



Indigenous and Authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the Triangulation of Meaning

In: Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies

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Pub. Date: 2014

Access Date: February 3, 2020

Publishing Company: SAGE Publications, Inc.

City: Thousand Oaks

Print ISBN: 9781412918039

Online ISBN: 9781483385686

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483385686>

Print pages: 217-232

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Indigenous and Authentic: Hawaiian Epistemology and the Triangulation of Meaning

Manulani AluliMeyer

Whether or not you can observe a thing depends on the theory you use. It is the theory that decides what can be observed.

—Albert Einstein

Indigenous and Authentic. We must develop new theories from ancient agency so we can accurately respond to what is right before our very eyes. It was Che Guevara, revolutionist extraordinaire, who believed the shackles of ignorance could be snapped via ideas that were indigenous *and* authentic, old *and* new, cycled *and* creative, ancient *and* developed-thismoment. So too with research. Can the idea, then, of duality combine itself into wholeness needed for this time? Dual to nondual, research to renewal, fragment to whole—yes this is the goal.

This chapter introduces you to indigenous epistemology as viewed by Native Hawaiian mentors, friends, and family so that you will understand that *specificity leads to universality*.¹ This is a spiritual principle within ancient streams of knowing. It nests itself within a wider and wider space I now experience as wonderment and truth in deeper and deeper dimensions. This chapter closes with a discussion of the Triangulation of Meaning, an authentic leap into new ways of viewing reality that will challenge current research paradigms based on Newtonian assumptions of space, time, and knowing. Indigenous and Authentic. Timeless and Timely. So, put on the tea. Here we go.

Hawaiian Epistemology: The Specifics of Universality

But will it also be thought strange that education and knowledge of the world have enabled us to perceive that as a race we have some special mental and physical requirements not shared by the other races which have come among us?

—Queen Lili'uokalani, 1898

All peoples have their own distinct beliefs of what knowledge is and what knowing entails. This idea is an example of epistemology² specific to place and people. Applying hermeneutics to politics, education, health, and all modern institutions details why such a simple epistemological truth is often denied.³ Power, hegemony, colonialization, racism, and oppression are the labels on such acts of denial. I now see these as *unawareness*.

How I experience the world is different from how you experience the world, and both our interpretations matter. *This is an important point* as it links inevitably to transformative policies, awareness, and pathways to liberation via our own articulated epistemology. It expands the idea of what knowledge is supposed to be and in truth is—vast, limitless, and *completely* subjective. As ocean people in a warm climate, you bet we have a different way of knowing and thus being. Regardless of the fracas of modernity within our shorelines, we as the first peoples of Hawaiinuiakea have our own uniqueness for how we have approached knowledge/ knowing for thousands of years. Our epistemology *still* differs from those who occupy our shores, and as we awaken, a revolution of remembering will bring us back to what is valuable about life and living, knowledge and knowing.

The following seven categories help to organize systems of consciousness that are needed to enliven what knowing means in today's rampage called modernity. They are doorways into a space without walls. They are notes in a song my people are singing to you. Do not be put off by its specificity, simple notions, and odd languaging. It is merely one group of people finding their way back into meaning—a space we all can share together. Remember, bear witness to your own thoughts now as you delve into these categories of knowing. How will you respond to the “exotic other”? Will you see the role of its vitality in your own capacity to see and hear? How will it inform your *own* ideas of research, knowing, and being of service to a worldwide awakening? Be open. Be ready. We have work to do.

1. Spirituality and Knowing: The Cultural Context of Knowledge

The question is, Who is the self? You're not just who you are now. You're aligned with people who have gone through it lots and lots of times.

—Calvin Hoe, Hakipuu

Knowledge that endures is spirit driven. It is a life force connected to all other life forces. It is more an extension than it is a thing to accumulate. When the Hawaiians I listened to⁴ spoke of spirituality with regard to intelligence, they were not talking about religion. *These are two completely different ideas*. What was discovered in the thoughts of others and within my own reflection was the intentionality of process, the value and purpose of meaning, and the practice of mindfulness. These ideas, accessed via deep and enduring respect for our *kupuna*, our lands, our oceans, our language, rituals, and families, became the foundation of a Hawaiian essence. These are *spiritual principles* that, if played out as epistemology, help us enter spaces of wonderment, discernment, right viewing, and mature discourse. It is an old idea that does not clock answers or place you in special education classrooms because you cannot read at grade level. It is a rich and mature response to life's diversity and brilliance.

The spirituality of knowledge got entangled within the bureaucracy of its form and has been pulled back further and further away from the light of fundamental empirical knowing. It is now often confused with religion and relegated to backroom lectures and dismissed by mainstream science. Spirit as knowing is a *real idea*

that allows us to ritualize ways to collect medicine, read a text, prepare a meal, or communicate with family. It allows knowing to be an act of consciousness that reaches beyond the mundane into connection and alignment with an essence that finds its renewal throughout the generations. This higher reach of knowing collapsed under the weight of homogeneity and assimilation—around the world. It must right itself through our engagement to secure our survival.

How does the interpretation of knowledge as spirit affect your research? It doesn't. *You do*. It merely points to a frequency that if heard will synergize with your courage when you write without fear after asking questions that search for deeper meaning to an act, an idea, a moment. An epistemology of spirit encourages us all to be of service, to not get drawn into the ego nurtured in academia, and to keep diving into the wellspring of our own awe. In that way, our research is bound in meaning and inspired by service to others or to our natural environment. That's an epistemology based on what we refer to as *ea* or animating principles. *Ea* is also our Hawaiian word for sovereignty. And as I believe more in the Nation-Within idea, let it inspire you to develop your own mind within the context of the needs of your own community. Do you see how it can assist you as you begin to formulate the why and what of your work? See your work as a *taonga* (sacred object) for your family, your community, your people—*because it is*.

