



# Imagination, Fantasy and Reality: A Look from Child-Adolescent Psychology

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### Editorial

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**Abbreviations:** CNS: Central Nervous System.

### Editorial

The main objective pursued by this succinct essay is to establish the articulation between imagination-fantasy-reality with the support of the theoretical-conceptual and methodological tools provided by Child-Adolescent Psychology, a branch of psychological science that studies the laws, categories and principles in which structure the psychic and spiritual life of the «dwarf princes», who -according to the Apostle- «are the ones who know how to love» and «know more than it seems».

However, linking these three concepts necessarily implies defining imagination, fantasy and reality from the perspective of this discipline of neurosciences and social sciences. Imagination is a higher creative process, which makes it easier for the individual to handle information generated from subjectivity in order to create a representation that comes through sensory experience [1].

Fantasy is a false or distorted idea, story, thing or perception of reality, which only exists in the cerebral convolutions of those who imagine an event or situation that does not exist in the outside world [2]. On the other hand, reality is the linguistic term that expresses the abstract concept of the real, that is, the sum or aggregate of everything that exists within a system, perceived as a dialectical relationship between the whole and the parts, as opposed to what is only the result of imagination or fantasy. From a philosophical perspective par excellence, [3] is everything that exists objectively, that is, independently of human consciousness, and is conceived as a subjective

(intrapsychic) reflection of the event or situation registered by the Central Nervous System (CNS) of the homo sapiens.

According to the theoretical-conceptual and methodological indicators in which the human personality is structured, imagination and fantasy are located in the cognitive sphere, which -like the affective-spiritual and conative spheres- configures said psychological category. For orthodox psychoanalysis, [4] these «additions» are part of the Freudian unconscious [5] where -in the spiritual component- the best and most beautiful of the generic man is found, that is, what brings him closer to the Divine Being that we carry inside, while that -in the instinctive component- the worst and most abject of the individual is located, that is, the «Steppenwolf» that -according to the laureate writer Hermann Hesse (1877-1962), Nobel Prize for Literature in 1945- is hidden in the most primitive regions of the human brain.

The pedagogical doctrine supported by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) [6] conceives fantasy as a character disorder, since it makes it difficult for the child -in the age of bio-psycho-socio-cultural and spiritual development- the possibility of concentrating their attention and interest in real objects, although I must clarify here and now that -in no way- I can endorse this criterion: completely «cancel» the «magical world of children's fantasy», which is inherent to that privileged stage of the cycle vital human, and that, in the adult, would be equivalent to «eliminating» or «silencing» the child self that caresses and sweetens our inner world.

According to this pedagogical conception, the mind travels through the «realm of fantasy» and deviates from its normal function; in this context, there is no control over «mistakes», there is nothing to coordinate thought, since it is impossible to pay attention to real things and everything that can be derived from it, such as creative thinking, which

usually characterizes the intellectual and spiritual work of professionals in science and culture. First of all, one must begin by admitting a truth that does not need to be demonstrated: inner life must be built on the basis of the real world, since if as psychologists or educators we manage to focus children's attention on real things and make that reality accessible and attractive, we will be able to motivate the child, and also, concentrate their attention and interest in those activities that facilitate their integral development as a social and individual being.

### What, then, is the Link Between Imagination-Fantasy-Reality?

Global and emotional intelligence develops on the basis of a critical analysis of the reality that is perceived, and that -as is obvious- only happens through direct contact with the real, objective world, which requires of subjectivity to be reflected in the human brain; or with other words, the objective and the subjective integrate philosophical and psychological categories, which are in an intimate dialectical relationship, because they are presupposed, they are not excluded, and therefore, they cannot be separated or divided, as some authors have claimed.

Reality is perceived through the senses, it is what identifies the cerebral cortex, since the visual sense of an infant in the first stage of development can be easily deceived by images that show fantasy as if it were something real; Hence, in order for the child to build his mind on solid foundations, he must have real experiences perceived through the senses.

On the other hand, many adults hold the mistaken belief that they contribute to developing children's fantasy by teaching the «little ones at home» to accept as real facts, objects or situations that are only distorted reflections of the outside world.

This false belief increases and reinforces with the excessive use of the small screen and digital technology (Internet, mobile phones) before the age of six. In this regard, Dr. Susan R. Johnson [7] establishes the correlation between the general sensory impairment suffered by the child and the deficit in psychomotor development, which affects the ability to concentrate, when exposed -indiscriminately- to the small screen, the Internet and mobile phones, just to cite the most significant examples.

A «little prince» who lives in a «fantastic world» is constantly scattered, «manufactures» non-existent worlds or situations, away from concentration and feeds false perceptions that lead to a distorted reasoning of reality, which -of course- makes it difficult or hinders the intellectual,

emotional and spiritual development of the child.

Based on the above approaches, which I accept because they are supported by scientific evidence, one must intuit the fact that the boy who uses his imagination to create or seek solutions to problems in his environment is a supposedly healthy person, and one must do everything possible to keep that imagination alive, since that is where creativity is born and grows, which plays a decisive role in the intellectual or other work that, as a man or woman, will develop in the not too distant future.

For child and adolescent psychologists, imagination is a power of the mind that makes it possible for «Ismaelillo» to venture beyond what is visible or concrete, which opens the doors to creation, in its broadest sense. Imagination is part of reality, since it helps us to create, awaken the mind and nourish the spirit. On the contrary, for the followers of the line of pedagogical thought traced by Dr. Maria Montessori regarding the subject at hand, fantasy is dreaming, and from it, we cannot create, even if it allows us to «fly, dreaming» or «building castles in the air», with our feet not well placed in existential reality.

Motivated by Marti's aphorism that «a child inspires me with two feelings: one of tenderness, for what he is, and the other of respect, for what he may become», our task as adults is to help the child write his personal legend, as well as fostering the right environment that seeks to guarantee not only his bodily integrity, but also to protect his psyche and soul, because-from positions consistent with humanist psychology- we defend the indissoluble unity of body-mind-spirit [8].

An education, based on this psychological principle, and based on reality, prepares the individual to face life with self-confidence and spiritual strength. I would not like to finish these reflections on the imagination-fantasy-reality interaction, without first expressing my opinion about these three essential elements, which-in no way- should be perceived as «isolated pieces» of a «puzzle», but rather as an all dynamic and functional, in which its three fundamental components play an indispensable basic function in the sociocultural context in which the «sovereign of creation» moves.

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