

Public Lecture Series



IMAGES AND IMAGINATION IN THE ACTUALIZATION OF POTENTIALS

OSA D. EGONWA Ph.D.; MAICA; fsna

Professor of Art & Art History

Dean, College Of Human Development,
Covenant University,
Canaanland , Ota.

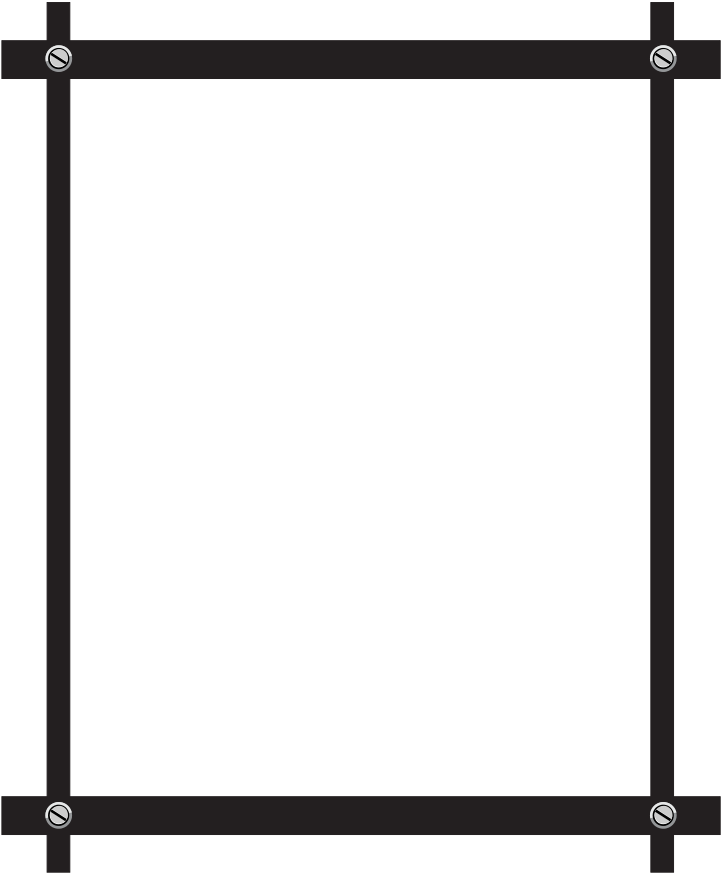
Corporate & Public Affairs
Covenant University

Canaanland, Km. 10, Idiroko Road, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria
Tel: +234-1-7900724, 7901081, 7913282, 7913283

Covenant University Press
Canaanland, Km. 10, Idiroko Road, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria

ISSN 2006---0327

Vol. 1, No. 1, January, 2008



IMAGES AND IMAGINATION IN THE ACTUALIZATION OF POTENTIALS

Abstract

Thinking entails mental manipulation of images and concepts. What you do not **see** mentally may not be understood, and what you do not **understand** you might not be able to **handle**. To release or withhold implies manipulation. The techniques of handling thought by imagination are housed in the right hemisphere of the human brain. Understanding activates potentials. This underscores the vitality of wisdom and understanding; images enhance understanding making it tangible. Images are crucial to seeing as seeing is crucial to understanding. Whatever is **actualized** has been made visible (seen). Nothing can be purposively made visible without mental handling via thinking (manipulation). Potential must be **seen, understood and worked out** for it to be realized, **actualized** or **released**. Thinking skills should be taught to scientists and future leaders. Human development studies hold the key to Africa's mental liberation and development.

