Mind, Body, and Soul: A Spiritual Perspective on the Entrepreneurial Imagination

Todd H. Chiles1, Brett Crawford2 and Sara R. S. T. A. Elias3

Abstract
We develop a spiritual perspective on the entrepreneurial imagination, addressing imagined futures in this “conversations and controversies” section on entrepreneurial futures. Specifically, we blend heterodox ideas from various yoga traditions, experiential sources of religion, and the work of poet-mystic William Blake. These diverse sources echo related ideas in a coherent way—uniquely embracing both transcendence and immanence, both mind and body. We structure our argument around the latter binary, making connections to spirituality and entrepreneurial imagination in each domain. We begin with the mind, acknowledging imagination as a mental act. Specifically, we explore the conscious, unconscious, and spiritual mind. We then turn to the body, recognizing imagination’s bodily basis. In particular, we investigate the corporeal, sensory, and spiritual body. Before offering some concluding thoughts, we discuss implications for entrepreneurial imagination with a focus on walking meditation (and contemplative practices of walking more generally) as one potentially fruitful way to engage mind-body-spirit and the forward-looking entrepreneurial imagination.

Keywords
contemplative practices, entrepreneurship, imagination, imagined futures, mind-body-spirit, spirituality, walking meditation

1Robert J. Trulaske Sr., College of Business, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO, USA
2Seidman College of Business, Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI, USA.
3Peter B. Gustavson School of Business, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada

Corresponding author:
Todd H. Chiles, Robert J. Trulaske Sr., College of Business, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211, USA.
Email: chilest@missouri.edu
We welcome the opportunity to be “in conversation” with Grimes and Vogus’s (in this issue) anchor paper on possibilistic thinking in the context of responding to grand challenges. Our paper, by contrast, focuses on the entrepreneurial imagination in the broader context of creating opportunities regardless of their size or scope. (See Appendix 1 for an overview of our conversation with Grimes & Vogus’s paper.)

We also appreciate the chance to engage with Sarasvathy’s (in this issue) paper, which offers an “even-if” approach that addresses “the extraordinary possibilities of ordinary imagination.” Our paper, by comparison, is open to both the exceptional and the prosaic imaginings of entrepreneurs.

Imagination is a vital wellspring of entrepreneurship (Chiles, Vultee, Gupta, Greening, & Tuggle, 2010). It originates novel ideas that ultimately lead to new products, organizations, and industries. It envisions customer desires, drives entrepreneurial action, and fuels economic development. More generally, it generates perpetual novelty, widespread heterogeneity, and substantial instability in disequilibrium entrepreneurial processes. Moreover, in keeping with the theme of this “conversations and controversies” section, it looks to the future (i.e., the imagined future)—even as it draws inspiration from the past and makes our world moment to moment.1

Despite imagination’s fundamental role in entrepreneurship, we know surprisingly little about it (Kier & McMullen, 2018). Many—including award-winning articles on creation theory (Alvarez & Barney, 2007)—sidestep it completely. Others invoke imagination, but frequently as one aspect of broader entrepreneurial decision-making (Sarasvathy, 2001), sense-making (Cornelissen & Clarke, 2010), sensegiving (Cornelissen, Clarke, & Cienki, 2012), resource positioning (Dolmans, van Burg, Reymen, & Romme, 2014), and aesthetic and relational (Thompson, 2018) processes. One might add Grimes and Vogus’s paper to this litany, as they draw (lightly) on imagination in relation to the focal possibilistic thinking process. Our own work has explored entrepreneurs’ forward-looking subjective imaginations from radical Austrian (Chiles, Bluedorn, & Gupta, 2007; Chiles, Tuggle, McMullen, Bierman, & Greening, 2010; Chiles, Vultee, et al., 2010; Chiles, Elias, Zarankin, & Vultee, 2013) and aesthetics (Elias, Chiles, Duncan, & Vultee, 2018) perspectives, but, again, only as one facet of broader processes in organizations and markets.

By contrast, Kier and McMullen (2018) provide a rare in-depth look at imagination—or, more precisely, what they term “imaginativeness.” Because Kier and McMullen (2018, p. 2285) explicitly position their study in the mechanistic worldview2 (Pepper, 1942), however, their investigation of “the cognitive skill of imaginativeness” remains at a distance from the actual phenomenon of interest: the entrepreneurial imagination. As such, it fails to directly investigate the focal phenomenon (Mintzberg, 1979). Moreover, nearly all entrepreneurship research (including Grimes and Vogus’s paper, Sarasvathy’s paper, and much of our own work) is biased towards conscious mental processes and disembodied action (but see Elias et al., 2018)—leading Kier and McMullen (2018, p. 2285) to conclude that “future research may benefit from broadening our understanding of the unconscious, embodied, and sensory nature of imagination.” To pursue such an agenda, entrepreneurship scholars suggest adopting other worldviews—moving beyond the familiar organismic worldview, which shares some assumptions in common with mechanism, to embrace less familiar worldviews, such as contextualism, that share none (Chiles, Elias, & Li, 2017; Vultee, Chiles, & Elias, 2021).

In this paper, we take up the call to explore these largely neglected aspects of the entrepreneurial imagination and do so by anchoring our argument in a far-from-mechanistic worldview. The spiritual perspective we adopt may surprise many academics. But it would resonate with a number of practitioners: Hard Rock Cafe’s Isaac Tigrett, Aetna’s Mark Bertolini, and Apple’s Steve Jobs come quickly to mind. Before starting Apple, Jobs—“the ultimate icon of . . . imagination” (Isaacson, 2011, p.
xxi)—took a spiritual journey to India, got deeply into Zen Buddhism, practiced meditation as a path toward enlightenment, used psychedelic drugs to raise his consciousness, and read numerous books on spirituality. What Jobs learned from these spiritual pursuits deeply influenced his work—from his ability to tune out distractions and focus intensely, to his love of simplicity and minimalism, to his preference for Eastern intuition over Western rationality. These qualities, in turn, influenced Apple’s products, which offered users a “techno-Zen experience” (Isaacson, 2011, p. 496). Our spiritual perspective attempts to put such entrepreneurial practices, qualities, and experiences into a broader conceptual framework featuring the entrepreneur’s mind, body, and spirit and how this trio affects their forward-looking imagination.

We follow the eclectic approach of prominent spiritual authors Ram Dass, Aldous Huxley, and Alan Watts (Osto, 2019). Specifically, we blend ideas from classical and nondualist yoga traditions; experiential sources of religion such as near-death, out-of-body, and psychedelic experiences; and the work of Romantic poet and anti-establishment prophetic figure William Blake. While we draw from diverse sources, they echo related ideas in a coherent way. Moreover, we draw on (primarily) literal examples to illustrate the concepts under discussion. In doing so, we take to heart the admonition of American poet Marianne Moore, who—in the spirit of Blake—urged her fellow poets to become “literalists of the imagination” and create “imaginary gardens with real toads in them” (Moore, 1920)—in other words, to give the body its due in the creative process.

We add to the emergent discussion at the nexus of entrepreneurship, religion, and spirituality (Balog, Baker, & Walker, 2014; Busenitz & Lichtenstein, 2019; Smith, Conger, McMullen, & Neubert, 2019). Consistent with Miller’s (2015, p. 276) claim that “[e]ven organizational research on religion and spirituality. . .largely has. . .left unchallenged the prevailing norm of secularism in scholarly research,” we found the literature at this nexus dominated by secularism: “an ideology expressing Enlightenment reasoning.” Such reasoning reflects the mechanistic worldview (Neubert, 2019), which is problematic for studying the entrepreneurial imagination, as noted above, and ill-suited to investigating spiritual phenomena, as many argue (Hugenot, 2016; Kripal, 2018). Accordingly, we eschew this complex of secular assumptions, Enlightenment reasoning, and mechanistic approaches, which has long limited our understanding (Miller, 2015; Neubert, 2019). Instead, we adopt spiritual assumptions, Romantic imagining, and decidedly non-mechanistic approaches. By doing so, we break with Grimes and Vogus’s and Sarasvathy’s adoption of secularism, and instead embrace “sources of inspiration, motivation, and explanation rooted in faith or spirit that could broaden our ‘seeing’” (Neubert, 2019, p. 253).

The literature at this nexus covers significant ground, from the entrepreneurial actions of religious organizations (Tracey, 2012) to the religious beliefs and behaviors of entrepreneurs (Neubert, 2013) to the relationship between entrepreneurs’ spiritual or religious values and a host of outcome variables such as motivations and attitudes toward entrepreneurship, responsible business behavior, and firm creation and performance (Balog et al., 2014). This literature, however, emphasizes transcendence to the virtual exclusion of immanence; it has little to say about the human body, and even less to say about the human imagination. Two recent articles have made important progress on this last point: Smith et al. (2019) by sketching how religious beliefs can influence entrepreneurial action via imagination, and Ganzin, Islam, and Suddaby (2020) by exploring the role of magical realist thinking in future-oriented sensemaking. Both articles, however, invoke transcendence (while neglecting immanence) and highlight cognition (while ignoring the human body). We, on the other hand, embrace both transcendence and immanence, both mind and body.

