

## Limits of Knowing

### How Westerners Think:

\* Western rational science believes our perceptions match reality, that which exists outside ourselves. Yet our perception depends upon our senses and cultural conditioning. The impulses our senses receive go through barely understood processes and filters, which transforms the impulses from “out there” into a perceptual image, which we call experience. *We have no way of knowing reality directly but only through what our brain’s processes and filters present us.*

\* Western science believes that it can reduce total reality into a mathematical equation.

\* We can only know something objectively, which means we think without the contamination of emotions and subjectivity. *Our feelings always influence our thinking. Rational science has never proven the reality of thought void of subjectivity.*

\* Rational science claims that cultural conditions do not influence what the true scientist comes to know. *Our conditioned preferences, biases, aversions, and worldview always influence our thinking.*

\* Western science believes that reality exists independently and apart from the observer. Conventional science still holds onto the belief that the observer of reality does not influence what it observes. *In quantum science, the observer cannot isolate itself from entanglement with the measurement of an experience. Quantum theory indicates that what we perceive does not exist until observed. The universe appears as a universe of things because we experience the things we have named.*

\* Western culture views reality as space in which discrete material particles move according to mechanical forces and serve as the building blocks of what we experience. *Quantum science describes reality as a wavelike patterns of probability. These patterns do not represent the probability of things but rather the probability of interconnections. The thingness of reality dissolves into possible relationships. Reality appears as a complex set of possible relationships reaching outward to other sets of possible relationships.*

\* Western science and culture believe that we have no limits to knowing, that we have the potential to know everything. We believe that no planetary limits bind economic growth because science will come up with a new technology that will allow us to exceed any limit. *We do not have the cognitive capacities to know anything for certain. We know nothing.*

### What Westerners Think About:

\* Western culture views reality as a machine. Once we know how the machine works, we can operate it for our own purposes. *We have no way to know reality. Life is not a machine.*

\* By fragmenting wholes into parts, rational science seeks to find the smallest thing that determines the behavior of the whole. Rational scientists view the universe and life as heaps of parts. *The whole is greater than its parts.*

\* In the Western view, we live in a world of things, stable, autonomous, and with sharp boundaries. *We live in a world of processes in flux. All we perceive flows and inextricably intertwines with one another.*

\* Western culture focuses on knowing how things work, how to apply that knowledge to develop new technologies to make money, and generally anything related to how to make money.

\* Western culture believes that we can only know what we can measure. Anything immeasurable has no reality, which we label as superstition or groundless speculation, such as the sacred, emotions, and values.

\* Western culture focuses on knowing how to control and manipulate Earth systems and life to reduce uncertainty and know the future. *We have no way to predict the future as we can never know all its causal conditions. We can guess what will happen but not with certainty.*

\* Western culture believes in the superiority of rationalism over other ways of knowing.

\* Western capitalism claims that private ownership gives the owner the right to destroy what it owns. *We do not own the Earth or life.*

\* Westerners believe that our capacity to know depends upon our position in the Western hierarchy – men on top, then women, then the wealthy over the poor, then other cultures, then the rest of life on Earth. Western courts long delayed granting personhood to former slaves and women. They persist in denying the consciousness of other lifeforms. *All life has awareness.*

### **How Western Language Shapes Knowing:**

\* Our language has the structure of subject-verb-object. The mover affects the object. We view reality as a collection of isolated and independent objects within space and time. We have past-present-future states of reality.

\* We center our experience on “I”. We have the starring role and perhaps the only actor in the drama. Our self-centered position privileges us knowing ourselves but denies we can know anything about another.

\* The verb *is* identifies the subject with an object or state of being: “Sam is happy.” Other languages, like Indigenous People of Turtle Island (North America), might say, “Sam happies”, transforming a concept into a verb. Instead of calling Sue a compassionate person, we could say “Sue compassions”, placing the emphasis on the doing rather than on a state of being.

### **What We Do Know**

Life sees patterns and makes guesses about the patterns. These guesses serve as practical rules of thumb to get us through the day and our lives. People have derived many health benefits from dedicated researchers observing patterns of cause and effect. Yet, we do not know why things are the way they are. We do not know how to secure our future through what we know. We do not know why there is something rather than nothing.

The Western model of knowing has given us many machines and products with the promise they would make our lives better. In return, we have a collapsing culture, massive species extinction, the plague of inequality, and a poisoned and devastated Earth.

Western culture believes that the purpose of knowing is to have power over nature and to accumulate wealth. Life has the purpose of surviving in ways that further life on Earth. Western culture does not even consider it important for life to survive on Earth because we have machines to meet all our needs.

We have for too long ignored the purpose of all life to further life on Earth. We have lost knowing how to further life on Earth as Western culture has separated us from the rest of life, the Earth, the sacred.

We do know that the ways we live in Western culture cause omnicide. Yet we seem incapable of stopping ourselves from harming others for self-benefit. We do not believe that we need others, other life, and the Earth to survive. Some people have no hope of surviving these times. Others, because of their religious prophecies, want to hasten the coming of the End Times. Yet most of us want the beautiful Earth and the outrageously diverse and beautiful life on Earth to survive. Those on the sacred path to further life on Earth devote their lives to that purpose.

We know we do not know because the ways we harm life on Earth have obscured our sacred nature – our awareness of the sacredness of life, our compassion, our equitable sharing of Earth with all life. We desperately do need to know how to interbe with other beings on Earth. Those on the sacred path to further life on Earth take on our responsibility to remove how we harm life and Earth, which will uncover our sacred knowing of what we can do to further life on Earth.

Others may consider us anti-science, against knowing. On the contrary, wrong views, assumptions, and harmful purposes of knowing riddle Western science, the handmaiden of Western capitalism. Western science refuses to admit its wrong views despite growing scientific evidence to the contrary. Its amoral purpose to give the Western elite control over nature advances the omnicide of the Earth Interbeing. The Western wrong views of its science have separated it from the sacred.

Uncertainty and not knowing open to the mystery of the sacred. We know our lives as an unknowable mystery. We have faith in the sacred and in our sacred nature to overcome our willingness to harm others for self-benefit so we can know what to do to further life on Earth. The sacred path continues and has no end.

Life always seeks to find meaning in the patterns that appear to us. Let us rediscover the patterns that tell the stories of how we can learn to interbe on Earth with other beings in ways that benefit all. Let us again see the embodied expressions of the sacred within a mountain landscape, in a thundering surf, and in those we might want to reject.

Somehow, we know the unknowable sacred. By opening to sacred knowing, we come to know how to further life on Earth in ways that all life and the Earth benefits. We go beyond knowing into confidence in the ways of the sacred path to further life on Earth.<sup>1</sup>

December 16, 2025

Rev. 1/23/26

---

<sup>1</sup> **Ways and values of the sacred path to further life on Earth (work in progress):** awakening and maturing our loving sacred being, living humbly, joyful surrender to sacred wisdom to know what to do, compassionate action, harmonious interactions, equitable sharing and caring for the Earth, responding to change in ways that further life on Earth, and preserving our inner balance with the sacred, life, and Earth. By living these ways, we deepen our loving awareness of the sacred and reverence for the sacredness of life and Earth.