

University of Dundee

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Meta Praxis

Craft Practice: A Way of Being

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# Consciousness

Irene Orr  
META PRAXIS



## Knowing

By the time I hear bird song  
It no longer exists.  
I listen to a word,  
As it leaves a trail  
To follow  
Questions gather in a lightning storm  
Perhaps which have the same answer  
Marks drawn are so sought after  
A scratch  
A thumbprint  
With impressions  
Our conjuring eye may have  
A glance of answers  
Unravelling stories whispering  
Searching  
For branches to roost upon  
Every grain uncovered  
Exposes itself  
Where  
Just  
Where  
Does it  
All come  
From



## Re-wire: Consciousness

Humanity has made a significant impact upon our planet. It seems a new ethical, moral, compassionate and sustainable development of our behaviours needs urgent attention. I believe our conscious mind needs to re-wire and to live in the 'present' moment in time to become aware of our actions.

To do this, requires a radical rethink, a re-training, a mindset towards an optimistic, positive choice to move away from the poisoning of environments, climate change, hatred and anxiety, that seems so prevalent now.

Mind training is possible. To re-wire towards a collective, non-destructive force both for the future and for ourselves. Richard Davidson, neuroscientist at the Centre for Healthy Minds states:

*"We have shown the evidence that is possible to cultivate these positive qualities in the depths of our being, and that many of us can begin this inner journey. Many of us may not be able to put forth the intense effort needed to walk the deep path. But the wider routes show that qualities like equanimity and compassion are learnable skills, ones we can teach our children and improve in ourselves."*<sup>1</sup>

To become familiar with the sense of a wider, more connected world, engaging with a creative mind can be part of a training, education, contemplative practice, purpose; a flourishing mind.

The 'poesies' of a making community can be a small part of this re-thinking to live a practiced life, a continued learning life, being creative, exposing beauty and injustice, living the reality of resilience, generosity and being seated firmly in the praxis of the consequence of our actions, having regard to materials, choice, a life of applied experience, a living rooted in knowing by doing, and exposing the wisdom of this.

Robert Ornstein, (President of the Institute for the Study of Human Knowledge, and Stanford University), Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (psychologist at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, researcher on topics relating to optimal experience 'Flow') and Dr Richard Davidson (Director of the Centre for Healthy Minds) all point to mind training, an awareness of mind actions that can lead us to this altered view point, towards a more responsive, altruistic, interactive, connected way of being.

As Robert Ornstein comments;

*"The world has changed, even in these twenty years, and so has our place in it. We need to revise radically our idea of how our mind developed, what is central to the human mind, and how that assessment changes. In this we need to enlist the revolutionary work*

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<sup>1</sup> Goleman & Davidson, 2017, p. 292



*from brain and consciousness research, cognitive science, evolutionary biology, and psychology. These disciplines, for the first time, provide a picture of the way this mind evolved from the earlier (unconscious) action routines of other animals, and how many of these still reside in ourselves.”<sup>2</sup>*

He continues:

*“It is difficult to change consciousness while fighting millions of years of evolved adaptations. Then why try? Because many of the important adaptations of the mind are inappropriate to a world that is long gone. Biological evolution shaped us to suit a world that disappeared long, long ago and we are failing to adapt to the modern world. This failure lies at the root of the ecological catastrophes that may well await us, the misdirection of effort in medicine and education, and the constant failure to understand peoples from different of the world.”<sup>3</sup>*

Right now, in a world where violence affects us all, we are shaken by madness. Those targeted are predominately minorities, homosexuals, tribal, religious or migrant families, isolated for that reason.

There is conflict with and a disconnect from those who are refugees fleeing from war, starvation, prejudice and poverty. Every day we are faced with dangers, fears that overwhelm our ability to live as we all desire, in peace, with fulfilment. We must, as a matter of emergency, look towards alleviating our reactions and responses to this, fundamentally changing our human responses towards a more tolerant, compassionate world. We must become aware of the value of being human in sustainable and flourishing ways.

