

The Ley and the Labyrinth: Universalistic and Particularistic Approaches to Knowing

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Abstraction is not our enemy unless it is thought to be our only friend.
— Graham Dunstan Martin (1990, p. 17)

*A line is a line in its minutest subdivisions, straight or crooked.
It is itself, not intermeasurable by anything else.*
— William Blake (1827/1976, p. v)

Adorning the countryside of Great Britain, some believe, are *leys* or *ley lines* that connect megalithic sites and other interesting structures. These are the *old straight tracks* that Alfred Watkins (1925/1973) suggested aligned ancient mounds, ancient unworked stones, moats, islands in ponds and small lakes, traditional or holy wells, beacon points, crossroads with place-names, ancient wayside crosses, ancient churches, hermitages, castles, and other special sites. Some have attributed archeological, esoteric, and even astronomical significance to these straight lines. Some maintain they are fictions. To others, they are as real as the highways, roads, paths, and other features portrayed on Ordnance Survey maps.

Throughout the world, one finds curious spiral markings and structures known as *labyrinths*. These winding patterns—spirals that turn back on themselves—despite their divers and diverse locales are remarkably similar. Often having either seven or eleven convolutions, these ubiquitous spiraling and labyrinthine patterns have been found carved onto stones at Newgrange in Ireland and Tintagel in Cornwall, laid out in large pebbles at Wier Island in Finland, etched onto coins at Knossos, Crete, on stone crosses, walls, and floors of old chapels and cathedrals (as in the cathedral at Chartres), on a Paleolithic mammoth ivory talisman in the Lake Baikal region of Siberia, on Egyptian scarabs, and as the Hopi symbol of Mother Earth—to mention but a few.

These two forms—the ley and the labyrinth—suggest metaphors for two ways of knowing. The ley is the straight path that goes quickly and directly to the goal, deviating as little as possible, an almost abstraction that touches few points and touches them lightly, never lingering. The labyrinth is the winding, all-encompassing path: meandering here and there, moving nonlinearly toward, then away from, then toward the goal again—but, in reality, ever approaching the center goal, without error; it is the long, indirect, patient path that seems to enjoy its own winding journey.

The ley and the labyrinth, respectively, could symbolize the universalistic (nomothetic) and particularistic (idiographic) approaches to knowledge. Like the ley, the nomothetic (literally: *laying down the law*) approach seeks to get to the heart of the matter as directly as possible. It does not beat around the bush; it seeks general principles that apply to all, in all places, at all times. It cuts across individual cases to learn what is common to all. It is interested in uniformities, invariants—not differences or exceptions. Its tools are abstraction, conceptualization, and generalization—and analysis, in order to discern common elements. In being unbending—in its quest for essence—it is exclusive: It excludes accidents, and it is unconcerned with particular instances.

Like the labyrinth, the idiographic approach (literally: *evoking a clear, lifelike picture of what is personal, separate, distinct, or unique*) is not in a hurry. It patiently covers all bases, making sure that it touches upon, honors, and is true to each and every point in its compass. It is circumference to the ley's line and points. It seeks to cover each individual case—thoroughly and one by one. When all cases or instances have been covered, one finds oneself, miraculously and unerringly, at the goal. It values differences and variability. Its tools are patience, thoroughness, rich and accurate description, and close attention to details. Since it bends, it is not exclusive: It is flexible, inclusive, and accommodating.

Temperamental Inclinations

*Temperament, whether individual or collective,
is not amenable to persuasion.*

— Joseph Conrad

Perhaps we have temperamental inclinations toward one or the other of these approaches. Perhaps the ley-like are drawn to the sciences—especially the natural sciences, wherein one finds the apotheosis of the nomothetic approach. Perhaps the labyrinthine turn toward the arts and the humanities, wherein the individual and individuality are emphasized. Within those two general arenas, predilections remain.

Within Literature

Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) was one of the ley-like, as this sampling of his writings reveals.

Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature. Particular manners can be known to few, and therefore few only can judge how nearly they are copied. . . . The pleasures of sudden wonder are soon exhausted, and the mind can only repose on the stability of truth.

[Shakespeare's] characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or

by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those of Shakespeare it is commonly a species. (Johnson, 1765/1951b, p. 587)

Sublimity is produced by aggregation, and littleness by dispersion. Great thoughts are always general, and consist in positions not limited by exceptions, and in descriptions not descending to minuteness. (1779-1781/1951a, p. 594)

The business of a poet is to examine not the individual but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances. He does not number the streaks of the tulip or describe the different shades of the verdure of the forest. (Johnson, quoted in Untermeyer, 1759/1959, p. 263)

Johnson valued *general rules*. It is not surprising that he wrote the first widely known British dictionary, *Dictionary of the English Language*, in 1755 (what is a dictionary, after all, but a compendium of semantic and linguistic rules?), that he was also well known as a moralist (and, hence, concerned with moral rules), and that he was a professional critic who judged the works of others.