Introduction

Educational psychologists have long held the erroneous view that logical/abstract mode of thought, mediated via verbal expression supported with numerical configurations is the only worthy mode of thought in learning and cognition. This fact has been held by many even though it is not the truth and actually is paradoxical to the findings of humanistic psychologists. In the first instance, logical and numerical literacy is dependent on visual images, real or assumed for its rationalization. In spite of this, but due essentially to the aforementioned fallacy, disciplines in which intuition and imaginative mental exploits is the order of the day have been assigned no position in the preparation of leaders in most professions. Divergent thinking skills promoted by the humanities and needed for originality and creativity is neglected. Hence in Nigeria we have so many non- inventive and default-prone professionals. Habitually cultivated perception, or some say, insight results from divergent thinking. What is divergent thinking? Simply put for our purpose, this is in operation when the mind and its perceived data are allowed to roam at will allowing issues to be viewed wholistically in a play-way. This is possible because all experiences we could be sensitive to via our five senses, have mental equivalents replica/ images; thinking is actually the manipulation of these images in either, visual (seeing), auditory (hearing) or **tactual** (feeling) modes. When these meditative modes are mentally active, they activate the relevant parts of the brain as if physically present. The simple reason being those cerebral (mental) actions and physical ones use the same neurological pathways. This is the basis of the principle that “thoughts are things”. That was why what Job feared most (ou

cannot think of it. If you cannot picture a thing mentally, it is impossible to manipulate or handle it mentally or otherwise. Imagination is mental handling of ideas or things for exploits and it is the greatest force in the universe. The greatest advances in all fields of life have occurred when human imagination has been let loose! The crux of this discourse is how to convince people to exercise God's given wisdom and power by accessing the intuitive and creative half of the human brain for result oriented living. Furthermore, it is premised on the conceptual framework that **whereas God imputed the regenerated man with all abilities to be all he desires, man out of ignorance remains at a beggarly level of manifestation, as an outcome of low thinking predisposition.**

The objectives and advocacy of this discourse are as follows: -

1. To highlight the importance of images, imagination and their understanding in cybernetics.
2. The actualization and maximization of our potentials through the full use of our thinking skills
3. The cultivation of thinking through appropriate school preparation, and innovative life applicable curricular.
4. To make a case for Covenant University's human development as the panacea for Africa's creative and mental emancipation to usher in societal development.

The above objectives raise the following questions:

- (1) How many traditional and popular schools have subjects that promoted creative thinking?
- (2) Could such factors be responsible for the below average performance of most people in their chosen fields of

operation?

- (3) Is it not possible to make the best in life using some revealed knowledge?
- (4) Can one increase his/her *thinking capacity building*?
- (5) If in the course of this paper, solutions are proffered to these questions, the effort would have been worth it.

The discourses will oscillate around the following sub-topics: -

- (i) The Power of Images
- (ii) Imagination
- (iii) Potential
- (iv) Actualization
- (v) Conclusion

Literature Review

A synoptic view of human development theories could be attempted. Earlier man was seen as prone to stimulus to which he responds (Pavlov 1928). Piaget and his followers were to add that the mind does more than react to stimuli, it grows, changes and adapts to the world. So man is not an inactive player whose destiny is determined by circumstances according to the Freudians. Among the cognitive theorists, only Bruner (1973) is fascinated with the process of intuition, creativity and aesthetics. Not until the humanistic psychologists Maslow (1969) and the rest, discovered that man is good, creative and could order his ways, the road was not paved for a deep study of man to reveal the source of his creative nature. Man has deeply studied so many things but himself. The literature on imagination as a major area of creative growth is far from being popular or advanced in Africa. Its treatment detracts from conventional academic lines. As such the literature is in the category of self-development, how to do it, and esoteric genre. What is considered as creative thinking in most

professions is biased towards the left-brain mode earlier mentioned. Those in the right brain dominant disciplines are not considered to engage in serious thinking. That is an erroneous mind set. It is only in the last few decades that some insightful management consultants began to challenge psychologists on the need to make aspects of their studies life-applicable, using the intuitive, creative side of the brain. Top on the list of this brand of “psychologists” is Dr. Harry Alder, the artist, corporate manager, entrepreneur, business school tutor and consultant. His book **The Right Brain Manager** (1993) is a pacesetter on this subject. On the subject of **lateral thinking** (1990) Edward de Bono is the eminent scholar whose course packages many personnel managers price so high. For the past three decades he has held the forte on the sub area of creative thinking. However, his materials and those of others like him are directed at those already in the world of work. The educational system where the primary preparation for the industry takes place is yet to incorporate such a vital area of study into their programmes. Earlier on Lowenfield and Britain (1971) had explored creative and mental growth across life span.

