unique path to knowledge taken by the imagination can be articulated as the ability to both discover and create relationships linking otherwise unconnected experiences, images, or ideas.” (Arthur 47-48)

Imagination as the “organ of meaning”

C.S. Lewis – “For me, reason is the natural organ of truth; but imagination is the organ of meaning.” (From *Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare*)

“A young person can have at her fingertips all kinds of theological truths or facts, ideas or abstract statements – in short, the correct content of faith – but unless that content is also identified with concrete images or experiences...abstractions will have little real meaning for her.” (Arthur 50)

“To put it bluntly, without imagination engaged in helping her process what a truth means, she doesn’t fully embrace it.”

C.S. Lewis – “Fairy Stories”

Commenting on the writing of his Narnia series:

“I thought I saw how stories of this kind could steal past a certain inhibition which had paralysed much of my own religion in childhood. Why did one find it so hard to feel as one was told one ought to feel about God or about the sufferings of Christ? I thought the chief reason was that one was told one ought to. An obligation to feel can freeze feelings...

“Fairy Stories” continued...

But supposing that by casting all these things into an imaginary world, stripping them of their stained glass and Sunday school associations one could make them for the first time appear in their real potency? Could one not thus steal past those watchful dragons? I thought one could.” (Of Other Worlds: Essays and Stories 37)

Tolkien – Fairy Stories and Recovery

“Recovery (which includes return and renewal of health) is a re-gaining – regaining a clear view. I do not say ‘seeing things as they are’ and involve myself with the philosophers, though I might venture to say ‘seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them’- as things apart from ourselves. We need in any case to clean our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity – from possessiveness.”

“...We say we know them. They have become like the things which once attracted us by their glitter, or their colour, or their shape, and we laid hands on them, and then locked them in our hoard, acquired them, and acquiring ceased to look at them.” (Tree and Leaf 77)

G.K. Chesterton

Chesterton says that **imagination is the most essential element in education**, and it is the most important product of education. If we learn to use our imaginations, it gives us a certain freedom and self-sufficiency and contentment. "The man who can make up stories about the next-door neighbour will be less-dependent on the next day's newspaper." People who neglect their powers of imagination become both passive and restless. They rely on something else to entertain them, something else to occupy their minds. They are unable to do it themselves. Chesterton says that a society that pays others to dance for them is in a state of decadence. Soon we are paying others to think for us. (Emphasis mine)

<http://www.dappledthings.org/advent05/feature.html>

Chesterton - Orthodoxy

"Granted, then, that certain transformations do happen, it is essential that we should regard them in the philosophic manner of fairy tales, not in the unphilosophic manner of science and the 'Laws of Nature'. When we are asked why eggs turn to birds or fruits fall in autumn, we must answer exactly as the fairy godmother would answer if Cinderella asked her why mice turned to horses or her clothes fell from her at twelve o'clock. We must answer that it is magic."

“...we all like astonishing tales because they touch the nerve of the ancient instinct of astonishment. This is proved by the fact that when we are very young children we do not need fairy tales: we only need tales. Mere life is interesting enough. A child of seven is excited by being told that Tommy opened a door and saw a dragon. But a child of three is excited by being told that Tommy opened a door...This proves that even nursery tales only echo an almost pre-natal leap of interest and amazement. These tales say that apples were golden only to refresh the forgotten moment when we found that they were green. They make rivers run with wine only to make us remember, for one wild moment, that they run with water.”

“We are all under the same mental calamity: we have forgotten our names. We have forgotten what we really are.”

“Because Children have abounding vitality, because they are in spirit fierce and free, therefore they want things repeated and unchanged. They always say, “Do it again”; and the grown up person does it again until he is nearly dead. For grown up people are not strong enough to exult in monotony.”

“But perhaps God is strong enough to exult in monotony. It is possible that God says every morning ‘Do it again’ to the sun; and every evening ‘Do it again’ to the moon. It may not be automatic necessity that makes all daises alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them...The repetition in nature may not be a mere recurrence; it may be a theatrical encore.”

Stanley Hauerwas – Resident Aliens

“Christian ethics arise, in great part, out of something Christians claim to have seen that the world has not seen, namely, the creation of a people, a family, a colony that is a living witness that Jesus Christ is Lord.” (p. 72)

“We have learned that Jesus’ teaching [specifically the sermon on the mount] was not first focused on his own status but on the proclamation of the in breaking kingdom of God which brought an end to other kingdoms.”

“The sermon on the Mount begins as an announcement of something that God has done to change the history of the world.”

“The Sermon is the inauguration manifesto of how the world looks now that God in Christ has taken matters in hand. And essential to the way God has taken matters in hand is an invitation to all people to become citizens of a new Kingdom, a messianic community where the world God is creating takes visible, practical form.” (p.87)

“Nowhere in the Sermon are believers encouraged to abandon this life or the world. Rather, we are to see the world aright, to grab hold of the world wisely.” (87)

- Seeing the world from the perspective of Christ's resurrection!

“Which helps to explain our earlier assertion that ethics is first a way of *seeing* before it is a matter of doing. The ethical task is not to tell you what is right or wrong but rather to train you to see.”

Our “educational task” is about training young people to see the world from the perspective of Christ’s resurrection.