

## ON IMAGINATION

Lewis Carroll wrote “Imagination is the only weapon in the war against reality.”

**Proposition (1)** The idea, that “Imagination is the only weapon against the war on reality “, (or that others imagine “Imagination permits escape from reality”) can be considered incongruous and untenable propositions. Certainly, there are realities we can escape using the tools of imagination-language-beliefs...but I imagine only some: “not all”.

I treat the term “reality” as a semantic variable—an algebraic “X”...a symbol representing an unknown to which each one of us gives our individual ‘values’, significance, and meanings. Not knowing what Lewis Carroll intended when he used the term “reality”, the propositions below are based on the meaning I have given to this term following Webster’s Collegiate—The totality of real things and events; and the term “real”...”occurring in fact”--which I translate to “that which exists”. But to avoid interminable argumentation, as much as I can, I use the words “realities”, or “a reality” instead of “reality”. (From this perspective, a mirage seen in the desert is a reality...not the same kind of reality as actual palms and water--but as an existence, also a reality.)

**Proposition (2)** Our indiscriminate, uncritical use of words, is often a source of many of our irresolvable problems at personal, societal, and international levels. We can attribute this to the fact that “we naturally identify”. “We generally forget that “A word, a symbol, an idea, a definition, an explanation, an assumption, our imagination, etc., as forms of representation, are not the things, situations, happening, etc., they are about.” Consequently, ambiguity and conflicts arise when we identify (do not recognize, or distinguish as being different) what our imagination is about, and what’s going on in the outside world. Towards achieving higher levels of intelligence and sanity, it suits us to distinguish (not identify the products of our imagination as being the same as outer realities. (Read Alfred Korzybski’s “Science And Sanity”, Chapter XXVI. General Semantics “Principle of non-identity”: No two things are the same in all respects (popularized as “The word is not the thing.”). Strictly speaking: As an aspect of change: A thing at time (1) is not the same thing at time (2)

**Proposition (3)** If imagination occurs, it qualifies as a reality. As a reality, imagination cannot be used as a weapon against reality (or realities)--all that exists...as this would include imagination being at war against imagination.” (This would be like using reasoning as a weapon to wage a war against reason.) I also contend that “imagination”, if accepted as part of reality, does not “permit escape from reality”. Where would it escape to? And if it escaped from one center of operation there are billions of other active centers.

**Proposition (4)** A part of a system, organization, institution, society, etc., can wage war against another or other parts of the system...but it cannot wage war against all the parts...while still a part: The emergence of “a war-raging part” of a system would change the system to one with a war-waging part engaged in waging a war against a system that now includes a war-raging part. (Imagine a part of a broom sweeping the whole broom clean.)

**Proposition (5)** If imagination, a part of realities, was used as a weapon against realities this would include a war against itself. To win such a war, imagination would have to wipe itself out...and leave realities with no imagination. But imagination cannot destroy all existing instances of imagination. A war against realities by one of its members (imagination ) leaves realities intact if the war did not eliminate imagination. Imagination lacks the power to destroy ‘itself’.

**Proposition (6)** If we think-imagine imagination as a function of neural processes, we can expand imagination to be an active process at both neural-unconscious and conscious-psychological levels. As a great deal of our imaginings takes place automatically and usually non-consciously--We are generally not aware how pervasive--how much the activity “imagination” normally operates as an ongoing function of our living. With higher levels of attentiveness, we could be more aware that not only in music, literature, and art, but also that a great deal of our living (including our dreams (awake or asleep)) involves imagination. Imagination is active in most of the things we do. The trio “imagination-language-beliefs” is at the core of our myths, our religions, psychologies, philosophies, sciences, technologies, historiography, anthropologies, politics, and many of our human problems...

**Proposition (7)** Imagination is active in our sensing, feelings, thinking, believing, remembering, theorizing, judging, explaining, trusting, the meanings we give, or think words, things and situations have. Imagination is active in our search for ‘the Truth’, when we fall in love, make plans, judge and decide on actions to take. Imagination is an integral feature of our fears, concerns, and anxieties. Imagination is involved, when in our communicating with ourselves, others, and the world around us, and in our efforts to make sense of things, we advance propositions, make assumptions, create theories, imagine possible and probable developments, make predictions, hope for a better (more satisfying) future, assert knowledge, and so on. Fake news, and advertisements, both products of imagination, stimulate imagination: Their effectiveness depends on the unrestrained, non-critical, identifying activity of the imagination of readers and viewers. As ‘drivers’ and ‘pedestrians’ we expect-imagine-believe (usually non-consciously) that others will respect regulations. We bring reading material to situations where we expect to wait. Becoming more aware of ourselves expecting

**imagining, believing, we become more humble, less cocksure, less trusting, and more attentive.**

**Proposition (8) With the powerful semantic tool composed of the trio of imagination-language-beliefs, we complexify and simplify, build and destroy, create and endeavor to resolve problems our imagination-language-beliefs-and related actions this combination creates. With our imagination, we non-consciously confuse, harass, amaze, and amuse ourselves. Our imagination-beliefs-and language infect and affect our attitudes, values, biases, prejudices, and related behaviors. The trio constitutes a natural source of our problems at intra-personal, interpersonal, societal, national and international levels. As we generally imagine ourselves more as thinkers and creative beings...not ‘imagingneerers’ (semantic engineers), we tend to pay little attention to imagination and the important part it plays in most aspects of our living. Towards achieving more satisfying relationships, it suits us to be more aware of the trio as an “in between” what’s going on, and what we make of what’s going on—including meanings we give, or think things have, and “the Truth”, which determine to some degree, our attitudes, and our ways of interacting-and inter-relating with ourselves, others, and a world of innumerable realities.**

**In a world where as far as we know everything is in interactive relationships, the myths of freedom and equality (products of our imagination) have not been, and might never be verified in realities in the world outside our heads. Towards better human relationships (interpersonal, societal, national, and international), it suits us to recognize the tremendous power of imagination. We find evidences of this power in our acceptance of, and belief in these myths...a belief that has led us over centuries, to persistent, unrelenting, undeviating, undeterred, delusional search, to achieve equality, freedom, justice, find ‘the Truth’, meanings, (and other products of our imagination). Our delusional search has generated attitudes, activities, conflicts and violence-- and in general “poor personal, societal, national and international relationships”. This semantic reality, presents us with an intractable challenge: “How do we employ imagination as a tool we can use to go about finding “a satisfying balance” between restraining our very fertile imagination, and allowing its natural free ranging!?”**

**Proposition (1,9) Based on the above overview: There are some realities we have escaped and can escape, using the tools of imagination-language-beliefs...but I imagine “only some: “not all”. The idea, that “Imagination is the only weapon against the war on reality “, or that “Imagination permits escape from reality” (a reality that includes imagination), can be considered incongruous, untenable, and probably, “unverifiable propositions”.**

**Milton Dawes/19**