

An Introduction to the Three Modes and Five Wits

The Assembly of the Sacred Wheel's Code of Ethics asks that you use the Three Modes and the Five Wits in making ethical choices. This is a brief description of how we define them and their context.

Let's start with the Three Modes that are like the three primary colors of wise problem solving. Using all Three Modes collaboratively leads to conclusions that are more stable in the short and long term.

The Three Modes

The Reductive/Analytical Mode

This begins with reducing a complex problem or situation down to its building blocks, its fundamental themes, and so on. In this mode you examine things through reason and a dispassionate eye to find cause and effect. When you have a working sense of the parts and how they interact with each other, then your analysis can suggest solutions.

The Creative/Aesthetic Mode

This begins with opening your senses and your emotions to experience the state of affairs fully. Allow yourself to acknowledge all that you feel including fear, anger, and any other unpleasant reactions. Find where there is beauty and harmony. Find where things are clumsy, unappealing, or repellant. Look for where there are missing connections and things fall flat. Then use your creativity to find changes, adjustments, and additions that would increase beauty and bring greater accord.

The Ecological/Conservative Mode

This begins by connecting with the wisdom of the natural world. In this mode you try to see the web of interconnectedness between everything in the field of action involving the situation directly and zoom out to its ties to the broader world. Work with the element of time to imagine how the situation unfolds over different time frames. Any single change can produce many results. What is gained, lost, strengthened, or diminished with each change you consider. The long view is more important in this mode.

The Five Wits

The Wits can be compared to the Five Senses in that they allow you to grasp and discern the world. However, the focus of the Wits is internal, and they are the faculties through which you perceive the meaning of your own thoughts and consciousness. The capacity to step back and examine yourself lies in the Wits. The Three Modes make use of the Five Wits. To make the best use of the Modes, you must consciously awaken all the Wits. There is no one best way to do this so the following are starting points for finding your path to being clear witted when making choices. It is possible to start at any of them. It is useful to work with all the Wits before you need to apply them to an ethical question.

Heart

Identify the emotions activated by the situation. Focus on each of them and then step back and view them as an interconnected whole. Do the same for any other people or communities involved in the situation. Then view all of them with as much love or equanimity as you can summon.

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Imagination

Call forth wonder, surprise, and curiosity by remembering moments of each in your life. Then using your preferred type of imagination, such as visual, auditory, narrative, etc., examine the situation with a what happens next prompt. Allow several alternate situations to emerge.

Intelligence

Breathe, ground, and center, then start listing, categorizing, weighing, every detail and cluster of meaningful information related to the situation at hand. Identify what is missing, is in deficit, or is in excess and how and if they are connected. See if any answers or plans or trends emerge from the data.

Courage

The Wits of Heart, Imagination, and Intelligence reveal what can be gained or lost in making decisions and how high the stakes may be. Courage comes when you use the first three Wits and commit to a choice and following through. Courage is the closure that comes from using your Wits.

Spiritual Hope

This Wit is both the end and the beginning of the process of making a consequential choice. Connect with your Higher Self, Divine Spark, tutelary Spirits, Etc. and ask for guidance. If you wish, give them permission to act on your behalf. Spiritual Hope reaches backward and forward in time and creates synchronicities. Spiritual Hope allows you to act on behalf of outcomes that you may not yet understand or value.