

Seeing With Different Eyes: On the Varieties of Ways of Knowing

The fatherland to us is there whence we have come, and there is the father. What then is our course, what the manner of our flight? This is not a journey for the feet; the feet bring us only from land to land; nor need you think of coach or ship to carry you away; all this order of things you must set aside and refuse to see: You must close the eyes and call instead on another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use.

~ Plotinus, *Enneads* I.6.8

One often hears the claim that we use only about 10 percent of our brain. If this is to be understood literally, there is no validity to such a claim. In fact, it is likely that all of us use 100 percent of our brain, or close to this, all or most of the time.

The claim makes more sense if it is understood figuratively or if the wording is changed somewhat to suggest what really is meant. For example, in a 1906 address and in a number of 1907 articles based on this address, William James included the following statements: “As a rule men habitually use only a small part of the powers which they actually possess and which they might use under appropriate conditions,” and “We are making use of only a small part of our possible mental and physical resources” (James, 1917, p. 237). He concluded his address and articles by mentioning two problems that would fruitfully repay investigation: the nature of these powers or resources, and our means of unlocking or actualizing these: “We need a topography of the limits of human power in every conceivable direction . . . [and] we need also a study of the various types of human being with reference to the different ways in which [these powers] may be appealed to and set loose” (pp. 263-264).

The Seven Percent Solution

In *The Sign of Four*, the fictional detective Sherlock Holmes makes this memorable utterance to his colleague, John Watson: “It is cocaine,” he said, “a seven-per-cent solution. Would you care to try it?” (Doyle, 1930, p. 89). Like Sigmund Freud (see Jones, 1953), Sherlock Holmes had a habit of using cocaine injections to counter depression and to increase his energy level. Both Freud and Holmes later lost their enthusiasm for the drug and eventually weaned themselves from its use.

I mention this cocaine use by Freud (usually a five percent solution) and by Holmes (a seven percent solution) for two reasons. First, in these two cases, as in many, many others, the drug was used in an attempt to access and facilitate “powers” and resources otherwise not available or readily tapped. Second, I find the two percentages—five and seven percent—of interest. It has often been remarked that only a small proportion of the general population—perhaps five or seven percent?—are in touch with and can access and make important use of immense powers, resources, energies, and human potentials that ordinarily are unknown and untapped by the rest of us. To return to the “ten percent of our brain” claim, it may not be unreasonable to suggest that, ordinarily, we use only seven percent of our available but usually latent powers and

resources for knowing, being, and doing. This suggestion might, alternatively, be phrased as perhaps only five to seven percent of us are able to access and make good use of the full range of our human potentials. If this is so, then for us to access the kinds of powers and resources mentioned by James would require two things: that a greater number of us begin to attempt accessing these, and that each of us might attempt to realize a much greater percentage of our own potentials.

Accessing our greater potentials sometimes happens spontaneously, in *crisis situations*. But when the crisis is over, when the energizing danger has been averted, we tend to return to business as usual, ignoring the transient actualization of potentials that we just experienced. Or, as in the case of Holmes and Freud, we may seek energizing *drugs or other kinds of stimulants* as a way of accessing these usually hidden resources. A third option is to work within the more familiar resources that we already access, attempting to *quantitatively increase* what can be accomplished by these through use of magnified attention, intention, practice, and will. The amazing accomplishments of prodigies and savants point to what might be possible if even our most familiar skills were to be suitably extended or expanded. The main purpose of this essay, however, is to suggest a fourth option. This is to recognize that we ordinarily function with and within a relatively narrow range of capabilities—ways of knowing, being, and doing—which have definite limitations, and that an effective way of expanding these capabilities is to begin to explore and access *other, qualitatively different potentials*, as a way of supplementing our usual ways of knowing, being, and doing. This could provide a different kind of “seven percent solution”—i.e., a solution to the seven percent utilization problem. It would involve more than increasing our ability to see by means of our present eye. Rather, it would involve *learning to see with entirely different eyes*.

Ten Modes of Seeing

The ten stones in the spiraling stones image below are meant to represent ten different modes of learning about and interacting with the world at large. These ten processes are analogous to ways of seeing with different eyes. Each mode has its range (what it can *reveal*) and its limits and constraints (what it *conceals*).