Our paper unfolds as follows. First, we structure our argument around the themes of mind and body, making connections to spirituality and
entrepreneurial imagination in each domain. Although our spiritual perspective views mind and body as thoroughly intertwined (e.g., yoga’s prakriti), we tackle them separately to explore their particulars. We begin with the mind, acknowledging imagination as a mental act. Specifically, we explore the conscious, unconscious, and spiritual mind. We then turn to the body, recognizing imagination’s bodily basis. In particular, we investigate the corporeal, sensory, and spiritual body. Second, we discuss implications for entrepreneurial imagination, with a focus on walking meditation (and contemplative practices of walking more generally) as one potentially fruitful way to engage mind-body-spirit and the forward-looking entrepreneurial imagination. Finally, we offer some concluding thoughts on a number of issues that have narrowed the field’s scope and kept scholars from fully exploring phenomena as fundamental to entrepreneurship as imagination and imagined futures, and how our spiritual perspective provides one possible way forward.

Mind, Spirit, and the Entrepreneurial Imagination

We begin by exploring three conceptions of the mind. Specifically, we journey from the well-traveled conscious mind to the lightly trodden unconscious mind to the completely uncharted spiritual mind in the field of entrepreneurship. Our exploration takes us into progressively deeper and subtler aspects of the mind, ever closer to the divine in each of us (Cope, 2007; Bharati & Ashram, 2019). Throughout, we make connections to spirituality and the entrepreneurial imagination.

Conscious mind

Much attention has been devoted to entrepreneurship as a cognitive activity, focusing largely on the conscious mind. The same holds for entrepreneurial imagination. Research from a radical Austrian perspective—which highlights “forward-thinking entrepreneurs who use their subjective expectations to create mental images of an unknown future” (Chiles, Tuggle, et al., 2010, p. 12)—provides an example. This perspective is grounded in the work of economists Ludwig Lachmann and George Shackle. We focus here on Shackle, whose work on “temporal foresight” or “forethought” (Stark, 1962) provides an opening for spirituality in entrepreneurial imagining. We then extend our argument to William Blake, whose work fundamentally embraces both spirituality and imagination.

Shackle (1979) spotlights choice as the origination of an imagined future that the entrepreneur, at the time of choice, considers within the realm of possibility: “The Imagined deemed Possible” (p. 2). Concerned that the word origin may not faithfully convey something that is created at least partly ex nihilo (p. 2), i.e., “out of nothing” (p. 4), Shackle “adopt[s] the word beginning, in a sense rather like that of the first sentence of King James’s bible, to mean a taking-place or an entity which in some respects owes nothing to the past” (p. 54). Thus, Shackle’s entrepreneur—like God, who in the beginning created the heaven and the earth—is “engaged in filling a void, the void of time-to-come, by an exertion of originative power of an extreme kind, the imaginative genesis of history” (p. 79). Such “uncaused causes,” so central to the entrepreneurial imagination (Shackle, 1979; see also Chiles et al., 2007; Chiles, Tuggle, et al., 2010; Chiles, Vultee, et al., 2010), are decidedly antithetical to the dominant mechanistic worldview, which demands an antecedent for every cause: everything must come from something; nothing can come from nothing.5 Not surprisingly, the originative imagination that interests us here rarely appears in the entrepreneurship literature, which has a strongly mechanistic tilt. Kier and McMullen (2018, p. 2268), for example, strip Shacklean imagination of its originative power,6 associating it instead with “everyday choice and reason.” While Shackle (1979) did not deny reason, he gave it a more limited, supporting role. And rather than everyday choice, Shackle (1979, p. 53) stressed originative choice in an
extreme sense, with its “essentially unaccountable beginnings.”

Shackle (1967, p. 27) argues that such beginnings—in which entrepreneurs freely create and continually recreate opportunities to inject genuine novelty into the entrepreneurial process (Chiles, Tuggle, et al., 2010; Shackle 1967)—“derive from some unexplained and essentially unpredictable inspiration.” We contend that such inspiration includes divine inspiration—a notion broadly consistent with Shackle’s (1979, p. 49) point that beginnings not only defy explanation, but also operate beyond “natural laws.” While not typically discussed in connection with entrepreneurship, the concept of divine inspiration as a source of novelty has long been associated with artists, musicians, and poets. Shackle (1979, p. 65) singles out “poetic” qualities as the most important in the entrepreneur’s toolkit. “What he needs of the poet’s psychic endowment,” Shackle (1979, p. 65) argues, “is imagination.” In other words, the psychic qualities of the poet give entrepreneurs a distinct way of thinking that features the imaginative pursuit of what can be.

In Western culture, the figure of the divinely inspired poet, popular during the Renaissance but eclipsed by Enlightenment rationalism, saw a rebirth as Romanticism burst onto the scene in the late eighteenth century. A key figure in that rebirth was William Blake (1757–1827). Although known today chiefly as a poet, Blake was also a painter, a printer, an inventor, and—despite his aversion to the world of commerce (Blake, 1988, p. 625)—something of an entrepreneur (Cantor, 1996). Blake was among the earliest and most radical voices of the Romantic movement to challenge Enlightenment assumptions about rationality—assumptions dominant in Blake’s time and that remain dominant in entrepreneurship studies today. In doing so, Blake sought to expand the boundaries of rationality by embracing a visionary mode of thought that featured the human imagination.

On imagination, Blake shared much in common with Shackle: (1) he integrated imagination with reason—the former taking the lead role, the latter a more limited, supporting role; (2) he conceptualized imagination as primarily prospective, rather than associating it with memory and retrospect, as many of his contemporaries did; and (3) he argued that the business of imagination is “to Create” (Blake, 1988, p. 153), including the emergence of genuine novelty, which he saw as central to the creative process (Dawson, 2013).

On spirituality, Blake was far more explicit. Imagination, which Blake called the “Poetic Genius,” is divine; hence his use of the term “Divine Imagination.” The imagination is God; and the work of art, which God creates through the artist in us all, is His incarnation. True artists, according to Blake, are visionaries in any field who labor to bring their unique visions to life. Steve Jobs, who saw himself as an artist, is an iconic example (Isaacson, 2011). Austrian economist Huerta de Soto (2010, p. 43) provides a picture of the entrepreneur that echoes Blake’s picture of the artist: If we assume a God who created the world from nothing and define entrepreneurship as “an ex nihilo creation of pure entrepreneurial profits,” it follows “that man resembles God precisely when man exercises pure entrepreneurship.” Thus, Blake’s artist is not merely divinely inspired, a ubiquitous idea in the Romantic period; the artist is divine. God is neither “up there” in the heavenly ether nor “out there” in the natural universe, but rather “in here,” residing in each of us in the form of imagination. Through this immanent divine force, entrepreneurs envision and actively create new ideas that challenge current thinking, new products that upset existing markets, or, more dramatically, new worlds that supplant old ones. Importantly, there is only one cause: the imagination. The “Poetic Genius,” Blake (1988, p. 39) wrote, “was the first principle and all the others merely derivative.” As the “Spiritual Cause” of every “Natural Effect” (Blake, 1988, p. 124), the imagination is originative: that is, it creates what did not previously exist.

Even at the level of conscious activity, then, the entrepreneurial mind appears to encompass a spiritual element that remains little understood through traditional approaches. This element is fundamentally originative. We have seen this in Shackle’s entrepreneur who makes originative choices to create imagined futures and in Blake’s artist who engages primarily
prospective visionary thinking that features the imagination as the origin of ideas and artifacts. Although both the Shacklean poet-entrepreneur and the Blakean artist-entrepreneur consciously employ imaginative thinking, the spiritual element largely tacit in the former receives full-throated expression in the latter. We have endeavored in this section to give voice to this tacitness and to share this expression with our colleagues by bridging a structural hole that separates diverse literatures. Doing so, we believe, enriches our understanding of entrepreneurial imagination and its forward-looking nature. In the next section, we dive deeper into the entrepreneurial mind and its connection to imagination and spirituality by exploring its unconscious dimension.

