

**Exploring the Potentiality of the Nigerian Mind:
The Power of Self Awareness, Intention, and Reflectivity in a Disadvantaged Society
with a Personal Note on the Value of *The Wisdom Page***

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Mind in essence is universal. Although malleable and conformable to cultural milieus, the basic potentiality of the mind is oneness. There is therefore no exception to the Nigerian mind.

The future of Nigeria lies in the mind of that young man or young woman, in despair and deep in the quagmire of societal fluxes and economic hardship. These disadvantages in present day Nigeria are profound with implications. Access to empowerment is out of reach for millions as they meander about without direction and hope. The natural inclination for many is to complain: blame government, society, their parents, their bosses, and even God.

But wisdom cries out in the streets: it declares unequivocally that Nigeria is in the greatest era of opportunity in its history to change its destiny. Socio-cultural forces, impeding our growth as a society, are strong and real. Yet, in the Nigerian mind, there is the power to break out of the complex web of cultural and religious paradigms while still maintaining its ethnic and spiritual integrity.

In this essay I explore the frontiers of self awareness, intention and reflectivity, believing them as the key set of disciplines that unleash personal power to transcend any kind of impasse irrespective of the country or people. As Nigerians, our destiny lies in our own hands, and we alone can shape the future of this country. The key is in the mind; our minds.

There are layers upon layers of untested beliefs and world views that sheath our true self, shrouding it from accessing reality. And without being in touch of reality we lack the power to master our circumstances, and our personal and collective destiny.

The Nigerian must stop in his or her tracks and stand alone in the midst of cultural forces to ask pivotal questions as these: In the most sincere and highest form of the words, who am I? Who is responsible for me, my outcomes and my destiny? How can I contribute? When backed up with courage and sincerity these questions open up to self awareness.

We start with an exploration of the first question “Who am I?” Seeing yourself as you really are is the opening precursor to change. Forget what society, voices from parents, friends, and religious leaders have said. You must be brave and face the stark reality of who you are.

Accept your personal reality and imbibe the factual philosophy of John Paul Satre when he observes

“Man can will nothing unless he has first understood that he must count on no one but himself; that he is alone, abandoned on earth in the midst of his infinite responsibilities, without help, with no other aim than the one he sets himself, with no other destiny than the one he forges for himself on this earth”.

Taking this truth with courage brings us to self responsibility. Without self awareness one cannot be absolutely responsible, consciously and deliberately. This is personal power and freedom. I deeply concur with Peter Koestenbaum when he asserts

“Nothing happens unless you make it happen. Your responsibility is wide-ranging. Wherever you find yourself, your sphere of influence, your capacity to affect events, to make things happen, reaches well beyond the sound of your voice and the reach of your eyes. These are facts – philosophic facts, if you will, but facts nonetheless. These are realities of the world in which we find ourselves functioning and alive. These are not matters of opinion, of variable value systems, or changeable belief structures. These are truths of our human condition. We must live consistently with them lest we become “unnatural”.

When people take responsibility, organizations change, society advances, and civilization takes a turn. To demonstrate responsibility one must ask this pivotal question: How can I contribute? In asking that question one is inevitably provoked into exploring external realities to identify gaps, and his or her own internal realities to identify strengths to help address these gaps.

Self awareness therefore is the consciousness of your inner locus of control over external events and destiny. It is the realization that life is not controlled by circumstances, capricious forces, or fate. Self awareness is the use of personal power to monitor internal states and the freedom and flexibility to manage these states to suit the overarching purpose in view.

Thus we come intention, the next discipline. Intention is the mobilization of the forces of consciousness and our being towards a focal point in the future. It is purpose narrowed down to daily activity with a consciousness of direction and a bull’s eye target.

Many Nigerians have hopes, dreams, prophecies, and promises of God but lack or are unaware of the power of intention. Intention is an offshoot of awareness, nothing more, and nothing less. Insight into reality and life situations fosters intention. In harnessing the power of intention one must concentrate his or her forces on doing what matters most, best suited to one’s individuality and personal significance. Imagine the discipline of intention gaining a critical mass in the collective consciousness of Nigerians. What will result is a mass acceleration of development in science, technology, social institutions, education, governance and wellbeing.

