



* On Arts of Participation *
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Acknowledging the Inherently Imaginal Re-Presentations of the Actual that Precipitate Awareness

Psychic Re-Presentations of the Actual that Precipitate Knowing the Real

There is a psychological view of perception and consciousness that interprets both the 'informational data' of the senses (sound, light, texture, etc.) and its incorporation into thoughts, *as primarily psychical* and thus essentially imaginal phenomena. From this perspective, human awareness is constituted in the mental generation of images, emotions, and concepts that are re-presentations of evidently existent entities and actions 'out there' in the world. Thus the book one 'knows' and 'understands' is essentially the book one re-presents or imagines in one's own consciousness. In this regard, awareness is constituted in the 'thingless things of thought' — be those mental images, emotions, or concepts.

Some would judge this view of knowing solipsistic or essentially divorced from external reality. But knowing by way of psychical re-presentations is not necessarily inaccurate. A person's imaginal re-presentation of a given book might or might not be an accurate re-presentation of the actual phenomena of a given book-like entity. However, whether accurate or not, one's knowing of it still derives from images, concepts, and thoughts that are 'mental activities' rather than 'the thing in itself' known without any intervening psychical representation. Thus in all instances of knowing, human awareness is *precipitated* by psychic re-presentations (perceptions and cognitions) that are not the actual things or actions of which those representations enable some knowing. This distinction is important because it suggests that all knowing, however literally accurate its psychical representations might be, is inevitably imaginal and likely somehow incomplete as a final assessment of the phenomena known by way of imaginal cognition. It also indicates that knowing is more dynamical than literally direct. Psychical re-presentations convey characteristic qualities of *how* what is perceived is composed or 'fits together.' A book is known not by literally 'taking it into

consciousness' but by perceptions and cognitions that generate a dynamic 'sensing' of its particular characteristics of *how* it is its particular manifestation. The 'what' of the book is the 'how' of relations among various aspects of color, shape, words, etc.

Mathematical knowing might be considered potentially the most accurate mode of imaginal knowing because the phenomena it imagines is so abstracted from 'literal things.' The 'how' of numbers is perhaps the most readily and exactly re-presentable of dynamical relations among 'things.' However, number is not 'the things in themselves' with all their complexities of individual traits and contextings. The $2 + 2$ that equals 4 is not the 'two oranges on the table and the two on the floor.' The numbers of mathematical knowing are useful reductive abstractions that, some would say, exist only in human consciousness. Similarly, knowing by way of biological chemistry is knowing in terms of the reductively defined and empirically tested existence of chemical elements in matter. However, this form of knowing is also an imaginal abstraction. Oranges are particularized entities that are radically individualized, regardless of their 'number' or the similarity of the chemical compounds that give them their characteristic 'orange-ness.' Abstract representations of their chemical composition provide useful knowing about aspects of orange-ness, but it is a most incomplete re-representation of actual, individualized oranges.

Given that actual phenomenon are known as real by way of imaginal psychical processes that precipitate conscious awareness, the status of reality is readily conditioned by how those imaginal activities of knowing are configured. Such re-presentations can be presumed to derive from pre-existing models or criteria as references for composing psychical 'knowing of the real.' That is to say, 'knowing the real' is necessarily precipitated by imaginal psychical activities that derive from some established models. Such examples or patterns for making associations and interpretations are referred to as epistemic modes of knowing and heuristic models for interpreting the meaning of what is known. The sources of such models are considered to be both genetically inherent to human consciousness as well as socially learned.

In a most general contrast, 'the real' or 'the actual' can be known in reference to either a more singularly reductive model or a more pluralistically concurrent, thus non-reductive, mode of association. It appears that humans most habitually distinguish the status of things in the singularly reductive mode. For evidently practical reasons, ordinary or conventional awareness thus tends to reflexively establish objects and events as discrete, separate entities. This attitude is referred to here as ordinarily reductive knowing and understanding. Such knowing is the basis for what is termed here as 'ordinary reality.' The issue is not that everyone's 'ordinary reality' is exactly the same, but rather that it tends to be composed in reference to more reductive models for knowing and interpreting phenomena.

Ordinary and Extra-Ordinary Realities of the Actual that Participate in Totality

This view of all knowing and understanding as being constituted in psychical or imaginal form is important for understanding both contrasts and similarities between reductively exclusive and pluralistically inclusive modes for knowing and interpreting phenomena. When knowing is guided by oppositional categories of true versus false, or real versus unreal, an intrinsically hierarchical judgment is established about what constitutes a valid status for the things known. That preferential judgment depends upon background models or criteria for what constitutes truth or reality—and these can vary dramatically between persons and cultures. Primary criteria for distinguishing the real or true from the unreal or false derive from shared social assumptions or conventions. These might or might not be rational or empirically accurate. But they are nonetheless socially derived and validated. In a modern, techno-scientific society, the real and true tend to be classified in terms of empirically materialistic or rationally self-consistent status. Thereby, that which cannot be ‘verified’ empirically or explained in a self-consistent, linearly reasoned manner is not readily granted a status of valid reality or truthfulness.

