



Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems

Edited by Robert J. Sternberg
Howard C. Nusbaum · Judith Glück



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ISBN 978-3-030-20286-6 ISBN 978-3-030-20287-3 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3>

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

The world is doing very well in some respects—lessening of poverty, increase in employment, increase in food provisions for its people—at the same time that it is doing not nearly so well in other respects—increasing income disparities, climate change largely out of control, simmering and in other places explosive violence, increasing ineffectiveness of many antibiotics, deadly pollution, proliferation of nuclear weapons. What is remarkable is that virtually all of the problems facing humans today are human-made. We, as humans, are largely responsible for income disparity, climate change, explosive violence, growing biological threats, pollution, and creating and then distributing the means to make weapons that threaten populations.

How can humans, who have created so many messes, clean up these messes they have created? We, as wisdom researchers and as editors, along with the authors of this book believe that the answer is through wisdom. Wisdom has a variety of different definitions, and these definitions are discussed in the chapters of this book. But most researchers on wisdom agree that wisdom involves (a) seeking some kind of common good, rather than just what is best for oneself and one's family, (b) dealing in a fair and just way with others, while balancing their

needs against one's own and the interests of larger entities, such as communities and nations, (c) balancing cognitive, affective, and contextual factors so that one is ruled, metaphorically, by both one's head and one's heart, (d) understanding and taking into account the points of view and concerns of others beside oneself and those with whom one largely agrees, and (e) recognizing that what works in the world and even what is true in the world can change over time. But wisdom always recognizes that uncertainty and ambiguity are intrinsic to many of the greatest challenges facing us.

The authors in this book were asked to write about applying wisdom to the solution of real-world contemporary world problems. They have taken a wide variety of approaches to this task. But all agree that humanity could do much better than it has in solving these problems, and that wisdom provides one key to doing better. Too often, everyone will narrowly approach problems through self-interest or through the lens of their own culture, ideology, society, or other framework that comes with its built-in set of beliefs. Wisdom involves going beyond our own beliefs and preconceived perspectives and seeking new solutions that can be effective, as well as possible, for all.

We hope that you find this volume thought-provoking, educational, and useful. Wisdom can be conceived of as an important basis for practical decision-making that leads to human flourishing. The approaches outlined in this book have taken both of those considerations seriously—that approaches should be practical and lead to human betterment. We are confident you will find that wisdom-based approaches have a great deal to contribute to the world and to the solution of its many and diverse challenges.

Ithaca, USA
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Judith Glück

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1

Where Have All the Flowers of Wisdom Gone? An Analysis of Teaching for Wisdom over the Years

Robert J. Sternberg

Please consider a thought experiment involving the solution of 10 quiz questions:

Quiz Questions

Here are some of the serious problems facing the world today. How can they be solved?

1. Global climate change.
2. Increasing income disparities between the rich and the poor.
3. Serious air pollution in some locales.
4. Proliferation of nuclear weapons.
5. Increasing antibiotic resistance.
6. Contamination of food by pesticides and other impurities.
7. A garbage vortex in the Pacific Ocean twice the size of Texas and growing.
8. Rich countries' unwillingness to help immigrants from poor countries.

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_1

9. Increasing tendencies of national leaders to move toward despotism.
10. Apparent inability of mutually hostile parties (such as Israelis and Palestinians, Democrats and Republicans, or whomever) to resolve their differences.

Now suppose, in some imaginary world, that one had access to *all* relevant facts and figures regarding any one of these problems. In other words, all knowledge to be had was made available. Further, assume that one had a superpowerful computer, analytically smarter than any living person, that was available and was able deeply and broadly to analyze all this information. Would any of these problems be solved?

The answer, of course, is no. Now let's look at why these problems cannot be solved solely by IQ, knowledge, or any combination of them. Let's just consider three of the problems, as the issues in all of the rest are formally comparable to the issues in these three.