2. That Which Feeds: Physical Place and Knowing

I am shaped by my geography.

—Hannah Kihalani Springer, Kukuiohiwai

Indigenous people are all about place. Land/*aina*, defined as “that which feeds,” is the everything to our sense of love, joy, and nourishment. Land is our mother. *This is not a metaphor*. For the Native Hawaiians speaking of knowledge, land was the central theme that drew forth all others. You came from a place. You grew in a place and you had a relationship with that place. *This is an epistemological idea*. Because of the high mobility of Americans and billboards as childhood scenery, many find this idea difficult to comprehend. Land/ocean shapes my thinking, my way of being, and my priorities of what is of value. Remember, if knowledge is imbued with spirit, how much more is the land where we are inspired in this knowledge making? One does not simply learn about land, we learn best *from* land.⁵ This knowing makes you *intelligent* to my people. How you are on land or in the ocean tells us something about you. *Absolutely*. It opens doors to the specificity of what it means to exist in a space and how that existing extends into how best to interact in it. This includes cities, rooms, suburbs, and all the many configurations we have found ourselves in.

Land is more than a physical place. It is an idea that engages knowledge and contextualizes knowing. It is the key that turns the doors inward to reflect on how space shapes us. Space as fullness, as interaction, as thoughts planted. It is not about emptiness but about *consciousness*. It is an epistemological idea because it conceptualizes those things of value to embed them in a *context*. Land is more than just a physical locale; it is a mental one that becomes water on the rock of our being. Consideration of our place, our mother, is the

point here. And she is more than beautiful, or not. *She is your mother.*

How will this inspire your research? Well, to begin with, check your breathing. Is it deep and aware or are you troubled and in a hurry? Land as an epistemological cornerstone to our ways of rethinking is all about relating in ways that are sustaining, nourishing, receptive, wise. Knowing with land should help you find out more about your own self, and when that process begins as a researcher, you start to open your own phenomenological inquiry into *your* origins of space. Was it lined with books or were you in the lap of dandelions? One does not judge here. It's all about *recognizing* and finding how space influenced your thinking. Because it has. It does now. And what you bring to your knowing influences all that you do, write, and offer to the world. This epistemological category helps us all recover from our childhood traumatic belief that place is never recoverable. With regard to research, our early spaces help create the topic you choose, the questions you formulate, and the way you respond to data. It is all shaped by space. Not time. Conscious-shaping space. Space-shaped consciousness. An epistemological priority.

3. The Cultural Nature of the Senses: Expanding Our Ideas of Empiricism

I don't think I was taught that! I was hearing it.

—Irmgard Farden Aluli, Kailua

I surf. My ways of knowing a swell, where to line up for a wave, and why Kona winds were perfect for diving (not surfing) in my home waters off Kailua made me a beach rat. It has helped me know my place in the world. It is distinct and based on experiences of place and passion. It differs from yours. You have your own brilliance and priority of knowing. We are uniquely experienced, and my sensual history brings my current understanding into a fluid context that extends a modern Hawaiian world-view. I am empirically configured by my past, and my senses and body were the tools and recording devices through which I retrieved and stored all data. *Our senses are culturally shaped.* This is an epistemological idea. It is not a bad or good thing. It is a fact that for some reason has been misunderstood and developed as a polemic point in most matters of philosophy and basically ignored in research.

Differences at these fundamental levels begin to expand all points of epistemology that will open your mind and keep it open to alternative interpretations of how one hears a song or sees an event. They are the ABCs of how and why we engage with others and why we sometimes scratch our head with their renditions of reality. Remember, what we have in common is our difference. It begins first with this, and it is the leaping-off point to the beauty of specificity that will bring us to a common knowing. This contextualizes the once static notion of empiricism that believes you and I see the same cornfield. It's the maturing of objectivity into subjectivity. It is experience that tells the farmer his cornfield is in need of calcium and water as I, the beach rat from Kailua, notice nothing.

Every Native Hawaiian I listened to spoke in terms of her own epistemology, her own empirical understanding of the world. The aroma of a *lei pakalana*, sunrise pinks splashed in the heavens as Hiiaka, the touch of *kalo* in cool running waters, the thrill of sound in harmony. All these are aspects of a culture evolving in place, and they all shape the building blocks of knowing—our sensual organs that are culturally configured.

This fundamental idea that our senses are culturally shaped seems almost obvious, but it must be understood deeply if you are to proceed into what many may not understand. What this entails for your research is that you will need to slow down what it means to see something, hear something, or experience something. There is a wealth of diversity and knowledge in smells! An entire universe is found in how one catches a glance. It all shapes how you will gather data, think through findings, and report out.

Knowing that you are unique at this basic level will bring a keen understanding of the nuance of your own subjectivity. Begin to name it at this stage and write sharply about its impact in how you know and experience the world. Operating at this level may be challenging to current policies, philosophies, and faculty in most universities. Keep going! Your relationship to your research topic is your own. It springs from a lifetime of distinctness and uniqueness only you have history with. Be encouraged by this! Do not doubt your own capacity to scaffold complex and cultural ways in which to describe the world. It is time to be clear at this very fundamental level.

4. Relationship and Knowledge: Self Through Other

How can you be happy in your experiences when others are unhappy?

—Gladys Brandt, Honolulu

Here is an epistemological category that deepens all other categories. Existing in relationship triggers *everything*: with people, with ideas, with the natural world. It was a cornerstone inspiration to the people I listened to. It marked a consciousness of the dialectic, a reckoning with what one brought to other. Relationship gave mentors opportunities to practice generosity with others, harmony with land, and ways to develop their own pathway to an idea. *These are epistemological points*. One was in constant interdependence with others and with natural surroundings. Even in modern Hawai'i, family spoke of awareness of connection and being in right relation with all. Of course, this was the ideal that sometimes fell short in reality, but it was a priority most mentors lived out in their lives.