Johnson's contemporary, William Blake (1757-1827), on the other hand, was of a labyrinthine persuasion.

To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit. General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess. (Blake, 1808/1976, p. 569)

Minute Discrimination is Not Accidental. All Sublimity is founded on Minute Discrimination. (p. 571)

Every Eye sees differently. As the Eye, Such the Object.

General Principles Again! Unless you Consult Particulars you Cannot even Know or See [Michelangelo] or Rafael or any Thing Else. (p. 573)

What is General Nature? is there Such a Thing? what is General Knowledge? is there such a Thing? Strictly Speaking All Knowledge is Particular. . . .

Generalizing in Every thing, the Man would soon be a Fool, but a Cunning Fool. (p. 575)

Blake valued the individual. It is not surprising that, in addition to being a poet, he also was an artist with a quite distinctive style. He created a novel procedure that allowed simultaneous printing of text and artwork (Blake claimed the technique had been communicated to him by the spirit of his deceased brother, Robert). In his writings, he used idiosyncratic typography. He developed his own mythology. In addition, Blake was a mystic whose imagination perceived in unique ways.

Within the Sciences

Because the scientific mindset is, itself, largely nomothetic, science has generally been the home of the ley-minded. In its quest to explain, predict, and control, it seeks to find islands of invariants and universals in seas of flux and change. Here and there, however, scientists have made excursions into the labyrinth of particulars. In the natural sciences, we can point to practices of naturalists and ethologists who study particular flora and fauna in their individual niches. A variation of the ley/labyrinth dance can be found, even more generally, in the predilections of scientists for more rationalist and theoretical (ley-like) or more empiricist and experimental (labyrinth-like) approaches to their work.

Rationalism tends to emphasize universals and to make wholes prior to parts in the order of logic as well as that of being. Empiricism, on the contrary, lays the explanatory stress upon the part, the element, the individual, and treats the whole as a collection and the universal as an abstraction. (James, 1904/1977, p. 195)

The labyrinthine (particularistic) also is associated with scientific thoughts and practices that include *qualitative features*, as well as the more ley-like (universalistic) quantitative features. The approach of the poet-scientist Goethe (1749-1832) may qualify in this regard. Goethe emphasized particular phenomena, qualities, and experiences in his own scientific investigations of plants and color. This work was downplayed and ridiculed by advocates of the more quantitative Newtonian approach. Today, however, there is a resurgence of interest in Goethe's style of science (see Goodwin, 1994; Roszak, 1989; Zajonc, 1994).

Today, this banner of the qualitative/particular/experiential has been taken up in the social and human sciences by an increasing number of advocates of qualitative research methods (see, for example, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1983, 1988). This strand, however, has a long and venerable pedigree. Within the field of human studies, strong idiographic stances were taken by Wilhelm Dilthey, by Wilhelm Windelband—who, in fact, coined the terms nomothetic and idiographic, in 1894, to describe, respectively, *was immer ist* (what always is) and *was einmal war* (what once was)—and even by Wilhelm Wundt, whose idiographic and human science (folk psychology) contributions have been virtually ignored in favor of his better-known positivistic work (see Polkinghorne, 1983). Each of these thinkers emphasized the importance of labyrinth-friendly *verstehen* or understanding as a special form of knowing to be cultivated and privileged by those interested in the human condition—as a complement to ley-like *erklären* or explanation. This approach to knowing—a *Geisteswissenschaften* thread that runs through Windelband, Dilthey, Wundt, Brentano, and Husserl—was obscured by the positivistic *Naturwissenschaften* approach, only to reemerge in the forms of phenomenology, hermeneutics, and today's developments in the human sciences.

Within psychology, the ley-labyrinth dance surfaced in Meehl (1954)—as *actuarial* versus *clinical* predictions—and in Allport (1962)—as the *general* or

dimensional versus the *unique or morphogenic*. Henry Murray's "personology" (Murray, 1938) honored the particularistic half of the dance in that it was devoted to a full understanding of the individual case. The particular has found its place in case study approaches, in the ever growing emphases on narrative and stories, and even in behavior modification, where attention is devoted to specific behaviors in specific circumstances in specific individuals. Skinner himself has remarked:

No one goes to the circus to see the average dog jump through a hoop significantly oftener than untrained dogs raised under the same circumstances, or to see an elephant demonstrate a principle of behavior.
(Skinner, 1972, p. 114)

Skinner made this remark in the context of the irrelevance of statistical trends, theories, and hypotheses when one is confronted with the responsibility of guaranteeing that a particular organism will engage in a given behavior at a given time. It indicates a greater concern for the particular case than for general principles.

Within transpersonal studies, a particularly pure form of the idiographic/labyrinth approach is found in the *organic research method* (Clements, Ettling, Jenett, & Shields, 1998). This method emphasizes intensive studies and presentations of individual cases in a narrative or story format. Rather than aiming to provide general *information*, its purpose is to facilitate *transformation*—of the research participants, the researcher, and the reader of the research report. Analyses, conceptualizations, generalizations, and conclusions are de-emphasized in favor of letting the intactly presented and highly particularized stories of the research participants act directly upon the reader and, hopefully, serve as opportunities for new appreciations, apprehensions, integrations, and personal transformations to emerge in that reader. The method honors not only thinking, but our other human faculties of sensing, feeling, and intuiting, as well.