These are huge issues. We are beholden to try to alleviate the causes of turmoil and suffering. It seems increasingly beyond governments or individuals to acknowledge any other way; but, perhaps, if we all recognise our international universal sameness in our senses, emotions, protectiveness and community coherences and turn to a training our mind and bodies to become part of a new consciousness, we can collectively rewire towards an opportunity to make change for the future and for those who will inherit the consequences of our stewardship.

Perhaps, if we listen to the research coming from anthropology, (knowing from the inside), neurology (plasticity of the brain), Buddhism (meditation), there are possibilities to reconfigure our consciousness towards an elevation of our world as it is now. The potential is there to accept the pressing needs of our actuality, to recognise knowledge through embodied experience to a wisdom, growth, empathy and connectivity we feel as a result, and thus being adaptive to living, touching life itself.

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<sup>2</sup> Ornstein, 1991, Preface

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.





“We do not have a moment to lose.”<sup>4</sup>

*“Our mental system has or had, good justification; it presents priorities for action via consciousness. However, it doesn’t show us the action ‘behind the scenes’ of the mind or even tell us which special purpose analyser is working at any time. In the normal course of affairs, we would have no need to observe the minds actions. We only know what is on our mind, rarely what is ‘in’ our mind.”<sup>5</sup>*

Buddhist meditation is the practice of ‘knowing what is in our mind’, a study of the nature of mind. There is much to learn there; it is a 2,500-year-old practice of direct experience of the phenomena of consciousness. It involves complex training to gain a simple goal of ‘knowing’, to have insights into one’s own personal phenomena of mind and reactions, to bear witness to emotions, and to train, using exercises (there are hundreds of meditations) and visualisations, to access perception, whereby consciousness is seen as universal. This training involves dedication, teachings, great motivation and intention to train to the full potential of life. To meditate is to train to be mindful, be aware of this moment, and live in awareness of that. Mindfulness in Buddhism is ‘remembering the training’.

As sure as we need to exercise our muscles and nurture our bodies, to optimise movement, and health, we can train our sensory systems and conscious minds to exercise the neural pathways for optimism, cogency and clarity in our choices. The process we enter as practice-based makers engages us through our conscious and unconscious perceptions, the space for creativity to reveal itself, the physical exercise of connectivity of sensual touch to mind as a source into the beauty of possibility, change and wonder. ‘Meta Praxis’!

The intention in Buddhism is to reach ‘enlightenment’ where one is no longer caught in the cycles of suffering; the journey is transforming consciousness to enhance our enjoyment of our ‘precious human life’.

I have not taken ‘refuge’ in Buddhism, which is the commitment to dedicate your life to alleviate human suffering for the good of all mankind. It is a noble attainment; its essence is to change oneself, to change surrounding reactions and the possibilities of this. The essence of an authentic Buddhist training has much to teach us in the secular world: compassion, practice, direct experience, observation and awareness. In its truest form, Buddhist training is a simple concept with enormous benefit, hijacked recently and, of course as a result, given fashionable attention. But at its core, it is thousands of years of working practice.

Meditation itself translates as ‘getting familiar with’. As we become familiar with our own responses and actions, we can change ourselves, with the consequence that change happens around us. The collective

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<sup>4</sup> Lama Rinchen Palmo 2016, personal communication, Retreat Holy Isle

<sup>5</sup> Ornstein, 1991, p. 5



action of this has possibilities to create positive change. The realisation of meditation leads to a calm mind, devoid of turbulence.

