

Title: “More regarding the Immanuel Approach and imagination”

October 16, 2024

Greetings all,

I continue to encounter questions and misunderstanding with respect to how imagination fits into the Immanuel Approach. So I decided to write another FAQ (“Is Immanuel Approach visual imagery created by my imagination?”) to hopefully provide additional clarification. This content can also be accessed from section XI, B in the “Cumulative FAQ Document” on the FAQ page of www.immanuelapproach.com.

Blessings,

Dr. Lehman/Karl

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Is Immanuel Approach visual imagery created by my imagination? Occasionally I hear someone say, “we use our imaginations to construct Immanuel Approach visual imagery,” or “Immanuel Approach visual imagery is just the same thing as imagination visual imagery,” or “Immanuel Approach visual imagery is created by our imaginations.” Neurological case studies and brain scan studies indicate that this is almost certainly not true.

Neurological case studies: An exceptionally well-documented case study describes a patient who experienced complete color blindness (he could only see in black and white) after a brain injury; and very careful evaluation revealed that he experienced the exact same color blindness in his waking vision, in the visual hallucinations he experienced during migraines, in the visual imagery of his dreams, in the visual imagery of all his memories, and in his imagination visual imagery.¹ Similarly, a number of well-documented case studies of patients with visual-field defects caused by brain injuries revealed that the patients experienced the exact same visual-field blind-spots in their waking visual perception, in the visual imagery in all of their memories, and in their imagination visual images.²

¹

Oliver Sacks, *An Anthropologist on Mars: Seven Paradoxical Tales* (Vintage Books: New York, 1995), pages 3-41.

²

See, for example, Martha Farah, Michael J. Soso, and Richard Dasheiff, “Visual Angle of the Mind’s Eye Before and After Unilateral Occipital Lobectomy,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, Vol.18, No. 1 (1992): pages 241-246; and Henry Head and Gordon Holmes, “Sensory Disturbances from Cerebral Lesions,” *Brain*, Vol. 34, No. 2-3 (Nov 1911): pages 102-254.

Brain scans: EEGs, functional MRIs, PET scans, and other brain scans show that waking vision, visual hallucinations, visual imagery in dreams, visual imagery in memory, and imagination visual imagery all use *some* of the same neurological circuitry.³

These neurological case studies and brain scan studies clearly show that waking visual perception, visual hallucinations, visual imagery in dreams, and visual imagery in memories all use *some* of the same neurological circuitry as imagination visual imagery. But nobody believes or says, “Waking vision, visual hallucinations, visual imagery in dreams, and visual imagery in memory are all just the same thing as imagination visual imagery.” And nobody believes or says, “Our experience of waking visual perception is created by our imagination.”

We do not have neurological case studies or brain scan studies for Immanuel Approach visual imagery, but I expect that they would show the exact same results—that Immanuel Approach visual imagery uses *some* of the same neurological circuitry as imagination visual imagery, just as all of these other visual phenomena use *some* of the same neurological circuitry as imagination visual imagery. And just as with waking visual perception, visual hallucinations, visual imagery in dreams, and visual imagery in memories, it does not make sense to say, “Immanuel Approach visual imagery is just the same thing as imagination visual imagery.” And it does not make sense to say, “Immanuel Approach visual imagery is created by our imagination.”

My belief is that the Lord can directly activate our visual-imagery neurological circuitry, and that this is what is happening when Immanuel Approach recipients experience visual imagery as part of perceiving the Lord’s tangible, living, interactive presence. And again, this is *not* the same thing as recipients themselves activating parts of these neurological circuits in order to produce imagination visual imagery. In fact, if my perception is correct, then Immanuel Approach visual imagery is more like waking vision than like imagination, in that both waking vision and IA visual imagery use neurological circuits from our visual systems to enable us to receive/perceive phenomena from *outside* of ourselves.

³See, for example, Scott D. Slotnick, William L. Thompson, and Stephen M. Kosslyn, "Visual Memory and Visual Mental Imagery Recruit Common Control and Sensory Regions of the Brain," *Cognitive Neuroscience*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2012): pages 14-20. DOI: 10.1080/17588928.2011.578210. Epub 2011 Jun 3; Giorgio Ganis, William L. Thompson, and Stephen M. Kosslyn, "Brain Areas Underlying Visual Mental Imagery and Visual Perception: an fMRI Study," *Brain Research. Cognitive Brain Research*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Jul 2004): pages 226-41. DOI: 10.1016/j.cogbrainres.2004.02.012; Joel Pearson, Thomas Naselaris, Emily A. Holmes, and Stephen M. Kosslyn, "Mental Imagery: Functional Mechanisms and Clinical Applications," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, Vol.19, No. 10 (Oct 2015): pages 590–602. DOI: 10.1016/j.tics.2015.08.003; Satoru Miyauchi, Masaya Misaki, Shigeyuki Kan, Takahide Fukunaga, and Takahiko Koike, "Human brain activity time-locked to rapid eye movements during REM sleep," *Experimental Brain Research*, vol. 192, No. 4, (Feb 2009): pages 657-67; R. J. Howard, A. David, P. W. Woodruff, I. Mellers, J. C. Wright, M. Brammer, and S. C. Williams, "Seeing visual hallucinations with functional magnetic resonance imaging," *Dementia and Geriatric Cognitive Disorders*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1997): pages 73-77. DOI: 10.1159/000106610.