Mention of the four *functions* of thinking, feeling, sensing, and intuiting, identified and emphasized by Jung (1959b) and those who follow him, reminds us that Jung considered thinking and feeling to be rational or judging functions, whereas sensing and intuiting were considered irrational or perceptive functions. Thinking and feeling—and those individuals whose temperaments are strongly governed by these two functions—are more ley-like, in that these functions involve mediation (they are a step removed from a situation; they are *about* something), consideration, reasoning, judgment, abstraction, generalization, and general lawfulness. Sensing and intuiting—and persons whose temperaments are strongly influenced by these—are more labyrinthine; these functions involve more immediate reactions to what is known, more direct perceptions of the concrete, particular, and accidental.

Within Spiritual and Wisdom Traditions

Parallels of the ley/labyrinth dance may be found in the various spiritual and wisdom traditions. Here, the dance reveals itself in two ways: in terms of those to whom the traditions' teachings are directed, and in terms of the traditions' attitudes toward images of particulars.

We can distinguish two classes of traditions. There are what might be called *universalist* traditions. These include traditions such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and certain aspects of Buddhism and Hinduism. Their teachings, messages, and concerns are widespread—for humanity at large—and they tend to seek converts to their respective systems. These universalist traditions can be contrasted with more *local* traditions that include the primal—and usually oral—wisdom traditions of indigenous peoples (e.g., Native American, Australian, and African peoples) and the various shamanic systems. Together with these, we might also include forms of Goddess spirituality, Earth-based spirituality, and Celtic spirituality. These latter direct themselves more to local tribes or social groups than to the world at large, and they tend not to seek converts. Already, we see differential emphases upon the universal and the particular in terms of the memberships and applications of these traditions.

It is also possible to make distinctions, both across and within traditions, in terms of the value placed upon general versus particular forms of knowing, especially in the context of their mystical or ecstatic practices. Some of the traditions greatly value experiences with specific, detailed imagery content, and often these particulars are believed to convey specific forms of knowledge applicable to specific situations or life challenges. Other traditions play down particular imagery in favor of contentless experience. It can be argued that the oral, primal traditions tend to emphasize rich, detailed, particular imagery in their spiritual practices and rituals, as opposed to more general principles or imageless experiences.

The practices of the universalist traditions, however, are more variegated. Within each tradition, there is a subtradition of practices that involve particular images. Examples of these would include the specific visualizations of Tibetan Buddhism, the particular objects of absorption in Yogic practices of *samyama*, the visualizations of Hebrew letters and other specific images in Jewish kabbalistic mysticism, the use of icons in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, and the *via positiva* or cataphatic contemplative paths within Christian mysticism. Within each tradition, there also is a subtradition or a complementary set of spiritual practices that eschews specific positive imagery and other content in favor of experiences of emptiness, the Void, silence, or the unknowing of the *via negativa* or apophatic way.

In the spiritual realm, it appears that two modes of knowing—the particularistic and the universalist—are not sufficient. We must add to these a third mode that has to do with the unknowable and with unknowing.

Personifying and Particularizing

Indeed indeed.

Can you see.

The stars.

And regularly the precious treasure.

What do we love without measure.

We know

.— Gertrude Stein: *Useful Knowledge*

The Personified and The Particular are arch-demons to advocates of a ley-like, nomothetic approach to knowing. Scientists teach their intellectual children at a early age to be wary of the wily Personification. Should Personification appear—in any of its several guises of animism, anthropomorphism, and projection—it should be treated as an evil, to be avoided or stamped out. The Particular is also not to be trusted. It can mislead. Those in the charge of nomothetic science quickly learn to banish The Particular by immediately labeling it, then ignoring it. These anathematizing labels include: *merely anecdotal, a single case, an n of one, a single data point, an uncontrolled observation, a single instance, an exception, a suggestive indication, an interesting possibility to be followed up by more careful study.*

An alternative view of the personified and the particular is found in the following excerpt from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's enchanting fable, *The Little Prince*:

"What does that mean—'tame'?" [said the little prince.]

"It is an act too often neglected," said the fox. "It means to establish ties."

" 'To establish ties'?"

"Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world."

"My life is very monotonous," [the fox] said. "I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain-fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the color of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat."

"One only understands the things that one tames," said the fox.
(Saint-Exupéry, 1947/1971, pp. 80-83)

Is there a form of understanding, of knowing that can occur only through familiar, intimate contact with the object of knowing—through a deep and sustained encounter with a particular? Unamuno thought so.