We are a complex mind system of conscious and subconscious thoughts. The subconscious is, as I like to imagine, the fertile storage space containing our senses, sight, sound, smell, etc., behaviour, belief and emotions. All are stored as a result of nurture, nature, experience. The conscious mind is the part of our mind we experience directly, translating and responding to the subconscious mind. It is the leafy growth projecting the contents of moments of consciousness from our seedbed system of sub-conscious. Both the practices of meditation and the practice of making access the communication systems between the two, in awareness through observation, unity and attention. In meditation, we come to realise reactions and responses are the manifestations of our subconscious and that, in the recognition of this, we are able to transform our conscious responses to it. In making, as we access a unity of embodied action and thought, our subconscious is given the space to rise to the fore of our conscious mind. How often do we acknowledge a surprise of the appearance of our subconscious in creativity?

*“We often feel like we’re engaging in these long trains of thought intentionally. Yet as you know from your practice, they can be spontaneous and impulsive as well. The intention connected with a mental object such as a memory can drag attention through a long sequence of impulsive thoughts. Once again, all moments of consciousness have intentions associated with them - intentions that we may experience consciously as an impulse toward some mental, verbal, or physical action.”<sup>6</sup>*

Whilst motivation and intentions of making and meditation are different, a creative mind, a generous mind, a humble status, a mind accustomed to guidance, of acceptance, change, resilience, a questioning mind seem to be inherent in praxis and poiesis, techne, the nucleus of making. The practice, the poetry, the rhythms, the technical ability, within those ingredients is a crucible capable of the creating seeds of new knowledge, growth and a rewiring of consciousness.

*“We don’t want a world where people do not know how their minds work, or know about major new facts of life, their identity, their society, the fate of the earth’. This is an era of re-education, a time when we will either take our evolution into our own hands or do far worse than we can imagine. There will be no more biological evolution without conscious evolution. It is not a matter of those not knowing history being condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past. Our own history is no longer prologue to our future. Understanding who we are and how we can adapt a new is prologue to our future. And the mind is the focal point of the future.”<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>6</sup> Yates, 2017, p. 183

<sup>7</sup> Ornstein, 1991, p. 12



We are born as human beings (in Buddhism, this is the highest realm, according to our higher consciousness in the sentient world) for which we should wake up every morning in gratitude. We are also shaped and programmed by our environment, experiences, culture, nutrition and nurture. We are all born with the same potential.

Who knows where the scientists will take us; our knowledge expands constantly, opening up our understanding of the universe? We seem close to the discovery of another particle (post-Higgs Boson), another dimension is under investigation (Cern). Today's standard of physics may well be seen as a primary standard of physics; quantum entanglement, quarks, string theory, gravitational wave theory will continue to unravel the mystery of who we are, why we are here, what is consciousness, how does that affect these questions, and how might creativity lead us to help answer those questions.

In conversation with Dr Richard Davidson (The Centre for Healthy Minds), I concluded that we do not, yet, have the language for the essence of creativity within science.

Making is the embodiment of many elements, brought together it engages our minds and bodily senses, and it can connect us to our outer world through inner thoughts and physical actions. It produces an awareness, through materials, of spatial movement and kinetics, of physics and chemistry, of mechanics, of stories, of an alertness of who we are, by use of tools, trial and error, a marriage of conscious, tacit, practiced, applied knowledge which inevitably leads to a growth in ourselves, and therefore our surroundings. Our consciousness evolves as we grow through these vital human ingredients.

We are all evolving, changing constantly. We must, however, look at the consequences of our actions to progress our consciousness towards an encouraging outcome. To do this, we must engage with the practical, as just viewing the world has little method of experience within the changes surrounding us. Learning within a conscious awareness (in the present moment) of these changes, we are embracing the encounter of transformation. The cognition of process (change), therefore, offers an opportunity to choose, to develop, to grow in a direction to embrace and accept we are all part of a impermanent world. We therefore can be conscious of an awareness towards an accepting, developing world with personal inner comprehension of the consequences.

Consciousness commands us to evolve, embracing the world as it is now. It commands the intelligence and insight to become less territorial, as our actions now have global consequences. It requires less violence, towards ourselves and our environment, while acknowledging cultural differences, celebrating our rituals but not at the destruction of that of our neighbours. We need to experience our beliefs, be compassionate towards those who experience beliefs differently. Such experience will teach us we are all the same; there is no difference, just our perceptions of those experiences.