The series begins with the smallest, innermost stone (Number 1) and moves clockwise from

there to the largest, outermost stone (Number 10). The ten modes identified here and represented by the stones include the following:

1. The use of our conventional senses [*smallest, innermost stone*]
2. The use of reason
3. Bodily reactions, behavior, affect (feelings and emotions)
4. Intuition and related processes
5. Different conditions of consciousness
6. Unconscious materials and processes
7. Psi (psychic functioning)
8. Intimations of survival of bodily death
9. Imaginal processes and imaginal realms
10. Mystical/unitive experiences [*largest, outermost stone*]

Our Senses

Spiraling stone Number 1, the smallest, innermost stone, represents our sensory experiences. For completeness, this might better be called our *sensori-motor systems*, for this includes not only ways of learning about the inner and outer world through sensation and perception, but also ways of influencing the world through use of our muscles and glands.

We owe our familiar five-fold classification of the senses—the familiar senses of sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch—to Aristotle. Additional human senses have been identified: senses of pain, balance, proprioception (one's own location or positioning in space), kinesthesia (movement), time, temperature, and perhaps direction. Each of these senses is responsive to a particular type and intensity of stimulation; if either of these is missing or too high or too low, perception via that sense will be absent. There may be a kind of level of tolerance in which too-weak stimulation may not be consciously perceived but nonetheless can be effective for certain purposes; this is the phenomenon of subliminal perception.

What is interesting is that it is possible to artificially extend the range of certain senses by means of transduction devices. For example, we cannot directly detect weak radioactive emissions. However, the clever invention of the Geiger counter allows an instrumented detection of radioactivity to be converted into clicking sounds so that one can become aware of the invisible and inaudible through its effect on a device (the transducer) and then on the conventional hearing sense. Similarly, transducers such as microscopes and telescopes allow us sensory (visual) access to what is ordinarily too small or too far away to be directly perceived.

Still, considering the vast number of qualities and intensities of energies and stimulation present in the inner and outer world, our conventional human senses are quite limited. Other living organisms (plants and animals) are able to sense things in ways that are not possible for us. For example, certain organisms are able to directly sense ultraviolet light or polarized light or weak electrical or magnetic fields in ways that we cannot. Of course, the complement also is true: Humans can detect certain qualities that certain animals and plants might not be able to sense.

I mention all of this to indicate that were we to rely upon our conventional senses alone, we would be capable of functioning with respect to and enjoying only a narrow slice of a huge range

of what is potentially available.

Our Faculty of Reasoning

Spiraling stone Number 2 is meant to represent reasoning. According to most Western philosophical and psychological systems, we have only two ways of learning about and interacting with the world. One of these is through use of our senses; the other is through our faculty of reason, which involves rational thinking, deduction, induction, discursive reasoning. Historically, those emphasizing the former called themselves *empiricists* (after the Greek term for experience, which tended to be limited to sensory experience). Those emphasizing the latter called themselves *rationalists*.

Reason, as conventionally understood, is a process of working with thoughts or information already obtained via the senses, in a logical manner, in order to extend the thoughts or information in new directions. Like the five-fold classification of the senses (above), the rules for proper logical operations are a legacy of Aristotle, who based his system of logic on three laws: *identity* (X is X), *noncontradiction* (nothing can be both X and non-X), and the *excluded middle* (there is nothing between or other than X and non-X). Although these three laws serve us well in most cases, certain special cases present difficulties for this limited form of logic. Some of these are the following:

- The paradox of Epimenedes: Epimenedes says, “all Cretans are liars”; Epimenedes is a Cretan.
- Zeno’s paradoxes of motion in which he appears to demonstrate that movement from A to B is impossible
- Interesting riddles such as The Barber’s Dilemma: There is a barber in a certain town whose rule is to shave everyone who does not shave himself. Question: Does the barber shave himself? If so, he fails to follow his rule; if not, he fails to follow his rule.
- Certain phenomena of relativistic physics
- Certain phenomena of quantum physics
- Instances of retroactive (backward in time) causation at quantum and macro levels
- Understandings of certain deep truths of various wisdom/spiritual traditions

In addition to the either/or Aristotelian logic, there is another logical system that is more inclusive of possibilities and that appears better able to handle things that Aristotelian logic does not handle very well. This is the particular version of the *tetralemma* found in Nagarjuna’s Mādhyamika (Middle Way) system of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist thought. Nagarjuna’s tetralemma (four-fold logical propositions) takes the following form:

1. X exists
2. X does not exist
3. X both exists and does not exist
4. X neither exists nor does not exist

Note that lemmas (propositions) 3 and 4, above, do not honor the noncontradiction and excluded middle rules of Aristotelian logic. A bit of the flavor of the tetralemma, and of the limitations of

Aristotelian logic, can be found in a saying attributed to the physicist Niels Bohr: “ [There are] two sorts of truth: trivialities, where opposites are obviously absurd, and profound truths, recognised by the fact that the opposite is also a profound truth” (quoted in Rozental, 1967, p. 328).

