



The art of living and imagery

Everything we do in life is driven by its image. The inner world of images is the playing field of our motives, desires, possibilities, and obstacles. With imagery, you can learn to navigate your inner world and access vital life resources. Art of living is to be in touch with your vitality and creative abilities and proactively apply these in the world in which you live.

The Art of Living

The art of living is managing your many selves. On the one hand, this means 'coordinating' everything that influences and touches you from within. On the other, it means dealing with whatever confronts you in the outside world, such as the circumstances in which you live; your family, relationships, and work; society, and the time in which you live. In the deepest sense, the external world is a (hidden) part of you, the terrain that belongs to you, in which your qualities and creative skills can flourish.

The first stage in the art of living is getting to know your inner world. Imagery is an excellent method for this. In the second stage you start to coordinate the different needs, talents and drives that live within you and begin to experience and express these different psychobiological energies in a balanced way. Once a firm center is established within yourself, your talents and creative abilities can mature. Clearing blockages or inhibitions is, of course, an essential part of this 'coordination' process. Imagery is an excellent means for this as well.

About imagery

The capacity to imagine is not something that is learned, but something we all have, it is innate. After all, imagining is what people constantly do, just like breathing. It is a core function of the psyche and continuously determines our behavior and experience. Every action, every new development is driven by its image. Advertisers, influencers in every field, and good teachers use imagery all the time. With it, you can consciously and purposeful use your imaginative capacity for your personal development and give meaning and direction to your life.

Just as in our solar system where the sun gives us life, so inside each of us there is a source of self-reinforcement and realization. This can also be compared to the roots and trunk of a tree from which branches, leaves and fruit continue to grow, if given the chance.

In the third stage of imagery we realize that our inner world and the outer world spring from the same source, and that we have the extraordinary possibility to create qualities and skills from this source.*

The mystical stage of imagery

The vital creative source within us is universal, we have all got it and at the same time it is our deep connection to everything that exists, from 'the other' to every stone and drop of water, but usually that's a secret for our 'normal', limited consciousness.

The more we consciously make deeper contact with our experience of the inner and outer world, the more we will experience the primal ground of existence, the immortal Self, and realize there is nothing else than absolute being, all else is like the flickering of the shadows on the walls of our cave (Plato). It is only when we come out of the cave that we perceive the true source, the sun.

In a way every image is like a ray of light. Once we really connect with an image and accept it, even if it represents a terrible, negative experience at first, it will bring us a core quality of life, which we can master and use for the benefit of ourselves and the world we live in.

Benefits and pitfalls

There are lots of rewarding benefits to be gained with imagery. But there are also pitfalls. If a firm psychological center is not developed enough in the person (I-strength; first and second stage of imagery), excessive flooding of the consciousness may occur causing disruptive effects on the person's well-being.

Also, when imagery remains merely a cognitive or emotional experience without any positive practical integration into everyday life, it can even have negative effects in the person's life and block personal development.**

As a means of developing the art of living imagery is a painstaking but rewarding enterprise. It requires an open mind, a willingness for instance to encounter also 'unpleasant' psychic parts and it requires proactive action in the external world with what is gained. Above all, going through the stages of imagery is a tremendous fascinating process, because in its deepest sense every image, whatever the sensory or intuitive form, sprouts from the source of life.

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* Read more about the stages in [The Three Stages of Imagery](#).

For more examples of imagery processes with illustrations: [Course book Imagery Toolbox](#)

** Oettingen, G & Mayer, D . (2002) . The Motivating Function of Thinking About the Future: Expectations Versus Fantasies . Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, vol . 83, 5, 1198-1212.