We know nothing save what we have previously desired in one way or another, and we would be justified in adding that we can not know, to any

great degree, anything we have not loved, anything for which we have not felt compassion. (Unamuno, 1913/1990, p. 151)

In order to love everything, you must personalize everything. For love personalizes everything it loves. . . . We love only that which is like us. (p. 153)

Consciousness, *conscientia*, is participated knowledge, and it is co-feeling, and co-feeling is compassion. (p. 153)

Love is a form of knowing, and we love persons, we love particulars. Others have expressed similar ideas:

Personifying is not a lesser, primitive mode of apprehending but a finer one. It presents in psychological theory the attempt to integrate heart into method and to return abstract thoughts and dead matter to their human shapes. Because personifying is an epistemology of the heart, a thought mode of feeling, we do wrong to judge it as inferior, archaic thinking appropriate only to those allowed emotive speech and affective logic—children, madmen, poets, and primitives. Method in psychology must not hinder love from working, and we are foolish to decry as inferior the very means by which love understands. If we have not understood personifying, it is because the main tradition has always tried to explain it rather than understand it. (Hillman, 1992, p. 15)

Great psychologists have always personified their constructs—Freud, his structures of the personality; Jung, his archetypes; Blake, his Forms or Zoas. I include Blake among the great psychologists. Many of Blake's writings about the four Zoas anticipate Jung's later ideas of the four functions and of the archetypes. It has been suggested that "The whole of Freud's teachings may be found in [Blake's] *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*" (W. H. Auden, quoted in Untermeyer, 1959, p. 295).

It is difficult to avoid personifying and anthropomorphizing. When the Pathfinder spacecraft landed on the planet Mars on Independence Day of 1997 and its six-wheeled robot rover directly went about performing its exploratory tasks, reporters, scientists, and the public at large immediately personified the small rover vehicle (calling her *Sojourner*), her actions (reporting how she warily descended her ramp then began sniffing the nearby rocks, occasionally communicated with her homebase lander, occasionally slept, nestled up to and tasted particular rocks; calling her charming and industrious), and even the rocks that she was investigating (calling them *Barnacle Bill*, *Yogi Bear*, and *Casper Ghost*).

Ironically, even the model of the universe dearest to those most opposed to anthropomorphism—the world as a gigantic clockwork mechanism or as any machine, for that matter—is itself an anthropomorphism, for clockworks and other machines do not develop spontaneously and through blind chance, but require humans for their design and construction. It is a further irony that the *metaphore du jour* for those who prefer to reduce the human brain and mind to a simple deterministic and mechanistic system—namely, the inanimate computer—itself requires a human computer-maker to make the analogy complete. Implicit personifying is at work even here.

The Particular as an Opening to the Universal

Writing poetry consists in letting the Word be heard behind words.

— Gerhart Hauptmann

And so we come to still another irony: The particular can serve as an opening, doorway, or pathway to the universal.

I think, therefore, that those ancient sages, who sought to secure the presence of divine beings by the erection of shrines and statues, showing insight into the nature of the All; they perceived that, though this Soul is everywhere tractable, its presence will be secured all the more readily when an appropriate receptacle is elaborated, a place especially capable of receiving some portion or phase of it, something reproducing it, or representing it, and serving like a mirror to catch an image of it. . . .

Every particular thing is the image within matter of a Reason-Principle [Form] which itself images a pre-material Reason-Principle [Form]: thus every particular entity is linked to that Divine Being in whose likeness it is made, the divine principle which the soul contemplated and contained in the act of each creation. Such mediation and representation there must have been since it was equally impossible for the created to be without share in the Supreme, and for the Supreme to descend into the created. . . .

The Soul . . . becomes the medium by which all is linked to the overworld; it plays the part of an interpreter between what emanates from that sphere down to this lower universe, and what rises—as far as, through soul, anything can—from the lower to the highest.

Nothing, in fact is far away from anything; things are not remote: there is, no doubt, the aloofness of difference and of mingled natures as against the unmingled; but selfhood has nothing to do with spatial position, and in unity itself there may still be distinction. (Plotinus, 3rd century C.E./1971, *Enneads* IV.3.11)

Here, in Neoplatonic language, is the suggestion that a universal form is somehow mysteriously implicit within the form of a particular, or that the latter may somehow reflect, attract, or capture particular aspects of the former. Similar notions were expressed by the Renaissance Neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499). Ficino held that "the soul, when stimulated by images of bodies, brings to light forms that are lurking in the recesses of the mind" (quoted in Moore, 1990, p. 54). Spiritual qualities either resided in material particulars or certain of the latter could serve as *divine allurements* or *magic decoys* for the former, with imagination serving as mediator. Deliberately surrounding oneself with particular objects could facilitate the cultivation in oneself of particular spiritual qualities.

Specific material forms and features could provide access to, or entry ways to or for, spirit.

We are now, of course, in the realm of the symbolic, in which things point beyond themselves to something else, something other. Suspicions of subtle connections among things, especially among similars, formed the basis for magical beliefs—particularly those of *sympathetic* and *contagious magic* (see Frazer, 1951). Symbols and similarities were at the heart of the complex systems of *correspondences* elaborated by the Renaissance magicians and hermeticists (see Yates, 1969). Subtle webs of interconnection were believed to provide linkages not only among the things of this world, but with other worlds as well.

