Five Insights About the Nature of Reality Gained through the Experience of Radical Inclusivity

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Introduction

My experiences of, and contemplation about Radical Inclusivity have brought me to five insights about the nature of reality. These do not feel like deductions based on the evidence or conclusions I have come to. They are convictions I hold simply based on how reality has revealed itself to be at its innermost core. To introduce these five insights I will start by discussing the use of the modifier ‘innermost’ in relation to Radical Inclusivity.

Awakening to Radical Inclusivity is a recognition that everything exists on the inside and that ultimately there is no outside. That being said, the only way that you can possibly distinguish something as being ‘innermost’ would have to be in relationship to its proximity to the outside. It would appear then that in the reality of Radical Inclusivity nothing could be more ‘inner’ than anything else and the use of the modifier ‘innermost’ becomes problematic. Partially this is an example of the inadequacies of a language that was born out of the dualistic consciousness that defines things in terms of polarities like inner and outer. Such a language is inherently limited in its capacity to hold the consciousness of what I have called ‘unity unfolding.’

In using the modifier ‘innermost’ I am not referring to some measure of proximity from the outside. I am referring to proximity to the Source of reality. It is my conviction that reality is sourced. It comes from something. And so when I refer to the innermost core of reality I am referring to that which is closest to reality’s ultimate source.

Those of us who are inclined to think in terms of the source of reality often unknowingly think of it in terms of being an inner source. We think of reality as growing from a core in the same way that an apple does. Probably you are familiar with the Big Bang Theory that claims that our universe emerged from an explosion. When we picture this we picture an explosion and a universe radiating outward from it. That explosion is the innermost core of the universe and it is located at the universe’s center.

There is one major problem with this picture of the birth of the universe. It all happens in a preexisting space. Before the Big Bang there was no space, no place for an explosion to happen in. If there was such an explosion it couldn’t have happened in space because space was one of the things that emerged out of it. Our language always refers back to the three dimensional space of the Cartesian worldview. The experience of Radical Inclusivity I believe is opening us up to a different reality, but we are still stuck with modifiers like ‘innermost’ until we develop new ones.

Radical Inclusivity would suggest that it is not helpful to think about reality in terms of having an innermost core, because in a reality of absolute interior nothing can be more inside than anything else. The idea of inner implies outer, and the experience of Radical Inclusivity show us that there is no outside.

A similar argument could be used to argue why it is not useful to think of the source of the universe as where it began in time as well because time also didn’t exist when the universe started. In spite of these challenges it might still be useful to think of reality as being sourced from something. We simply have to avoid thinking about it in terms that refer back to some notion of space containing an inside and an outside, or time that exists on a line. Trying to envision the source of the universe without referring to Cartesian time and space is another example of a wormhole inquiry that can lead us to slip into a different reality.

As I look around at the scene in front of me I wonder, what is the source of all of reality? Where is this entire universe coming from? This brings me to my first conviction about the nature of reality that Radical Inclusivity has brought me to.

1.1. First Insight: The living core of reality is a unity of expanding Consciousness.

We have been conditioned to see ourselves as separate entities living in the universe. We experience ourselves as living things that exist alongside other living things in an inanimate, unconscious expanse of space and time. Radical Inclusivity reveals something very different. Reality is a living being that happens to be having a localized experience of being me. This will take some explaining.

Reality, or we can say the universe (as long as we don’t limit ourselves to the infinite three-dimensional space-filled-with-things Cartesian universe) is having a localized experience of being through human beings. I am not an entity that lives in the universe. I am an experience that the universe is having. That experience is the experience of
being a being that has experiences one of which is the experience of being a being that has experiences. In defense of my attempt to articulate this fact (and in an effort to win over more of your attention) I would like to point out that the great Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard didn’t do much better when he wrote:

Man is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to its own self; or it is that in the relation that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation but consists in the fact that the relation relates itself to its own self.

From my point of view the experience of ‘being a being that has an experience of being’ seems like a localized event. I feel like I am here in one spot and not anywhere else. But where is that experience really taking place? Is it happening in my mind? If it is, is that mind separate from the rest of the universe?

I would contend that the experience of being ‘me’ is not a localized experience; it is an experience of being localized that is happening throughout the entire universe. From the universe’s point of view I am a localized experience of being that the universe is having. The universe is not having that experience in me; it is having it in its entire being. Just like when I cut my finger I feel the pain in my being, not in my finger.

There is fascinating neuroscience experiments that show how we can be fooled into feeling a touch on a rubber hand. By placing the rubber hand in view while touching our real hand that is hidden we will swear that we are feeling the touch on the rubber hand. What this demonstrates is that we are not feeling a localized sensation of touch. The feeling of the location of the touch is part of the feeling of the touch. We feel the sensation in our being and part of the sensation is a sense of where it is located. Otherwise if we were feeling the touch in some localized area we could never be fooled into feeling the touch on a rubber hand.

