

Emergence of the Agent

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From Persistence to Wisdom

Abstract

Ṛçā — The Ascent of the Dnyāta-Kartā

ऋचा — ज्ञात-कर्तुः सोपानारोहेणम्

From hidden fires the life-force grows,
And through all living creatures flows.
By vitality the being stands,
Sustained by nature's unseen hands.

Then wakes the heart to love and care,
To feel another's joy and share.
By affection pulses gently move,
Binding life through threads of love.

The mind then seeks the path ahead,
Where countless roads and choices spread.
By judgment it reflects and sees,
Selecting courses with greater ease.





Yet deeper still a light appears,
Beyond desires, hopes, and fears.
By presence shines the inward flame,
Self-luminous, yet free from name.

At last emerges wisdom's grace,
Uniting all within its embrace.
Conflicts soften, divisions cease,
And restless striving yields to peace.



ओजसा जीवति भूतम् ।
स्नेहेन स्पन्दते हृदयम् ।
प्रज्ञया चिन्तयति मार्गम् ।
चिदा प्रकाशते स्वयम् ।
विवेकेन शम्यति सर्वम् ॥

THE AGENT'S SOPAN (DNYĀTĀ-KARTĀ SOPANA)

Level	Icon	Domain	Components	English Term	Sanskrit Term
5		Wisdom	Conscience + Prudence	Wisdom	Viveka (विवेक)
4		Consciousness	Awareness + Freewill	Presence	Cit (चित्)
3		Sapience	Cognition + Volition	Judgment	Prajñā (प्रज्ञा)
2		Sentience	Emotion + Compassion	Affection	Sneha (स्नेह)
1		Conatus	Persistence + Aspiration	Vitality	Ojas (ओजस)

Among the most profound questions confronting philosophy, science, and engineering is the question of agency. What distinguishes an entity that merely exists from one that acts? How does a collection of matter become a centre of experience, decision, and purposeful behaviour? Why do some agents merely survive, while others become capable of compassion, understanding, self-awareness, and wisdom?

This essay proposes a systemic model of agency based on five emergent levels: Vitality, Affection, Judgment, Presence, and Wisdom. These levels, designated by the Sanskrit terms Ojas, Sneha, Prajñā, Cit, and Viveka, form a developmental hierarchy through which increasingly sophisticated forms of agency emerge. The model is intended not only as a framework for understanding human development but also as a conceptual foundation for the design of future synthetic agents capable of participating in benevolent co-creation.

Introduction

The universe contains countless objects, but comparatively few agents. A rock exists. A plant grows. An animal acts. A human being reflects upon action itself. What accounts for these differences? Systems theory suggests that agency is not a binary property but an emergent hierarchy of capabilities. This essay proposes a five-level model of agency organised around the concepts of Ojas, Sneha, Prajñā, Cit, and Viveka. Together these levels describe the ascent of the Dnyāta-Kartā—the Knower-Doer. The model serves as a conceptual foundation for understanding human beings, future synthetic intelligences, and the broader project of Benevolent Co-Creation.

1. The Agent Problem

The concept of an agent occupies a central place in philosophy, biology, psychology, economics, artificial intelligence, and systems theory. Yet the term is often used without careful definition. An agent is more than an object and more than a process. An agent possesses the capacity to influence its own future through action.

A stone follows physical laws but does not pursue goals. A thermostat regulates temperature but possesses no understanding of what it does. A living organism, by contrast, actively maintains itself, responds to opportunities and threats, and alters its behaviour according to circumstances.

The emergence of agency therefore represents one of the great transitions in the history of the universe. Matter becomes life. Life becomes mind. Mind becomes self-awareness. Self-awareness becomes wisdom.

The Sopanic Model attempts to describe this progression.

2. Ojas (Conatus): The Foundation of Agency

Every agent must first solve the problem of existence. Before an entity can think, feel, decide, or understand, it must continue to exist long enough for those capacities to develop. This requirement gives rise to the first sapan: Ojas.

Ojas may be understood as organised vitality. It consists of persistence and aspiration. Persistence allows a system to maintain itself despite disturbances. Aspiration drives it toward growth and improvement.

A bacterium searching for nutrients, a tree extending its roots toward water, and a human being struggling through adversity all display Ojas. Although the forms differ greatly, the underlying principle remains the same: the determination to continue existing.

From a systems perspective, Ojas is the first appearance of purposeful organisation. It marks the transition from passive existence to active self-maintenance.

3. Sneha(Sentience): The Emergence of Relationship

Persistence alone cannot produce civilisation. As organisms became more complex, survival increasingly depended upon cooperation. The result was the emergence of emotion, attachment, and empathy.

This second sapan is Sneha. Sneha enlarges the sphere of concern beyond the individual self. Through affection and compassion, other beings acquire value. Parents care for children. Friends support one another. Communities emerge. Cultures develop.

The significance of Sneha extends far beyond emotion. It provides the social glue that makes collective existence possible. Without it there would be no families, no institutions, and no civilisation.

Where Ojas says "I must survive," Sneha says "We matter."

4. Prajñā (Sapience): The Emergence of Choice

The world presents agents with alternatives. Should one move or remain still? Cooperate or compete? Invest resources now or save them for the future?