Making allows for consequential action, entering a process, an engagement with materials, an embodiment of conscious and



unconscious mind, senses, observation, skill, attention, focus, reflection, creation - all a direct experience of our very being with the potential to operate from 'inside' our minds' eye, an intra-relationship with our world.

We are 'with' our thoughts and movement, rather than viewing them from 'outside'. Professor Tim Ingold, Anthropologist, describes the experience of scholarship:

*"For many years I have taught undergraduate courses, both at introductory and more advanced levels, in which I have explained that it is wrong to think of learning as the transmission of a ready-made body of information, prior to its application in particular contexts of practice. On the contrary, we learn by doing, in the course of carrying out the tasks of life. In this the contribution of our teachers is not literally to pass on their knowledge, in the form of a ready-made system of concepts and categories with which to give form to the supposedly inchoate material of sensory experience, but rather to establish the contexts or situations in which we can discover for ourselves much of what they already know, and perhaps much of what they do not know, and also perhaps much of what they do not. In a word, we grow into knowledge rather than have it handed down to us."*<sup>8</sup>

I too have taught at undergraduate level, in jewellery and metalwork. At that time, there was pressure to increase the number of students, and to change the nature of the learning experience from one of hands on mentoring, challenging personal enquiry, to more group-based activity, dissertation priority, more multidisciplinary, resulting in less individual tutoring time. More theory and less practice. Pressures were financial, with institutional targets to be met, and crucially to determine the job nomenclature and employment probability to appease governing bodies.

I was always surprised that little credence was ever discussed or mentioned of the importance and implication to the students of those who evolved their own original practice, an incredibly different approach to that of many courses that require information and data retrieval. Governmental employment targets became a priority. The student who through the *experience* and *experimentation* gained personal knowledge to produce new and original thoughts and work, usually left not to join the workforce to follow instructions, but to create new businesses, create new communities, often developing employment opportunities, transforming not only themselves, but setting in motion a ripple of innovation, fresh development and positive consequence. This experiential visual laboratory of creative making has a substantial makers community which has evolved from its teachings, the consequences of which have increased employment, business, local and international economy and are a testament to the artistic ability of this resourceful community to transform, not only the physicality, but the economic vibrancy and atmosphere of a post-industrial landscape.

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<sup>8</sup> Ingold, 2013, p. 13





No one is suggesting it is an easy route; there are huge obstacles en route, but we can all identify with the enormous contribution these artisans give to their surroundings, bringing vitality, work, tourism, colour, narrative, history, social engagement, commerce and media attention to their respective environments. To do this requires stamina, determination, co-operation, all positive attributes. Those who do succeed often cannot imagine any other contribution to a way of being, to wellbeing, despite the struggles.

Maybe this original contribution to community is, in a small way, part of a transformative quality we require to pursue a practical, sustainable, society.

We have inquiring minds, are drawn to question, have desires to encounter magnificence, have emotion, a desire to be shocked and amazed, to feel alive, to be revealed through the emotion of the artefacts. We do so as a window to ourselves, to settle our determination, to discovery, in all its shapes and forms.

This combination of making skill, inquiry, and original insights led specifically towards our most significant discoveries.

Materials:

To engage with one's materials shows us, by practice, those moments of change, yielding, expanding, fraying, hardening, breaking. We are working with the quintessence of change, our eyes, minds, and hands become connected. The tools we choose, mould and develop become part of a communication of exchange, of execution, precision, aptitude. Through this use, we gain deep insights into the properties of our materials, the innate physicality of the manoeuvrability and practicality of them. Through this, we evolve our techniques, gain significant knowledge, expand our minds. Through praxis and techne (practice, process and technique), we learn and convert ourselves as we become interwoven with our tools and matter, to discover the appropriate language, and performance, to develop our artefacts.