**Unconscious mind**

The unconscious mind is rarely invoked in the mainstream entrepreneurship literature, which tends to focus instead on phenomena that are more readily operationalized and quantified. Not surprisingly, little is known about unconscious processes in relation to the entrepreneurial imagination. While Shackle (1979) made passing mention of the unconscious, Blake firmly embraced it—as his references to “the Abyss,” the “fathomless void,” and the creature Urthona, typically described as “dark” and whose “forge is in the deep dens or caves [of the unconscious]” (Damon, 1988, p. 426), attest. In particular, Blake is concerned with creating a world of imagination from the materials of the unconscious, with enabling the products of the imagination to emerge from the unconscious impulses of the abyss (Dawson, 2013).

Even more to the heart of what interests us here, Blake’s writings on the “Divine Imagination” amount to a “theory of emergence” about how the creative unconscious mind’s latent impulses become manifest in works of art, broadly defined (Dawson, 2013, p. 67). Such a theory resonates with action painter Jackson Pollock’s (2013, 23:29) “basic conviction that the unconscious was where art came from.” It might also help explain country music legend Hank Williams’s songwriting process: Asked how he wrote his “sad songs,” Williams reportedly replied, “I don’t write ‘em, I just hang on to the pen and God sends them through” (Burns, 2019, Ep. 3, 1:20:21). A Blakean theory of emergence would add to our understanding of a research topic (emergence) situated at the intersection of spirituality, religion, and entrepreneurship (Busenitz & Lichtenstein, 2019), inviting entrepreneurship scholars to put both the “Divine Imagination” and the creative unconscious front and center in their research on emergence.

We suggest, consistent with literature outside entrepreneurship studies (Bronk, 2009; Claxton, 1997; Dyer, 2012), exploring the interaction between unconscious processes and the divine/creative imagination. Unconscious or partly unconscious emergent processes, such as dreaming, meditation, yoga—or even such contemplative activities as fishing, walking, or taking a shower—are widely recognized for releasing the grip of thought, opening a space where “the stream of ideation is free to drift, by its own emotional gravity, as it were, in an apparently ‘lawless’ fashion” (Koestler, 1964, p. 178). Our proposed approach would examine the role of these processes in shaping the imaginative experience of entrepreneurs.

Consider entrepreneurial dreaming—a phenomenon frequently reported in media accounts of entrepreneurs but rarely addressed in the entrepreneurship literature. Blake’s most original entrepreneurial idea—his invention of illuminated printing—came to him in a dream. For several years, Blake had searched in vain for a method of drawing his designs directly onto copper plates, until one night his brother, who had recently died, appeared in “a vision of the night” and provided him with the answer (Gilchrist, 1863, vol. 1, p. 69). As near-death-survivor-turned-doctor-of-engineering-turned-spiritualist-and-medium Alan Ross Hugenot (2012, 2016) observes, dreaming is an important means by which the dead (i.e., disincarnate spirits) and the living (i.e., divine beings having a human experience) can communicate across the veil that separates the spiritual and physical...
worlds. Perhaps even more profound are the notions of dreams as messages directly from God (Claxton, 2006), such as those Hard Rock’s Isaac Tigrett (2009) claimed his avatar-guru, Sathya Sai Baba, delivered; and precognitive dreams that foretell the future (Kripal, 2018)—a process facilitated, according to celebrated mycologist and entrepreneur Paul Stamets (2017, 2:05:20), by the psilocybin mushroom experience, which can serve as a “portal . . . into the multiverse” where time and reality change in inexplicable ways. These ideas and examples could provide a helpful starting point for future research into the largely neglected topic of entrepreneurial dreaming—one that underscores the role of both spirituality and futurity in such experiences.

The approach we suggest would also investigate the divine/creative imagination—which Blake wholeheartedly embraced not only in the words and images of his art, but also in his everyday life and work practices—and how such imagination and unconscious dreaming work together to create novel ideas and artifacts. While we don’t know the details of Blake’s imaginative forethought or how his divine/creative imagining interacted with his unconscious dreaming, we do know the morning after the aforementioned dream he bought the necessary supplies and invented the new technique of relief etching (Bentley, 2001). This revolutionary method of printing allowed Blake to publish his books quickly and inexpensively, in his own studio, without the need to hire typesetters or go through the time-consuming process of engraving. Here, as a continuation of Blake’s “vision of the night” story from above, we encourage researchers to explore the divine/creative imagination as part of any future work on entrepreneurial dreaming. In the following section, we turn our attention to the deepest level of the entrepreneurial mind: the spiritual mind.

**Spiritual mind**

The spiritual mind is uncharted territory in entrepreneurship research generally and research on the entrepreneurial imagination specifically. To ease our way into the depths of the entrepreneurial mind, we begin with some examples. Country music’s Ricky Skaggs reported hearing “calling-of-the-deep” voices repeating, “simple life, simple life, simple life,” which led him to reimagine his entrepreneurial career and “take it back to the front porch” (Burns, 2019, Ep. 8, 1:32:23). Isaac Tigrett (2009) received “broadcasts” from Sai Baba with “messages” that helped him solve problems at the Hard Rock Cafe and beckoned him to India, where he saw a “love all, serve all” sign in the guru’s ashram that would become the guiding words of his business. While Skaggs connects these communications with imagination and Tigrett with the (incarnate) divine, Blake, as we have seen, made no such distinction; for him, the imagination was itself divine.9 Voices, whether from the depths of the soul or from distant beacons, are thus utterances of the “Divine Imagination.”

Hearing such voices is viewed by some as a “psychological oddity” that should be weeded from the scholarly garden—despite nearly a quarter of the population experiencing them regularly or occasionally (Claxton, 2006, pp. 10–12, 42). Others, however, embrace such “oddities” as their stock-in-trade. Take Jeffrey Kripal—a religious studies scholar at Rice University, student of Hindu tantric mysticism, and disciple of William Blake. Kripal (2018) is intrigued by “primal spiritual encounters—the weirder, the better.” In addition to precognitive dreaming and hearing voices, examples include near-death, out-of-body, and psychedelic experiences. Importantly, Kripal (2018) is not interested in established religion, but rather “in the experiential sources of religion—in religion before it becomes religion . . . in anomalous events or extreme experiences that form the basis of various religious ideas.” Thus, Kripal’s work—like ours—centers more on the spiritual than the religious.

One topic Kripal (2017, 2018) takes up uniquely contributes to our understanding of the spiritual mind: Mind at Large. The term was coined by Aldous Huxley (1894–1963)—a prominent writer, psychedelic spirituality pioneer, and follower of both Eastern mysticism
and William Blake—but the idea behind it had intrigued others before him, including William James and Henri Bergson. Shortly after experimenting with the spiritual potential of mescaline, Huxley (1954) described his psychedelic experience and articulated the concept of Mind at Large in his Blake-inspired *The Doors of Perception*. Contrary to Huxley’s expectation that mescaline juices up the brain’s synaptic chemistry to produce a psychedelic trip, his experience led him to theorize that the drug actually shuts down the brain’s regular cognitive processes and bypasses the “reducing valve” that ordinarily funnels to a manageable trickle Mind at Large—a sort of superconsciousness or pure consciousness (i.e., yoga’s *purusha*) distributed throughout the universe. This broader Cosmic Consciousness, this yogic Light of Divine Consciousness, this Spiritual Mind that comes flooding in, allows one to experience reality not as filtered by thought constructs and linguistic structures, but as it really is—infinitesimal.

Here imagination—or “hyper-imagination,” in the case of certain psychedelics (Osto, 2019, p. 49)—plays a role. Some psychedelic researchers argue straightforwardly that imagination “creatively produces images, and some of those images may be rich in meaning and personal truth, relevant to everyday living or to spiritual knowledge” (Richards, 2016, pp. 35–6). This seems to resonate with Kripal’s (2017, p. 6) view of imagination as an “expressive artist,” which, if interpreted in a Blakean frame, is synonymous with the divine. However, Kripal’s (2017, p. 6) suggestion that imagination may be productively thought of as an “ecstatic mediator” or “translator of the really real” struck us as connecting imagination solidly with Mind at Large.

Turning to the forward-looking imagination in Mind at Large, Osto (2019, p. 235) reports having “a chemically assisted vision of the future that came to pass two weeks later.” To make sense of this, he looked to the *Gandavyūha*, which “describes a vision of reality wherein past, present and future all interpenetrate and simultaneously coexist” (p. 235). “Since the future does in some sense ‘exist’ in the present,” Osto concludes, “under certain conditions, such as in an altered state of consciousness, it is possible to ‘perceive’ future events” (p. 235). This is in keeping with psilocybin researchers who report “past and [future] collapse into the present moment” (Griffiths, 2013, 17:48), and perhaps with near-death survivors who report experiencing a timeless state (Hugenot, 2012). Moreover, it is consistent with our broad, trans-temporal view of the present moment as suffused with the past and the future (see note 1).