The key problem associated with logic/reasoning is that it is dependent upon language, and language is inherently dualistic, fragmenting (as opposed to holistic), and unable to apprehend aspects of ourselves or of Nature that are not so obviously “either/or.”

The combination of our conventional senses and conventional logic generally serves us well, especially when dealing with “trivialities.” However, to provide a more complete and satisfying treatment of reality, we must supplement these by other modes of knowing, being, and doing.

Bodily Reactions, Behavior, Affect

As represented by spiraling stone Number 3, an easy way to supplement senses and reason is to observe what our bodily, behavioral, and affective (feelings and emotions) activities and reactions might have to tell us about the nature of our inner and outer world. These activities can provide clues about our preferences, our conditions of mind and body, and the nature of the environment in which we find ourselves. It is a matter of realizing that these actions can carry useful information, intending to access these as completely as possible, fully focusing attention on these, remembering and integrating what is learned, and frequently and diligently practicing these means of access.

Intuition and Related Processes

This different way of seeing is represented by spiraling stone Number 4, and is the name for a family of related processes. These go by names such as intuition; direct knowing; knowing through presence, participation, empathy, sympathy, compassion, and love; and knowing through becoming, being, and identity with what is to be known. This very full and immediate form of knowing also is related to an earlier meaning of *intellect*.

In the West today, *intellect* tends to be identified with the faculty of reasoning and often is contrasted with *knowledge of the heart*. It is important to note that this use of intellect reverses its original meaning. Once, intellect had a much larger meaning—related more to the heart than to the head. In fact, *intellect (nous)* was the largest manifestation of mind, and was used synonymously with heart, as in the most complete, deepest core of one's mind and being. What we now call "intellect" (i.e., rational thinking) was, to the most mystical of the early Greeks, merely *dianoia*, which was but one part of the much larger *nous*. A flavor of this distinction, and of how the meanings of the two terms have been reversed, can be appreciated by considering their definitions within *The Philokalia* (from the Greek, *love of the good, love of beauty*), an important and influential collection of 4th – 15th Century (CE) writings within Eastern Orthodox Christianity:

"Intellect (*nous*): The highest faculty in humanity, through which—provided it is purified—one knows the divine or the inner essences or principles of created things by means of direct apprehension or spiritual perception. Unlike the *dianoia* or reason, from which it must be carefully distinguished, the

intellect does not function by formulating abstract concepts and then arguing on this basis to a conclusion reached through deductive reasoning, but it understands divine truth by means of immediate experience, intuition or 'simple cognition.' The intellect dwells in the 'depths of the soul'; it constitutes the innermost aspect of the heart. The intellect is the organ of contemplation, the 'eye of the heart.' "

"Heart (*kardia*): Not simply the physical organ but the spiritual center of one's being, as made in the image of the divine; one's deepest and truest self or inner shrine"

~ from *The Philokalia* (Palmer, Sherrard, & Ware, 1979-1995)

The more familiar, but more limited, meaning of *intellect* (as *dianoia*: discursive reasoning) was treated earlier and was represented by spiraling stone Number 2. Here, as represented by spiraling stone Number 4, we return to the original, larger, heart-like form of *intellect* (as *nous*).

The term *intuition* has many meanings in everyday usage, philosophy, psychology, and in the various wisdom/spiritual traditions. It usually is taken to mean a form of knowing that occurs quickly, all at once, without the usual reflection or thinking, and in a global/holistic manner that can include formerly "unconscious" information.