Not only things, but words and ideas, too, can point beyond themselves, can suggest something other. The German anthropologist Adolf Bastien (1868) distinguished *Elementargedanken* (elementary or primordial thoughts or ideas) from *Volkgedanken* (folk or ethnic thoughts or ideas). The elementary ideas are universal motifs or forms that are found across time frames and across cultures and do not change; these are very much like what Jung (1959a) later developed into his notion of the *archetypes*. The folk ideas are the local manifestations of the elementary ideas—they are clothed in the language and imagery of the times and places in which they are found; they may be considered particularized universals.

A possible example of this distinction is found in a well-known passage relating "the great vision" of Black Elk of the Oglala Lakota people. Black Elk relates how, in his vision, he was taken "to the high and lonely center of the earth" (Neihardt, 1961, p. 26). He "was standing on the highest mountain of them all" (p. 43), which he identified as Harney Peak in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Black Elk added, "But anywhere is the center of the world" (p. 43). Mythologist Joseph Campbell is fond of quoting this last sentence, feeling it indicates that Black Elk "knew the difference between the folk cultic symbol and the reference of the symbol" (Campbell, 1990b, p. 46).

Campbell describes a myth as "a metaphor transparent to transcendence," (Campbell, 1990a, p. 40). "Transparent to transcendence" is a phrase of German psychologist Karlfried Graf Dürckheim (see Goettmann, 1991). For Campbell, the function of mythology is to help us to experience everything temporal as a reference [a metaphor]. And also to experience the so-called eternal verities as merely references [metaphors]. Mythology opens the world so that it becomes transparent to something that is beyond speech, beyond words—in short, what we call transcendence. (Campbell, 1990a, p. 161)

Common to the shrines and statues of Plotinus, the images of bodies of Ficino, the mountain of Black Elk, and the myths of Campbell is the tendency to think of some thing or some thought as an opening to, indicator of, or manifestation of something else, something other than or in addition to what it is (or appears to be). It is as though there are multiple realms or worlds—this world and an otherworld—and that certain forms of the former are more or less opaque to, or more or less transparent to, the forms of the latter. The latter, itself, may be more or less transparent to still another realm of which we cannot speak

The terms *particular* and *universal* become relative and equivocal. Is there more than one form of particular and more than one form of universal?

Particulars as Particulars

Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose.
— Gertrude Stein: *Sacred Emily*

As a counterpoint to what has gone before, Brenneman (1993) has introduced the notion of the *loric* to describe particulars that do not point beyond themselves. He describes the experience he and his wife had while working with the holy wells of Ireland.

It was like no other place on earth, and it was precisely because of this uniqueness that it was powerful. The spring, the trees, the stone manifested something that was nothing more than it was. It did not point beyond itself, but was its own self in its own uniqueness that invited us within it; it absorbed and, in a sense, intoxicated us with its presence.

We have chosen to call this form of power of place "loric power," for this same sense of uniqueness and intimacy is present in all lore, by which we mean the unique particulars of a person or thing which set it apart. For example, the power of story-telling lies in the event of the telling and in the unique way that a particular teller tells it. The story is not meant to be repeated in a uniform way from teller to teller, as is a myth in the sacred tradition. At the same time there is an otherness in loric power which is shared by the sacred. There was an element of mystery The loric and sacred share a participation in the archetypal, repeating timeless and powerful themes. The difference is that the sacred derives its primary power from the eternal identical repetition of the archetype, whereas the loric derives its primary power from the differences manifest from repetition to repetition.

Further, the notion of place is central to an understanding of loric power. Whereas the sacred is world-creating, the loric is place-maintaining. (Brenneman, 1993, pp. 137)

Brenneman goes on to contrast the spirituality connected with the loric with the type of spirituality associated with the transcendent. In the latter, there is a tendency to view the otherworld as the *overworld*—as we see clearly in Plotinus and in other Neoplatonists, and as we find in the notion of the Oversoul found in Emerson and other Transcendentalists—and to associate it with the sky or the heavens. Often, the sky is associated with the masculine (as in the case of Ouranos, Father Heaven)—although there are notable inversions (for the Egyptians, the sky is the mother, Nut). In Celtic lore, the otherworld is the *underworld* and is associated with the chthonic, Mother Earth, and the feminine.

From the perspective of Western and even most Eastern cosmologies and the worldviews deriving from them, the Celts have an inverted cosmos: the source of all power is not found in the sky but in the otherworld beneath the earth. The result is that power and wisdom radiate upward from below rather than downward from the sky. This positioning of power provides an experience of the sacred very different from that found in such historical religions as Christianity and Islam. The experience is one of intimacy with the sacred rather than of separation from it.

The most common location of the otherworld is beneath the surface of the earth, and access to that world for the living is possible only at certain places on the earth's surface which are containers of loric power. Access to the otherworld can . . . be gained through a lake, cave, or well.