Knowledge was the by-product of slow and deliberate dialogue with an idea, with others' knowing, or with one's own experience with the world. Knowing was in relationship with knowledge, a nested idea that deepened information (knowledge) through direct experience (knowing). The focus is with connection and our capacity to be changed with the exchange. Thus the idea of self *through* other. I believe this is an idea more shaped by our practice of aloha, the intelligence of compassion, empathy, and care. It is an ancient idea to heal with all relations, and this included land and ocean. Aloha was a level of consciousness that defined our

intelligence.⁶ Vivid interconnection was valued, a lived dialectic. After all, did we not bring the endless joy of riding waves to the world?

How does this inspire research? It reminds us that knowledge does not exist in a vacuum. Intelligence is challenged, extended, and enriched when viewed in dyad awareness or group consciousness. Of course, this opens doors to the richness of hermeneutics and its inevitable worldwide focus, but first we segue with epistemology. It is the notion that intentions must harmonize with ideas, and ideas form the libretto of our transformational drama. It is all fundamentally done with awareness of other and, consequently, oneself. Will your research bring forth solutions that strengthen relationships with others or will it damage future collaborations? How will your own relationship with self inspire truth and courage to do what will be needed when predictable roadblocks enter your view? A knowledge that includes true awareness of other will radically alter research protocols, questions, and processes.

5. Utility and Knowledge: Ideas of Wealth and Usefulness

Going to the beach for her (mother) was a place where you would go and gather and not a place for recreation.

—Pua Kanahele, Panaewa

Function is the higher vibration of an idea, not the lower. How one defines function is first discovered in its meaning and then its interpretation. Here it is! Here is where the cosmological clashing began, not with the word but with its *meaning*.⁷ This is why we go to epistemology and then, inevitably, to hermeneutics. This is where Descartes's error comes to light. *Cogito ergo sum*—I think therefore I am—does not divide us from our embodied selves; it can unite us in a wisdom that is embedded in usefulness, awareness, and function. This is edging into a universal epistemology. It's all about function. And as aloha is my intelligence, well, I guess this means you can use my board.

Hoa'e ka 'ike he'enalu i ka hokua o ka 'ale—show your knowledge of surfing on the back of a wave. Thus one knows. It's not about how well you can quote theory; it's whether those ideas affect how you *act*. Here is the focus of this entire book: How will you feel encouraged to go forth into the world to alter its frequency? How will you bring robustness to this flat land knowing literacy keeps undimensioned? How will you actualize these principles of being to expand what knowledge is at its core?

Make your work useful by your meaning and truth. I know it sounds somehow ethereal, but this is the point: Knowledge that does not heal, bring together, challenge, surprise, encourage, or expand our awareness is not part of the consciousness this world needs now. This is the function we as indigenous people posit. And the great clarity that I have been waiting to express through the beautiful mind of our beloved kupuna healer Halemakua: *We are all indigenous.*'

6. Words and Knowledge: Causality in Language

Okay, you give an assignment to a family. Maybe to that family you'd say: You cook the long rice and chicken. Come that night it starts to bubble, then you would know they grumbled. They didn't put their heart and soul in making this so you can find out who grumbled, I mean, by the taste.

—Florence Kumukahi, Kaipalaoa

Here is an epistemological category better reflected in Hawaiian literature and historic textual discussions than the mentors interviewed. It is a subtle category that was clearly repetitive throughout our Hawaiian written history but somehow silent in modern oral descriptions of intelligence. I believe this absence signals where precisely we must lend our awareness.

Hawaiians at one time believed in the causative agency of intention.⁹ *Thought creates*. This is why it was seen as negative to even *think* of hitting a child. Negative thoughts then had negative consequences. This whole cycle of reciprocation turns on the integrity and life force of a thought expressed as action. The point here is that effect begins with intention. This is an epistemological idea that helps us mature into a deeper relationship with what action and reality is at its core: *thought*.

The idea that thought creates and intention shapes the observable world may seem farfetched to some, but it is now recognized and discussed in depth by indigenous scholars, quantum physicists, mothers, and social scientists and summarized in groundbreaking works.¹⁰ Specific to human problems in society, effective research stems from deeply looking into the *conditions* of what may be the cause of specific phenomena. And these conditions are inevitably found in *consciousness*. David Hawkins (2002) summarizes it thus: "There are no *causes* within the observable world ... *the observable world is a world of effects*."¹¹ Our thoughts create reality. This is where authentic dovetails with indigenous. This is where standardized tests miss the boat. This is where research comes in.

What this means is that poverty does not cause drug addiction but rather our *response* to poverty does. My *thoughts* about the effects of poverty affect how I respond to it. All bets are off, however, if my brain cells are not operable. It highlights the idea that postcolonialism for Hawai'i is not first a physical place but a *mental one*. It by *no means* dismisses the physical burden that poverty, oppression, and other acts of abuse put on the body, mind, and spirit; it simply names what is at the inevitable *core* of anything tangible: *thought*. It also helps us develop a different discourse for solution making that snaps us out of the level of consciousness it was created in.¹²

The question now may be, What is your intention in doing research? What are your thoughts about your topic? What do you bring to the phenomenon of a moment shared with other? How will you think through the process and product of data collection, or how will you respond to experiences and ideas that will be completely new to you? This is not a distant discussion of your bias or of your deductive or inductive realities. It is the pulse

of your character that you must name. Understanding causation in intention and language helps us critically self-reflect. It can bring a vibrancy of purpose and truth to your findings and style of writing.