There is no other way; reading, watching, recording, all can gain a 'know how' but not a deep, doing, changing physical manifestation of these ingredients.

The 'Meta Praxis Techne' (beyond the practice) language evolves as indigenous peoples would 'know' the vernacular of their landscape, know how and where to plant according to the water table, seasons, interchangeable symbiosis of knowledge, passed between those with skills and seeing, hearing, smelling, listening to the essences of the plants. We as craft practitioners also engaged in this confluence of sense and activity.

Robin Kimmerer is a botanist, and a scientist coming from an indigenous heritage with a different language, culture and practice. In her book, "*Braiding Sweetgrass*", she explores these differences, her personal journey to bring the knowledge of her ancestry into an empirically tested science community.



*“Native scholar, Greg Cajele, has written that in indigenous ways of knowing, we understand it with all aspects of our being, mind body, emotion, and spirit. I came to understand quite sharply when I began my training as a scientist privileges only one, possibly two of these ways of knowing: mind and body. As a young person wanting to know everything about plants, I did not question this. But it is a whole human being who finds the beautiful path.”<sup>9</sup>*

She also works with her students through practice ... in the field, where a different knowledge exchange and learning take place.

*“I am not sure I want to force the teachings of grass into the tight uniform of scientific thinking and technical writing that is required of the academy: Introduction, Literature Review, Hypothesis, Methods, Results, Discussion, Conclusion, Acknowledgements, References Cited. To be heard, you must speak the language of the one you want to listen.”<sup>10</sup>*

By process of the intimacy of our craft, the skills we use are in constant evolution, adapting, making allowances and manipulating materials, developing a personality embracing technology posing and solving ethical and sustainable questions. We are creating a relationship with our craft and, therefore, ourselves, generating culture, language and tacit knowledge.

The origins of science itself can be traced to the active involvement of artisans and craftsman, who took the philosophers out from thinking into laboratories. In *“Body of the Artisan”*, Pamela Smith (historian), traces the transition from practice within artist’s studios and workshops into a systematic endeavour to arrange knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions.... the birth of science as we know it today. Separating intellectuals from those who work with the body and their hands, a division arose within western culture, took us away from different, alternative types of knowledge, rooted in material knowledge, learning to shape, interconnect and deeply understand real-world epistemology.

As stated in *“Body of the Artisan”*:

*“Since the time of Aristotle, the making of knowledge and the making objects have generally been considered separate enterprises. Yet during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the two became linked through a ‘new’ philosophy known as science. Much early modern science owed to an unlikely source- artists and artisans. From goldsmiths to locksmiths and from carpenters to painters, artists and artisans were much sought after by the new scientists for their intimate, hands-on knowledge of natural materials and the ability to manipulate them.”<sup>11</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> Kimmerer, 2013, p. 47

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 158

<sup>11</sup> Smith, 2004, Endpaper



Artisans once considered all knowledge rooted in matter and nature. Just as peasants and farmers knew their soil and crops, craftsmen knew their materials.

*“The claim to literacy in the language of nature in the sixteenth century represented a social and intellectual threat. The language was Latin, and a person had to be literate in this language in order to make claims to legitimate knowledge and to the authority to which this knowledge conferred. An institutional structure embedded within a political and social hierarchy mediated and guarded this literacy. Palissy’s statement that he read earth and sky, and this book was open to all, challenged established educational structures and a social elite educated by texts in ancient languages. It opened an epistemological controversy about the aims and methods of knowledge, and it raised the spectre of religious confrontation between personal illumination and institutionalized intercession.”<sup>12</sup>*

A clear delineation of both accepted intellectual ‘knowledge’ held through language inaccessible to the common people, and a ‘knowing’, a hierarchy of information guided by those with, and wanting to retain, power. Smith continues with Palissy’s observations (Bernard Palissy: French potter):