In order to be definitive and thus practically useful, socialized assumptions and conventions intrinsically assert some formulation of ‘ordinary reality’ that is necessarily reductive of pluralistic complexity. Singular things are more readily related and manipulated. Social continuity and ordering demand some shared consistency of definitive identifications of persons, things, and functions. Knowing and understanding that exceed or contradict those reductions are thus intrinsically extra-ordinary. While all socialized standards for reality and truth can be considered reductive in that these tend to be definitive rather than radically complex, the standards of modernist societies are in a sense ‘radically reductive.’ Reliance on mechanistic and materialistic models as the predominant conventional standards for knowing and interpreting favors the assumption that measurement and quantification are ultimate tests of valid reality. Such emphasis restricts ordinary validity to a particularly narrow mode of knowing and understanding phenomena. That which cannot be measured, quantified, or mechanically (systematically) modeled is thus reflexively regarded as of questionable existence or value. Under this rule for ordinary reality almost any pluralistic status that is not empirically based and mechanistically or hierarchically ordered is difficult to validate.

Obviously, mechanistic and systematically rationalistic modes of knowing and interpretation are capable of generating impressively potent practical understandings of ‘how things work.’ Their usefulness in defining a context of ‘the real’ is not in doubt. However, like all socially constituted versions of reality and identity, these are

reductively limited in adequately re-presenting, or precipitating awareness of, the more radically complex dynamical status of concurrently diversified totality. Thus precipitating awareness of this latter aspect of ‘the real’ requires some additional, relatively *extra-ordinary* mode of knowing and understanding ‘how things really really are.’

Suggesting such an intrinsic contrast between some ordinary version of reality and an extra-ordinary one is not posed here as ‘an opposition.’ This contrast is not being presented in the sense that ‘one is more real than the other.’ Rather, both are understood to be required for human consciousness to adequately represent, by way of differently categorized imaginal modes of knowing (reductive and non-reductive), the complexities of totality that are concurrently composed in both singularly particular and pluralistically diversified statuses (of oneness and manyness). Ordinary and extra-ordinary modes of knowing and interpreting the real or actual are complimentary in a consciousness that participates in the holistically inclusive dynamical character of totality. Thus both reductive and non-reductive (or extra-ordinary) modes of knowing are required to precipitate such radically inclusive awareness.

The Challenge for the Ordinary to Submit to Participation in the Extra-Ordinary Dynamics of Concurrency

Though there exists a plausible logic for the co-existence of ordinarily reductive and more-than-ordinarily pluralistic statuses (both being known by way of imaginal psychic processes), bringing these into overt relationship is not easy. The ordinary version of reality has the reflexive advantage because it is considered, by unconscious default, to be the practically real. Developing a conscious awareness of and relationship between the two thus requires some overt mediation. That tends to involve confronting the habitually reductive, ordinary perspective with some explicit representation of the more-than-ordinary complexity of irreducible diversity in concurrent being/becoming. Such representation is discussed here in terms of ‘artful expression’ that provides tangible form to the dynamic character of concurrency’s pluralism. The potential effect of such expression on psychic processes is to engage more conscious awareness of the inter-relatedness of ordinary reduction and more-than-ordinary multiplicity. Thus, its creation is referred to here as ‘arts of precipitating participation.’ This phrase is used to suggest that some ‘special’ expression (art) is required to *precipitate* overt awareness of more-than-ordinary complexity, thereby enabling *participation in* a sense of self and world *as of* the actual, but ordinarily implicit, interactive multiplicity of concurrency.

However, the challenge of engaging sense of self and world overtly in such participation is not only a matter of creating artful expressions that explicitly manifest some extra-ordinary complexity. Even if this occurs there remains the difficulty for ordinarily

reductive attitudes to affirm or validate that expression, much less submit their dominance to an actual *participation in* a ‘larger field’ of manyness-in/as-oneness. Thus one could posit two aspects of the ‘arts of precipitating participation’ in radical complexity. The formalizing of precipitory expression involves making and enacting—painting, writing, performing, etc.. But some ‘artful maneuvering’ is also called for in the activities of consciousness that allow the resulting expressions to be ‘taken in’ or engaged by the mind—a mind whose attitudes about self and world tend to be habitually reductive. This latter, more internal psychical shift constitutes a sort of ‘art of reception’ that allows conscious attitudes to correspond or *co-respond with* the external expressions of concurrency’s radically complex dynamics—thereby effectively participating in/as those extra-ordinarily interactive dynamics.

In a mechanistically based culture, with its dualistic emphasis upon literalistic reality and singularly rationalistic truth, the entrenched status of habitual identity and ordinary reality can be utterly resistant to a valid knowing of radically dynamic concurrency. Such a basis of ordinary status is fundamentally ‘set against’ any submission to chaotic or radically complicated status. In such a socio-cultural context even the most overt mythical, metaphorically metamorphic and symbolic styles of expressing the dynamical quality of concurrent being/becoming can become ineffectual in precipitating participation in extra-ordinary complexity of concurrency. It is the very extremity and effective repression of this resistance in modern cultural mentalities that prompts the rationalistic efforts to re-justify or re-validate mythical knowing presented on this web site. It is proposed here that only by way of psychological insights about how *all knowing* is psychical and implicitly depends upon an interplay of reduction and non-reduction to make its distinctions, can the value of mythical knowing to ‘knowing inclusively’ be restored to a socially validated status for ‘knowing the real.’

Further elaboration of these concepts in Chapter One of the text **Manifesting the Many in the One** on page of that title

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