This is not objectivity we are discussing; it is fully conscious *subjectivity*, and it holds the promise of being effective in a radically different way if you understand its meaning and prioritize it at all levels of your research. It is called *metā-consciousness*. To be more than a woman of my word. To be a woman of my *intention*. Write about it. Put your thoughts in a prologue or in an appendix. It can be done.

7. The Body/Mind Question: The Illusion of Separation

Without heart we don't have sense.

—Keola Lake, Kahala

Here is the capstone of Hawaiian epistemology and its sharpest sword in this duel with mainstream expectations of what it means to know something. The separation of mind from body is not found in a Hawaiian worldview. It was not apparent in any interview, in any body of literature, in any dreams that arrived in service to this unfolding reflection. Indeed, intelligence and knowledge were embedded at the core of our bodies—the stomach or *na'au*. The *niau* for Native Hawaiians is the site for both feeling and thinking. Wisdom, *na'auao*, also translates as heart, emotion, and intelligence. Modern Hawaiians are trained to dismiss these tuggings of one's embodied knowing for the objective, unfeeling one. Clearly, if one succeeds in this way, culture erodes and wisdom becomes a flimsy caricature of its potential.

Body is the *central* space in which knowing is embedded. It was not merely a passing idea but basic to all interviews. Our body holds truth, our body invigorates knowing, our body helps us become who we are. This was not simply a metaphoric discussion of union with sensation and conceptualization. Our thinking body is not separated from our feeling mind. *Our mind is our body. Our body is our mind.* And both connect to the spiritual act of knowledge acquisition. It is part of what we will discuss further as an integral space in the triangulation of meaning.

Liver is where you digest the powers of perception. Digestion is not purely physical. I have “fed” on knowledge. It is an internal digestion. If I have digested a book, I have eaten it, digested it. This is where we separate epistemologies—in digestion and vital organs.

—Rubellite Kawena Johnson, Scholar/Educator

But that's what *na'auao* is. It's a cosmic center point. It has to do with your ancestors coming together with you. It has to do with your spiritual being coming together. It has to do with our physical being.

—Pua Kanahela, Kumu Hula/Educator

Knowing there is intelligence in feeling and feeling in intelligence begins the long turnaround from an isolated

thinking self void of the potential messiness of subjective realities found in all versions of the world. It brings us back into ancient sensibilities that recognize the strength found in conscious subjectivity and clearly stated origins of thought found in empirical, objective recognition. Objectivity is not the evil here. It does not serve a more awakened future to argue one is better than the other. In our evolving future, both are needed, both are useful, both will find their way to harmony. It is the bullying found in unconscious worldviews that would deny that subjectivity is actually a maturing of objectivity, not a dumbing down. Here is where indigeneity and authentic synergize.

Hawaiian Epistemology: Implications for Research

Aloha is the intelligence with which we meet life.

—Olana Kaipo Ai

True intelligence is not described by an SAT score. Here is the point to all this detail on what it means to be intelligent to my people. What are the implications of these seven categories of knowledge making and knowing on *your* research mind? Did you feel a *remembering* with these ideas? It has become clear to me that the specificity of these Hawaiian epistemological categories is indeed endemic to islands in the middle of the Pacific. But they also offer a way to organize universal truths you may wish to consider:

1. Finding knowledge that endures is a *spiritual* act that animates and educates.
2. *We are* earth, and our awareness of how to exist with it extends from this idea.
3. *Our senses are culturally shaped*, offering us distinct pathways to reality.
4. Knowing something is bound to how we develop a *relationship* with it.
5. *Function* is vital with regard to knowing something.
6. *Intention* shapes our language and *creates our reality*.
7. *Knowing is embodied* and in union with cognition.

I arrived at this view-plain through the specificity of knowing my ancient self—spaces we all can recognize because we all have them. True intelligence *is* self knowledge.¹³ Self-inquiry helped shape my own understanding of knowing and put in the light bulbs on a path leading to wider application. It ends my feelings of inferiority and disconnection. It helps discern the glaring difference between uniformity and universality. It is best summarized by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore (2004): *Man's individuality is not his highest truth, there is that in him which is universal.*

So, if specificity leads us into universal truths, how does *that* help us right what is so clearly wrong with our systems and thought patterns? How do we begin to effectively debate entrenched practices that do not recognize a more enduring way to engage in knowledge or a more enlivened way to live in harmony with all things? Why can't we approach research, scientific inquiry, and policy making with integral beliefs that honor and develop fractal approaches to intention?¹⁴ Why do we not engage dialectically with those who oppose

us? How are we to develop tools of self-reflection so that we become more capable agents of change and transformation? Here are questions that an expanding epistemology challenges us to think through. Perhaps as we enter the Triangulation of Meaning, we are heading into parts of how they will be answered. Indigenous and Authentic, remember? Yes, yes. Let's continue on. We've still got lots to do.

The Triangulation of Meaning: Body, Mind, and Spirit

Triangulation, three intimations of one idea, should be noted as a guide to edifying coherence among associations.

—Zach Shatz (1998)

Here we go! Here is the authentic part of this chapter. It is a set of ideas that may bring you back to *remembering*. It extends indigenous epistemology into a context of world awakening. It is daringly simple, but then again, words only point to the truth. *Genuine knowledge must be experienced directly.*¹⁵ It is meant to help you organize your research mind and give you the courage to do so with the rigor found in facts, logic, *and* metaphor. It is offered now because it organized my own thoughts and oiled the tools needed to dismantle the master's house found in perfect order *in my own mind.*¹⁶ We as researchers can now become architects of meaning, shaping spaces as yet unseen. Here is the challenge. Here is a floor plan.

Let's begin with the idea of *triangulation*. Wilderness education teaches that if you wish to find your place on a topographical map, you need only locate two geographical distinctions on land, and with the use of a compass and pencil, the third and final spot—your location—can then be found. The use of three points to discover one's location in both two and three dimensions is the art and science of “triangulation,” and I have always thrilled in its use and implication. Thus the metaphor of *triangulating our way to meaning* with the use of *three* points. These three points? Body, mind, and spirit.

