

LIFE in the Sun or GLAD to be GLAD

We humans are so enamoured with our concept of 'consciousness' that we ignore the more basic idea of 'awareness'.



In order to stay alive, all living beings need to be aware of their environment. The Sunflower needs to be aware of gravity in order to send its roots downward, and it is aware of sunlight when it points its flower-head to face to the sun. Its aware of chemistry as roots pick up nutrients, and leaves suck carbon dioxide from the air. Sunflowers are complex life-forms but even a lowly bacterium senses food nutrients as it swims around.

The Gladiolus waves its petals, designed to reflect ultra-violet light and attract bees. It can do this because it is aware in its genetic memory that growing such petals and loading stamens with sugar will result in pollination. And pollination produces progeny. It also has a built-in timer, since it must complete a total lifespan, from seed to seed, in about four months.

A virus can sense a cell inside a human body, it uses this awareness to do something; to attack. A bacterium senses nutrients in a petri dish, it starts eating. A partridge sees a red cranberry and swallows it. Thus, it appears that awareness alone does not indicate that life is present. Any awareness is followed by some action to maintain or produce more life.

So! What if some hydrogen atoms meet an oxygen atom? Their outer electron shells sense each other and combine to form a water molecule. We are aware of the water molecule as a 'being' but this does not fit our criteria for a 'living being'. We could thus think (be aware of), atoms as being aware of other atoms. Similarly, we can talk of the quarks inside a nucleus as being aware of each other by way of the strong nuclear force. If we have stretched the idea this far, we could talk about a quantum field being 'aware' of any particles it contains, and consequently ask if the whole cosmos is aware of itself!

That is my take on the concept of 'awareness'. Quantum field awareness augmented by the memory of the Big Bang; Atomic awareness and the memories of quantum structures; Plant awareness with their genetic memory; Animal awareness with neuronics memory; and Human symbolic consciousness augmented by animal awareness.

