



\* On Concurrent Becoming \*  
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## An Orientation to Artistic Creativity as Evoking the Metamorphic Manifestation of Concurrent Becoming

The notion that concurrent becoming is engaged by the multiplicity of mythical dynamism is extended here to a more general category of artistic expression. The term art has many contextual uses, from 'the art of painting' to 'the art of medicine,' 'fine arts' and 'arts and crafts.' There is a rather lofty sense of 'the fine arts' and a general sense of 'artistic expression.' From the perspective of pragmatically literalistic modern social values, there is also a sense that any and all art is relatively superfluous. It is not regarded as practically useful (except as economic commodity) but rather a form of decoration, entertainment, or perhaps aesthetic and emotional expression. Some would say that all art has become 'mere commodity'—a product that is created for a consumer market, whether the price is low or high. Others assert that there is no longer any agreement upon a viable definition of art, no defining style or set of qualities, no generally shared hierarchy of aesthetic values. In this view, the category 'art' has become indistinct.

### Art as an Expressive Departure from Ordinary Perception and Understanding that Models Concurrency

Some critics assert that art has become whatever any person who declares his or her self 'an artist,' an art dealer, or an art critic, declares to be art. The 'art history' of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century presents a tumult of competing styles and manifestos on art, from Impressionism, Cubism, Expressionism, and Dada to Abstract Expressionism and Performance Art. Prior to this era, art as a cultural phenomenon tended to be defined by a specific style in a given historical or cultural context. If art is no longer a specifiable type of object or particularized style of representation, perhaps it has emerged as, most generally speaking, a manner or mode of creating or expressing that is somehow extraordinary—or, 'about' the more-than-ordinary aspects of being and becoming. From this

perspective, art is impractical, superfluous, merely decorative, and indistinct because it is not an ordinarily reductive mode of knowing and interpreting phenomena.

If this is an accurate generalization, then artistic expression can be related to the notion of mythical expression as a mode of conveying the more-than-ordinary dynamism of pluralistic concurrency. This view might also explain why, though art obviously remains a pervasive ‘human production,’ it has become ‘impractical.’ In a social order dominated by pervasive mechanism and quantitative reduction, art as mythical dynamism now lacks an appropriately socialized status. Perhaps, in order for it to be understood as meaningful, this mode of expressing requires a mode of interpreting that is also somehow ‘outside the bounds’ of what is ordinarily acceptable or familiar. In this regard, what makes art *art* involves a shift in knowing phenomena ‘away from’ the socially structured frame of ordinary identity and reality and ‘toward’ some more-than-ordinary or ‘anti-structural’ status. (Though there is arguably a sense of ‘aesthetic appreciation’ for artistic expression in contemporary contexts, it does appear to be largely subordinated to the commercialized, thus reductively quantified, context for such expression.)

If this general view of art as distinguished by an extra-ordinary epistemic mode of knowing that associates with a non-reductive style of heuristic interpretation is accurate (at least in a psychological regard), then the ‘things’ of art or ‘art objects’ are not ordinary things. It can be suggested then that what ‘causes’ these objects and images to be other-than-ordinary derives from how, as forms, they somehow manifest or provoke an experience more-than-ordinary being. Just how the forms of art generate that experience seems to derive from something other than the materials of their construction. The materials of ‘art works’ are often quite ordinary, being paints, stone, sounds, ‘found objects,’ and even the human body. Thus it appears that there are some qualities of composition, of how materials are arranged or contexted and images styled, that ‘makes art *art*.’

One might then consider the unusual, impractical gestures, images, and formal compositions of art as mythical in the sense that their primary significance is dynamical rather than objective or definitively descriptive. This view emphasizes *how* art alters, redirects, or recreates perception and interpretation of phenomena as the ‘the art of art.’ As such, artistic expression ‘makes manifest’ a different sensing of reality—one that is characteristically not immediately familiar, not a reiteration of habitual assumptions, or at least not as these are typically portrayed ‘in public.’ Art thusly becomes meaningful not as an aesthetic object that ‘gives pleasure’ but as an extra-ordinary influence or effect on one’s perception, experience, and subsequent understanding. It is ‘artful’ then, in so far as it induces a ‘departure from’ ordinarily reductive modes of knowing and interpreting the phenomena of self, others, and the world. From this point of view,

tendencies to literalize art as its objective status as a materialized thing ‘reduce’ its ‘artful dynamism’ to a static, singular status.