Using body, mind, and spirit as a template in which to organize meaningful research asks us to extend through our objective/empirical knowing (body) into wider spaces of reflection offered through conscious subjectivity (mind) and, finally, via recognition and engagement with deeper realities (spirit). Finally, we are defining places science can follow into but not lead or illuminate. Other ways of knowing something *must* be introduced if we are to evolve into a more enlightened society. It will not occur with scientific or objective knowledge only. Nobel laureate Werner Heisenberg puts it more succinctly: *Physics can make statements about strictly limited relations that are only valid within the framework of those limitations* (Wilber, 2001).

So, before we begin this discussion, please understand that your schooled mind has been shaped by mostly one point in the triangulation—body. *Body* is a synonym for external, objective, literal, sensual, empirical. Change agents, indigenous researchers, cultural leaders, and transformational scholars are now working together to help this idea grow up. So, take a breath. Keep your mind open.

To begin, mahalo to Ken Wilber for his capacity to see patterns in philosophy and research that brought this idea to the world.¹⁷ I have simply extended his preliminary list into trilogies that make sense to me and the needs of our focus. It was my wilderness education experiences that brought forth the idea of “triangulation” as I have experienced the beauty of its practice and utility. We are poised to use three points in our experiencing of life and research to find our way home. Not two. Not one. Three.

The Number Three

The Tao gives birth to One.

One gives birth to Two.

Two gives birth to Three.

Three gives birth to all things.

—Tao Te Ching, Chapter 42

It is more like Bucky Fuller's tetrahedron.¹⁸ It's about the structural integrity formed when *three* points meet in dimensioned space. The tetrahedron is also the sacred geometry of infinity, energy, and the perfect balance of equilibrium found in postquantum physics. It is the doorway into wholeness. We at first thought it was about opposites, about duality, about bridging polarity and painting our theories of gender, science, and life under this light. Black and white comparisons kept us busy for hundreds of years. It has shaped the polemic universe we now take for granted. True or false. Body or mind. Oppressor or oppressed. Cognition or feeling. Real or imagined.

The world is indeed perceived in binary systems. It has caused untold horror and helped create a rigid epistemology we now assume cannot evolve. We have options, however. Why not experience duality like the Yin and Yang, Ku and Hina of our ancient selves?¹⁹ Life *is* found in dual forms, but as we gather evidence from all sectors of world scholars, mystics, and practitioners, we are discovering that life moves within a *context of dynamic consciousness* that synergizes with Aristotle's highest intellectual virtue he referred to as *phronesis*. This is not simply a discussion of moral relativity or the third point in duality; it is a piercing into different planes of epistemology to discuss what inevitably shifts into nonduality because of its inherent wholeness. It has helped me step from entrenched patterns of thinking to include older ways and more experienced expressions of what intelligence *really* is and how it can be expressed. It's about time, don't you think?

Reaching for Wholeness

Relative and absolute, these two truths are declared to be. The absolute is not within the reach of

the intellect, for intellect is grounded in the relative.

—Shantidevi

The world is more than dual. It is whole. We have looked at parts so long we perhaps believe the gestalt of our knowing is not possible. With regard to research, we *still* believe statistics is synonymous with truth. It is a dangerous road to travel when we pack only empirical ways of being into our research backpack. Here is the point of doing research at this juncture of history: Empiricism is just one point in our triangulation of meaning, and although it may begin the process of research, it by *no means* is the final way in which to engage, experience, or summarize it.²⁰ Research and life are more in line with three simple categories that have been lost in theory and rhetoric: body, mind, *and* spirit. Thus begins the discussion of a triangulation of meaning. *Ho'omakaukau?* Let us begin.

Body: The Gross and Physical Knowing of Life—First Point in the Triangulation of Meaning

I believe we carry our values in our bodies. We carry our culture in our bodies.

—Peese Pitsiulak, Inuit

We're not talking gross as in yucky. Gross starts this triangulation of meaning because it describes what is outside, what is external, what is seen, what is empirical. It is the *form* that consciousness has shaped. It is one way to begin this discussion of research for meaning because it is what we are familiar with. It is science in all its splendor. It is the part of your research that may be counted, sorted, and emphasized because of statistical analysis. It is what you see, not the way in which you interpret what you see or hear. It is the ABC of experience you may jot down in memo form so you don't forget specifics. This is the description of what was in the room, the time of day, what was said, or the written ideas on butcher paper informants shared. It is the information phase of gathering ideas. It is vital. It is the objective pathway we mistook for destination.

The body idea in the triangulation of meaning is what science has cornered. It is expressed through sensation via objective measurement and evaluation. It is a valuable and rigorous part in the triangulation of meaning and the center of most research processes. The gross/external part of the triangulation is the nitty-gritty of experience, the atomic process of physical movement, the force that moves objects. It is vital to not underestimate the beauty of research found at this level. The problem was that we assumed all the world could be described this way. In one sense, all the world can be described in this way. We are simply acknowledging the world to be fuller, richer, and lived deeply also in the internal processes that empiricism only points to. Thus, the world *can* be described via objectivity alone. It just would not be enough. *Is* not enough.

[Table 11.1](#) draws out why detailing this portion of the triangulation is vital and yet only one third of the whole. It will give you a clearer picture of what we are talking about. [Table 11.1](#) gives us a glance at the future of rigor.

Gross/external/body knowing becomes part of a wholeness forming when combined with mind and spirit. Mature self-reflection finds objectivity moving in space/time toward a subjective reality that finally realizes the strength and beauty of its limitation and potential.

