



\* On Arts of Participation \*  
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## Knowing Self by Becoming Other: Artful Provocations for Becoming the Not-Not-I that Precipitates Participation of Multiplicity

If valid knowing of the manyness in/as/of oneness associated with concurrent being and becoming involves an experiential participation, then the most vivid 'ground' for such experience would appear to be 'within' selfhood. If the notion of complex selfhood is accepted, then knowing 'one's self' is actually a matter of 'knowing one's selves,' one's diversity. The shift from a habitually singular sense of self to a pluralistic one is represented in the categories for self identity of being "I" but then also some aspects of "Not-I" and thereby one of "Not-Not-I." Though there is a logical basis for these diversifications of identity, some actual experience of them seems to require the extraordinary 'mirror of artful form and enactment.'

### Selfhood and Encounters with Artful Expression of Extra-Ordinary Form

Arts or artful expressions and enactments that manifest some explicit forming of diversified concurrent being can alter not only a person's sense of 'how things really are' but also of how one is one's self. If a person's ordinarily singular sense of self is disturbed by encountering these forms so that some aspects of self are experienced as separate or alien to other aspects, he or she becomes 'other to their self.' When such awareness of genuinely disparate qualities of thought, experience, or emotion arise then the normally singular sense of self can 'multiply.' The "I" of self identity is thereby confronted with the potential of having to choose one expression of self over another as 'the real me.' Or, the "I" might somehow attempt to encompass the pluralistic diversity of selfhood with a new, more complex, but still reductive sense of ordering the 'parts.' Encounter with an artfully extra-ordinary form-ing of radical complexity that is particularly challenging to ordinary assumptions and social convention can be so threatening to the habitual basis for one's identity that one 'loses a sense of self.'

These sorts of ‘divisions of sense of self’ can derive from unexpected experiences of affinity, revulsion, or understanding arising in response to how seemingly familiar aspects of the world are represented. A person might thusly perceive their own self or their relations to others in a surprisingly new, perhaps radically complex way as a result of viewing a painting, reading a story, or performing a dance. A more-than-ordinary formulation of causality, interactivity, or the compositions of identity can shift the habituated basis of self-knowing toward uncertain and inconsistent boundaries. One can become aware of a capacity to ‘identify’ with socially proscribed behaviors as modeled by characters in novels (murderers, tyrants, lovers, monsters). One can discover a capacity to experience meaning in the seemingly inchoate figures of abstract paintings. One can become aware that one’s assumed beliefs are in some significant conflict. Subsequently, self-consciousness can be confronted with a sense of ‘an other selfhood,’ perhaps one that seems quite alien and unfamiliar to its ordinary sense of self.

### Self-Knowing from the Perspectives of the “Not-I” and the “Not-Not-I”

Such shifts in self-knowing can provoke that sense of somehow being “Not-I” as the ordinarily singular, unified sense of self is confronted with unexpected self-aspects. An experience of ‘not being who or what I thought I was’ enables radical reflection upon what selfhood actual is and how much of it one might be unaware of. When sense of self is maneuvered in such a way as to identify with both a more familiar and a strange or alien condition it can confront the “Not-Not-I” status. This condition of identity encompasses a diversified or ‘not self-consistent’ selfhood that suggests a more radically complex basis for dynamical self-to-self relations and self-expression.

The compounded, interactive status of being “I” and “Not-I” thus “Not-Not-I” makes overt a concurrency of selfhood that is more able to ‘know its selves from their various perspectives’ on selfhood and world. The ordinarily singular or unitary sense of self thus comes to be known from disparate nexes of experience and thought that are ‘other to it’ yet discovered to be occurring ‘in the same person.’ ‘A’ self thus participates more experientially in its own diversity. This need not impose an ‘crisis of identity,’ but rather (particularly if it is given some socially affirmed importance), such self-complexity individualizes and expands a person’s capacities to ‘be their self/s’ and thus relate to the complexities of other people’s struggles with “Not-I” and “Not-Not-I” qualities of being and becoming concurrently.

### The Imaginal Role of Artful Expression in Precipitating Psycho-Mythic Knowing of Radically Complex Selfhood

In order for a habitually singular sense of self to be shifted toward a more complex and diversified status of “Not-Not-I,” ordinarily established criteria for the validly real status

of ‘being a person’ must be amended. A more-than-ordinary perception or experience is typically required to provide a valid basis for engaging some significant otherness of one’s selfhood. In general, artistic expressions are those that present some extraordinary representation of ‘how things are.’ That effect derives from images and actions that divert perceptual knowing and interpretive understanding from more familiar toward more unusual, unexpectedly complex statuses of being and becoming. The shift ‘away from’ the ordinary and conventional is necessarily ‘imaginal’ from the perspective of ordinarily singular, definitive representations. When the ordinary context for reality is challenged, it can allow some departure by assuming the shift is ‘merely imaginal,’ a form of entertaining fantasy or ‘thought experiment.’ Yet sometimes ‘the self’ experiences that ‘imaginal departure’ as vividly real and vitally significant.

The ‘art’ of re-presenting what ‘is’ as significantly different, thus more complicated than how it is ordinarily known and interpreted, involves ‘an imagination that re-makes reality.’ The encounter with artful expression that precipitates more radically complex self-knowing by enabling or provoking ‘knowing differently’ can be considered ‘psycho-mythically experiential.’ This term is meant to suggest that the imaginal aspect of coming to know selfhood by ‘becoming other to one’s self’ necessarily involves a psychological form of awareness rather than a literally mechanistic one. It demonstrates that ‘identity’ and ‘reality’ are psychical as well as material phenomena. In this regard, such an awareness is also mythically dynamic in that it constitutes an experientially valid status by way of the ‘impossible reality’ of metaphorically metamorphic representation—the “I” of “I am I”, “I am Not-I,” and “I am Not-Not-I.” This mode of experiential understanding is also referred to as mythical knowing. If the quality of its ‘impossible reality’ or being ‘real but not real,’ is obscured, then the encounter with the otherness of selfhood is likely to be reduced to an ordinarily understood, even if now altered, condition of identity.

\*\*\*Further elaboration of these notions in Chapters Three and Six of text **Manifesting the Many in the One** on page of that title\*\*\*

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