Their findings have been useful in Arts education to date. However, such facts need to be infused into general education for all.

I began to pre-occupy my thoughts with the essence, power and multi-dimensional permutations of human thought process in the visual mode since 1980. My visual treatise **Images of Thought** (1986) in which I explored mostly remembered simulated and orchestrated images was my first response. Ever since, I have not relented as I made iconographic studies a haven in my on-going art history expedition and now human development studies (Egonwa 1992; 1994). I am of the opinion that a lot could be learnt about man by understanding the ramifications of man's imaginative exploits: those perhaps extant notions of logical

thinking needs to be re-examined and its frontiers expanded to acknowledge right brain processes. The implication of the above are twofold: First, this brand of life science must be infused into the school system for the growing members of our society. Secondly it has to be properly developed and disseminated among the adult populations for a new consciousness towards better livelihood. Our current thoughts on human development studies are propelled by this existential truth.

The power of Images:

The quality and type of images people see (i.e. how people see themselves, situations and the world) is crucial to their abilities to perform tasks, set goals and get them achieved (Gen.13:14-15, Exd. 7:1) Self-image actually aggregates world image, as we shall see. What people's life become is largely a matter of how they see life.

Human experiences are pervasively visual at base that is they are built on a background of imagery. It has been established “that 97% all our experiences are pictorially articulated in our minds.” This involves the sensibility of “seeing” with our mind's eye, even though the event or object is not physically in place. The brain areas responsible for perception will actually record the event as present.

It is therefore, not mere semantic or pedantic cosmetics when people exclaim, “I see”, when they come to an understanding of an apparently non-physical issue. The same people when they have a hunch would equally reason “It appears to me”. A mental picture of what seems to be the reality has been flashed on their minds. These expressions betray an essential cognitive mode of thought, which many are ignorant of - ***the visual or image mode of thought***. There is a power in the image, which is primordial and divine. No wonder

the scriptures tells us that, “In the beginning was the word, and the word was God. (Jn. 1:1). And the word was made flesh (Jn. 1:14) (i.e. take form and shape) and dwelt among us.

The reality of words is a function for the **images** they provoke, **since** images make our formation and understanding of concepts possible. Words are but image **surrogates**. **Words represent** but images **present**. When God speaks He expects us to form the mental picture of it in our mind, affirms Oyedepo (1998). Unless one can imagine the referents of many abstract terms we use daily, they are but meaningless sounds in space. Concepts are vital in the development of theories in both social and natural sciences. Theories are the basis of lasting actions because they are a construct of studied truth. Notwithstanding, without images, concepts are hard to come by and theories are impossible to formulate. Invariably **art** is the mother of **science** as we can see. In the scripture quoted above, “made flesh” would mean become **real, appeared, and visible** by the force of presence. Images have powers of presence, they present the essence of their subject matter, to make them meaningful - and in the words of Eisner (1986) “there is an icon -a stylized image of reality underlying any term that is meaningful. The makers of such icons are people that were regarded as “perceptive” or “insightful”. These words **perceptive**, a derivative from perception and **insightful** from **insight**, both connote vision or something seen. Since there is usually no physical object or event prior to these terms, it follows that the picture or image referred to is a mental one (in the mind). The word insight means (sighted from within or seen through from within -intuition). Eisner therefore, concluded that in the beginning was the image, “since the Latin root of 'intuition' rendered **intueri** means to look upon or to see'. Suffice to say categorically that there is immense power in images. Images do not fail. Those who prepare manufacturers manual know this.

Addressing top management staff of Covenant University recently, Bishop Oyedepo said,

I know what I saw. When I see what I saw I will know it What I am seeing now has not approximated what I saw”

Such is the enormous power of images and imagery.