Table 11.1 The Triangulation of Meaning in Its Many Formsa

<i>Body</i>	<i>Mind</i>	<i>Spirit</i>	<i>(Source)</i>
Objective	Subjective	Cultural	Karl Popper
Facts	Logic	Metaphor	M. McCloskey
Perception	Conceptualization	Remembering	Yoga Sutra
Empiricism	Rationalism	Mysticism	Ken Wilber
Information	Knowledge	Understanding	Manu Aluli
Sensation	Reason	Contemplation	Ken Wilber
Instinct	Intelligence	Intuition	Halemakua
Emotion	Feeling	Awareness	Spinoza
Force	Power	Liberation	David Hawkins
Its	I	We	Buddhist inspired
Life	Mind	Joy	Upanishads
External	Internal	Transpatial	Ken Wilber
Knowledge	Knowing	Enlightenment	Māori inspired
True	Good	Beautiful	Plato
Gross	Subtle	Causal	Ken Wilber
Tinana	Hinengaro	Wairua	Māori
‘Ike (to see)	‘Ike (to know)	‘Ike (revelations)	Hawaiian
Hearing	Thought	Meditation	Buddhist
Duality	Nonduality	Wholeness	Ken Wilber
Biology	Psychology	Spirituality	Manu Aluli
Seeing	Thinking	Being	Ken Wilber
Word	Meaning	Perception	Patanjali
Monologue	Dialogue	Presence	Ken Wilber
Empiricism	Epistemology	Hermeneutics	Manu Aluli
Dot	Circle	Sphere	Mel Cheung
Eye of the Flesh	Eye of the Mind	Eye of Contemplation	Ken Wilber
Ways of Knowing	Ways of Being	Ways of Doing	Aboriginal
Decolonization	Transformation	Mobilization	Poka Laenui

NOTE: Unless noted specifically in the reference section at the end of this chapter, all descriptors in this list have been collected during a lifetime of experiences and kept as journal entries without citation. Students have also given me their renditions, and I have begun that list. The list itself is as self-evident as truth.

Study [Table 11.1](#). Do you sense the simplicity here? The list is explained now so we can be on the same page when we discuss the other two parts of the triangulation. This body-centered aspect in the triangulation is absolutely vital if we are to evolve. It is not the “bad guy” of research but a critical link to help us expand what it is we are engaged in. Valuing an empirical relationship with the world *begins* the discussion we may have with aspects of an idea, event, or issue. It is simply not the end.

The body/external knowing of the triangulation is what we all can relate to because it is the template in which society and our institutions of higher learning operate from. It has been the bread and butter of research and science and the main assumption found in the notion of rigor. It is objective, tangible, and measurable. Now, don't you think it's time to evolve? After all, one does not live on bread alone.

Mind: The Subtle and Subjective Knowing of Life—Second Point in the Triangulation of Meaning

The great consciousness exists in my mind.

—Oscar Kawagley, Yupiaq

Finally! Truth that objectivity is a subjective idea that cannot possibly describe the all of our experience. To believe that science or objective and empirical-based research could describe all of life reduces it to its smallest part. Ken Wilber (2001) states it clearly: Physics is simply the study of the realm of least-Being. Claiming that all things are made of subatomic particles is the most reductionistic stance imaginable! Science and the belief in objectivity as the highest expression of our intellect works only in “restricted fields of experience” and is effective only within those fields (Wilber, 2001). What a revelation! Let me repeat that for the benefit of those in the back: *Objectivity is its own limitation.*

Enter mind, subjectivity, thought. Courage is needed to articulate these ideas with a robustness that will signal a leap in consciousness within our society. Even though insults will be hurled by mobs who have an investment in status quo thinking, be prepared with ideas that scaffold what has become obvious: Our rational minds, our inside thoughts, our subjective knowing are *vital* to how we experience and understand our world. The question remains: How will the internal process of thoughtmade-conscious affect the process and product of your work?

Return to [Table 11.1](#) and look again at synonyms found in the mind category of the triangulation of meaning. They are not the EKG lines found on graph paper; they are the *thoughts* those lines represent. Thought is an inside and subtle experience inspired by a richness or poverty only you can imagine. Because thought shapes form, do you see how vital it is to develop our minds consciously and not get stuck on form? This is where we are heading as a planet—to become more mindful of what it is we must do, how we must heal, where we must go to invigorate our own process not fully encouraged within our institutions of learning.

The following four quotations are from my heroes. They are given here as an extension of what my own people have portrayed in their own reading of their world. As we begin to formulate authentic ideas within ancient streams of knowing, let the dialogue expand our connection to world-doers who have articulated the beauty found in their own knowing:

Māori Marsden(Māori): Abstract rational thought and empirical methods cannot grasp what is the concrete act of existing which is fragmentary, paradoxical and incomplete. The only way lies through

a passionate, inward subjective approach.

David Hawkins(Psychiatrist): *To merely state that objectivity exists is already a subjective statement. All information, knowledge and the totality of all experience is the product of subjectivity, which is an absolute requirement intrinsic to life, awareness, existence and thought.*

Leroy Little Bear(Blackfoot): *Subjectivity is your starting point to reality.*

Greg Cajete(Tewa): *Native Science reflects the understanding that objectivity is founded on subjectivity.*

Subjective, thought, inside, logic, rationality, intelligence, conceptualization—these are some of the inside processes mind brings forward. They are the snapshots from our trip to meaning, heightened purpose, and useful inquiry that will aid in healing ourselves and our world. The mind part of this triangulation harnesses what is seen, counted, and expressed into a meta-consciousness that explains, contextualizes, or *challenges*. It gives us the green light to engage in creative exploration needed to unburden ourselves from the shriveled promise objectivity has offered the world. We are being asked to *think* now, to develop truth in our bias, to speak our common sense, to deepen what intelligence *really* means.