The otherworld in Irish myth is understood as the first form or archetype of all life and wisdom. The surface world is a reflection of that archetype and contains the same structural components, but it lacks the power present in the otherworld except at critical times and in particular places. (Brenneman, 1993, pp. 141-142.)

Even here, there is a subtle privileging of certain particulars over others—because they can provide access to the *power* of the otherworld. A particular is the only entrance to the otherworld, but there are many particulars. To paraphrase George Orwell, all particulars are equal, but some are more equal than others.

Ways of Knowing

The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know. We feel it in a thousand things.

— Blaise Pascal

According to the received view, we know particulars and universals through the faculties of sensation and intellection (reason), respectively. Early philosophers, but especially the Scholastics, used metaphors of the *eye of the flesh* and *eye of the mind* to describe these two ways of knowing. Later, these two ways were emphasized by the empiricists and the rationalists. When we examine these forms of knowing carefully, we find that they are really quite mysterious and magical; we understand very little about them. Yet, they are well-recognized and accepted because they are so familiar and because the experiences, processes, and products associated with them are relatively easy to describe and to communicate to others.

However, there always has been an intimation of a third form of knowing, beyond sensing and thinking. Although, upon careful consideration, it is no less direct, and no more magical, than sensing or thinking, it seems less familiar, and it is much more difficult to put into words and talk about. It is, therefore, less well-known and less accepted—at least, by those who have limited experience of it. It is a way of entering into what is to be known and knowing its essence immediately, directly, and fully.

Knowing Directly and Silently

In describing his Great Vision, Black Elk related: "While I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner . . . (Neihardt, 1961, p. 43). Indeed, this is very much the same language used by Polanyi in describing what he called *tacit knowing*: "we can know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1967, p. 4). Polanyi uses the term *indwelling* to describe the process: "When we make a thing function as the proximal term of tacit knowing, we incorporate it in our body—or extend our body to include it—so that we come to dwell in it" (Polanyi, 1967, p. 16).

Spinoza (in the 17th century), called this form of knowing *intuitive science*, and, after him, Bergson, Husserl, and Jung knew it as, simply, *intuition*. Whereas Spinoza described intuition as "an adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (Spinoza, 1677/1952, p. 388) and Jung, in one place, defined it as the "perception of the possibilities inherent in a situation" (Jung, 1960, p. 141), it is Henri Bergson's thoughts about intuition that are of greatest value to us here. In intuiting, he writes, he is

attributing to the . . . object an interior and so to speak, states of mind; I also imply that I am in sympathy with those states, and that I insert myself in them by an effort of imagination. . . . By intuition is meant the kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. . . . Intuition . . . is a simple act. [It is a] means of possessing a reality absolutely instead of knowing it relatively, of placing oneself within it instead of looking at it from outside points of view . . . in short, of seizing it without any expression, translation, or symbolic representation (Bergson, 1912/1958, p. 126, 128, 129)

He contrasts intuition with analysis:

Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to elements already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects. To analyze, therefore, is to express a thing as a function of something other than itself. (p. 128)

It is of great interest that, although the knowledge obtained through indwelling or intuition is tacit—i.e., it cannot be spoken—it can nonetheless reveal its presence in other ways: through bodily changes, feelings, actions, or recognitions that we may exhibit upon being confronted with objects, situations, or other particulars. The knowledge is simply latent, not absent.

Some examples may be helpful. Although we cannot verbally describe a particular face, we can recognize its features, through the aid of a police artist or an IdentiKit, well enough to indicate that we, in fact, possess detailed knowledge of the face. Although a child cannot verbally describe the physics of trajectories, her skill in throwing and catching tossed balls with uncanny accuracy reveals that her body does, indeed, possess such a knowledge of trajectories. Persons with certain neurological conditions—agenesis of the corpus callosum or surgical severing of that large bundle of neural fibers that connect the right and left cerebral hemispheres—cannot *verbally*

identify an object presented only to the right hemisphere, yet they can accurately point to the presented object with the left hand, when the object is presented along with other objects. These examples indicate that *if the requisite vehicle of expression is supplied*, the latent knowledge can readily be revealed.

Seeing or touching particular objects; experiencing particular musical selections or works of art; listening to specific narratives, stories, or poems; observing certain actions of others—perhaps all of these can be vehicles or occasions that help us recognize or remember "inexpressible" knowledge that we already possess—and which we previously acquired, tacitly, through intuition or indwelling—and allow us to reveal these latent knowings to ourselves and to others. These occasions can provide the raw materials—the clay—with which a knowing part of us may mold understandings for other parts that are not yet enlightened.