Here is a tiny sampling of meanings of intuition, chosen to illustrate the vast range of views about the nature of the process:

- A third form of knowing—in addition to Form 1 (sensory experience, opinion, or imagination) and Form 2 (reason)—considered to be the only truly adequate knowledge of the essences of things, which knows things not in their temporal context, but in the context of eternity, of timelessness, and as they are situated in their relationship to God (philosopher Baruch Spinoza);
- A simple, indivisible, holistic experience of sympathy through which one is moved into the inner being of an object to grasp what is unique and ineffable within it (philosopher Henri Bergson);
- The "perception of the possibilities inherent in a situation," that can allow access to latent or implicit tendencies or potentials not yet explicit or available to the senses (psychiatrist and psychologist Carl Jung);
- "The direct assimilation of a knowing faculty with its object. All knowledge is in some sort an assimilation; intuition is an immediate 'information,' without an objectively interposed intermediary; it is the only act by which the knowing faculty models itself, not on an abstract likeness of the object, but on the object itself; it is, if you will, the strict coincidence, the common line of contact of the knowing subject and the object" (Belgian Jesuit priest, philosopher, psychologist, and scholar of mysticism, Father Joseph Maréchal);
- A form of direct knowing in which one identifies with and becomes that which is to be known, in a process called *saṁyama*, which is the conjoint practice of the last three "limbs" of Ashtanga (eight-limbed) Yoga: *dhāraṇā* (concentration), *dhyāna* (contemplation or meditation), and *samādhi* (absorption) (the Patañjali *Yoga-Sūtras*);
- The direct knowledge of Reality, a knowledge in which the knower is not separate from either the process of knowing or the object known. In it, the consciousness of the knower meets up with the consciousness in the object to be known, made possible by the same Self that is common to both (Indian philosopher and sage Sri Aurobindo Ghose).

The key characteristic of this family of forms of direct knowing through presence, identity, being, and becoming what is to be known—represented by spiraling stone Number 4—is that the process is *immediate* and complete, *unmediated* by conventional forms of knowing, and *unmitigated* by spatial or temporal considerations.

The Possibilities and Impossibilities of Different Conditions of Consciousness

Our “normal waking consciousness,” from which most of us draw most of our experiences, analyses, and interpretations, most of the time, is but one of many possible conditions of consciousness. Beyond this familiar form are several less familiar states of consciousness including dreaming, dreamless sleep, hypnagogic and hypnopompic states (transition states of entering or leaving sleep), meditation, and various drug-induced states. If we were to examine these different states or conditions carefully, we would find many cases of overlaps and commonalities in the kinds of knowing, being, and doing that are possible or impossible within each, and we also would find distinct differences in what is revealed and concealed within each condition. It is unnecessarily restrictive and unwise to limit ourselves to what can be learned or accomplished in our familiar waking consciousness. Greater possibilities exist for us when we avail ourselves of other consciousness conditions, indicated here by spiraling stone Number 5.

I am willing to make the bold assertion that although most of us spend most of our time in normal waking consciousness, the greatest experiences, insights, discoveries, and inventions—for us as individuals and for societies and cultures at large—are informed not by this familiar condition but by the less familiar additional conditions of consciousness mentioned above, and that these contributions have had and continue to have important consequences in all aspects of our lives: body, mind, spirit, relationships, and creativity.

It even has been suggested, by psychologist Charles Tart (1972), that it might be possible to practice different forms of science within the various states of consciousness, creating what he has called *state-specific sciences*.

Unconscious Materials and Processes

In several places above, I’ve mentioned the complementarity of what is revealed vs. what is concealed in different forms of knowing. Perhaps the greatest concealments are those involving materials and processes that usually are “unconscious.” We have no definite awareness of such unconscious (i.e., “untalkaboutable”) content, yet its influences on our feelings, thoughts, preferences, judgments, and behavior can be appreciable. These influences have long been emphasized by philosophers and by psychiatrists and clinical psychologists, but—especially since the mid-1980s or so—interest in these has been increasing in the areas of cognitive psychology and neuroscience. The existence and influences of unconscious mental and brain processes are now well-established.

The good news is that it is possible for us to become “conscious” of formerly unconscious materials and processes, and thereby greatly increase our awareness of ourselves, others, and the world around us. This expansion of our range of knowings is represented by spiraling stone

Number 6.

Sometimes, formerly unconscious materials, information, and processes reveal themselves *spontaneously*, and often when we least expect this, in the form of new ways of understanding, new solutions to problems, inspirations, illuminations, insights, and epiphanies. Although such revelations typically are beyond deliberate egoic control, we can at least resolve to be more aware of these when they do occur. We can do this by paying increased attention to subtle internal bodily conditions, reactions, feelings, thoughts, and imagery that can serve as vehicles for these revelations.

Other "revealers of the unconscious" to which we can be ever alert include unintentional slips of the tongue; unintended but revealing changes in our behaviors, perceptions, and memories; as well as bodily illnesses, dreams, images, and feelings that come upon us, unbidden.