This will change your research process and structure. Knowing the relevance and maturation of conscious subjectivity will sharpen your rationality, help you speak through your gender so that you may lend what is beautiful about being alive, unique, and one of a kind. No kidding! Knowing mind, your mind, and how it has helped shape your thoughts, will make you honest and help you write truthfully as an incest survivor, or a Pacific Island scholar facing untold obstacles, or a recovering addict working in prisons. Whatever it is. Whoever you are. It is all distinct, all shaped in mind patterns that, if recognized, will bring forth greater intelligence, not less. Self-reflection of one's thoughts and actions helps you understand that who you are, how you were raised, what you eat ... all act as agents for your mindfulness or mindlessness. And all affect how you see and experience the world.

Mind, as the second point in our triangulation of meaning, helps us recover from the bullying and uniformity of “power-over” epistemology. It gives us breathing space to self-reflect in meaningful ways and engage with a rigor perhaps not captured in academic citations. Remember this! You will have to expand your repertoire of writers and thinkers if you wish to explore beyond the limitations of predictable research methodologies. It will be your mind that recognizes and describes new patterns needed for rationality, logic, and the true rigor found in knowing something in depth. Follow mindfulness to its own intelligence and seek inevitably what most scholars refuse to admit exists: *spirit*. Yes, let us enter this grove with care and quietude.

Spirit: The Causative and Mystical Knowing of Life—Third Point in the Triangulation of Meaning

At this point, the rational, conceptual aspect of the mind must let go, allowing a break-through into

direct, intuitive experience.

—Francesca Fremantle (2001)

Here it is, the third point in a spiral. It is what people misconstrue for religion and dogma. *It is not that*. To expand on ideas previously suggested earlier in this chapter, the spirit category in our triangulation of meaning is no less valuable, no more valuable. It is part of the whole, period. It is data moving toward usefulness, moving toward meaning and beauty. It is the contemplation part of your work that brings you to insight, steadiness, and interconnection. It is the joy or truthful insights of your lessons and the rigor found in your discipline and focus that is not so much written about but expressed nonetheless.

Spirit as a point in this triangulation is all about seeing what is significant and having the courage to discuss it. It is what Trungpa Rinpoche describes as “an innate intelligence that sees the clarity of things just as they are” (Fremantle, 2001, p.59). This category that pulls facts into logic and finally into metaphor recognizes that one will eventually see more than what is presented. *You are being offered an opportunity to evolve*. Here is where the mystical aspects of this category encourage, inspire, calm. To know we are more than simply body and thought is to acknowledge how those ideas expand into wider realms of knowing and being. This is a spirit-centered truth that is older than time. Again, do not confuse the category of spirit with religion.

Look again at [Table 11.1](#). What do you learn from the spirit category? Are these not the products and process of a conscious life? Is there any wonder billions of people wish to capture these values and ideas in ritual? The spirit part of triangulating ourselves back to meaning is all about the purpose and reason of our lives. It will help you think of your research as something of value and keep you at the edge of your wonder with how it will shape who you are becoming. This third category encompasses the first two. It is an advancement of earlier ideas and gives a structure of rigor that positivism ultimately is shaped by.

Spirit in the triangulation of meaning is as it says: whole, contemplative, intuitive, metaphoric, joyful, liberating. Within research, it is answers you will *remember* in your dreams. It is questions you will frame differently after eye contact with a child. It is understanding an unexpected experience that will heighten the clarity of your findings. It is the “Aha!” that came from stirring oatmeal after a night of transcription. Developing a respect for the qualities of awareness, joy, and beauty will actually develop how you *think* and thus see the world. Do you see how all categories are really just one?

The spiritual category in this triangulation of meaning holds more than the extension of the first two categories. It is the frequency by which *all* connect. It is not simply a linear sequence. All three categories occur *simultaneously*. It is an idea whose time has come as it helps subjectivity mature into the fullness of its potential. Do not fear what is inevitable—that we are all part of the birthing of a new culture. Why not do it with a consciousness courageous in its purpose and quiet in its consistency?

Here is the point: research or renewal; mundane or inspiring; fragmented or whole. Do you see why Sir Karl Popper called the advancing of objectivity toward subjectivity into the inevitability of *culture* something we need to recognize? Culture is defined as best practices of a group of people.²¹ Here is the metaphor of this

discussion: *that we change the culture of research*. We do this simply by engaging all *three* categories.

Ha'ina Mai Ka Puana: *Thus Ends My Story*

If knowledge is power then understanding is liberation.

—Manu Aluli-Meyer (2003)

I believe it is time to think indigenous and act authentic even at the price of rejection. To disagree with mainstream expectations is to wake up, to understand what is happening, to be of service to a larger whole. You may even begin to work on behalf of our lands, water, and air. This is why we are heading into the field of hermeneutics—interpretation—via epistemology. We must first detail what we value about intelligence to even see there are other interpretations of life, brilliance, and knowing. The idea that the SAT or other measurable tools of “intelligence” are just *tiny* facets of intelligence is now timely. *Your* rendition of your own experience is now the point. Who are you then? What do you have to offer the world? Here is where hermeneutics enters with a bouquet of daisies. To realize that *all* ideas, *all* histories, *all* laws, *all* facts, and *all* theories are simply *interpretations* helps us see where to go from here. To understand this one idea has brought me to this point of liberation.

When ancient renditions of the world are offered for debate within a context of real-life knowing, there is a robustness that I find invigorating and breathtaking. Here is where interpretations matter and because indigenous folk are peopling places we were never found before, do you see why things are changing? We simply posit difference—a difference that knows place and encourages a harmony within that place. Of course, we are far from perfect, but we do bring something unique to the table. We bring dreams, food, elders, courage and the clarity of speech and purpose. After all, there is no time to waste.