1. *Global climate change.* Climate change is bad, of course, leading to melting ice caps, rising oceans, and severe weather that has already made some locales uninhabitable, with more to come. Presumably, few people think climate change is good. People in developed countries often think that they, along with people in developing countries, have a responsibility to cut down on carbon emissions. But people in some developing countries believe that developed countries are largely responsible for these problems and that those in the developed countries now want to stop them, in the developing countries, from having the same opportunities the developed countries once had. This, some in the developing countries believe, is not fair. And then, again, some in developed countries are unwilling even today to carry any reasonable share of the burden.
2. *Increasing income disparities between the rich and the poor.* High levels of income disparity are bad, of course, fostering resentment, social conflict, and, potentially, rebellion. But many people who are well off believe they have earned their money and that those who have not done well economically have not done well because they are untalented, or have not tried hard enough, or have sold themselves out to substance abuse and other harmful things. These well-off people tend to be the ones in power and may prefer to help those, like themselves, who they believe have "helped themselves." People who are not well off often are born into and raised in conditions (e.g., poverty,

gang-related activity, unstable family situation) that create great hardships for them. Some of them actually may have succeeded in the past and then lost their jobs due to automation, various forms of discrimination, or failure of the business in which they work. Various solutions to the problem of income disparity have been proposed (e.g., Piketty, 2017; Stiglitz, 2013), but despite these proposals, the problem seems on track to getting worse before it gets better, if indeed it does get better.

3. *Apparent inability of mutually hostile parties (such as Israelis and Palestinians, Democrats and Republicans, or whomever) to resolve their differences.* Virtually no one believes that these conflicts—between ethnic groups, ideological groups, national groups, or other groups—can be resolved simply. For example, both Israelis and Palestinians claim certain land is theirs. How does one decide what is anyone's? How far back do claims go, and what criteria are to be used for deciding ownership of land? What religious grounds count as bases for deciding on some concept of God-granted ownership?

The bottom line is that problems of these kinds simply cannot be resolved by facts, figures, and analysis. All of them involve competing interests, with the needs and desires of the relevant parties having to be resolved by balancing the interests of certain individuals and groups against those of other individuals and groups. As Fisher and Ury (2011) have pointed out, not all positions are necessarily equally justified. It is for that reason that one needs to focus on competing interests rather than positions. Some people always will seek to justify unjustifiable positions when it serves their self-interest. By focusing on interests rather than positions, one moves beyond each party's conception of what is "true" or "right." When such balance is involved, the issues can be resolved only through the application of wisdom, where wisdom is defined as using one's abilities and knowledge toward a common good, by balancing one's own, others', and higher interests over the long and short terms through the infusion of positive ethical values (see Sternberg, 2018b, 2019).

Not even one of these serious, world-consequential problems would be solved, even if all facts and figures were available and all the data were comprehensively analyzed. One reason is that each problem involves competing interests. As a result, the problems are ill-structured—they have no clear path to solution. There is no one

solution that will satisfy the interests and perceived needs of all parties involved. The problems are nothing like the multiple-choice or short-answer problems that have proliferated in schools, where the correct answer is obtained by a well-structured path to solution and is unique among all of the possible answers to the problems.

If we look at the kinds of problems that appear in school and on standardized tests, they look little like the consequential real-life problems we have to solve that invoke wisdom (Sternberg, 2001) or even social aspects of intelligence (Sternberg & Smith, 1985). What are the differences?

