

## Species-Typical Phronesis for a Living Planet

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Phronesis or practical wisdom is an idea often presumed to have emerged from the ancient Greeks and thus discussions tend to focus on their views. Yet practical wisdom was not just the purview of ancient Greek thought but was discussed among Axial age philosophies (e.g., Confucius), and it is apparent, though not transcribed, in ancestral-style societies (noncivilized) (Lee & Daly, 2005) and among First Nation peoples of the Americas (e.g., Deloria, 2006). The perspective presented here suggests that, perhaps because of inadequate attention to these other traditions, there are gaps in most scholarly discussions of phronesis. The latter traditions include two critical ingredients of phronesis not typically attended to in discussions of ancient Greek traditions: the grounding or biosocial ecology of development and the expansive imagination or worldview of transpersonal transrationality. Both are arguably fundamental species-typical aspects for becoming and being human on a living planet, and for living a life that is good for one to live. These two gaps characterize humanity's non-civilized but sustainable history. I will argue that both these aspects---the biosocial ecology of development and transpersonal transrationality---are required for a species-typical phronesis, critical for living a durable life.

Phronesis is characteristic of human living, answering the question, how does one live a good life? Phronesis or practical wisdom integrates all the intelligences, applying what is needed in the situation: interpersonal and intrapersonal (socioemotional intelligence), spatial and kinesthetic (body in space), logico-mathematical, musical, linguistic, naturalistic (understanding of the natural landscape) and spiritual (Gardner, 1999). Phronesis or practical wisdom guides us in what we are doing tomorrow, today, right now. To stay alive, every creature must have prudence, sagaciously discerning what is safe or unsafe (Aquinas, 1991) with rapid implicit "neuroception" (Porges, 2011). But for social creatures like human beings, practical wisdom is broader and deeper, because for example, humans make choices that can greatly affect many others, both human and other than human, at multiple levels—from quality of life that others experience, including future generations, to disturbances of ecosystems and avoiding lasting eco-devastation (e.g., in water, soil, air, diversity, balance) that cause, for example, pandemics. The critical aspects discussed here may help explain how the dominant culture of the world—globalized capitalism (another form of colonialism)—became "reasonable" while habitat and life destructive.

### Top Gap: Transpersonal Rationality

The top gap, transpersonal rationality, entails an intertwining of species-typical consciousness, thinking, and truth, whose nature reflects the quality of the biosocial ecology of development, all of which are critical for the application of practical wisdom.

Although there has been some discussion of an extended mind among western philosophers (e.g., Clark & Chalmers, 1998), it is typically limited to informational devices rather than inclusive of a participatory consciousness embedded in a living world. The latter view, part of *preconquest* consciousness matches better with what we have learned from quantum physics. Physicist David Bohm (1994), articulating the new physics of interconnection, described the universe as a dynamic holonomic implicate order in which an explicate order, the concrete manifestation we call the physical universe, is enfolded. Bohm explains how quantum reality overturns the static dualistic, subject-object worldview. Instead of separable elements, the world is unbroken and in dynamic interactive flux. Participation is entwined with observation. These notions are apparent in eastern traditions where *wu*, non-being, no-knowledge or wordless participation in nature, reflects approaches to life such as the Tao (Lao-tzu, 1963). *Wu-wei*, unmotivated, spontaneous action through nonaction or unforced action, attends to the unfolding of life in the moment.

Bohm distinguished two kinds of thought. One form is *insight-intelligence*, an experiential awareness that arises from allowing the flow of shared space with others. Much like the aims of Socratic dialogue, insight-intelligence transcends individual emotions, beliefs and will. This intersubjectivity is a co-creation of being through the interpenetration of various centers of subjectivity, a holistic and organic mutuality (de Quincey, 2005). Insight-intelligence taps into transrational reality, the deeper consciousness within the implicate order (the unmanifest), what preconquest consciousness and *wu* appear to access routinely. In

the industrialized, westernized world, this form of thought typically only comes to attention in sudden “eureka moments.”

Bohm contends that we can mistakenly confuse the manifest for the whole, based on thought processes representative of the other form of thought he named, much more familiar to the industrialized, westernized world, and matching up largely with *postconquest* consciousness. It consists of static habits of mind, a fossilized consciousness, such as beliefs, which reside within an individual’s brain and can be measured. These form part of the *explicate* order, a small concrete manifestation of a complex holonomic universe. According to Bohm, only the transrational form of thought is orderly and creative whereas thought-in-the-mind can get stuck in its own feedback loops, even culturally shared loops, losing connection with the deeper consciousness. **In Taoist terms, *wu-wei* is missing.**

