

Imagination

What is it?

It seems to be a faculty that enables us to create mental scenarios or models of reality, especially as projections of what might take place in an imaginary future - a sort of mental time travel. Or it enables us to abstract from actual situations and arrange a version of reality in our heads. Saying that, we could almost declare that *all of* our mental perception is imagination since it is modified in various ways by each person according to their own mental apparatus, their capacities, life experiences and how these in turn have conditioned us to perceive reality in certain ways.

Why do we need it?

To me it seems to have developed as a means for survival and helps account for our success as a species. This ability to abstract important features from reality; to investigate possible outcomes mentally, find and weigh up better strategies and then reapply them cooperatively to our actual situation is so advantageous for us. Not only that, but to be able to re-iteratively remember and record results of actions not only greatly enhances our survival chances - it improves our quality of life exponentially above that of other species on this planet.

What can go wrong when we use it? Does it need to be disciplined, tamed, by reason and logic?

To my way of thinking this imaginative faculty has become too powerful. It is so good at imagining and rehearsing different mental scenarios that it goes too far. We become too immersed in our imaginings and become separated from what is actually going on in the present. The imagined landscape becomes preferable and more attractive than what is happening in the the present, even though it might be endless repetitive, fruitless, mind churning. Indeed, the present is seen merely as a means to a future that is imagined to be more enjoyable. Meditation and other spiritual practices help us to see through this propensity for daydreams and mind chatter and to restore life to a more beneficial perspective and one of equilibrium.