



* On Images and Enactments *

www.mytho-logos.net

Image and Object as Discontinuous Phenomena of Concurrent Presence, Absence, and Relations

Of Things and Events that Appear Singularly yet are Variously

It seems a commonplace habit to perceive and experience objects and events as singular entities. Practical concerns tend to necessitate assumptions that things are separate and that events occur in successive parts that can be managed or manipulated. Objects are reflexively sorted into separate categories, such as magazines, books, newspapers, comics, graphic novels, and brochures. To learn how to perform a new action, such as a dance or how to operate a computer, people often tend to begin at the beginning and proceed 'one step at after another.' These reductions of things and events to singular and progressive status are useful. However, much complexity is thereby ignored.

Characteristics of things separated into singular categories often overlap those categories. Newspapers and magazines can be experienced as having more in common than in contrast. Magazines can vary dramatically in layout, content, and appearance. Learning a dance step involves intricately concurrent activities of mind and body. The actual composition and function of things tends to be constituted in a conglomerate of characteristics and interactions that are not uniformly self-consistent or simply sequentially progressive. The 'events' of emotional states 'occur' in what seems like a distinct instance of time in a specific manner but are similarly difficult to represent with exact definition. A person can feel angry and sad and frightened all at once—there can even be a feeling of the absence of a feeling, such as having an emotional sense of not experiencing the emotion of affinity or caring. Similarly, things and events are known in reference to memory, to what was, or is not present except as a thought, mental image, or emotional feeling. Thus there is always some aspect of knowing that is the 'presence of an absence,' a relation to what is not 'here, now' but in some sense is present. Such implicit, diversified variousness is difficult to represent definitively. Yet

this is an intrinsic aspect of both ‘how things are’ and how they are known and experienced.

Images and Forms that Overtly Re-Present Concurrent Status

In one regard, every context of existence or event has multiple elements and thus a concurrent quality. Photographs best illustrate this condition of ‘many things being present or happening all at once.’ Presented with a photograph of objects in a room or an instant of activity on a city street, a perceiver has many options about ‘where to start taking them in.’ The various things and actions existent in the single instant when the photo was created are ‘all there concurrently.’ There is no particular order or sequence to their being or occurring. However, rational description of objects and events requires reliance on specific designation and progressive reasoning. Description and reason tend to be ordered in narrative form. There is a need to know ‘what is what’ and ‘which comes first.’ Such interpretation of contexts and events, or representations of these, is useful but tends to repress the implicit diversity and complexity of the ‘relations between things.’ A photo can be ‘interpreted’ as indicating a particular order of events. Yet various sequential orderings of the same elements in the same photo are often possible.

Acknowledging the intrinsic interactivity of the component parts of things and the related but sometimes discontinuous or contradictory aspects of the interactivity of elements comprising events requires emphasizing a more concurrent mode of perceiving and interpreting. Artful ‘distortions’ of the ordinarily recognizable forms of things and actions can act as a re-orienting stimulus to human perception and understanding. Stylistic modes, such as the “pointillist” technique or ‘dot painting’ characteristic of Impressionist art, or the portrayal of objects as seen from various perspectives simultaneously associated with Cubism, can shift awareness toward the concurrent interactivity of ‘how things are’ and ‘how things are experienced.’ Representations that are overtly non-practical and extra-ordinary immediately shift the context for representation and its interpretations toward a more-than-habitual context.

By ‘playing’ with ‘how we see,’ ‘what we think we see,’ and ‘how what is there fits together,’ artful re-presentation stimulates reflective awareness upon how ordinary perceptions and assumptions can be both radically abstract and reductive. In ‘leaving out’ some aspects of things and events that one habitually assumes to be primary or present, or by ‘adding in’ elements that are not usually associated with familiar entities, a more overt awareness of their complexity, and human experience of it, can be aroused. This quality of re-construing awareness derives from images as diverse as a pen and ink drawing of pears upon a table and metamorphic images of half human monsters such as Centaurs in myths. Such ‘dislocations’ of ordinary modes of representing, configuring,

and thus knowing the ‘things of the world’ has an important psychological component. In one regard, it brings to more overt awareness how ‘things are variously’ and are diversely experienced. It can prompt unexpected and yet significant associations. In another respect, it makes more obvious the psychical nature of all knowing—including that of the seemingly ordinarily actual or real. Thus it not only ‘remodels’ how things are known or knowable, it renders accessible the psychical origins of knowing in imaginal processes of re-presentation of ‘the actual.’ Knowing itself becomes an overt ‘object’ of such representation.

What is then ‘artful’ about representations is approached here as involving qualities of extra-ordinary figuring, associating, and contexting that ‘foreground’ ordinarily repressed concurrencies, interactivities, discontinuities of seemingly separate identities or events, and the ‘presences of absences’ that are the actual forms of re-presentation. In this sense of artful approach to how things are perceived and known, representations become more overt re-presentations of the discontinuous complexity of ‘the concurrent nature of things.’ Images, objects, and events actually manifest, in this view, in the dynamically extra-ordinary manner of artistic expression.

.
***Further elaboration of these concepts in Chapters Four and Seven in text
Manifesting the Many in the One on page of that title***

* * * * *

© Copyright June 3, 2005
Leslie Emery ã