Similarly I am saying that the human experience is an experience of being that includes a sense of being limited by location. That experience of being is happening in the entire universe and it includes a sensation of happening locally. Part of the experience of being human is the experience of being limited by location. We are an experience of localized awareness that the universe is having throughout its entire being.

We are not separate from the universe. There is no line anywhere of which I can confidently say that I exist on this side but not on that side. I cannot find a place beyond which I cease to exist.

Since there is nothing that separates me from the rest of the universe then my experience cannot be separate from the rest of the universe. In my deepest spiritual realizations I have discovered that the core of my experience is a unity of expanding consciousness. Since I am not separate from the universe this must be the living core of the universe itself.

1.2. Second Insight: Consciousness expands infinitely beyond our human experience of it.

The thing that conditions our current experience most deeply is the limited experience that we have access to in our current human form.

Imagine three people walking into a room filled with amazing books to read. One of them has a blindfold on and can’t see anything. One of them is in a straight jacket and can’t touch anything. The third has nothing blocking his or her vision and nothing binding his or her hands.

Each of these people has different capacities for perception. The person with the blindfold on can’t even see that there are books in the room. The person who is in a straight jacket can see the books and maybe even read the covers, but can’t open any of them. The last person can see, touch and read anything they find interesting.

Imagine all of the possibilities for experience in a room full of amazing books. Then imagine how many of those are blocked from the first two people we described. Each of the people in the room has a different amount of access to the total experience available in the room.

Our perceptual access as human beings determines how much of what is available to experience we actually do experience. We have no way of knowing how limited our human experience of reality is. Do we have access to fifty percent of what exists? 20 percent? 1 percent? Less?

We are all conditioned by the limits of what we can consciously experience and even more so by what we can imagine. We find it difficult to imagine the reality of anything that is beyond our experience. It is impossible to imagine, except in the most abstract ways, anything that exists outside of our ability to experience.

My deepest experiences have convinced me that reality extends far beyond my capacity to imagine and since reality is conscious then I am convinced that consciousness extends far beyond my experience.

We are deeply conditioned to define consciousness in relationship to the human experience of it. This habit is severely limiting our further growth and creating a context that appears to be contributing to, if not causing, massive
destruction that is threatening the further evolution of life on this planet.

It is important to point out here that although our physical senses are certainly the biggest and most obvious limitation to our perceptual capacity, I don’t see them as the most significant one. More significant are the limitations imposed by our current conception of the universe and ourselves. Our fundamental conception of reality is a filter through which we experience reality. We habitually filter out enormous amounts of experience – discounting it as unreal – before it even enters conscious awareness. This filtering based on our preexisting conception of reality is the most significant limitation on our experience.

1.3. **Third Insight: Consciousness is growing beyond any localized experience of it.**

As we look over the small amount of history that we are aware of we see evidence that the destiny of consciousness is to expand beyond all localized limitations of perception.

My first conviction was that the universe we live in is conscious at its core, and yet it appears that the consciousness that is implicit in reality from the start also becomes conscious of itself in a localized way. The movement from being conscious to being conscious of being conscious is the movement from awareness to self-reflective awareness.

The American philosopher William James pointed out that the word consciousness really denotes self-reflective awareness. It comes from two roots – one meaning ‘with’, and one meaning ‘knowing.’ Consciousness therefore means ‘with knowing.’

James felt that it would be more appropriate to have used the term ‘sciouness’ to talk about awareness because the term consciousness already implies self-reflective awareness. For our purposes we will use the less awkward phrase “pure consciousness” when we mean consciousness prior to awareness of being conscious, and “self-reflective consciousness” when we mean consciousness that includes the awareness of being conscious.

Imagine for a moment that the universe is a living conscious entity. And then, at some arbitrary point in its life cycle, on an arbitrary planet revolving around a random star, some of the universe evolved into the form of a planet that gave birth to different forms of life. One of those forms became aware that it was aware, it became “self-reflective” and named itself Human and called its experience of awareness ‘consciousness.’

This species was the only one it ever encountered that was self-aware and initially believed that it was the only conscious thing in the universe. Some great luminaries among this species objected. Our consciousness is part of an infinite and unified consciousness, they claimed. Many appreciated these statements, but few saw the reality of it firsthand, and even fewer lived as if it was true.

So in this living conscious universe one species became self-reflective and initially mistook itself as the only conscious thing in the universe. This species initially only recognized its own experience of consciousness and so defined everything else in the conscious universe as unconscious. We mistook our own form of self-reflective consciousness as the only form of consciousness and ourselves as the only tiny bits of conscious matter in an unconscious universe.