How does this discussion of Mind at Large, imagined futures, and psychedelics connect with entrepreneurship? For one, researchers at Johns Hopkins University have found that the psilocybin experience leads to long-term increases in the personality dimension of openness, which encompasses a variety of characteristics of import to entrepreneurship, including imagination, and is fundamental to creativity (Griffiths, 2013). This echoes Steve Jobs’s view that psychedelics could have helped Bill Gates, whom he described as “unnervingly narrow” and “basically unimaginative,” to overcome these limitations (Isaacson, 2011, pp. 172–3). While Jobs took full doses of psychedelics as a path toward enlightenment, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs today microdose psychedelics primarily to enhance creativity and focus at work (Yakowicz, 2015). Despite entrepreneurs’ use of drugs to enhance their creativity and imagination, research on this topic is lacking. Warnick, Kier, LaFrance, and Cullter’s (2021) study of cannabis users’ creativity in new venture ideation takes an important first step in this direction, but is silent on topics that psychedelics are uniquely able to speak to: divine consciousness and imagined futures.

Other practices such as meditation and yoga can act metaphorically as a sort of psychedelic microdosing, allowing entrepreneurs to experience states that move in the direction of, or perhaps even approximate, Mind at Large. We return to this last point, focusing on walking meditation, in our implications section below.
Body, Spirit, and the Entrepreneurial Imagination

We now turn to explore three conceptions of the body and their connections to spirituality and the entrepreneurial imagination. To structure our argument, we borrow from a venerable yoga framework, which holds that the light of divine consciousness in each of us is encased like an onion in multiple bodily layers (koshas or sheaths)—the outermost layer being the physical body (annamaya kosha or anatomical/gross body), the next three layers each progressively more subtle, and the innermost layer the most subtle of all (anandamaya kosha or bliss/divine body) (Feuerstein, 2011; Iyengar, 2005). To simplify our argument, we use the outermost and innermost layers and construct an intermediate layer that is an amalgam of the sensory-emotional-intuitive aspects of several layers of the subtle body (Roeser, 2005). Specifically, we start with the corporeal body, shift to the sensory body, and conclude with the spiritual body, moving toward increasing subtlety.

**Corporeal body**

The notion that the corporeal body (muscles, organs, blood) and mind are at odds with one another has a long history. Claxton (2015, pp. 16, 21) outlines the origin of this divide, beginning with ancient Greece and continuing through the Enlightenment: Bodily pleasures were seen as “dangerous impediments to enlightenment”; wisdom and intellect were in conflict with the “brutality of bodies.” Distaste for the body permeated world religions: Christianity developed a “hatred of the flesh,” and Islam treated bodily fluids as needing purification (p. 18). Mechanistic thinkers, such as René Descartes, echoed this dichotomy: The inferior body belongs to the physical order, while the superior mind defies physical laws and is intended for thinking (Crossley, 1995).

Post-Enlightenment thought that separates the corporeal body from the mind dominates a long tradition of entrepreneurship research that treats entrepreneurs as disembodied minds. In a rare exception, Cornelissen (2013) emphasizes that the corporeal body—particularly one’s limbs, interacting with material objects to sketch, gesture, and paint—is critical for sparking and refining ideas in the process of entrepreneurial imagining. More commonly, however, researchers are more interested in how the corporeal body learns to perform repetitive work tasks (e.g., Viteritti, 2013) than in its role as an instrument inspiring human imagination. Muscle memory learned to perform a particular task is different from creative processes that are not learned, but instead emphasize inspiration and inventiveness. Thus, we believe that the ancient Greeks and others tell only a partial story. Some of our own work (Elias et al., 2018) shows that when arts entrepreneurs imagine what a raw material might become (along with how future customers might react to the finished product), they use their corporeal bodies to shape untouched wood (for example) into a beautiful artwork, using their hands to bring unfolding imaginings to life. Our spiritual perspective marks an initial stab at bridging the enduring division between the corporeal body and (disembodied) mind, setting up the possibility of two fundamental shifts: first, using the corporeal body to better explain the bodily basis of imagination; and, second, banishing the faith-based notions of the corporeal body as hateful or impure. We now turn our attention from the gross to the subtle body, starting with the sensory body.

**Sensory body**

Beneath the corporeal body lies the sensory body, including the five human senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. In entrepreneurship, only a scattering of articles accounts for the sensory body, often using an aesthetics lens to explore, for example, how entrepreneurs “use their bodies to sense, feel, imagine, and interact with particular material and social surroundings” (Elias et al., 2018, p. 365), and how “imagination forges a link between [the entrepreneur’s sensory] body and mind” (Thompson, 2018, p. 244). Such embodied approaches,
“neither restricted to an individual’s mind nor decontextualised from practices” (Thompson, 2018, p. 231), allow researchers to transcend disembodied approaches (and those limited to the corporeal body), opening our eyes to sensory-emotional-intuitive aspects of the imagination. Entrepreneurs, as Elias et al. (2018) and Thompson (2018) imply, do not have to be treated as stoics who somehow isolate their minds from their senses as if they are decontextualized from their surroundings.

The sensory body also accounts for emotions and feelings. Because “entrepreneurialism is a deeply emotional activity” (Goss, 2008, p. 120), it thus plays a significant role in the entrepreneurial imagination. Cardon, Foo, Shepherd, and Wiklund (2012, p. 3) describe “entrepreneurial emotion” as capturing the affect, mood, and feelings that are inseparable from the entrepreneurial process. Future imaginings can be bolstered by our ability to transpose ourselves into the bodies of others, feeling their pleasures and pains, and being open to those emotions driving our own creativity (Bronk, 2009). Through empathic imagination, entrepreneurs devise ways to connect with future customers by “vicariously experienc[ing] the world as seen through the minds of others” (Modell, 2003, p. 115; see also Chiles, Tuggle, et al., 2010). Empathic imagination is thus a metaphorical process that provides entrepreneurs, as they imagine various possibilities for the future, with an embodied and sensory understanding of imagined future customers in terms of their own experience (see Modell, 2003). Reflecting on the emotions and intuitive feelings these experiences incite in their bodies—through what Shackle (1979) terms “emotional imagination”—entrepreneurs ultimately pursue the imagined future that they feel will produce enjoyment and satisfaction. This process goes well beyond conducting market research, which Steve Jobs, for example, rejected because “customers don’t know what they want until we’ve shown them” (Isaacson, 2011, p. 143). Instead, Jobs relied on raw emotions and intuitive feelings to imagine wildly innovative products. “Our task,” Jobs said of this process, “is to read things that are not yet on the page” (p. 567). Fueling his ability to creatively imagine the future were a wide range of feelings and emotions: He was “energized by great design” (p. 294) and derived “deep emotional pleasure” from certain projects (p. 247). At the other end of the emotional spectrum, he was known to throw “spontaneous temper tantrums” (p. 113), “scream and get hopping mad” (p. 461). Core to the (at times unconscious) process of choosing to pursue a particular imagined future are “gut feelings” and emotions, which are often the source of inspiration and, therefore, are powerful drivers of the entrepreneurial imagination (Elias et al., 2018). Notably, our treatment of gut feelings as bolstering imagined futures contrasts sharply with Grimes and Vogus, who see them as “mental shortcuts” that limit imagination, perhaps due to the oft-ignored bodily and largely invisible nature of gut feelings. Rather, we believe that gut feelings help constitute a much larger and more complex process that invokes and engages the sensory body as key to entrepreneurs’ future imaginings.

The scattering of articles that account for the sensory body and resulting entrepreneurial emotions and actions (Elias et al., 2018; Thompson, 2018) have paved the way for entrepreneurship scholars to start understanding not only sensory elements, but also the tacit and ineffable elements that are at the root of entrepreneurs’ forward-looking imaginings, and that are inherently difficult to verbalize, often because they unfold unconsciously. That said, focusing primarily on sensory experience limits our understanding of the interplay between the sensory body and spirituality, which we believe is critical for an even deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial imagination in extra-sensoryial ways (i.e., a spiritual perspective). While entrepreneurs might use words to explain what can be seen, heard, tasted, smelled, and touched, significantly more work is needed for exploring ineffable and divine aspects that inspire the
entrepreneurial imagination: that is, the invisible, silent, tasteless, odorless, and untouchable. To do so, we now turn to the spiritual body.

Spiritual body

Our journey toward increasing subtlety takes us to the innermost sheath, where the body becomes a field of unmanifest energy, vibrating at a higher frequency than the other sheaths. This is the spiritual body, which Hugenot (2012) describes as existence beyond the physical realm, where the denseness of matter disappears and unrestrained freedom can be experienced. The spiritual body is infinite, contrasting with the finite nature of the corporeal body: “we are all infinite beings in a temporary human experience” (Dyer, 2013). Owing to the largely indescribable and mysterious nature of the spiritual body, many have struggled to pin down exactly what it looks like. Some suggest that it manifests through spherical shapes with “opaque circular feature[s]” (Dyer, 2012, p. 80) or “bubble like...hologram[s]” (Hugenot, 2012, p. 152). Others describe the spiritual body as a transparent human-like shape, albeit with a much lower density than the corporeal body. Some have foregone physical descriptions, instead portraying it as “beautiful warm golden light” and “pure unconditional love” (Craig, 2018).