Deslauriers (1992) suggests that, in addition to the more commonly recognized knowing modes—*paradigmatic* (abstract, generalized) and *narrative* (contextual, particular)—*ritual* is itself a form of knowing. Perhaps, if ritual can indeed be "a deeply connected way of knowing that is often glimpsed only through deep engagement in ritual and ceremony" (Desauliers, 1992, p. 191) in which the knowing is grounded in action and is embodied and sensually experienced, then rituals might themselves serve as vehicles that allow tacit knowing to become explicit. This might be especially likely in a sensation-rich group setting in which multiple opportunities would be available and could synergistically reinforce one another.

In addition to rituals, bodily movements and various physiological activities and sensations might allow the explication of previously tacit knowing. Likewise, visitations of special sites or structures could provide opportunities for gaining a fuller awareness of one's own latent, implicit knowledge. One might speculate that the reading and writing of "fiction" could serve a similar purpose, as could entertaining and appreciating various images through imaginative play, reverie, dreaming, and various forms of creative expression. The process of *free imaginative variations* employed by Husserl and other phenomenologists may serve this very function of providing imaginal vehicles for the *recognition* and subsequent expression of formerly tacit knowing of the essential structures of what is being investigated. Perhaps *creativity* is simply a summary term for these and similar cases in which tacit knowing becomes explicit—species of forced or prompted rememberings (*anamnesis*).

A passage in Spinoza may provide a clue as to why certain forms of knowing become tacit in the first place, and remain so.

I will briefly give the causes from which terms called *Transcendental*, such as *Being, Thing, Something*, have taken their origin. These terms have arisen because the human body, inasmuch as it is limited, can form distinctly in itself a certain number only of images at once. If this number be exceeded, the images will become confused; and if the number of images which the body is able to form distinctly be greatly exceeded, they will all run one into another. . . . If the images in the body, therefore, are all confused, the mind will confusedly imagine all the bodies without

distinguishing the one from the other, and will include them all, as it were, under one attribute, that of being or thing. (Spinoza, 1677/1952, p. 387)

Consider a human face. Its features are numerous and complex. Although the face as a whole may be apprehended in a holistic, gestalt, "right-hemispheric" manner and may be recognized and distinguished from other, even very similar, faces, the informational content of the facial features may be too great for the more analytical, verbal, "left-hemispheric" function to handle. The latter blurs all of the features into a single attribute—Mary's face. Its specific features, being too numerous, have become ineffable—tacit. Letting the analytical, verbal, conscious psychological processes work with single features or a small number of features—as with the selections of eyes, noses, and mouths that sketch artists may provide—gives it materials within its handling capacity and the features—part by part—may now be articulated. An excessive number of features may be one cause of ineffability. Other causes, of course, have to do with the simple unavailability of appropriate or well-learned names for rare features or unusual experiences.

Parallels

We find many descriptions of forms of direct, yet tacit, knowing. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Scholastics—especially Hugh of St. Victor, Richard of St. Victor, and Bonaventure—used the metaphor of the *eye of the spirit* to describe this third form of knowing. Elsewhere, it is associated with the heart—as in Sufism's *eye of the heart*, *vision of the heart*, and *knowledge of the heart* or in esoteric Eastern Christianity's *attention of the heart*. We find it in Jacques Maritain's views on *connaturality* (see Arraj, 1988); in the mystics' claims of *knowing through being*, in which one merges with and becomes what is known; in the direct knowing promised—in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*—to those who dwell, through *samyama*, upon particular objects with an exquisite fullness of attention, and in the various *transsensory forms of knowing* studied in psychical research.

These words from a letter of Miura Baien (1723-1789) describe an attitude that may be conducive to direct knowing:

To know the world of Heaven (nature), therefore, [one] must put [one's] own interest aside in order to enter into the world of Heaven. In order to know objects, [one] must again put [one's] own interests aside and enter into the world of objects; only in that way can [one's] intellect hope to comprehend Heaven-and-earth and understand all things. (Miura Baien, 1958, p. 487)

The "How" of Direct Knowing

To put the matter quite bluntly, we have no idea how direct knowing occurs. After centuries of intellectual grappling with these issues, there remain large gaps in our understanding of how one can become accurately aware of what is apparently remote from the usual organs of knowing. The notion of influence at a distance has always been

one that has met with unusually strong resistance among philosophers, scientists, and the general public alike. Nature abhors vacuums; the intellect does not tolerate gaps. Upon close examination, however, the apparent gap involved in intuition or direct knowing seems no larger than the gaps that are present in the more familiar and conventional psychological processes of sensation, perception, memory, reasoning, intending, and feeling. In conventional understandings of consciousness, there remains an unbridgeable gap between brain and mind, between neural processes and conscious percept, experience, or *qualia*—a gap that is just as large and problematical as that between an intuiting mind and a remote, intuited object. One's preferred placement of the gap, and comfort or tolerance for either, may depend upon historical, cultural, or temperamental factors—but a gap there is, and a gap there remains, in either case.

In attempts to fill this gap, numerous explanations of direct knowing have been proposed. Ultimately, these explanations or mechanisms are simply well-wrought analogies or metaphors—as are, perhaps, all scientific models or theories, however sophisticated they may appear, at first blush, to an outsider or how obviously precise and correct they may appear to an habituated insider.