The ‘work of art’ that becomes an ‘object of commodity’ valued by an economic quantification is not, as such, the extra-ordinary dynamic effects it might have upon one’s modes of epistemic knowing and heuristic interpretation. Such ‘possessing the object of art’ can be regarded as an attempt to subordinate the radically concurrent or mythically dynamic qualities of its effects on knowing and understanding to the socially structured definitions of singular, definitively identified objects. This subordination of art to socially structured ‘orders of reduction’ is similar to how the epistemic dynamism of the forms of mythic narratives and images are ‘literalized’ as ‘historical truths,’ ‘false descriptions of reality’, or de-potentiated as ‘literary entertainments.’

### Art as Forms that Precipitate Participatory Experience of Concurrency and Radical Complexity

Following on the notion that artistic expression can significantly alter more ordinary qualities of knowing and interpreting, one might ask ‘in what way’ or ‘to what effect?’ In traditional and archaic cultures, what moderns term artistic expression is generally associated with sacred, spiritual, and mythical concerns. As such it is directed to representing or knowing some extra-ordinary qualities of being. Thus its ‘subjects’ are often gods, divine creation of the cosmos, and relations of humans or human consciousness with other-than-human ‘forces’ that ‘animate’ the ‘ordinarily visible world.’ In so far as it eschews literalistic imitation of phenomena in favor of a more abstract, fantastic, metamorphic style, such artful representation suggests a realm of being that is ‘beyond socially structured reality.’ That overt departure from how things are ordinarily known can be associated with an attempt to reveal some ‘inner’ or ‘hidden’ complexities of existence. In the representations of such art, ordinary reality and identity tend to be challenged or manipulated in some manner. That shift can occur in the subtle intensities of hyper-realistic painting or the overt distortions of expressionistic figures and geometric abstraction.

As more-than-ordinary modes of representation, artistic styles might well be ‘figuring’ in a more pluralistic or inclusive manner, one that is dynamically more ‘attuned to’ the interactively complex statuses of concurrent being/becoming. The ‘forms of art’ that exemplify such a shift thus manifest or *participate in* the metamorphic character of concurrency while also effectively *precipitating* it. That is, by making a form that ‘figures the metamorphic complexity of radical interactivity,’ an artist precipitates the manifestation of such dynamic activity *in the style of* the art object. Further more, in so far as a person who encounters that art object experiences a shift in his or her experience

of reductively singular and pluralistically concurrent status, the artistic style can precipitate overt *awareness of* that mode of knowing in that person's consciousness.

Thus artful expression can not only 'depart from' ordinarily reductive representation but also induce reflective awareness of that shift. A potential consequence of such awareness is overt appreciation of how the interactivity of ordinary and more-than-ordinary representation of the statuses of being effects human knowing and understanding of identity and reality. Artistic style thus can instigate a form of dialectical interplay between socially established structure and engagement with a radically more complex, 'anti-structural' status of concurrent being/becoming. It is the potential experience of that dialectical interplay between 'how things are supposed to be' and 'how they really *really* are' that causes art to be regarded with suspicion and declared superfluous by ordinarily pragmatized attitudes in a predominantly mechanistic social context.

Given these views, expressive objects that tend to reinforce ordinary, socially structured assumptions about identity and reality (meaning those that do not challenge habituated and socialized knowings and interpretations) are not likely to precipitate any participation in extra-ordinary engagement with the complexities of concurrent being/becoming. This assessment is predicated in part on the concept that socialized assumptions about identity and reality are typically reductive of pluralistic statuses and necessarily resistant to the transient metamorphic instability of concurrency. In this respect, art that is not experienced as challenging habituated, socially structured reductions of status has, despite its style, been 'co-opted' as an 'icon of the status quo.' Thus, whether artful expression precipitates engagement with mythical dynamism is not only a matter of its more-than-ordinary style, but of how social order has contexted it. The most abstract and fantastic styles can be 'domesticated' to socially structured reality by way of reductive interpretations. Examples of such de-potentialization of metamorphic style are numerous, from the reduction of archaic myths and 'fairy tales' to childhood fantasy to definitive interpretations of the meanings of abstract expressionist painting.

Although this view presents an orientation toward art as an expressive representation of the more-than-ordinary statuses of concurrency, it still locates the origin of such a dynamical shift in knowing and interpreting 'within' the 'art object' as dynamical form. In order for there to be a dynamic of artistic style that can precipitate such an epistemic and heuristic shift in a perceiver there needs be some formal qualities that render such a dynamism tangibly accessible to perception and cognition. The 'things of art' are necessary to the activity of artistic effects upon knowing and understanding that shift consciousness toward more pluralistic, inclusive, radically dynamic awareness of metamorphic concurrency. And yet, those 'things' are not here identified as 'the art of *art*.'

\*\*\*Additional elaboration of these concepts are found on the **Arts of Precipitating Participation** page, and Chapters Two and Three of **Manifesting the Many in the One**\*\*\*

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