We are shaping long boards for a winter swell that is coming. It's time to learn new skills with our ancient minds. Time to deploy common sense back into our consciousness. Time to triangulate our way back to meaning. Time to laugh more and bear witness to the deeper truth of why we do what we're doing. Time to see how we can connect and help others. Time to work on behalf of our lands, water, and air. Do you see how we are *all* on the path of sovereignty, and ultimately, of freedom?

It's funny how the depth and practice of cultural specificity helps me be interested in the collective again. The wider collective. As if the path to wholeness first begins with fragmentation. It's my own body, mind, and spiritual walk toward knowing that I have worked out in this chapter. And for this I'm grateful. Mahalo for sharing the space and making the time. May you find your own secret (Nityananda, 1996). May your bibliography be easy to gather. May you know your own brilliance. May it lead to collective joy.

Amama ua noa.

Notes

1. Universality in this ideal is not to be confused with uniformity—America's answer to diversity. Universality is a fundamental spiritual truth exemplified in harmony, peace, and awareness. This can only occur through respect and honoring of distinctness, thus the idea that “specificity leads to universality.” It is best described in *Sadhana*, by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore (2004) of India. It was also the one big idea that surfaced from my MA-level class on Ethnicity and Education, held at UH Hilo's Education Department in 2003.
2. Epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge. It asks questions we have long taken for granted: “What is knowledge? What is intelligence? What is the difference between information, knowledge, and understanding?” It is *vital* to debate the issue of knowledge/intelligence because of the needs of our time.
3. Hermeneutics is the philosophy of interpretation. It helps us pause to ask, “Who is talking and what interpretation do they bring and not bring to the discussion, idea, or issue?” Hermeneutics makes the clear case that all ideas, all theories, all facts, all laws, or all histories are ultimately only *interpretations*. It is where philosophy is heading. The point here is that different ideas or priorities of knowledge (epistemology) are often dismissed given the nature of who is in control politically or ideologically.
4. Twenty-five Native Hawaiian educators, leaders, and cultural practitioners were interviewed on their views of Hawaiian intelligence and on their philosophy of knowledge. It culminated in my EdD thesis, *Native Hawaiian Epistemology: Contemporary Narratives* (Aluli-Meyer, 1998).
5. This idea that we must learn from land and not simply about land was first learned through the writings of Greg Cajete (2000). It has validated and informed our place-based pedagogy movement in Hawai'i.
6. Aloha as the origin of our intelligence was first shared by hula teacher Olana Kaipo Ai.
7. The Yoga Sutra (Patanjali) cautions us to understand the difference between “word, meaning and perception” in order to get to the bottom of the world's problems and thus their solutions (Hartranft, 2003).
8. “We are all indigenous” came from the mind and writings of a beloved elder, Halemakua (2004), a leader and teacher for our Hawaiian people and for many people around the world. I believe he meant that at one time we all came from a place familiar with our evolution and storied with our experiences. At one time, we all had a rhythmic understanding of time and potent experiences of harmony in space. He believed we can tap into this knowing to engender, again, acts of care, compassion, and the right relationship with land, sky, water, and ocean—vital for these modern times. To take this universal idea into race politics strips it of its truth.
9. For a discussion of this idea, please refer to Aluli-Meyer (2003).
10. Books that bring out the causative agency of thought: *Quantum Questions* (Wilber, 2001), $E = Mc^2$ (Bodanis, 2000), the *Self-Aware Universe* (Goswami, 1993), *Spirit and Reason* (Deloria, 1999), the *Woven Universe* (Marsden, 2003), the *Yoga Sutra of Patanjali* (Hartranft, 2003), the *Holographic Universe* (Talbot, 1991), and so on.
11. The idea that “there are no causes within the observable world ... the observable world is a world of effects” is detailed by Hawkins (2002).
12. Jean Houston (2004) in *Jump Time* summarized Einstein's famous idea that a new/different consciousness is needed to solve our current problems. Useful ideas were going to come from unknown places and differently trained individuals. She concurred that today, the consciousness that solves a problem

can no longer be the same consciousness that developed it.

13. True intelligence as self-knowledge was put forth by Plato.

14. Fractals are basic expanding and contracting patterns in nature. They were first described via coherence theory (chaos theory) as smaller and smaller elements of a larger and larger whole. A vein is a fractal of a leaf, a leaf is a fractal of a stem, a stem is a fractal of a branch, and a branch is a fractal of a tree. It can then reverse itself back into the molecular level and then out into the forest, countryside, and world level. They represent a coherent whole we are not fully aware of. It is used here to infer that thoughts are also fractals in the world—change is directly linked to whether we think it possible. It begins first with an idea.

15. The idea that “words only point to truth, genuine knowledge must be experienced directly” came from Fremantle (2001).

16. Audre Lorde (1984) inspired this dilemma found in postcolonial theory classes: Can you dismantle the master's house (i.e., imperialism, colonialism, etc.) with the master's tools? Answer: *yes and no*. All outward realities are first inward expressions and thought patterns. A new consciousness must be forged to approach old issues. False dualities of master/slave must also be reconfigured.

17. Ken Wilber, integral philosopher, was the first to introduce me to three points in philosophy and research. I discovered this in his epic work, *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (Wilber, 2000).

18. I have always enjoyed the image of the tetrahedron learned from a lecture Buckminster Fuller gave in Honolulu before he died in the 1980s. He described the tetrahedron as “structural integrity” itself.

19. Yin/Yang is a Chinese way to organize female and male principles. Ku and Hina is a Hawaiian way. It gives us a way to recognize balance and to cultivate both aspects in our own character.

20. Empiricism is the belief that our five senses are the only modality in which to experience knowledge.

21. Kumu Hula, Keola Lake said this during an interview for Aluli-Meyer (1998).

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483385686.n11>