Some of the explanations attempt to bridge the gap between the knower and the known through constructs of empathy or sympathetic understanding (Dilthey and many others), intellectual sympathy (Bergson), sympathetic vibration (Ficino), or sympathetic resonance (Anderson, 1998). Related to these are the various field explanations, including Sheldrake's morphogenetic field. Other explanations attempt to overcome the gap by positing that what appear to be disparate, isolated entities are really intimately interconnected parts of a greater whole. For example, Bergson used the image of "our large body" (Bergson, 1935, p. 246) that was co-extensive with our consciousness, comprising all we perceive, reaching to the stars. A similar concept is the "long body," familiar to many peoples. A specific instance of this is the *orenda* of the Iroquois—a fundamental life force or energy that is inherent in everything and also has aspects of a tribal power or group soul (see Highwater, 1981). Related to the large body constructs are the various hologram-like concepts of Bohm and others.

The most mundane explanation of certain types of direct knowing is that the known can serve as a specific yet rich unconditional or conditional stimulus that evokes a tacit complex of unconditional and conditional reactions in the knower—in the manner of well-known principles of classical and operant conditioning. The least mundane explanations of some forms of direct knowing can be based upon models and findings derived from meditative traditions (e.g., principles involving *samyama* in certain Yogic traditions) and from the principles operative in psychic functioning that have emerged in experimental parapsychological research.

Still another approach to bridging the gap is to attempt to eliminate it entirely by questioning and revising the assumptions or axioms upon which are constructed the mindset or worldview that leads to a problematic gap in the first place. This is the strategy of Harman and his colleagues who have been closely examining and suggesting revisions of the metaphysical foundations of modern science (see Harman, 1994). The gap problem arises if one posits separate, individual, isolated entities as givens—as the

fundamental building blocks of the universe. If one turns this assumption on its head and posits, instead, that "the universe is basically a single whole within which every part is connected to every other part, [and that] this wholeness includes every aspect accessible to human awareness" (Harman, 1994, p. 393), then the gap problem disappears. It is immediately replaced, however, by a new set of problems that have to do with explaining real or apparent instances of separateness and limitations of knowledge and influence.

One of the most compelling statements of a worldview based on these inverted, holistic assumptions is provided by the 13th century mystic/poet Jelaluddin Rumi: "I've heard it said there's a window that opens / from one mind to another, / but if there's no wall, there's no need / for fitting the window, or the latch" (Rumi, 1984, p. 10). Leibnitz argued that monads "have no windows" (Leibnitz, 1714/1960, p. 177). Rumi would contend that they don't need them, since they are all within the same room.

The Power of the Particular

It appears that the particular is able to convey a richness and depth of knowing that the universal cannot readily provide. Part of this power of the particular may be attributed to the greater number of channels or modes of knowing that are made possible by particulars. Universals or generalities appeal to, and may even be restricted to, the thinking function, the intellect. Generality of knowledge may be accompanied by a diffusing or weakening of attention or concentration. Particulars, on the other hand, can involve a greater range of knowing modalities. Particular, concrete objects or specific accounts can activate multiple sensory channels and can evoke rich memories as well as emotional and bodily reactions. This may result in a greater density of concentration, registration, appreciation, and understanding than would be possible for the comparatively dilute set of primarily intellectual and verbal reactions evoked by generalities or universals. This greater range and breadth of reactions evoked by concrete particulars may account for some of the power of anecdotes, stories, novels, poetry, and art, as well as for the greater interest value of these latter forms of communication.

The Necessary Dance

What I do is me: for that I came.

— Gerard Manley Hopkins

The universal and the particular require, and make no sense apart from, one another. They are the two sides of the coin of knowing, the coin of being. An alchemical dictum comes to mind: *solve et coagula*, dissolve and congeal. In the complete process of being and becoming, the particular dissolves into the universal, and the universal congeals or condenses into the particular. The universal and the particular are as breath and bone, cleaving to and from one another in their necessary and eternal dance.

A full account of what is to be known requires partaking of each of these complements. The universal supplies the central tendencies, themes, and commonalities;

the particular supplies the variability, the variations, the differences. In taking in the largest picture, one moves from one to the other then back again, covering all of the possibilities.

The labyrinth metaphor was intended to suggest the manifold ways of *knowing*—a thick pie of particulars, rather than a thinner slice of commonalities or universals. The same metaphor also suggests the multiplicity of *being*—the vast possibilities of what may be realized in the forms of concrete particulars. The winding labyrinth path that touches and depends upon each and every point of its area may symbolize the infinite possibilities that may be realized—an infinite appreciation of a pluralistic universe.

If all things are related the unity of creation demands that each life form contribute its intended contribution. Entities are themselves, because they had been made to be so. Any violation of another entity's right to existence in and of itself is a violation of the nature of the creation and a degradation of religious reality itself. Admonitions to generate self-change are a form of insanity, violating the whole nature of reality. (Deloria, 1973, p. 299-300)

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