1. *Definition of problem.* School-based problems almost always predefine the problem for the student. All the student has to do is solve the problems. Wisdom-based problems have no clear definition, and typically, different parties define them in different ways.
2. *Structure.* School-based problems tend to be well-structured. There is a clear path to solution; wisdom-related problems are always ill-structured; there is no clear path to solution.
3. *Answer format.* School-based problems are often presented in multiple-choice or short-answer format. Wisdom-based problems never have clearly defined single correct answers.
4. *Practicality.* School-based problems are often quite far removed from the concerns of everyday life. Wisdom-based problems, in contrast, pertain to the real problems we face in life that involve competing interests.
5. *Consequentiality.* School-based problems have solutions that matter little. Who cares, for example, how many apples Mary buys when she goes to the supermarket? Wisdom-based problems tend to be ones where the consequences matter greatly.
6. *Ethical considerations.* School-based problems rarely involve ethical decision making. Wisdom-based problems typically do.
7. *Human values.* School-based problems rarely touch upon matters of human values such as being honest, sincere, or helpful. Wisdom-based problems always do.
8. *Competing interests.* School-based problems rarely involve competing interests. Wisdom-based problems always do.

These are not necessarily the only differences between school-based and wisdom-based problems. And there may be school-based problems, from time to time, that are wisdom-based. But I believe that

presentation of such problems in schools is the relatively rare exception. (Emphasis on creativity is similarly negligible—Sternberg, 2010; Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Singer, 2004.) The analysis below will suggest that the incidence of such problems has decreased greatly over time.

“Where have all the flowers gone?” is a well-known folk song written in 1955 by folk singer Pete Seeger. The song, taken metaphorically, is about the loss of wisdom in society. It first asks where all the flowers have gone and notes that they are long time passing. Then it asks where all the young girls have gone, where the husbands have gone, where the soldiers have gone, and where the graveyards have gone. Through society’s own foolishness, it has lost its young—its future. After every verse, it asks, “When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?” Well, hopefully, they would learn in school. But do they?

If we are going to be wise in our lives, we have to know how to do it. One excellent place to learn would be in school. I have suggested that a problem with our schools is that they fail to teach for wisdom (Sternberg, 2001)—that is, to teach in a way that promotes wisdom in students. The trend away from teaching for wisdom has occurred in part because the schools today are concerned primarily with preparing students to take standardized tests. Those tests do not measure wisdom, hence wisdom has disappeared from the curriculum. To the extent that adults do not show wisdom, perhaps it is in part because they simply were never taught what wise thinking is.

Is it really true, though, that schools once taught for wisdom and that teaching for wisdom has gradually been reduced or eliminated in our schools? Are people acting foolishly because they never learned any better (Sternberg, 2018b)? Or is it just an easy thing to say that schools once taught for wisdom and no longer much do?

In order to address this question, I decided to do an informal survey of reading textbooks from recent times (the early twenty-first century), somewhat earlier times (the mid-twentieth century), and much earlier times (the early twentieth century). I chose readers at the second-grade level because the age of the children, roughly 7–8, is a time at which wisdom might first be taught at an elementary level. (As an aside, our triplets are in second grade so I was curious as to what they were learning compared with what I once learned in the mid-twentieth century,

and with what my forbears, had they been Americans, would have learned.) And I decided to analyze whether the lessons learned at any time actually would be relevant to the theme of this volume, namely, applying wisdom to enhance one's life and create a better world. I defined a lesson as wisdom-based if it would help students develop positive ethical or other values that ultimately could be used to resolve the kinds of intrapersonal (self-related), interpersonal (other-related), and extrapersonal (world-related) problems (Sternberg, 1998) that people face in their lives. Here is what I found:

Analysis of Second-Grade Readers

A Wisdom Analysis of McGuffey's Second Eclectic Reader

McGuffey's Second Eclectic Reader (Revised Edition) was first published in 1879 and was re-copyrighted through 1920. It represented the way reading was taught near the transition between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I looked at the first 18 chapters (25% of the text in terms of number of chapters) to see what lessons were taught that might conceivably be described as imparting wisdom.