In addition to the above, a number of techniques are available that can help us become aware of formerly unconscious content. These include dream incubation, active imagination, some forms of guided imagery, automatisms (such as muscle testing, hand-held pendulums, and the more dramatic automatic writing and automatic speaking), Eugene Gendlin's (1978) focusing process, and observing our reactions to the outcomes of random decisional processes such as coin flips. Finally, creative expressions, in a great variety of modes, often allow us access to previously unconscious information. These expressions can take the form of drawing, painting, working with clay, collage work, engaging in spontaneous movements, and the writing of poetry and fiction.

Psi (Psychic Functioning)

Spiraling stone Number 7 is meant to represent psychic functioning, a shorthand term for which is *psi*. Psychic experiences provide us with additional, powerful means of knowing about and influencing the world, in ways that extend beyond the reaches of our conventional senses and motor systems. The five major forms of psi are telepathy (accurate knowledge of the mental content of another person, usually at a distance), clairvoyance (accurate knowledge of objective events, usually at a distance), precognition (accurate knowledge of future events, beyond what is possible through rational inference or chance coincidence), psychokinesis (direct mental influence of physical or biological systems), and psi-related healing (sometimes known as mental healing or spiritual healing). The first three of these (instances of what might be called *receptive psi*) are closely related to the direct knowing process mentioned earlier. The latter two (instances of what might be called *active psi*) are similar to the process of *empowered imagination* or *himmah*, to be treated later.

Well-documented instances of the five major types of psi have occurred spontaneously in everyday life as well as in well-controlled experiments in the laboratory. As these naturally occur, psi experiences frequently serve an adaptive function and help satisfy important needs or wishes that might not be satisfied otherwise. Actions based on telepathy, clairvoyance, or precognition have resulted in accident avoidance and also have served to prepare individuals so that they might better deal with later experienced traumatic events. A special form of psi known as *PMIR* (*psi-mediated instrumental response*) suggests that we may be constantly, albeit

unconsciously, scanning the world, through space and time, for events that have great significance or meaning for us, and when such events are found, changes in our perception, memory, or behavior can occur that increase our likelihood of encountering useful positive events (being at the right place at the right time) or avoiding dangerous situations. Psi experiences also can provide us with important lessons about ourselves and about the world. These lessons include hints or reminders that there is *More* to us and to the world than is revealed to us by our conventional senses and that deep and profound *interconnections* exist between persons and between persons and all of Nature. The experiences also can provide confirmations or affirmations of the correctness of decisions we have made and of paths recently chosen.

The nature of psi experiences and the conditions that can either facilitate or inhibit these have been treated extensively in various essays, articles, and book chapters available on various pages of this website (see the Archived Papers, Related Materials, Short Essays, and Additional Content pages), and the interested reader is directed to these for further information. The psychological processes of *attention* and *intention* are of extreme importance in the occurrence and awareness of psi-related knowings.

Intimations of Survival of Bodily Death

Spiraling stone Number 8 is meant to represent forms of knowing and influence that are suggestive of our survival of bodily death. These intimations of survival include experiences and phenomena such as apparitions of the dead, hauntings, some poltergeist occurrences, mediumistic communications, mediumistic physical phenomena, some out-of-body experiences, some near-death experiences, reports suggestive of past lives and reincarnation, and reports of electronic voice phenomena (EVP) and instrumental transcommunication (ITC), which may or may not involve voices and images of the deceased.

Research in these areas not only addresses the reality status of these possible indicators of discarnate survival but also necessitates a careful reexamination of who and what we are even while we are living. If something survives, what might that something be, and in which ways might that something exist within us or as part of us—and, hence, be a crucial facet of our identify, nature, and being—as we carry on, in this life, as living, conscious entities? If there is something more than our body and brain that might survive the death of the body and of the brain, then that More is a part of our present being that deserves serious attention in our considerations of our nature and potentials as human beings.

I call these *intimations* of survival, rather than proofs of survival. This is because, even in excellent cases in which possible artifacts and confounds (misobservations, misperceptions, tricks of memory, recording errors, coincidence, and so on) have been carefully eliminated or dealt with, it remains possible that what seem to be manifestations of the deceased might really be complex productions of the psychic functioning of the living persons involved in the episodes.