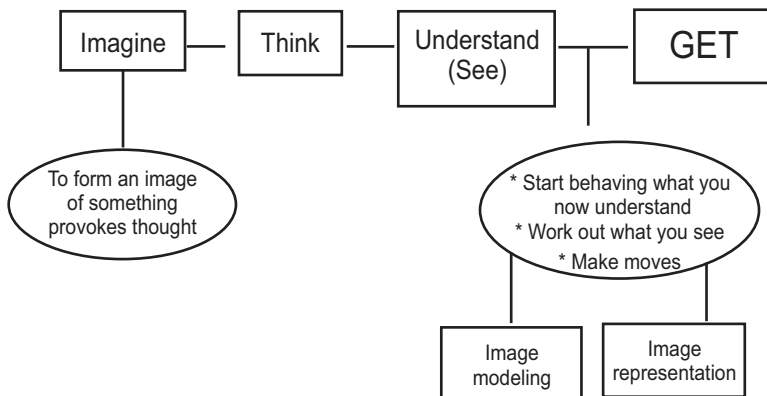


Fig 1.1: Osa Egonwa's Thoughts to Things Pathway. (DETPP)

Imagination

The word imagination means born of images which otherwise never existed. No wonder a wise man said that God speaks in pictures. It is a natural tendency to create pictures in our minds, but it goes beyond that. The images formed in the mind must be manipulated or handled under the auspices of thinking to form new realities in infinite configurations. Information so handled in that mental slate represents a higher order of seeing that brings into being. It is termed cultivated perception or lateral thinking. In the

words of Ritson and Smith (1975) it manifests in:

“the ability to see relationships, to imagine, to question, to make decisions, to pass judgments, to find forms and order, to think intuitively, to rethink and restructure and to develop perceptions”.

Hypothesizing and visualization belong to this level of thinking, “intuition is relied upon but logic is not completely out of it, neither is analysis but we allow our mind to roam, as it were, until we strike the **eureka** moment. Construction and deconstruction are easier when the object is present and tangible. The project is made real with the force of imagination so we can rearrange, add and delete mentally as the case may be. Until we perceive the image of a conceived goal and have it in our mind, the practical steps towards its realization are difficult. That is why when people are faced with challenges, because they refused to or are ignorant of the resource of imagination, they say “they do not have the least idea”, on how to go about the issue. It is because they have not seen any images. Imagination is doing exploits with images. Imagination means mental resourcefulness; it precedes actual or entrepreneurial prowess but it is the powerhouse for action.

Genesis 11:6b *“... and this they began to do; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do”.*

These people wanted to make a name, so they conceptualized a magnificent skyscraper, visualized it, had a clear image of it in their heart, then they took the step of faith to possess it and actually began to concretize (actualize) the images of their mind! Why because man as an image of God enjoys OMNI status if he could imagine it.

The lord on whose hand the king of Samaria leaned could not **imagine** the vision of Elisha that “tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria” 2Kg.7: 1. He could not form the picture, so he was restrained from partaking of it He was given charge of the event but as he was **looking** he did not **see** when the people stampeded and trod upon him. His eyes were open but his mind was blind (verse 20).

Potential

According to Munroe (1992) “potential is the large, unknown bank of resources you were given at birth”. It is the fruits of the power and wisdom of God in human kind waiting to manifest. In the school of miracles, expectation they say is the mother of manifestation. In potential actualization, understanding backed by action is the mother of its manifestation. One may have understanding but if he/she fails to act nothing results. Potential is dead without work (action). The true impression of your latent powers, talents and abilities must be registered affirmatively in your minds' eye and understood. Hence such axioms as “man know thyself”. Until it is present it is impossible to possess i the sole of our spirit man's feet must step upon these images for us to take possession because possession is greater than ownership. No one stands on the old spot to take possession; we must step forward. We must behave the status and ability. Potentials need to be possessed before they could be actualized. What you desire you deserve, but what you possess you partake. What we think of ourselves matters a lot and it begins at the conceptual level. With concepts we call up qualities in us, which are otherwise unseen that **is** we visualize our notions, proposals and aspirations, because concept can be

imaginatively handled. We can build edifices with seemingly disparate ideas we have encountered. Nevertheless, we must take practical steps towards the actualization of our mental edifice.