What then would be the role of reflectivity in a disadvantaged society? In training the mind to harness its powers for the good and making contributions to the world, one must learn to ponder, meditate, and stand back and think. Deliberate and sustained thought are

the keys to every breakthrough in creativity and problem solving. Reflectivity is based on self awareness and self responsibility. It is knowing that the solutions to life's problems come from your active involvement and hard work and not from a passive disposition to await solutions from a lucky break.

Our society yearns for these disciplines. We need our youth to learn, master, and use them for the common good. What lies before us, is not scarcity, hardship, and impossibilities, but opportunity in the 21st Century, the age of innovation based on wisdom and consciousness.

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On August 7 of this year, while visiting and window shopping in a book store, I met a young man. I overheard him lamenting that he wanted to buy a book that would motivate him. He was emotionally down and needed help. My heart went out to him.

I perceived that the fundamental problem was not motivation but a lack of understanding of life principles and wisdom. I asked him what he did for a living. He told me he worked as a cleaner at the Nestlé factory outside town. And he had just a high school qualification (what we call secondary school here in Nigeria).

Fortunately for me I had bought a book from *Barnes and Nobles* in Baltimore when I was there the previous month. I read the electronic version of the book many years ago: *As a Man Thinketh* by James Allen. This particular one I bought was a hard cover special edition printed like a Bible. I had been looking for someone to give it to as a gift, wanting to find someone who would really appreciate the book and use it.

So it was a moving experience for both of us when I went home to get the book for him. He told me it was the second time in his life that he was ever given such gift that meant so much to him. I felt immense fulfillment and peace. I encouraged him to work hard to get a degree and he promised he will keep in touch.

So many people are groaning inside and need answers that culture and organized religion are not giving to them. Amidst a vast sea of opportunity with open access to information, knowledge, and connectivity that is characteristic of this age, many still hold on to obsolete ideologies and dogma. They lack the courage to break out of the cultural barriers imposed upon them through their upbringing.

Wisdom to some people is at best a fantasy and people in the majority pray to be given the gift of wisdom. Many beliefs here in Nigeria (and indeed other parts of the world) see wisdom as something that is received passively, a gift gotten through prayer rather than a virtue earned, painstakingly through passionate seeking, courage, sincerity, ambition, and transcendent suffering in the vicissitudes of life. The pursuit of wisdom however has to be informed through enlightenment; otherwise it will be amiss, ending in futility and foolishness. Paradoxically, so long as one doesn't stop there, he or she could still be on the path to wisdom if they continue to learn. Hence, I believe wisdom can be ardently

sought through the reading of high quality inspirational material which predisposes the mind to accessing its true personality, attuned to mastering circumstances, and having an understanding of universal principles and an objective view of reality.

Wisdom cannot be taught but the mind can be inspired to be wise. In essence, what one is doing in wisdom education is helping the aspirant find access to his or her self where infinite wisdom is present. For a number of people this may be difficult because too many artificial structures have shrouded the true self obscuring it in inactivity and dullness. In this dulled state, without access to the wisdom of the self, the individual is a victim in the seeming 'wicked' forces of reality.

The Wisdom Page therefore makes the scene in a time when humanity, its systems, its governance and its future deeply yearn for wisdom. Of all the resources I have come across, *The Wisdom Page* stands tall and uncommon. Authored by some of the world's most proficient mappers of reality, it is replete with guided and illustrative opportunities for humanity and the future of our planet. Its responsibility is huge, its work for an ailing planet is daunting, but its vision is inexhaustible. Its neutrality and reason based thinking make it suitable for all sectors of society, religion, and government. Having access to *The Wisdom Page* here in Nigeria reveals what is dawning upon our world--the informed power and responsibility to forge a new destiny for humanity and the Earth.

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