Regardless of description, the spiritual body is most commonly experienced through altered states of consciousness: for instance, near-death experiences or drug-induced states that “often carry...spiritual dimensions” (Krippal, 2018). Reflecting on his near-death experience, Hard Rock’s Isaac Tigrett (2009, 42:29) claimed he “was in the spirit body” on “the other side,” in a state of “peace” and “total bliss,” and possessing “superconsciousness.” This and other experiences helped Tigrett (2009, 50:10) understand “the amazing, divine nature of everything and how we’re all connected and everything is connected.” These observations echo Griffiths’s (2013, 17:05) finding that psilocybin can give rise to “mystical experiences” with features such as “universal love, joy, peace,” “pure consciousness,” “sacredness,” and “unity” or “interconnectedness.” The psilocybin experience that takes us into the spiritual body also holds the potential, as noted in the Spiritual Mind section, to boost the entrepreneur’s imagination (Griffiths, 2013; Osto, 2019)—not only during the experience, but long afterwards (Griffiths, 2013).

The spiritual body serves as a basis for divine/creative imagination through “direct experience”—or what Claxton (2013) terms a “Glimpse.” Such experiences can be remembered, much like dreams, and later translated into ideas driving future imaginings (Krippal, 2018). “Glimpsters”—those who have successfully peeled back the body’s layers to access the innermost sheath—often liken their experiences to a “liberation of affection” and “a felt shift from separation to connectedness” (Claxton, 2013). In the context of entrepreneurship, we argue that glimpsing can help drive entrepreneurs’ imagined futures: for example, as they develop a new venture that thoughtfully considers its long-term impact on individuals, communities, and the planet—perhaps taking the time to contemplate how love, as a core organizational value, might catalyse a collective initiative to address “the grand challenges of our time” (Shepherd, 2015, p. 1).

Entrepreneurs who are attuned to the spiritual body recognize the symbiotic, synergistic, and intertwined nature of self, other, and world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Much like jazz musicians, entrepreneurs connect and “communicate” with others (e.g., customers, other entrepreneurs) and the world through the spiritual body, continually “inject[ing] novel ideas into the ever-shifting musical flow” that is the entrepreneurial process, while entraining (i.e., coordinating, synchronizing) the rhythm of their actions to that of others (Chiles, Tuggle, et al., 2010, p. 38). As entrepreneurs entrain their present actions in light of a future-oriented vision (Chiles, Tuggle, et al., 2010), they generate new beginnings, creating “the impulses from which history is formed” (Shackle, 1979,
p. 80); this results in a polyrhythmic texture and “harmonic progression” that Heidi Craig (2018) describes as “deeply profound and deeply beautiful.”

While “unconditional love” is often described by “glimpsters” who have directly experienced the spiritual body, severe bodily pain and suffering seem to function as its gatekeepers. Numerous sources—ranging from survivors of near-death events (e.g., Mark Bertolini, Heidi Craig, Alan Ross Hugenot, Isaac Tigrett) to pioneers of out-of-body experiences via primitive body modification (e.g., Fakir Musafar)—point to bodily crises (i.e., pain, suffering, trauma; also see Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Sørensen, 2006) as access points to the spiritual body: “the body is the door to the spirit” (Slotnik, 2018, quoting Musafar). Akin to rockets reentering the Earth’s atmosphere, which causes extreme burns, people who have peeled back the body’s layers while delving deeper into the spiritual body describe reentering the confinement of the physical body as excruciating (Hugenot, 2012). But how can such experiences trigger the entrepreneurial imagination? Sørensen (2006) provides some insight, arguing that pain and suffering can drive innovative ideas; bodily crises help entrepreneurs move beyond the corporeal body, which Claxton (2015) calls the spiritual body’s “sarcophagus.”

Implications for Entrepreneurial Imagination

We now turn to discuss the implications of our spiritual perspective on the entrepreneurial imagination, in a deliberate effort to fuse mind, body, and spirit together. The intended payoff is a more holistic understanding of the future-oriented entrepreneurial imagination. In particular, we focus on walking meditation (and contemplative practices of walking more generally) as a potentially fruitful way to discuss how the entrepreneur’s mind-body-spirit informs their forward-looking imagination. Our focus on such contemplative practices dovetails with corporations’ curating contemplative experiences through biophilic contact, including outdoor “winding walkways” that stimulate employees’ senses to bolster their creativity (Klotz & Bolino, 2021). More generally, it resonates with contemplative practices such as nature therapy, including forest bathing, aimed at cleansing oneself of everyday stress in pursuit of contentedness, or bringing the corporeal body to a near standstill by fly fishing, watching a dry fly float atop the calming river current, as the conscious mind recedes and the unconscious mind ascends. It also adds to our nascent understanding of meditation in entrepreneurship, specifically Buddhist loving-kindness meditation (Engel, Noordijk, Spoelder, & van Gelderen, 2021), and it deepens our limited knowledge of meditation, including Buddhist walking meditation, as a spiritual practice for business leaders (Delbecq, 2000; Levy, 2000; Miller, 2000).

With roots in Buddhism and branches in yoga and mindfulness, walking meditation is a spiritual practice of focusing awareness on the movement of or sensations in the feet and legs, or feeling the movement of the whole body, while walking; it emphasizes quiet and calmness and achievement of a meditative mental state (Cope, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2013). When such a state is sufficiently deep, one can bask in the light of divine consciousness (Singh, 2006). Walking meditation often has a slow rhythm, using the mind and body in concert to unleash an inner voice and facilitate reflection that creates a new awareness (Delbecq, 2000; Levy, 2000). Business leaders who practice walking meditation frequently find a “spot out in nature” (Levy, 2000), prioritizing serenity over bustling contexts and opening the human imagination to
innovative ideas and decisiveness, both in times of crisis and in the day-to-day grind (Miller, 2000).

Despite varied approaches to walking meditation, we wish to emphasize the attentive and contemplative nature of meditatively walking back and forth or in a circle over some distance, enough to wear a well-worn path outdoors or establish a route between places indoors. We have in mind “creative contemplation,” the “powerful employment of imagination” (Singh, 2006, p. 157), and a spiritual “calling into existence” (Nyanatiloka, 1980, p. 67), as captured in the term bhāvanā. We also recognize the closely related practice of contemplative walking, dubbed “the Western form of meditation,” where one walks to “clear one’s head” by shifting the focus from doing to simply being (Gopnik, 2014). Thus, our implications may apply to contemplative practices of walking more generally.

Steve Jobs, who would have undoubtedly encountered walking mediation during his early Zen Buddhist training, adopted walking—especially long walks—as his “preferred way to have a serious conversation,” his “preferred mode of meeting” in his professional life (Isaacson, 2011, pp. xvii, 82). So it is natural to revisit Jobs, focusing on his walking practice to develop intuitive awareness, fusing mind-body-spirit with forward-looking entrepreneurial imagination. Each day, Jobs would walk contemplatively inside Apple’s design studio, a “calm and gentle” visual, auditory, and tactile paradise that enabled him to attentively imagine Apple’s future. In the studio’s “cavernous main room,” he could “graze” slowly among a few elongated steel tables (Isaacson, 2011, pp. 345–6). Leaves from nearby trees cast “moving patterns of light and shadows,” which combined with techno and jazz music to set the mood. Jobs replaced disembodied “formal design reviews” with embodied experience, playing with each iteration of the material prototypes with his own fingertips as he walked back and forth among the tables. He was looking to be inspired: to make “insanely great” products, spark new ideas, generate excitement, fulfill his Zen devotion to simplicity, and “see the future” (Isaacson, 2011, pp. 110, 345–6). In pursuit of these goals, Jobs’s forward-looking creative imagination was bolstered by his preference for unconventional practices that combined mind, body, and spirit.

Our discussion of walking meditation and the Jobs example suggest several implications for entrepreneurial imagination. First, walking meditation opens up a space for suggestions, which are the basis of entrepreneurial imagination; and entrepreneurial imagination, in turn, has the power to create the future and bring new worlds into existence. As Shackle (1983, p. 6) argued, imagination and the future actions it formulates are “based on suggestions and you get suggestions from any mortal thing that happens. . . . You get suggestions from anywhere.” When the mind is in a meditative state—as it is in walking meditation and other contemplative practices—a particularly fertile space is opened up. Suggestions can come from sacred inner voices and reflective thoughts. They can come “out of the blue,” as the conscious mind and rational thought recede and the unconscious mind and intuitive feelings ascend (Claxton, 1997; Isaacson, 2011). They can come from the free flow of ideas that often rush in when we “clear our heads.” And they can come from seeing, touching, or hearing things in our environment.