The activity of imagination may appear as daydreaming, in solitary fantasy, but this play- way cerebral operation, increase thought capacity building and provides the springboard for expression (manifestation). If it is well thought out from its internal structures, it definitely shall be well expressed. Graphically the relationship between **image**, **imagination** and **potential release** could be illustrated in the diagram below: -

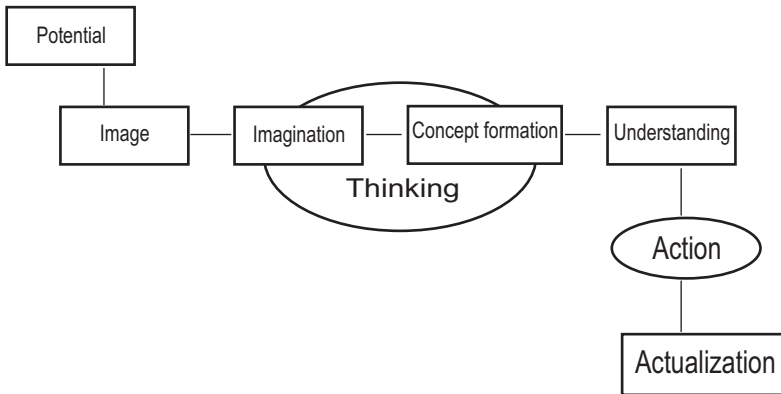


Fig. 1 .2: Osa Egonwa's Potential Actualization Sequence (OEPAS)

It has been said that ideas rule the world but of these, well thought out well imagined, understood and worked out ones dominate. No wonder perceptive men devote good time to THINKING.

Actualization

Many people have underestimated their mental and physical abilities because they lack strategies to invoke the full manifestation of God's *power* and *wisdom* put in them at birth. Knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom has been programmed into us by God. And if it is from Him it will surely according to Oyedepo (2002) produce practical proofs! The type of assumptions inherent in traditional platonic beliefs such as the misapplied difference between mind and body; the baseness of the latter and the loftiness of the former, the superiority of mental ideas mediated through words and numbers over icons and images even in a world in which the ratio of the printed image is far in excess of printed word, have been partly responsible for this. The wider consequences of these views are disastrous for education. For instance there is a dubious status hierarchy in terms of subjects taught in schools. Mathematics is the king of the subjects, while the subjects in which students make use of their hands (doing subjects) are assigned lower intellectual status. There has been undue separation and emphasis of step by step logical thought and language over, imaginative, insightful and visionary thought.

The first pattern of thought above is the operation of the left hemisphere of the brain while the second belongs to the right hemisphere. The tendency is to favour the left-brain pattern to the disadvantage of the right. But both are part of the divine plan in our makeup. God has given all, why do we take partial delivery? Some people say they are left-brain people other say they are right- brain people. The truth is that every significant right-brain activity must incorporate aspects of left-brain operations as well. No logical and analytic invention can materialize without an intuitive or