McGuffey's Second Eclectic Reader Revised Edition

1. Take satisfaction in a job well done (p. 12). (Two children, Harry and Kate, have learned their lessons well today and thus feel happy.)
2. Every boy and girl should have a happy home in which the children kiss their dear father and mother goodnight (p. 12). (Harry and Kate kiss their parents goodnight after a happy family-centered evening.)
3. In playing, it is important to respect property and not to break things when you play (p. 13). (Willie, a young boy, realizes that he should not break glass windows with toys he wants.)
4. It is important to be brave in one's life and not fear the unknown (p. 21). (Willie learns not to be afraid of his shadow.)
5. If at first you do not succeed, try, try again (pp. 24–25). (A mother cat wants her kittens in the attic and a servant keeps removing them. But after the mother cat keeps trying, the servant decides to reward the mother cat's repeated efforts and leave the kittens in the attic.)

6. Children should always be ready to help each other (p. 26). (One cat has helped another cat.)
7. After play, we should be happy to work (p. 28). (A boy knew that after he had fun playing, he had to do his work.)
8. Help not just yourself but also your parents (p. 28). (A boy, after taking care of his personal hygiene, helped his mother.)
9. Do one thing at a time (p. 28). (The boy did not try to play and work at the same time.)
10. If you have a smiling face, you bring with you brightness to others (p. 31). (Susan Brown brought others happiness through her bright, smiling face.)
11. Don't cry wolf (p. 31). (Susie, as a baby, never cried unless she was sick or hurt.)
12. Don't be unkind to others (p. 32). (Susie was always pleasant to others and never said an unkind word.)
13. Be kind especially to children who are bullied (pp. 32–33). (Susie takes a bullied girl into her house and treats her kindly.)
14. Bring goodwill and happiness to those who are least fortunate (p. 34). (A sunbeam goes into a lowly hovel to bring happiness.)
15. Be honest (p. 36). (Henry uses a dollar he finds to help others by shining their shoes for free. Some decide to reward him.)
16. Help your parents and siblings if they need your help (p. 36). (Henry gives the money he earns to his mother, who is in need of more funds.)
17. Work hard to help others (p. 37). (Henry works all day and goes to school at night.)
18. Be considerate of the needs of others (p. 37). (When other people need to work, do not make a lot of noise.)
19. Be honest with others and, in dividing work, take on the extra share for yourself, even if the others do not realize you are taking on the extra share (p. 39). (A boy, in splitting a task with his younger brother, takes on the extra share of work, even though his younger brother does not realize it.)
20. Figure out what you are good at by reflecting on yourself (p. 40). (Nursery rhyme.)
21. It is good to love (p. 40). (Nursery rhyme.)
22. Even if you are small, protect those around you against larger threats (p. 42). (A kingbird, though small, protects its young against larger birds that threaten the young.)

The lessons above represent a mere 42 pages of a much longer book. Those pages contain a minimum of 22 lessons in wisdom. Clearly, McGuffey's is trying to teach children not only how to read but also

how to live virtuously and wisely. And without virtue, it is difficult to have wisdom, because without it, one will be reluctant to, or have trouble in seeking out, a common good.

A Wisdom Analysis of *The New Friends and Neighbors*

The New Friends and Neighbors (Gray, Monroe, Artley, & Arbuthnot, 1956) is a revision of a text created a decade before, *Friends and Neighbors* (Gray & Gray, 1941). It is the textbook I used in second grade in the mid-1950s to learn to read. It is part of a series published by Scott, Foresman often referred to as the “Dick, Jane, and Sally” readers, although the characters of Dick, Jane, and Sally themselves disappear after the first part of the second grade.

The first 25% of the book for the first half of the second grade contains a dozen lessons. Thus, the quarter of a book consumes considerably more pages (71 pages) than in the McGuffey reader. Because the 1941 and 1956 editions are so similar—they are the same except for occasional stories here and there—I analyzed only the 1956 edition. What wisdom lessons are to be found in the Scott, Foresman reader for the first half of the 2nd grade?