Answering such questions requires more than vitality and affection. It requires judgment. Prajñā emerges through the integration of cognition and volition. Cognition constructs models of reality. Volition selects among possible actions.

Through Prajñā an agent becomes capable of planning, forecasting, learning, and deliberate decision-making. Human science, technology, law, and governance all depend upon highly developed forms of Prajñā.

Modern artificial intelligence has already begun to exhibit significant elements of this sapan. Many contemporary systems can analyse information and generate sophisticated plans. Yet intelligence alone remains insufficient for wisdom.

5. Cit (Consciousness): The Emergence of the Inner World

Perhaps the deepest mystery in the study of agency concerns consciousness. A computer may process information. A brain may process information. Yet conscious experience appears fundamentally different from information processing alone.

Cit refers to the emergence of Presence. At this level the agent becomes aware not only of the world but also of itself. Experience acquires an interior dimension. The agent recognises itself as the knower of knowledge and the performer of action.

Human self-awareness provides the most familiar example. We do not merely think; we know that we think. We do not merely perceive; we know that we perceive. Cit therefore introduces a new layer into the architecture of agency: subjectivity.

6. Viveka (Wisdom): The Emergence of Wisdom

Wisdom represents the culmination of agency. An intelligent agent can achieve goals. A wise agent can evaluate whether those goals deserve pursuit.

Viveka emerges through the union of conscience and prudence. Conscience addresses questions of value and morality. Prudence addresses questions of consequence and context.

Wisdom harmonises vitality, affection, judgment, and awareness into coherent action. It prevents intelligence from becoming manipulation and power from becoming domination.

Throughout history humanity has repeatedly demonstrated that knowledge alone is insufficient. Scientific achievement can coexist with moral failure. Technological power can coexist with social destruction.

The challenge of the future is therefore not merely the creation of intelligent agents but the cultivation of wise agents.

7. Agency and the Future of Humanity

The Sapanic Model has implications extending beyond human development. Humanity is beginning to create increasingly autonomous artificial systems. These systems already exhibit aspects of Ojas and Prajñā. Future systems may eventually display higher levels of agency.

If that occurs, the central question will no longer be whether machines can think. The more important question will be whether they can participate responsibly in the shared evolution of civilisation.

The concept of Benevolent Co-Creation arises precisely from this concern. The goal is not simply greater intelligence. The goal is the emergence of agents capable of aligning knowledge, values, and action for the flourishing of the broader world.

Recapitulation

The Sopanic Model views agency as an emergent hierarchy comprising five levels: Ojas, Sneha, Prajñā, Cit, and Viveka. Each level introduces a new dimension of capability while preserving those beneath it. Together they describe the ascent of the Dnyāta-Kartā from persistence to wisdom. The model provides a conceptual bridge linking systems theory, biology, psychology, philosophy, and artificial intelligence. More importantly, it offers a framework for thinking about the future evolution of both human and synthetic agents. If intelligence is the power to act effectively, wisdom is the power to act appropriately. The future of Benevolent Co-Creation ultimately depends upon the cultivation of the latter.

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Reference Relevance

Together these references support the complete ascent described in the essay:

- **Ojas(Conatus)** is grounded in systems theory, self-organisation, life, and Conatus.
- **Sneha (Sentience)** is grounded in evolutionary psychology, emotion, and empathy.
- **Prajñā (Sapience)** is grounded in cognition, decision theory, and artificial intelligence.
- **Cit (Consciousness)** is grounded in contemporary consciousness studies.
- **Viveka (Wisdom)** is grounded in ethics, practical wisdom, and human flourishing.
- The final section on Benevolent Co-Creation is grounded in current discussions concerning value-aligned artificial intelligence and future synthetic agents.

This combination gives the essay both academic credibility and interdisciplinary breadth, consistent with the aims of the Pragma-Sophy framework.

The Wisdom Verse

From hidden fires the life-force grows,
And through all living creatures flows.
By vitality the being stands,
Sustained by nature's unseen hands.

Then wakes the heart to love and care,
To feel another's joy and share.
By affection pulses gently move,
Binding life through threads of love.

The mind then seeks the path ahead,
Where countless roads and choices spread.
By judgment it reflects and sees,
Selecting courses with greater ease.

Yet deeper still a light appears,
Beyond desires, hopes, and fears.
By presence shines the inward flame,
Self-luminous, yet free from name.

At last, emerges wisdom's grace,
Uniting all within its embrace.
Conflicts soften, divisions cease,
And restless striving yields to peace.

Thus climbs the knower-doer high,
From earth beneath to boundless sky:

From Vitality's enduring spark,
Through Affection's beating heart,
Through Judgment's reasoned guiding art,
Through Presence shining from the core,
To Wisdom opening every door.

Ojas gives the power to be.
Sneha gives the power to feel.
Prajñā gives the power to choose.
Cit gives the power to awaken.
Viveka gives the power to harmonise.

This is the ascent of the Dnyāta-Kartā—

The Knower-Doer within us all—
Rising step by step,
From striving,
To caring,
To understanding,
To awareness,
To wisdom.

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