Imaginal Processes and Imaginal Realms

The various modes of seeing that we have been discussing represent a *pluralistic epistemology*. It

is possible that these are alternative ways of accessing different parts or aspects of a single reality. It also is possible, however, that along with this pluralistic epistemology goes a *pluralistic ontology*—these different modes may be accessing different realities, different realms. Accessing alternate realms or realities may be most likely in connection with intuition (in some of its meanings) and direct knowing, altered states of consciousness, psychic functioning, and intimations of survival. For example, if some aspect of human personality or consciousness is able to survive the death of the physical body, in which realm or reality might this aspect continue to exist? The idea of separate realities is sufficiently important for this to be represented, explicitly, by a distinctive mode and stone (Number 9)—*imaginal processes and imaginal realms*.

In treatments of the imaginal, the following are some of the names that loom large: Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi (the 12th Century Sufi founder of the Illuminationist philosophy or “Oriental Theosophy”), Ibn al-‘Arabī (the 12th Century Andalusian Sufi mystic and philosopher), Marsilio Ficino (the 15th Century Italian Renaissance philosopher and Neoplatonist), Mulla Sadra (the 17th Century Persian Shia Islamic philosopher), Emanuel Swedenborg (the 18th Century Swedish scientist, philosopher, Christian mystic, and theologian), Henry Corbin (the French philosopher and scholar of esoteric Islam), Carl Jung (the Swiss analytical psychiatrist), and James Hillman (the American archetypal psychologist).

These persons focused great attention on the *mundus imaginalis*, the *imaginal world or realm*. Henry Corbin chose the terms *imaginal* and *imaginal realm* in order to distinguish this from the *imaginary*. Unlike the imaginary, which contemporary commentators tend to identify with fantasy and the unreal, the *imaginal*, the *imaginal realm*, and the *alam al-mithal*, the world of the Image, describe a world that is just as ontologically real as (or even more real than?) the world of the senses. It has a faculty of perception of its own—one of *empowered imagination*—that has a cognitive and noetic quality and is just as real as the faculties of sensory perception or intellectual intuition (Corbin, 1969, 1972, 1995).

Key considerations regarding different forms of imagery and their nature and “powers” have been provided by Henry Corbin (1969), in his elaboration of Ibn al-‘Arabī’s description of *himmah*—a kind of transfigured or empowered imaginal process or creative imagination, through which it becomes possible to directly perceive subtle or spiritual realities and to endow products of one’s imagination and intention with a form of external reality, capable of being perceived by others—and by Jess Hollenback’s (1996) treatments of *enthymesis* or empowered imagination, with properties identical to those of *himmah*. In these systems of thought, ordinary imagination may remain “local” in what it may know and accomplish. However, a special form of concentrated, empowered, transformed, or dynamized imagination can know and act veridically and nonlocally.

The topic of the *imaginal* and the *imaginal realm* is both rich and subtle, and it would take a much more intensive treatment to do it justice. For present purposes, I have introduced this simply to indicate this as a special and quite real additional form of knowing, which has been treated by serious scholars over a vast time frame.

Mystical/Unitive Experiences

About the true nature of mystical/unitive experiences, represented by spiraling stone Number 10 the largest, outermost stone, actually little can be said. One must experience this directly in order to truly know and appreciate it. Like the Zen image of pointing to the moon as a way of providing at least a hint as to what it is like, the treatments of the mystical/unitive experience are necessarily indirect and have taken the form of such “pointings” as poetry, art, music, koans, riddles, humor, aphorisms, stories, parables, metaphors, and similes. These provide intimations of at least some of the qualities of the mystical/unitive experience, and they also provide ways of communicating about it, especially among those who already have had the experience.

Essentially, the mystical/unitive experience is one of a deep and profound connection to ultimate reality. It, and similar experiences, is an important feature of virtually all wisdom and spiritual traditions, and it involves its own special form of knowing.

A conclusion, based on all of the above, is that humans are “amphibious” in nature: Like the frog that originates in water but later can venture onto land, we are familiar with and at home in our normal waking consciousness, but we also can enjoy venturing into other forms of consciousness and experience other ways of knowing, which can greatly expand our appreciation of ourselves and of the world(s) around us.



In connection with venturing into other realms, this brings to mind the following image.



This is a colorized version of an unattributed black and white wood engraving that appeared in the French astronomer and science popularizer Camille Flammarion’s 1888 book *L’atmosphère: météorologie populaire* (*The Atmosphere: Popular Meteorology*). To me, it conveys the sense of

leaving our ordinary, familiar reality and having a glimpse of other realms, in which it is possible to see with different eyes.

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