Of course this species is us and this mistake limits our access to the wider universal consciousness that we are in fact a part of. The habit of seeing ourselves as a conscious thing in an unconscious universe actually restricts our capacity to experience the wider consciousness that we have never been separate from.

Psychologists have long known that we don’t experience reality the way it is. Our experience is profoundly shaped and filtered by what we expect to experience. If we believe that we are the only conscious things in the universe that is what we will experience. That isn’t because everything around us isn’t already conscious, it is just that we don’t recognize consciousness in any form we aren’t expecting.

This limitation, which I would call the limitation of a localized experience of consciousness, seems to be unacceptable to the universe. The universe seems to want to grow and expand and breakdown this type of limiting localization. Over time consciousness seems to unerringly move to expand beyond all localized limitations.

The nature of consciousness is to expand beyond limiting perspectives. The human experience of consciousness is a limiting perspective that consciousness is currently expanding beyond. Our efforts to expand our own awareness are aligned with a universal desire for expansion. In fact, generating beings that think they want to expand their consciousness is how the universe expands its consciousness.
1.4. Fourth Insight: We have access to consciousness beyond what we can comprehend, recognize and even perceive.

As we begin to break the habit of defining consciousness only by our experience of it, a previously hidden world of subtle consciousness begins to reveal itself to us. If we relax and allow something miraculous to take place we find ourselves opening up to dimensions of reality beyond our experience of it.

This is exactly what great mystics and realizers have told us throughout human history. We are not what we think we are. We are not limited in our perception in the ways that we believe we are. What we currently call consciousness is a tiny sliver of what is truly alive and awake in reality.

There was a time when human beings assumed that what they saw as light was all the light that existed in the universe. Then we discovered that what we call the visible spectrum of light is just a tiny fraction of a much larger electromagnetic spectrum. We can’t see the rest of the electromagnetic spectrum with our eyes, but that doesn’t mean that we don’t experience it.

We experience other parts of the electromagnetic spectrum already, but we experience them differently. We experience infrared rays just as commonly as we do visible light. We just don’t see them with our eyes. We feel them as heat. Similarly we experience ultraviolet rays whenever our skin burns in the sun.

So to, what we currently experience of reality and mistakenly think of as all of reality is a thin slice of everything that actually exists. Yet, just like we felt heat and got sunburned before we knew that it was caused by light that we couldn’t see, we must also be experiencing more of reality that we are currently recognize as being real.

This is challenging to think about because what we are saying is that we are already experiencing things that we don’t recognize to be real. How can you experience something without recognizing that it is real? How can you experience the unreal and where does that experience reside?

I believe that it is not simply a matter of developing extrasensory perception. It is not only that we don’t have the proper apparatus to experience more of reality. What is causing the limitations on our experience is how we define ourselves and the world. We see ourselves through a localized lens of consciousness. That localization is in large part caused by a limited understanding of reality.

As we discussed in the last section, we think of ourselves as conscious beings in an unconscious universe. We define consciousness based on our experience of consciousness and then assume that that is all there is. Just like we defined light in terms of what was visible to us and missed all the rest.

Our experience of reality will expand as our understanding of reality expands. How we define things limits how we perceive them. Understanding and perception are flip sides of a coin. They must expand together.

1.5. Fifth Insight: We are being called to grow beyond our localized experience of consciousness.

As far as we know the level of self-reflective consciousness that we experience is the most advanced form of consciousness in the Universe. Of course it might not be, and there are days when I pray that it is not. Still, there is no conclusive evidence, and only scant evidence of any kind, that even hints that there might be another species somewhere that matches or surpasses our level of awareness.

If it is even possible that the consciousness we experience as human beings is the highest form yet existent in any species in the Universe then we have a great deal to consider. We might be living on the most important planet in the Universe and those of us who feel drawn what we are discussing here are being given an opportunity to participate in something unimaginable.

It seems that in order for our world to get past this moment in its history, human beings need to grow beyond their localized experience of consciousness. We need to allow our awareness to expand into places where we are currently unable to go. We must develop the capacity to experience what we cannot comprehend, recognize and even perceive. We must learn to journey evermore deeply into the unimaginable.

Our localized, human-centered experience of reality must expand. We must yield to a larger perspective for the sake of a future that we cannot imagine. We are being called to expand into the unknown and the unknowable.

We feel this as a call only from the perspective of our localized, human-centered experience of reality. Our universal self feels the same movement as its own expansion beyond the limiting perspective of the species that first came to self-reflect. Like a snake shedding its skin, the universe feels itself expanding beyond an uncomfortable constraint. Our spiritual growth is the way the universe is expanding beyond the constraints of our current conception of what it means to be human.