

Introspection

Introspection is an inspection and analysis of oneself. While this kind of inquiry is by now common and widely practised as part of the study of psychoanalysis it has for the longest time labored under the burden of a major procedural obstacle. I refer to the inherent difficulty of serving both as a student of oneself and as the object of one's study. In introspection the inspecting self seems to surrender any point of immunity, from which it can carry out its work of inspection.

The dilemma of introspection intersects with the inventive quests of 'modern art,' that adventure in self-expression which has characterized the increasingly introspective painting, literature, and music of the last two centuries. The artist working to express himself effectively, in that period of time, has had to accustom himself to expressing a self which is already the object it is attempting to express, the very dilemma of introspection with which we opened. The result of this intersection tends to become an art of pre compromised self-hood, which deals as a matter of regular compromise with distorted images of selfhood, thus with the widely recognized 'difficulty' of the modern arts.

The Socratic injunction to 'know thyself,' will have commanded wide respect among thinking antiquity. The thrust of this entry is to remind ourselves of the difficulty of what Socrates is requiring. We are already the self which we are being asked to know, so face the problem of being what we are introspecting.