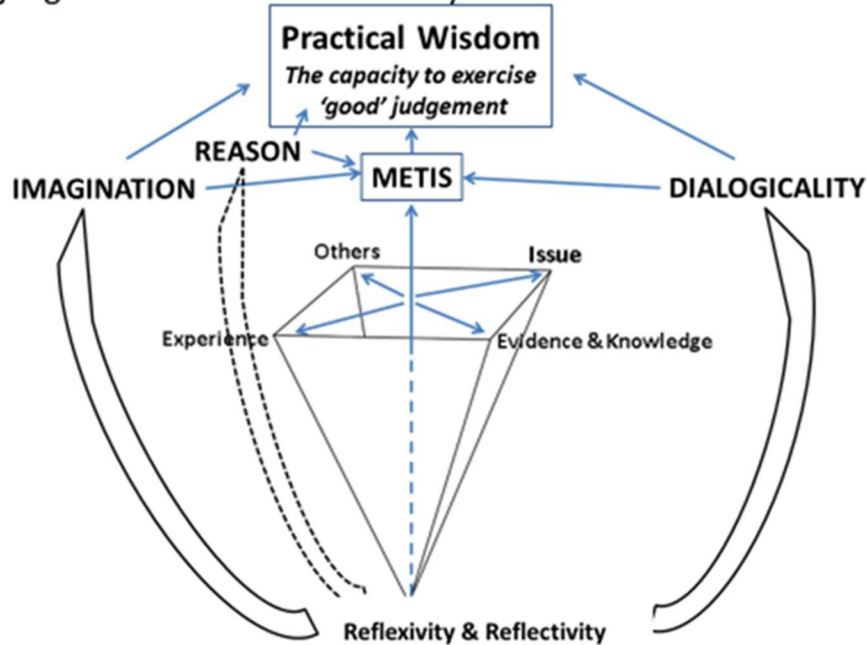


The Capability of Imagination – Reading 1

The capabilities are the cognitive and collaborative skills that are required for the development and exercise of practical wisdom, and the making of good judgements – they are Reflectivity, Reasoning, Dialogue and Imagination. Here we talk about imagination.

To judge is not to act in habit or by 'rule'- but to choose to choose!



"Imagination is not a ...power added to consciousness, but it is the whole of consciousness as it realises its freedom" (Sartre)

"Logic will get you from A to B. Imagination will take you everywhere." (Einstein)

In the history of western thought, the imagination has been seen as performing such a wide range of different functions that it is doubtful as to whether we should understand it as a single faculty of mind.

To be imaginative is not to be creative – to be creative is to craft ideas from ones imaginings. To be creative, to have ideas, one has to have imagination – but it is only a necessary capability not a sufficient one for creativity. To create, to ideate, is to have productive imaginings.

Imagination has been termed the missing mystery of philosophy. Philosophy is all about pursuing mysteries and pursuing them vigorously, but the mystery of imagination has received far less demystifying attention than many other topics. This is surprising given how fundamental it is to our humanity, but not surprising given the difficulty of nailing down this remarkably elusive cloud.

We can imagine what is absent, unreal or even absurd, and so it would appear to grant us almost unlimited conceptual powers. Yet it also seems to inform our perception of what is present and real and everyday – it permeates the most basic levels of our daily lives. As Michael Beaney says *"Imagination infuses so much of what we do, and so deeply, that to imagine its absence is to imagine not being human"*

Many in evolutionary psychology strongly agree and see the roots of our imaginative capability in our natural selection driven capacity to collaborate. They talk about us 'reading other minds' in our imagining of the thoughts and probable actions of others when we are attempting to collaborate with them. It can be argued that this evolved capability underpins our capability to 'identify' with other human beings and

‘empathise’. Our imaginative capability is quite possibly why we survived as a species, and might very well underpin our moral sense!

So what does it mean to imagine? As ever in philosophy this is the foundational debate – from which the following arises - *‘Imagining’ means thinking of something that is not present to the senses [that may or may not be true or existent]; thinking which, in being called ‘imagining’, indicates a lack of commitment to the truth or existence of what is thought of by the person calling it such”.*

We can imagine everything from what is going on in the mind of our competitor’s CEO to the shape of the glass on her desk and the random antics of the billions of water molecules therein, as well as those of some of her staff. We can imagine a future founded on an imagined past – a past that might or might not have happened or founded on nothing at all.

We can imagine everything & anything – but the operative word is CAN. We have the skill but we must also have the will, and we need to be strong willed if we are to fully and usefully exploit this most amazing of our human gifts.

To exploit it to its fullest we must liberate our imaginative capacity from the many cognitive shackles that have slowly ensnared it since our childhood - **reflexivity** is the foundation of wisdom and the **first step to creativity**.

We must seek diversity of perspectives as it provokes our reflexivity and the friction of dialogue can light a fire of creative conversation.

We must be disciplined in giving our mind time and space to wonder, wander from the path and see what others may never have seen - we must be disciplined in our exercise of ill-discipline.

The graphic consists of a dark blue rectangular background. At the top left, a purple speech bubble contains the quote: "If you change the way you see the world, you will change the world you see". Below this is a portrait of Satya Nadella, a man with glasses and a dark shirt, resting his chin on his hand. Below the portrait is the text "Satya Nadella – Microsoft CEO". At the top right, another purple speech bubble contains the quote: "What everyone **knows** about a business/industry/market is an opportunity for everyone that does not know". Below this is a portrait of Steve Jobs, a man with glasses and a dark shirt, also resting his chin on his hand. Below the portrait is the text "Steve Jobs 1955-2011" and "Apple". In the center of the graphic is a light gray rectangular box with the text "Reflexivity is the first step to creativity" in blue, with "Reflexivity" and "creativity" in a larger font size.

"If you change the way you see the world, you will change the world you see"

Satya Nadella – Microsoft CEO

Reflexivity is the first step to creativity

"What everyone **knows** about a business/industry/market is an opportunity for everyone that does not know"

Steve Jobs 1955-2011

Apple