*“Theory: And how do you know that, and what is your basis for undertaking to contradict so many learned philosophers who have written such fine books on alchemy? You who know neither Greek nor Latin, nor scarcely good French.*

*Theory: And where have you found this written down? Or tell me, what school have you been to, where you could have heard what you say?*

*Practice: I have no other book than the sky and the earth, which is known to all, and it is given to all to know and to read in this beautiful book.*

*The claim that literacy in the book of nature is superior to literacy in texts and that sky and earth are given to all to know and to read were radical social and intellectual claims.”<sup>13</sup>*

While we look to science for evidence of ‘knowledge’ and rely upon it to provide systematic data for concrete knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions, do we not require intimacy, process, practice, and unwritten articulation to guide us to where science should follow?

If senses are part of the intimacy, and we give primacy to the visual, what might another perspective look like?

Architect Juhani Pallasmaa (*The Eyes of the Skin*) asks of the 3-dimensional practice of architecture why the prominence of one sense,

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<sup>12</sup> Smith, 2004, p. 159

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 158



sight has given superiority over other senses, and how this perspective changes our thoughts and responses.

*“In the experience of art, a peculiar exchange takes place; I lend my emotions and associations to the space and the space lends me its atmosphere, which entices and emancipates my perceptions and thoughts. An architectural work is not experienced as a series of isolated retinal pictures, but in its full and integrated material, embodied and spiritual essence. It offers pleasurable shapes and surfaces moulded for the touch of the eye and the other senses, but it also incorporates and integrates physical and mental structures, giving our existential experience a strengthened coherence and significance.*

*In creative work, both the artist and craftsman are directly engaged with their bodies and their existential experiences rather than focusing on an external and objectified problem.”<sup>14</sup>*

What might these ‘existential’ experiences be and how may they be essential to our unique position as ‘makers’?

*“Touch is the sensory mode which integrates our experiences of the world and of ourselves. Even visual perceptions are fused and integrated into the haptic continuum of the self; my body remembers who I am and how I am located in the world. My body is truly the navel of my world, not in the sense of the viewing point of the central perspective, but as the very locus of reference, memory, imagination, and integration. All of the senses, including vision, are extensions of the tactile sense; the senses are specialisations of skin tissue, and all sensory experiences are modes of touching, and thus related to tactility. Our contact with the world takes place at the boundary line of the self through specialised parts of our enveloping membrane.”<sup>15</sup>*

Perhaps creativity is the striving of the human spirit to assist consciousness to a healthy equilibrium. By exposing questions, expanding a space for a practical exploration of examining and nurturing metal, cloth, clay, texture, concepts, positioning our sensual body to the forefront of encountering personal experienced knowledge. By magnifying, inquiring and participating into our complex interrelated agency, we can strive towards a truth and wisdom. As developed awareness grows, it becomes an enabler and opening to our human spirit. Attention and observation, doing through experience using embodied emotion and engaging with touch, sight, smell, listening, space, uncovers a communication at its core. Evocative, embellishing, raising a particular knowledge route which has origins unique to the process of discovery and consequence of these elements.

Making embraces the theory, poesis and praxis of this; the embodiment of mind, body, tools and materials. The movement and symbiosis of investigation, skill and discovery manifests itself in the

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<sup>14</sup> Pallasmaa, 2012, p. 13

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 12





heart, root and soul of our being. We are the seeds in our laboratories, the studio of process giving rise to intimate knowledge.

Everything is in change, our thoughts, movements, from the quantum world of our perception. Once we can accept this, we can train this unquestionable, inevitable transformation to enhance, elevate, balance, investigate, hand over to science to test and explain, to qualify and quantify, to evolve for our very survival.