imaginative thread running through it. Failure to avail oneself of the complimentary services of the two hemispheres the brain spells mediocrity. Some say science is discovery while by implication art is performance. Let it be known that every discovery without a performance, whether pre or post will end in the chronicles of myth/legend, and every performance that is not hinged on a definite discovery ends up in the annals of amusement! Psychomotor skills do not operate in isolation of the cognitive and affective. The tidy separations we have embarked on between these three through the years in our course offerings is more out of political exigency than epistemological reality. For instance architects use their right brain to visualize spatial and aesthetic relationships but depend on the left brain to estimate dimensions, details of orientation and quantification of physical materials needed. The conclusion of this matter is that we should maximize our thinking faculty for that is the expressive root of our potentials. One of the greatest developmental problems that exist in the Nigerian nation today with respect to its emerging professionals is this imbalance in disciplinary exposure while in the making. For instance our technologists lack creative arts training while in colleges; as a result they only emphasize the scientific aspect of their products. Worse still they are not imaginative enough in their inventions and therefore, cannot compete in the committee of inventors. Those school subjects that will help develop imaginative thought; motor-skill and visionary tendencies needs be recognized, funded and made mandatory at the primary and secondary levels of education in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The regenerated (born again) man as an image of God has all that it takes to manifest in any field of his desire. We need to see these, see ourselves playing that status in the larger, limitless world of our imagination. And as we behave these, i.e. act them out, they will be actualized. This is the desire of Covenant University's brand of humanistic psychology as an agency in the fulfillment of God's plan for man to come to perfection. Popular school subjects in our public institutions have not produced the work ready, self-reliant graduate at whatever level. The average Nigerian graduate has not been taught to think, so he lacks self esteem, self-confidence and cannot actualize himself. Never a time has Africa been blessed as now in the creative curricular revolution being launched by Covenant University. Human development studies the fire brand life science under the auspices of its queen; the Total Man Concept (TMC) shall indeed produce **expert thinkers**, who are responsibility sensitive, self-motivated and enterprising. A visionary generation that shall invariably play a dominion role is being mid-wived. It is only wise that other universities and colleges should turn to Covenant University for mentorship on how to join this revolution in the academia. Federal agencies in charge of curriculum and educational development will be wiser the sooner they come to see. Science is a product of imagination, to exclude human development studies (life science) from the foundational preparation for scientists is to render them irrelevant to life. Besides, such an act is not only illogical but also antithetical to the match of civilization.

Acknowledgments

We give thanks, glory and honour first of all to the Almighty God, the Ultimate One without whom any empowerment for today's effort would have been impossible. We appreciate in no small measure the Founding Bishop and visionary Chancellor, Dr. David Oyedepo for pioneering this great revolution of developing the man who will develop his world. I wish to express my profound appreciation to my best friend and wife, Rose Osa Egonwa for her ever-willing support and love. Our gratitude also goes to the Head Department of the Human Development, Prof. Aize Obayan, whose idea it was to start a Seminar of this kind. She has worked tirelessly, organizing this event. In collaboration with her, are the wonderful members of Human Development Department, lecturers and staff who are co-organizers of this conference, and have worked hard to see it through. To the members of our sister colleges and departments Deans and their staff, who have supported us in no small way, we owe our thanks. Finally, our appreciation also goes to you all special people, too numerous, and which time will fail me to mention, and members of the audience, who have made out time to be here in spite of your busy schedule.

References

- *The Holy Bible* (KJV)
- Alder H. (1993) *The Right Brain Manager*, London, Piatkus
- Craig G.W. (1989) *Human Development*, New Jersey, Prentice Hall
- Eisner W.E. (1986) "The Role of the Arts in Cognition and Curriculum" *Journal of Art & Design Education* Vol. 5, pp. 1 & 2
- Egonwa O.D. (forthcoming) "Art & Sustainable Development in Nigeria" Unpublished Manuscript.
- (1986) *Images of Thought*, Art exhibition catalogue, (Press Center, Benin City) 12pp.
- Edward de Bono (1990) *Lateral Thinking*, London, Penguin Books
- Ibiyemi T.S. (2002) *God, Man And The Image Grammar*, 57th Inaugural Lecture University of Ilorin 30th Sept. - Lowenfield V, Britain L (1971) *Creative and Mental Growth*, London, Macmillan
- Murphy J. (1964) *The Miracle of Mind Dynamics*, London, Reward Books
- Munroe M. (1992) *Releasing Your Potential*, Shippensburg, Destiny Image Publishers
- Oyedepo, D. O. (2000) *Towards Mental Exploits*, Lagos, Dominion House
- Oyedepo, D.O. (1998) *Walking in Wisdom*, Lagos, Dominion House

- Ritson J. E. and Smith J.A. (1975) *Creative Teaching of Art in Elementary Schools*, London, Ally and Bacon.