Second, walking meditation may enhance entrepreneurial imagination even more when combined with other contemplative practices. In the Buddhist tradition, walking meditation is used between sitting meditations throughout the day. It can be combined with Buddhist loving-kindness meditation (Cope, 2007). It can be integrated with awareness of breathing, as commonly practiced in hatha yoga and mindfulness meditation (Kabat-Zinn, 2013), and perhaps even with some of the specialized yogic breathing techniques known as prānāyāma. It can be blended with the Western practice of contemplative walking, something akin to what Henry David Thoreau appears to have done in his daily walks in the woods around Walden Pond (Furstenau, 2007; Gopnik, 2014). And, recalling
a point made in the Spiritual Mind section, it can be practiced in combination with the microdosing of psychedelics. These combinations offer practitioners more opportunities to pay attention, be present, and let go of the thought-mind—moving deeper into the meditative experience and opening wider the sacred space for suggestions that fuel entrepreneurs’ imaginations and the futures these create.19

Third, walking meditation challenges the division between mind and body—and the privileging of mind over body—rampant in post-Enlightenment thinking (see Beyes & Steyaert, 2021), the separation of mind, body, and spirit in much of Western thought (see Claxton, 2015), and the bias against imagination in science-centric fields such as entrepreneurship (see Daston, 1998; see also Bronk, 2009). Unlike most of our peers (but see Cornelissen, 2013), we embrace both mind and body as natural partners of the forward-looking entrepreneurial imagination, thus extending research on entrepreneurial futures beyond disembodied cognition. We also fuse mind-body with spirit to enrich our understanding of entrepreneurs’ imagined futures, thus enlarging the view of entrepreneurial futures beyond secular approaches. We see experiential wisdom generated through the contemplative/embodied/spiritual practice of walking as a valuable tool for creating, moment to moment and with every step, the deep introspective insight needed to boost entrepreneurs’ forward-looking imaginations. Our use of walking meditation to concretize the fusion of mind, body, and spirit will hopefully inspire a more holistic understanding of entrepreneurs’ imaginings and the futures these create. We see this fusion as informing not only how we theorize entrepreneurial imagination, but also how we study it.

Echoing Grimes and Vogus’s call for conducting field studies that feature interviews and observations, we urge scholars to embrace direct experience (Mintzberg, 1979) and more embedded methods (Cunliffe, 2018) to explore processes that are fundamentally subjective and thus neither directly observable nor easily measurable (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Inspired by Eastern experiential wisdom, we recommend that researchers seeking to “eff the ineffable” (Claxton, 2013) fully immerse themselves in the phenomena under study—by, for example, (1) engaging in autoethnography while enacting entrepreneurial endeavors and reflecting on their practices (Johannisson, 2011); (2) applying psychoanalytically informed techniques, such as dream analysis, to delve deep into dreams—not only researchers’ but also participants’—and thus develop hermeneutic insight into unconscious processes and lived experiences (de Rond & Tuncalp, 2017); and (3) using specialized interviews such as long interviews and walking interviews to explore, alongside entrepreneurs, and in situ, deep meanings and multisensory insights that are profoundly connected to the environment in which imagined futures unfold (Crawford, Chiles, & Elias, 2020; Evans & Jones, 2011). Finally, similar to Grimes and Vogus’s call for laboratory studies, it would also be worth considering Johns Hopkins-style psychedelic research (Griffiths, 2013; Richards, 2016) that focuses on entrepreneurs and their divine/creative imaginings, and the unique entrepreneurial set and setting needed to facilitate such research.

**Concluding Thoughts**

We realize the ideas put forth in this paper are not everyone’s cup of tea. We invite those in this group to temporarily suspend disbelief. If that is not possible, we ask for indulgence. We have admittedly taken a rather unconventional path, traveling light and stopping briefly at a relatively small number of scenic over looks. We humbly offer our observations from the journey. Although our knowledge of entrepreneurship has grown dramatically on many fronts, we still have much to learn about one of the most fundamental phenomena in entrepreneurship: imagination. We hope our paper offers some insights and points a way forward, one possible direction for overcoming a range of biases—from cognition-centric to conscious-centric to science-centric—that have kept us from fully exploring the entrepreneurial imagination.
If the doors of perception were cleansed,” Blake (1988, p. 39) wrote, “every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite—For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern.” In articulating our spiritual perspective on the entrepreneurial imagination, we make a modest attempt to cleanse the field’s doors, which have collected considerable dust in the form of mechanistic and secular thinking. Such thinking has narrowed our collective view of entrepreneurship, relegating many of the ideas we cover off-limits. We hope our paper might open the field to a range of issues: from controversial phenomena such as forward-looking imagination, to contested notions such as ex nihilo creation, to marginalized topics such as the unconscious, the body, and the eternal and infinite world of the spirit. We believe such issues represent “potential sources of vitality” for the field, some of which may even “change the boundaries of what is labeled as entrepreneurship” (Shepherd, 2015, p. 489).

Shepherd (2015, p. 489) urges entrepreneurship scholars to be “entrepreneurial in [their] research,” to do more “transformational research.” He warns against “playing it safe by using ‘accepted’ theories and approaches” (p. 489). If entrepreneurship scholars fail on these counts, he cautions, “we run the very real risk that the field will stagnate and lose what is ‘special’ about it—that is, lose the very real and widespread willingness to accept considerable novelty in questioning, theorizing, and testing to generate new and interesting insights” (p. 489). We believe our spiritual perspective on the entrepreneurial imagination fits Shepherd’s call and hope it might contribute to the field’s continued distinctiveness and future flourishing.

Acknowledgements

We thank editors Joel Gehman and Joep Cornelissen for their feedback and guidance on this paper. We thank Susan Mathis, Ken McRae, Lynn Rossy, and Sady Strand for conversations about yoga, Buddhism, and meditation. And we thank Denise Vultee for discussions on Romanticism, poetry, and William Blake.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Todd H. Chiles https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4966-2059

Notes

1. Following Purser (2015), we take a broad, trans-temporal view of the present moment, in which past and future dynamically flow from—and are unified with—an absolute present.
2. In addition to downplaying time and process, mechanism assumes an objective reality and reduces phenomena to their parts, which can be explicitly measured. Instead, we see entrepreneurial imagining as an inherently subjective and messy process that unfolds over time and is difficult to observe and measure.
3. Autobiography of a Yogi was so resonant that, after reading it as a teenager and again in India, Jobs read it once a year for the rest of his life (Isaacson, 2011).
4. The information provided in this research paper should not be construed as advocating the use of psychedelic substances in jurisdictions where they are not legal, nor is it meant to encourage extreme spiritual practices (e.g., primitive body modification to induce out-of-body experiences) by novices. The authors assume no responsibility for any legal, physical, psychological, emotional, or other consequences arising from enacting the spiritual practices explored in this paper.
5. It is common for scientists to write off as “nothing” phenomena such as beautiful sunsets that do not fit with their mechanical models (Paulson, 2020). The spiritual phenomena that interest us fall into this class. Although we adopt the dominant language in order to connect with the extant literature, we do not view the spirit, the divine as “nothing.” On the contrary, sunsets can inspire us and the spirit can move us.
6. In a table providing examples of imagination in the literature, these authors list Shacklean imagination as “the source and business of original thought” (Shackle, 1979, p. 7), but what “original thought” means is never explained, nor is it ever used in developing the article’s argument.

7. Our discussion of Blake draws on material in Vultee et al. (2021).

8. Merle Haggard, an American country music singer-songwriter, said this of country music: “It rose up out of nothing, uneducated, from the soul”—an ex nihilo creation Haggard viewed not only as divine but original: “probably never been anything like [it] and they’ll never be anything like it again” (Burns, 2019, Ep. 8, 1:46:19).

9. Similarly, in George Bernard Shaw’s (1924) Saint Joan, when Joan of Arc tells Captain Robert de Baudricourt, “I hear voices telling me what to do. They come from God,” he replies, “They come from your imagination!” “Of course,” Joan responds, “that is how the messages of God come to us.”

10. Typographical error in original; “future” was intended (R. R. Griffiths, personal communication, 2 September 2020).

11. Relatedly, Steve Jobs turned to his fingertips to “feel, inspect, and fondle” material objects as part of imagining future products (Isaacson, 2011, p. 387).

12. Bertolini’s near-death experience happened after breaking his neck in a skiing accident. Following this experience, he turned to yoga and meditation in his pursuit of presence, mindfulness, and healing—and he infused these practices throughout Aetna, where he was CEO at the time.