Transrationality, generally, characterizes preconquest consciousness and is apparent still in non-civilized human societies (Descola, 2013). Transrationality refers to “objective nonpersonal, nonrational phenomena occurring in the natural universe, information and experience that does not readily fit into standard cause and effect logical structure” (Bernstein, 2005, p. xv). Much like Bohm’s description of a deeper consciousness, Eastern philosophical views and ancient western views developed practices that emphasize genuine living as experiencing being “lived through” (e.g., Pearce, 1981; Rohr, 2015). Embracing the flow of life energy enlivens a process of being (*wu*) and of becoming wise (Bourgeault, 2003). The Axial sages emphasized the need to let go of the ego so that life’s energy (*qi* in Chinese thought) could flow freely (Ivanhoe, 2017). Because everything is connected, life energy will balance when we are in the right state of being. Instead of embracing dogma or logical formulations, conclusions or ideas, life is an interpersonal dance, sometimes described as love: “Ideas inform us, but love forms us---in an intrinsic and lasting way” (Rohr, 2015, p. 104) To be thus connected to transrationality is to become human, to change and find the indwelling of transcendent love and support. The spirit of transformative love, as opposed to ego-driven action, can be seen in actions that are patient, kind, generous, gentle, joyful and self-controlled (as described in Galatians 5:22).

Experiences of becoming, how we are nurtured, influence forms of perceiving and “knowing.” Truth is learned tacitly from embodied experience, without effort, building the implicit mind’s associations, interpersonal attachment style and worldview, so it matters what experiences one has. Truth for preconquest consciousness involves intuitive knowing and the honest sharing of feelings with interests and desires transparent to others (Sorenson, 1998):

feeling and awareness are focused on at-the-moment, point-blank sensory experience—as if the nub of life lay within that complex flux of collective sentient immediacy. Into that flux individuals thrust their inner thoughts and aspirations for all to see, appreciate and relate to. This unabashed open honesty is the foundation on which their highly honed integrative empathy and rapport become possible (pp. 82-83).

There is no deception but a full exposure of the self, similar to what Cooper, in his book *A Time Before Deception* (1998), learned from his interviews and observation of multiple North American Native American societies: lying was considered a sign of insanity in that “a person who does not speak truth must not know reality, and thus is to be pitied” (p. 3). In contrast and more familiar to readers, postconquest truth addresses instrumental knowing, focused on extracted facts and abstract propositions, often ignoring or dissembling feeling. Sorenson noted in his decades of observing preconquest societies that contact with postconquest people could be disastrous. He noted that those who are educated in western ways adopt logico-mathematical reasoning routinely “automatically and without awareness” and thereby “paralyze[d] the cognitive processes of the liminally focused” (Sorenson, 1998, p. 105). Because postconquest consciousness is governed by intellect and dialectical reasoning, by its nature it suppresses, “conquers” or invalidates the Indigenous, feeling-oriented, consciousness (de Quincey, 2005; Sorenson, 1998).

Vastly different perceptions are represented in the preconquest or Indigenous consciousness (a.k.a., Indigenous worldview; Four Arrows & Narvaez, 2015; Redfield, 1956). Its receptive openness embraces more than human-only interactions, perceiving sentience all around. Indigenous animism does not so

much speak about harmony with nature as being *alive to* nature as a community of persons deserving respect (Harvey, 2013). One is perceptive of all relationships in one's vicinity, those whose lives one's own life "touches," from human persons to animal persons, plant persons, river persons, and so forth (Harvey, 2017). It is a kin-centric orientation of practical cooperation, rather than an abstracted ethic (Martinez, Salmon, & Nelson, 2008).

Practical wisdom from this perspective displays an interconnected, nonegoic stance attentive to mindset and manner of being. Attending to relationships means attending to virtue, which means attending to manner—of respect and acknowledgement. Among First Nation peoples, communities purposefully engage in practices that emphasize connection to "all our relations" including the other-than-human. Practices such as greetings and gratitude prayers, storytelling (only in winter among Native Americans), trance dancing and vision quests (Katz, & St. Denis, 1997; Narvaez et al., 2019; Young, 2019). The principles of the Honorable Harvest guide one to ask permission to take a plant or animal life, and take "no" for an answer (Kimmerer, 2013).

Non-egoic action embraces inclusivity, aware that all is sacred and interconnected. One must not let one's ego get carried away with puffiness or umbrage (group teasing mitigates this possibility; Lee, 1979). Human humility forms a key virtue for interacting with all relations, (Cajete, 2001; Narvaez, 2019). Humans consider themselves younger members of the biocommunity who have much to learn from the rest—whether tree beings, winds, or specific animal beings of the local landscape. To act otherwise, is to be imprudent.

Practical wisdom is guided by meaning-making narratives and root metaphors but also by what is believed to be rational. According to William James (1912), rationality has at least four dimensions: moral, aesthetic, intellectual and practical. To judge rationally means to maximize all four dimensions simultaneously. Indigenous sustainable wisdom aligns with this view, adding in a transrational or spiritual dimension. According to Native American traditions, to live fully and well means to cultivate these dimensions and their interdependence throughout one's life (Cajete, 2001; Narvaez, Four Arrows et al., 2019).

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