



\* On Concurrent Being \*

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## Education, Maturity, and the Value of Diversifying Modes of Knowing and Understanding

### Practical Influences of Confronting Social Reality with Nature's Radical Complexity

From a practical perspective one might well ask what are the motives or benefits for trying to know and understand a radically complex, pluralistic status of concurrent being and selfhood. Such pluralistic, indefinitely multiple conditions for reality and identity tend to appear as chaotic and confusing. These do not promote a precise sense of knowledge or control over self and phenomena. How could such a sense of being be useful? In so far as a radically complex version of 'how things really *really* are' has some logical validity, then the context in which humans ordinarily assume they can assert mechanistic, predictable, reductively exact control over phenomena becomes an abstraction from, or reduction of, a more radically interactive, dynamically concurrent totality.

In this sense, the ordinarily assumed context of singular, mechanistic reality exists 'within' a more-than-mechanistically-ordered totality. Human societies define and order their versions of reality and identity 'inside' and in some sense 'in opposition to' that more intricately complicated context. In short, societies reduce the complexity of nature to what seems like a more 'manageable reality.' But that pragmatized version of 'how things are' is necessarily limited, incomplete, and thus delusional. The extra-ordinary representations of both myth and science can disrupt the illusion that socialized reality is ultimately accurate or inclusive. Nonetheless, society's version of identity and reality is 'right' because, for society to exist, it must be collectively accepted—at least for much of the time and in most contexts.

This incongruous relationship between the reductive contexting of socially ordered pragmatism and the irreducible complexities of the inclusive totality of diversified manifestations poses the possibility of dangerously inaccurate representations and interpretations of nature. Thus, awareness of that relationship might be deemed essential to a wisely developed human consciousness. Ignorance of the pluralistic statuses of concurrent being might well prove impractical if it leads to disastrous ‘miscalculations’ in how humans attempt to ‘manage phenomenon’—both materially and psychologically. Inaccurate understanding of the complexity of natural environments and thus the potential impact of human development upon them is one obvious example. The likelihood of socialized human knowing proving inadequate to understanding the complexities of psychic phenomena, behavior, and natural systems suggests that social reality requires some confrontation with its reductive limitations. Thus it seems a wise endeavor to develop a relationship with the interplay of normative reduction and extraordinary complexity. The very value of seeking more conscious engagement with the interplay of singular and pluralistic knowings and understandings is demonstrated by how ordinary social attitudes resist it.

## Educating an Honestly Complex Maturation of Individuality and Social Relations

This concept of practical value for radically inclusive knowing and understanding relates to questions of what constitutes human maturity. It suggests that a fully matured sense of selfhood involves awareness of the conflict between socialized reductions and non-reductive understanding. Ignorance of this contrast denies a person the capacity to differentiate the complexities of their own thought or experience, and the intricacies of their own personal individuality from social definitions. Attaining reflective awareness of how the concurrent complexities of one’s personal psyche and relations with others or nature are limited by habitual reductions would seem an important part of education. A ‘wise’ and independent individual would appear to need development of both reductive and non-reductive modes of knowing and understanding.

It is evident that educational efforts typically involve attempts to introduce young persons to progressively more diversified and complex views of reality and identity. Schooling involves increasingly complicated and specialized levels of intellectual training from lower to higher grade levels. Mature adults are expected to have a more complex understanding of human behavior, social propriety, and scientific knowledge than children do. However, those gradations of knowledge typically tend to be derived primarily from reductive, pragmatically mechanistic modes of knowing and understanding (or epistemic and heuristic modalities). Schooling is reflexively a process of social indoctrination. Unless overtly conscious efforts are made to resist that inherent

emphasis, schooling will not dare challenge the reductive assertions of the socialized basis for knowing and understanding.

An education that does not radically question the limitation of mechanistic, materialistic, and positivistic statuses for valid being is, as it were, logically inadequate for understanding radical complexity. As such it is dangerously one-sided. Individuals who cannot be honest with themselves about the limits of the certainty with which they know and interpret self and the world are not likely to be very wise about living with each other. Familiarity with the inherent otherness or alterity of one's self-complexity can contribute considerably to making people more sensitive about the complexity of other persons. And as to the promotion of individuality, people un-prepared to question socialized definitions of who they are and how they should be are poorly prepared to discover their own particular character and sense abilities. Similarly, a society that fails to acknowledge how its ordinarily reductive structures and definitions obscure human capacity to understand more-than-socially-defined reality denies itself access to a 'broader view' of factors and relationships in both the human collective and the natural world. It is thus more likely to act upon its abstract rules for propriety and short-term practical concerns *without* appreciating their long-term implications.

Comprehensive appreciation of the uses and limitations of reductive knowing and understanding depends upon some conscious relationship with the radically complex character of totality. Such an awareness involves engagement with the polyvalent logics of concurrency, whether by way of mythical dynamism in artful expressions or scientific notions such as randomness, deterministic chaos, quantum weirdness, ecological sensitive interdependence, emergent properties of complex systems, and non-linear dynamics. In so far as these notions are presented in schooling, they tend to be subordinated in importance to more mechanistic models. That is because maturation of the potential range of epistemic and heuristic capacities so as to include a valid appreciation of the polyvalent dynamics of concurrently diversified being has broad implications.

Educational efforts capable of generating a human consciousness mature enough to be 'wise' about, or have sophisticated discretion in relation to, the interplay of singularity and plurality, reductive and non-reductive dynamical status, would promote emergence of 'radically reflective' individual consciousness. Such individuals would be much less likely to subordinate their own complexity to the power hierarchies in any existing social order. Thus the issue of developing the broadest possible range of reductive and non-reductive, inclusive and exclusive modes for knowing and interpreting is intrinsically a 'socially radical idea.' Its promotion is also inherently supportive of the generation of socially pluralistic, individualistically egalitarian, and empathically respectful human relations with self, others, and world.

**\*\*\*Further elaboration of these notions in Introduction and Chapter 1 of text *Learning to Be—Variously*\*\*\***

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