We train to become an artist, artisan, craftsman. We become skilled and, therefore, are tuned to our humanness. The movement within this confluence connects us directly to ourselves through identity, cultural preferences, narrative, evolution and functionality. It is within our training, the opening up to those moments of coming together, a flow, intuition, inspiration which allows us to amplify our uniqueness but most importantly our unity. We are all human beings who must live in symbiosis with ourselves, and indeed all other species, as we are dependent upon this conscious knowledge to co-exist. This knowledge is available to all, our senses work in all human endeavours; it is important to realise we have all the same emotional responses. We are not governed by a censored, prejudiced, intellectual hierarchy of what is to be known; we can be the masters of our own knowledge.

The increased loss or diminished importance of intimate knowledge, and wisdom accessed through 'Meta Praxis Techne', the growth and connectivity of this, causes a greater gulf from this source of vigour, a well-spring of interconnected interactions. A world consisting of data and information is a distancing from the close relational being of and within this world.

If we are to ignore this alternative and relevant source of knowledge and wisdom, a source of 'being' questions such as: How something is made? How something is grown? How do we replenish? Where do we learn? What value has our humanness? manifest themselves through engagement, connection and action. It is here, between giving and receiving, that we learn true value, beyond economics, which is failing us.

I have been a practitioner all my life. I always preferred to be blown over in the wind, fall from rocks, see the leaves turn to gold, hear and sense the world I occupied, often swimming against the tide. Whilst I can fully lose myself within a book and alight my imagination, be taught by the information and ideas that are printed, it is in my doing/making world that I feel I am coming into my own mind. There it is, my own imagination that leads the process. My mistakes are knots that unravel mysteries, folds, angles, burns, all leading me into a personal realism.

Francisco Varela, neuroscientist, who brought to the world the idea of "The Embodied Mind":

*"Thus, we can distinguish between self-conscious or intentional action and self-less or intentionless action. At first the idea of action without*



*intention seems absurd, but in fact our lives are full of intentionless actions. We dress, we eat, and more important, we exercise consideration for others. We do all these things without intention, but we do not do them randomly or purely spontaneously. We do them without intention because we are experts at them. Through appropriate extension and attention and by training over time we have transformed these actions into embodied behaviour.”<sup>16</sup>*

As practitioners, by the very name, we practice our craft. In time, we become expert, or the practice becomes embodied within us; our creative mind is a clearing to grow into; our practiced mind joins us to our sensory body. We are alive to the ability of habitual training in our conscious mind and, therefore, to the ability to train our minds to matters of consideration, empathy and cognisance of our actions and the significance thereof.

Within this awareness lies the potential for the makings of a life which, in turn, connects us to ‘Meta Praxis’ and all its constituent possibilities. We are all flawed, but the action of embodied practice and its inherent training and learning has capacity for a consciousness alive to consequence.

*“The means of transforming mental constituents into wisdom is intelligent awareness, that is, the moment to moment realization of the virtual self as it is - empty of any egotistic ground whatsoever, yet filled with wisdom.”<sup>17</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> Varela *et al.*, 1993, p. 35

<sup>17</sup> Varela, 1999, p. 73



## Meta Praxis

'Meta Praxis' is the potential for human flourishing through an awareness of practice and the value of making craft as an explicit knowledge pathway. Within and beyond the practice, this pathway has the potential to put us in touch with the essential vitality of life and its human value.

