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Originally published as "Living A-part", *Ahimsa Voices* (4.3), July 1997
To appear in *Dimensions of Unity* (book form)

THE EXPERIENCE OF KNOWING

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In a conference such as this, we may hear polar views on what is the ultimate nature of consciousness. On one end, Consciousness is the Ultimate Nature of everything. On the other end, consciousness is a product of an evolving complex biological system -- the brain. Both answers stem from the question "How do we search for an understanding of consciousness?" I'd like to explore this question by connecting together some thoughts starting from teaching science and art, and ending on considering consciousness and the universe. Let's start with, perhaps a simpler question: "What is the wind?"

In a class I offered some years ago on art and science, I gave as an assignment the question "What is the wind?". Each student was asked to answer it in her or his personally most authentic way. By "authentic" I requested the students to be aware of their own senses and sensations which gave their answer the "ring of truth" and the confidence to say, "Yes, I know what wind is." Importantly, each student needed not only to claim, but to be able to communicate that understanding -- to elucidate: "Yes, I know....".

An engineering student described how he had tried to just feel the wind by standing outside, but concluded by saying "What wind really is is horizontal mass motions of air driven by pressure and temperature gradients. That's the only way to really explain what wind really is."

A second student, a dancer, described how she would memorize the physics equations for her midterm tests, but that "I can't feel what they mean -- so I can't use them". As for understanding the wind, she thought she could come to class and dance "wind" for us. But then she realized that we would only see a dance, and that was not sufficient to know the wind. She concluded "I need to teach to you dance, so that you can feel wind *in* you."

Of and *in*: these two answers, taken together, illustrate categories of ways-of-knowing which I came to call *icate* and *emate*. **Emate** associates with sensation, entry or projection into, **empathy** - "there is a feeling about this room." The **ic** of **icate** derives from the suffix *ic* (as in volcanic) meaning *of, of the category of.., having to do with.....* which implies an outer perspective, a looking at a structure of classification, e.g. of the structure of a volcano. The suffix **ate**, used to form verbs, signifies **to become, to cause to become**; so *icate* is *knowing made as of* and *emate* is *knowing made as in*. The idea we reach for here is that *icate* and *emate* make up two dimension such that both dimensions taken together make up a space of 'authentic knowing.' Knowing, itself, becomes attached to one dimension, the one selected in making (*ate*) knowing. The other dimension is "silent," being the very inner root "holding" the knowing.

This idea derives from the work of the Philosopher Polanyi who stressed two terms to knowing, one term of which is tacit or silent within the other. Here, to say that 'knowing' is of one term is to 'stand silently' in the other term.. Think of a view, whether viewing a movie screen or looking at the country side. What we see and describe is in a plane perpendicular to our viewing line. The dimension of the sight-line in which we stand is tacit in the viewing. In analogy to this sight line, it is the quality of the tacit dimension which completes the authentic knowing in us. For example, mathematical proof may well rest on a hidden sense of integrated beauty of reasoning which cannot be pointed to. As another

example, a structure of form may become life within the exuberance of the dance -- there is a tacit recognition of the structure of wind to which the structure of the dance fits as an equivalent.

Following Polanyi, we may say that the two dimensions complement each other. The objective is subtly subjective and vice versa. We may conceptualize the relation between the two terms by visualizing the Taoist Yin-Yang symbol, namely the implicated dot in its "opposing" distinction. In another sense, we may see this as an uncertainty principle - certainty in cognizing structure is accompanied by a loss in the certainty in feeling.

In terms of our everyday life, in the freedom of uncertainty we carry a mixture of *icate* and *emate*, paying attention more to feeling or sometimes to analyzing as we go on our ways. But if we accept the interplay of two such terms in daily experience, we run into trouble when we push to know "final" monistic universal principles. "What is consciousness?" If I start with tools of measure I must describe what I know in the language of these measures (*icate*), hence consciousness approached from a biology or a physics viewpoint must be known and described in measurable attributes. If my tool is introspection into the very sense of consciousness, then matter itself must in the end be described in terms of consciousness. One can only speak of something in terms of the language of the tools that one uses to know it. And it is important to note that, in either case, consciousness will no longer be the same as our common-sense experiences and notions of it.

We cannot talk except in terms of maps, and something marvelous can happen at the universal level when mapping is attempted. Reflecting on the cosmology he developed, Arthur Young, inventor of the Bell Helicopter, said, "... We would not know whether we were inside or outside the model!" Inside/outside is the same. The universe with our awareness of/in it, is a map in/of itself. The universe, as Young points out, includes all the levels of determinism and freedom.

And so we find ourselves at the starting question. How do we understand consciousness? -- as within the universe, as of the universe? One answer is via complementarity principles: *icate* and *emate* is the form of one such principle. Whitehead's philosophy echoes a synthesis of such poles. The second is dialogue itself, as the art of knowing, seeing wholeness as necessarily requiring a dance of perspectives. To quote Lama Govinda on Tibetan mysticism, "[this] thinking... consists in a circling around the objective of contemplation... a many-sided, i.e. multi-dimensional impression formed from the superimposition of single impressions from different points of view." How much more so is this true when the center of contemplation is consciousness itself.

In this interplay we are the universe seen as parts knowing parts. We are *in* knowing *of*, and *of* knowing *in*. Even our very acts of awareness brings such a division of/in itself. The nature of completion is thus beyond our ability to query. Arthur Young writes, "Since purpose is within the whole and not the part, the whole must be greater than the parts... the whole cannot function when divided. It follows that the function is that aspect of 'cause' which is not in the parts and which science cannot deal with, because science deals with mass, length, and time which are parts. This leads to a basic cosmological postulate; the parts are derived from the whole, and not the whole from the parts. In other words, the whole exists before the parts."

And so we end on the note of the wisdom of a Sufi poet who wrote of living *a-part* in/of, such a wholeness. The part -- the illusory whole -- must turn toward the authentic wholeness. "To seek only to satisfy yourself is worthless Only in serving others is there worth."