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Encountering the Rest of the World

EVERYTHING is a changing configuration of what exists outside and what looks out from inside.

Searching for that fluid and, in fact, non-existent border between the inside and the outside is the most complicated challenge facing the mind.

There are those who attempt to acknowledge and defend objective reality. Others proclaim and rationally justify the impossibility of ever reaching that reality. Still others deny that it exists at all. Each of these positions is honest and principled in its own way. Their limitations depend on the fact that none of them is an instrument for working with reality. They permit us to think about it, but they do not help us to use it.

Yet it is the moments of consummation and consumption that count, when one connects with the other, when what is inside penetrates what is outside and becomes **EVERYTHING**.

One procedure for consummation and consumption is the creation of art.

In an intuitive sense, we can mark off the boundaries between

what is outside, and what is inside us

what is objective, and what is subjective

what is given, and what is constructed.

External things seem to be facts, and contain something unchanging. This is the domain that we like to call reality. Internal things seem to be methods, means, instruments. The intuition accepts this convenient division. At times, however, the intuition is capable of turning things upside down and seeing internal facts and external methods. Such a reversal can be found in art.

People look at reality—reality looks at the artist.

This complicated combination, in which the seen mixes with the seeing, can be expressed in a simplified way through coordinates on a graph where the vertical scale is reality and the horizontal scale is realism.

(place for the graph)

We therefore have four domains in a definite relationship with each other. In each domain, a "different" kind of art occurs. The first quarter of the graph is delineated by objective reality and imitative realism. This is where the most "normal" things occur. Science and logic can be placed here. There is also a place here for a certain type of art. This art attempts to render reality faithfully, and seeks tools for copying. In the popular mind, this attitude is regarded as "real" art. In fact, however, this is an artistically impoverished domain. Artists are required to be objective and to limit their room for maneuver. Artistic possibilities emerge thanks to the fact that such requirements never achieve perfection: artists never replicate reality faithfully. Failures along the road to perfection contain outstanding, delicate metaphorical moments. The second quarter is defined by objective reality and interpretative realism. The tension is significantly higher here. Broad creative opportunities are available to those involved. Among other things, they are free to deform reality through the use of interpretation. The choice of this location results from a certain type of personality. It requires the nerve of a journalist, the inquisitiveness of a historian, and the curiosity of a voyeur.

The art that arises in this domain has great power. It is grounded in reality in a "healthy" and distinct way. No harm results from the fact that reality is energetically violated by individual interpretation. This interpretation often includes exaggerated overstatement that can make the work so intense that it hurts. This domain is home to shock art and socially engaged art, and often produces performance and protest art.

The third quarter is marked by subjective reality and interpretative realism. This is the domain of outsiders. Here, the gaze is directed inwards rather than outwards. This is an area of little public usefulness, but of great creative potential. It is necessary to be an egoist here. In this domain, the artist is under the supervision of inner-directed interpretation. It is obligatory for the artist to maintain the vigilance of this interpretation, which regulates the "healthiness" of constructions that are at risk of breaking down during prolonged periods of introspection. Artists of this domain do not seek contact with the beholder. They expend no effort making things easy or offering hints in their art.

Nevertheless, art located here can be "taken in" by the beholder—surely because the predicament of the outsider possesses a great capacity for universality.

The fourth quarter is bounded by subjective reality and imitative realism. Here, an attempt is made to describe the uninterpreted interior with the use of a neutral instrument. People with severe psychological problems work in this domain. They are not interested in comparisons or

any sort of verification. They regard their own interior as the sum of reality, and attempt to portray it realistically. There is no entrance for the beholder, although the curious may peer in. These four relations with reality interpenetrate.

Compliant portrayal can be violated by attempts at commentary or by uncontrolled intrusions on the part of the "psychological." An attempt at cold interpretation may be disturbed by the pain of the outsider. And submission to the interior may be brought back to its senses when external reality comes knocking. Nevertheless, these neighborly interpenetrations and intrusions do not efface the specific nature of the principal domain that defines the type of our art.

Unfortunately, we are not the ones who decide on the choice of "our" domain.