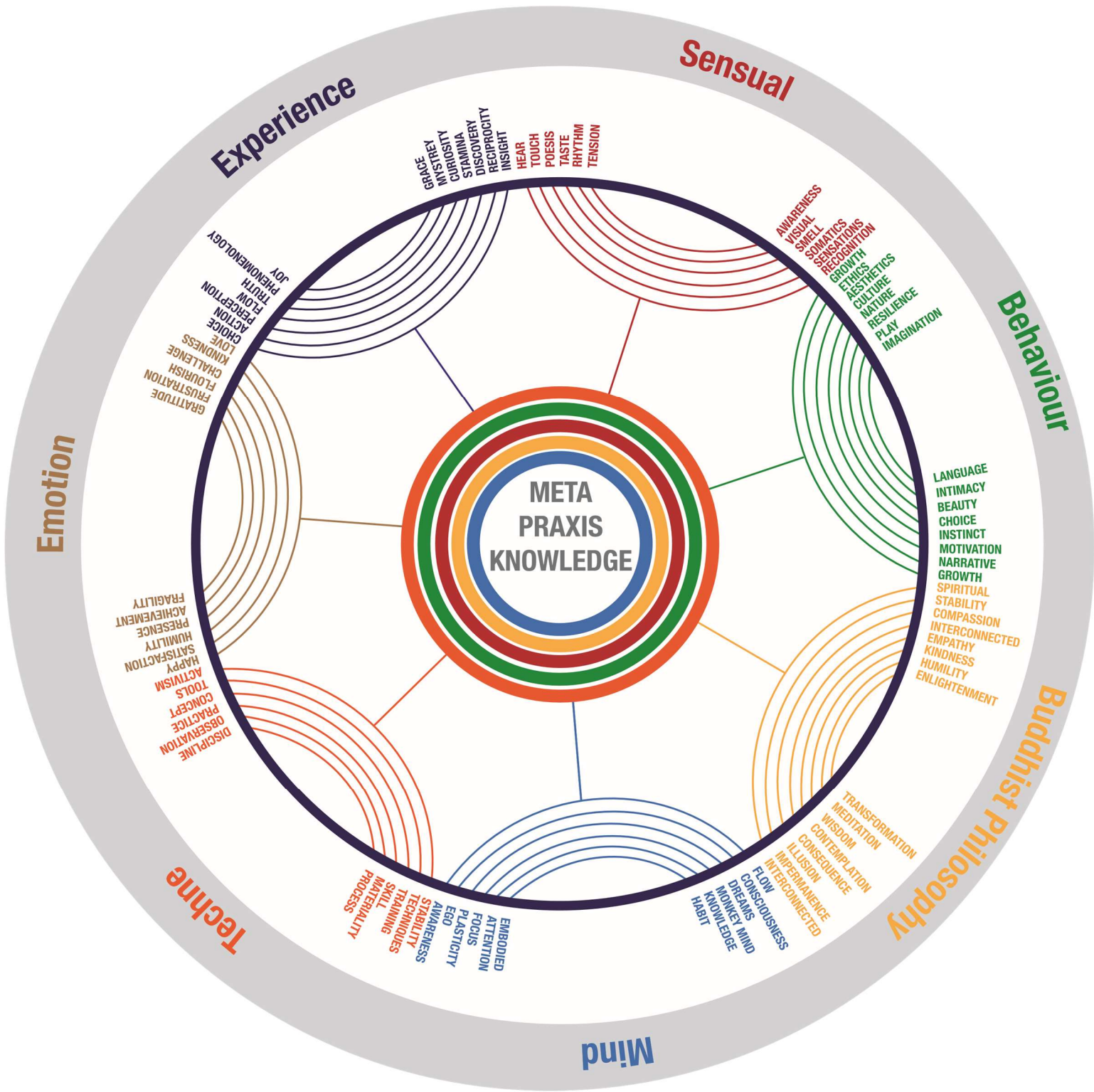
The exposition and articulation of 'Meta Praxis' and its potential is the original contribution to knowledge. This research leads us through interdisciplinary schools of thought (craft practice, Buddhism, anthropology, and neuroscience) to make connections and to set out why and how making craft is an explicit knowledge pathway and what is its importance for human thriving.

## Chart

The chart represents possible reflections, encounters and human traits explored within the 'reflections'; each has multiple, personal and potential pathways represented in the chart. As the reader engages with the writing in each text, it is possible to explore these routes of knowledge and relate them specifically to the idea of 'Meta Praxis'.

The texts are the reflections of practice, with relevant encounters affirmed through an interdisciplinary approach.





**META PRAXIS  
CRAFT PRACTICE: A WAY OF BEING**