13. Musafar, who pioneered the primitive body modification movement, performed a series of outré practices, including piercing, branding, and corseting to modify his body as a means of entering the spiritual realm. He once, for example, suspended himself in a tree from hooks in the flesh of his torso, enacting a Native American ritual used to induce shamanic journeys.

14. This effort is consistent with yoga traditions that seek to unite prakriti (mind-body) and purusha (spirit) (Iyengar, 2005).

15. While the authors acknowledge the practice’s Buddhist heritage, their allegiance is to secularism.

16. Jobs was not alone in his affinity for such walking practices. His fellow entrepreneurs Jack Dorsey, Arianna Huffington, Jeff Bezos, Melanie Perkins, and Mark Zuckerberg all turn to long walks when seeking mindfulness.

17. In his own yoga practice, the first author has experienced this space not only during the practice, but also for a period of time after the practice. Oppezzo and Schwartz (2014) found that creativity was boosted both while walking and when seated shortly after walking. So, walking meditation (as a sort of yogic walking) may boost the practitioner’s imagination not only during the meditation, but also for a short time afterwards.

18. In yoga, breathing is a key process linking mind and body (Bharati & Ashram, 2019).

19. The sequencing of these practices can effect the movement of energy (prāna) through the subtle body (e.g., letting energy steep in the first practice and then come alive in the second) and the management of fatigue in the corporeal body (e.g., shifting to walking mediation after lethargy sets in with sitting meditation).

References

Alvarez, S. A., & Barney, J. B. (2007). Discovery and creation: Alternative theories of entrepreneurial action. Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal, 1, 11–26.

Balog, A. M., Baker, L. T., & Walker, A. G. (2014). Religiosity and spirituality in entrepreneurship: A review and research agenda. Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion, 11, 159–186.

Bentley, G. E. (2001). The stranger from paradise: A biography of William Blake. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Beyes, T., & Steyaert, C. (2021). Unsettling bodies of knowledge: Walking as a pedagogy of affect. Management Learning, 52, 224–242.

Bharati, J., & Ashram, A. (2019). Yoga sutras 1.1–1.4: What is yoga? http://swamij.com/yoga-sutras-10104.htm

Blake, W. (1988). The complete poetry and prose of William Blake (D. V. Erdman, Ed.). New York: Doubleday.

Bronk, R. (2009). The romantic economist. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Burns, K. (2019). Country music. https://www.pbs.org/kenburns/country-music/

Busenitz, L. W., & Lichtenstein, B. B. (2019). Faith in research: Forging new ground in entrepreneurship. Academy of Management Perspectives, 33, 280–291.
Cantor, P. (1996). William Blake: Printer’s devil. *Huntington Library Quarterly, 59*, 557–570.

Cardon, M. S., Foo, M. D., Shepherd, D., & Wiklund, J. (2012). Exploring the heart: Entrepreneurial emotion is a hot topic. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 36*, 1–10.

Chiles, T. H., Bluedorn, A. C., & Gupta, V. K. (2007). Beyond creative destruction and entrepreneurial discovery: A radical Austrian approach to entrepreneurship. *Organization Studies, 28*, 467–493.

Chiles, T. H., Elias, S. R. S. T. A., & Li, Q. (2017). Entrepreneurship as process. In A. Langley & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of process organization studies* (pp. 432–450). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chiles, T. H., Elias, S. R. S. T. A., Zarankin, T. G., & Vultee, D. M. (2013). The kaleidic world of entrepreneurs: Developing and grounding a metaphor for creative imagination. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management, 8*, 276–307.

Chiles, T. H., Tuggle, C. S., McMullen, J. S., Bierman, L., & Greening, D. W. (2010). Dynamic creation: Extending the radical Austrian approach to entrepreneurship. *Organization Studies, 31*, 7–46.

Chiles, T. H., Vultee, D. M., Gupta, V. K., Greening, D. W., & Tuggle, C. S. (2010). The philosophical foundations of a radical Austrian approach to entrepreneurship. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 19*, 138–164.

Claxton, G. (1997). *Hare brain, tortoise mind: Why intelligence increases when you think less*. Hopewell, NJ: Ecco.

Claxton, G. (2006). *The wayward mind: An intimate history of the unconscious*. London: Abacus.

Claxton, G. (2013). On being touched and moved. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-HjWMuFCs8&t=4s

Claxton, G. (2015). *Intelligence in the flesh*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Cope, S. (2007). *The wisdom of yoga*. London: Bantam.

Cornelissen, J. P. (2013). Portrait of an entrepreneur: Vincent van Gogh, Steve Jobs, and the entrepreneurial imagination. *Academy of Management Review, 38*, 700–709.

Cornelissen, J. P., & Clarke, J. S. (2010). Imagining and rationalizing opportunities: Inductive reasoning and the creation and justification of new ventures. *Academy of Management Review, 35*, 539–557.

Cornelissen, J. P., Clarke, J. S., & Cienki, A. (2012). Sensegiving in entrepreneurial contexts: The use of metaphors in speech and gesture to gain and sustain support for novel business ventures. *International Small Business Journal, 30*, 213–241.

Craig, H. (2018). The near-death experience of Heidi Craig. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSa3Ei8FVoO

Crawford, B., Chiles, T. H., & Elias, S. R. S. T. A. (2020). Long interviews in organizational research: Unleashing the power of “show and tell.” *Journal of Management Inquiry*. Epub ahead of print 10 June. DOI: 10.1177/1056492620930096.

Crossley, N. (1995). Merleau-Ponty, the elusive body and carnal sociology. *Body & Society, 1*, 43–63.

Cunliffe, A. L. (2018). Wayfaring: A scholarship of possibilities or let’s not get drunk on abstraction. *M@n@gement, 21*, 1429–1439.

Damon, S. F. (1988). *A Blake dictionary*. Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England.

Daston, L. (1998). Fear and loathing of the imagination in science. *Daedalus, 127*, 73–95.

Dawson, T. (2013). “A firm perswasion”: God, art, and responsibility in Blake’s *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. *Jung Journal: Culture and Psyche, 7*, 62–77.

de Rond, M., & Tunçalp, D. (2017). Where the wild things are: How dreams can help identify countertransference in organizational research. *Organizational Research Methods, 20*, 413–437.

Delbecq, A. L. (2000). Spirituality for business leadership: Reporting on a pilot course for MBAs and CEOs. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 9*, 117–128.

Dolmans, S. A. M., van Burg, E., Reymen, I. M. M. J., & Romme, A. G. L. (2014). Dynamics of resource slack and constraints: Resource positions in action. *Organization Studies, 35*, 511–549.

Dyer, W. W. (2013). *Mastering the art of manifesting*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNREFpkgWQo

Dyer, W. W. (2012). *Wishes fulfilled: Mastering the art of manifesting*. London: Hay House.

Elias, S. R. S. T. A., Chiles, T. H., Duncan, C. M., & Vultee, D. M. (2018). The aesthetics of entrepreneurship: How arts entrepreneurs and their customers co-create aesthetic value. *Organization Studies, 39*, 345–372.
Emirbayer, M., & Mische, A. (1998). What is agency? *American Journal of Sociology, 103*, 962–1023.

Engel, Y., Noordijk, S., Spoelder, A., & van Gelderen, M. (2021). Self-compassion when coping with venture obstacles: Loving-kindness meditation and entrepreneurial fear of failure. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 45*, 263–290.

Evans, J., & Jones, P. (2011). The walking interview: Methodology, mobility and place. *Applied Geography, 31*, 849–858.

Feuerstein, G. (2011). *The encyclopedia of yoga and tantra*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala.

Furstenau, N. (2007). *Thoreau and Eastern spiritual texts* (electronic resource) [Master’s Thesis]. University of Missouri-Columbia.

Ganzin, M., Islam, G., & Suddaby, R. (2020). Spirituality and entrepreneurship: The role of magical thinking in future-oriented sensemaking. *Organization Studies, 41*, 77–102.

Gilchrist, A. (1863). *Life of William Blake, Pictor Ignotus*. 2 vols. London: Macmillan.

Gopnik, A. (2014). Heaven’s gaits: What we do when we walk. *The New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/09/01/heavens-gaits

Goss, D. (2008). Enterprise ritual: A theory of entrepreneurial emotion and exchange. *British Journal of Management, 19*, 120–137.

Griffiths, R. R. (2013). Johns Hopkins psilocybin research project. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lbRbMavHm-8

Grimes, M., & Vogus, T. (2021). Inconceivable! Possibilistic thinking and sociocognitive underpinnings of entrepreneurial responses to grand challenges. *Organization Theory, 2*, https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877211005780

Huerta de Soto, J. (2010). *Socialism, economic calculation and entrepreneurship*. Chichester, UK: Edward Elgar.

Hugonot, A. R. (2012). *The death experience*. Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear.

Hugonot, A. R. (2016). *The new science of consciousness survival and the metaparadigm shift to a conscious universe*. Indianapolis, IN: Dog Ear.

Huxley, A. (1954). *The doors of perception*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Isaacson, W. (2011). *Steve Jobs*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Iyengar, B. K. S. (2005). *Light on life*. New York: Rodale.

Johannisson, B. (2011). Towards a practice theory of entrepreneuring. *Small Business Economics, 36*, 135–150.

Kabat-Zinn, J. (2013). *Full catastrophe living*. New York: Bantam.

Kier, A. S., & McMullen, J. S. (2018). Entrepreneurial imaginativeness in new venture ideation. *Academy of Management Journal, 61*, 2265–2295.

Kloz, A. C., & Bolino, M. C. (2021). Bringing the great outdoors into the workplace: The energizing effect of biophilic work design. *Academy of Management Review, 46*, 231–251.

Koestler, A. (1964). *The act of creation*. London: Hutchinson.

Kripal, J. J. (2017). *Secret body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kripal, J. (2018). The queerness of it all. *Los Angeles Review of Books*. https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-queerness-of-it-all-an-interview-with-jeffrey-kripal/!

Levy, R. B. (2000). My experience as participant in the course on spirituality for executive leadership. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 9*, 129–133.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962). *The phenomenology of perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Miller, B. (2000). Spirituality for business leadership. *Journal of Management Inquiry, 9*, 132–133.

Miller, K. D. (2015). Organizational research as practical theology. *Organizational Research Methods, 18*, 276–299.

Mintzberg, H. (1979). An emerging strategy of “direct” research. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*, 582–589.

Modell, A. H. (2003). *Imagination and the meaningful brain*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Moore, M. (1920). Poetry. In A. Kreymborg (Ed.), *Others for 1919: An anthology of the new verse*. New York: Brown.

Neubert, M. J. (2013). Entrepreneurs feel closer to God than the rest of us do. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2013/10/entrepreneurs-feel-closer-to-god-than-the-rest-of-us-do

Neubert, M. J. (2019). With or without spirit: Implications for scholarship and leadership. *Academy of Management Perspectives, 33*, 253–263.

Nyanatiloka, M. (1980). *Buddhist dictionary*. Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society.

Oppezzo, M., & Schwartz, D. L. (2014). Give your idea some legs: The positive effect of walking
on creative thinking. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 40*, 1142–1152.

Osto, D. 2019. *Altered states*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Paulson, S. 2020. Finding love in the ecosystem. https://www.ttbook.org/interview/finding-love-ecosystem

Pepper, S. C. (1942). *World hypotheses*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Pollock, J. (2013). Jackson Pollock documentary. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXc0qYVEEU8

Purser, R. (2015). The myth of the present moment. *Mindfulness, 6*, 680–686.

Richards, W. A. (2016). *Sacred knowledge*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Roeser, R. W. (2005). An introduction to Hindu India’s contemplative psychological perspectives on motivation, self, and development. *Advances in Motivation and Achievement, 14*, 297–345.

Sarasvathy, S. D. (2001). Causation and effectuation: Toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency. *Academy of Management Review, 26*, 243–263.

Sarasvathy, S. D. (2021). Even-if: sufficient, yet unnecessary conditions for worldmaking. *Organization Theory, 2*, https://doi.org/10.1177/26317877211005785

Shacke, G. L. S. (1967). *Time in economics*. Amsterdam: North-Holland.

Shackle, G. L. S. (1979). *Imagination and the nature of choice*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press.

Shackle, G. L. S. (1983). An interview with G. L. S. Shackle. *Austrian Economics Newsletter, 4*, 1, 5–7.

Shaw, G. B. (1924). *Saint Joan*. http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks02/0200811h.html

Shepherd, D. A. (2015). Party on! A call for entrepreneurship research that is more interactive, activity based, cognitively hot, compassionate, and prosocial. *Journal of Business Venturing, 30*, 489–507.

Singh, J. (2006, transl.). *Vijñānabhairava*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Slotnik, D. E. (2018). Fakir Musafar, whose ‘body play’ went to extremes, dies at 87. *New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/13/obituaries/fakir-musafar-whose-body-play-went-to-extremes-dies-at-87.html

Smith, B. R., Conger, M. J., McMullen, J. S., & Neubert, M. J. (2019). Why believe? The promise of research on the role of religion in entrepreneurial action. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights, 11*, e00119.

Sørensen, B. M. (2006). Identity sniping: Innovation, imagination and the body. *Creativity and Innovation Management, 15*, 135–142.

Stamets, P. (2017). Joe Rogan Experience Podcast Episode #1035. https://jrelibrary.com/1035-paul-stamets/

Stark, S. (1962). Temporal and atemporal foresight. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 2*, 56–74.

Thompson, N. A. (2018). Imagination and creativity in organizations. *Organization Studies, 39*, 229–250.

Tigrett, I. (2009). Isaac Tigrett – 31 August 2009 – Werner Herzog interview. https://vimeo.com/71439771

Tracey, P. (2012). Religion and organization: A critical review of current trends and future directions. *Academy of Management Annals, 6*, 87–134.

Viteritti, A. (2013). It’s the body (that does it)! The production of knowledge through body in scientific learning practice. *Scandinavian Journal of Management, 29*, 367–376.

Vultee, D. M., Chiles, T. H., & Elias, S. R. S. T. A. (2021). Entrepreneurial imagination: A Blakean perspective. In K. Pavlovich & G. D. Markman (Eds.), *Spirituality, entrepreneurship, and social change*. Singapore: World Scientific. In press.

Warnick, B. J., Kier, A. S., LaFrance, E. M., & Cuttler, C. (2021). Head in the clouds? Cannabis users’ creativity in new venture idea-dependents on their entrepreneurial passion and experience. *Journal of Business Venturing, 36*, 106088.

Yakowicz, W. (2015). Silicon Valley’s best-kept productivity secret: Psychedelic drugs. *Inc. Magazine*. https://www.inc.com/will-yakowicz/entrepreneurs-use-lsd-psilocybin-to-boost-creativity.html

**Author biographies**

Todd H. Chiles is a senior research fellow at the Center for the Study of Complexity, Creation, and Change and an emeritus professor at the University of Missouri’s Trulaske College of Business. His research explores entrepreneurship as a complex creative process, featuring processes involving emergence, imagination, and far-from-equilibrium dynamics. His recent work examines the spiritual basis and process dynamics of entrepreneurial
imagination, investigates slow research methods for generating richer data and developing better theory, and reflects on and re-contextualizes earlier work in institutional and Austrian economics. His work has been published in journals such as *Academy of Management Review, Organization Studies, Journal of Management Studies*, and *Organization Science*.

**Brett Crawford** is an Assistant Professor of Management at the Seidman College of Business at Grand Valley State University. His research explores how organizations shape social and institutional meaning over time. Brett earned his PhD from Copenhagen Business School. He has published in *Organization Studies, Journal of Management Inquiry, Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, and *Strategic Organization*, among others.

Sara R. S. T. A. Elias is an Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship at the University of Victoria’s Peter B. Gustavson School of Business and a Research Associate of the Center for Psychosocial Organization Studies. Her research interests include creative entrepreneurial processes, entrepreneurial imagining, arts entrepreneurship, aesthetics in organizations and entrepreneurship, strategy and entrepreneurship as practice, and qualitative methodologies. Sara has published in *Organization Studies, Organization, Journal of Management Inquiry, and Organizational Research Methods*, among others.

---

### Appendix 1. Overview of our conversation with the anchor paper.

| Focal concept          | **Chiles, Crawford & Elias** | **Grimes & Vogus** |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Context                | Entrepreneurial imagination | Possibilistic thinking |
|                        | Opportunities without regard to size or scope | Grand challenges |
| Future                 | Imagined futures             | Possible future outcomes |
| Mind                   | Conscious and unconscious cognition; Mind at Large (i.e., superconsciousness, pure consciousness, divine consciousness) | Conscious cognition |
| Body                   | Gross and subtle aspects of the body; Emotions are addressed | Body is largely absent; Emotions are addressed |
| Agency and action      | Creative agency; Embodied action | Responsive agency (primary), creative agency (secondary); Disembodied action |
| Philosophical orientation | Relativist ontology; Spiritual approach with an emphasis on Romantic imagining | Realist ontology; Secular approach with elements of Enlightenment reasoning |
| Methodological approaches | Field studies embracing direct experience and embedded methods (e.g., autoethnography, dream analysis, walking interviews); Johns Hopkins-style psychedelic studies | Field studies featuring interviews and observations; Quantitative and qualitative analysis of archival documents; Lab studies |