1. You should share with others (p. 27). (Tom shares a cookie with his friend Dick.)
2. When you share selflessly, you nevertheless may get rewarded (p. 30). (Tom gave away all of his cookies but his mother happened to make cookies for dessert after dinner.)
3. You need to speak in a way so that others, especially younger children, understand you (p. 35). (Dick and Jim learn that by not calling a young child’s home “home,” the child does not understand that it is supposed to be her home.)
4. Do kind things for others, including people from whom you make your store purchases (p. 41). (A group of children buy a birthday present for Mrs. Hill, who owns a store.)
5. Help others even when they are not immediately aware that you are helping them (p. 54). (Joe has brought Uncle Peter’s balloons, which Uncle Peter forgot, to a birthday party without Uncle Peter realizing it.)

6. Be kind to new children who have just moved into your neighborhood (p. 59). (Children in a neighborhood are kind to a new kid on the block named John.)
7. Children from very different kinds of places (rural, urban) are not so different and indeed play much the same way (p. 64). (John finds out that city boys play ball the same way country boys do.)
8. Instead of just acting, think first (p. 71). (Jim realizes that if he thinks before he acts, he can make his life easier.)

A Wisdom Analysis of *Journeys: Common Core*

Journeys: Common Core (Baumann et al., 2014) is a contemporary reader based on contemporary reading standards. The book for the first half of the second grade has much longer chapters than the earlier two books. In order to make the analysis at least somewhat comparable, I examined the first four chapters of *Journeys*, which covers a total of 221 pages, and include 27% of the text (measured by number of chapters).

1. Asking your parents nicely for something that is a reasonable request may well pay off (p. 19). (Henry's parents buy him a dog, Mudge, after Henry's earlier unreasonable requests were denied.)
2. If you give a friend a nice gift, that gift will remind the friend of you (p. 36). (Lucy gives a beautiful bracelet to Megan and the bracelet reminds Megan of Lucy.)
3. The secret to a long life is never to fall asleep in a shoe (p. 123). (Grandpa tells his grandson the secret to a long life. Note: I don't really understand this lesson, but it is offered as wisdom.)
4. If we take the time to get to know each other, we will all get along just fine (p. 128). (A child wishes that people would not make rash judgments about spiders.)
5. You need to learn what you are good at and what you are not good at (p. 136). (A spider learns what he does well and what he does poorly.)

What is to be concluded from this wisdom analysis?

First, there is a clear and fairly steep decreasing trend in wisdom-related content as the readers move forward in time. Keep in mind that the analysis, if anything, underestimates the discrepancy, because roughly 25% of a text is much more text in the Scott, Foresman

The New Friends and Neighbors series than in the McGuffey reader, and quite a bit more text in the Houghton-Mifflin-Harcourt *Journeys* text than the Scott Foresman book. In terms of sheer density, therefore, the decrease in material teaching wisdom-based lessons is staggering. In Sternberg (2018b), I claimed that there was a decrease in wisdom-related content over time, but this chapter represents the first time I actually have analyzed the decrease quantitatively.

Second, I believe there is not only a quantitative decrease in wisdom-related content, but also a qualitative one. The content of McGuffey is deeper with respect to wisdom than is that of Scott, Foresman, which in turn is deeper than that of *Journeys*. To compare McGuffey with *Journeys*, the idea that giving a friend a gift will remind the friend of you, or that the secret to long life is not falling asleep in a shoe (whatever that means) does not seem comparable to that of not crying wolf or being kind to children who are bullied. And the character of the suggestions in *Journeys* is quite different from the character of the suggestions in McGuffey. In particular, they seem much more self-oriented—more leading people to do things that will benefit them personally.

Third, the differences do not seem to be somehow at random, or chance fluctuations. The McGuffey readers at all levels seem to have been written with character-building in mind. They were of course designed to teach children how to read, but they further appear explicitly to have been designed to teach children wise lessons about life—about how to live. Arguably, they are as many books about life lessons as they are books about learning to read.

In the Scott, Foresman series, some of the stories seem to be oriented specifically toward teaching lessons about life. Those stories are mostly folk tales (e.g., “City Mouse and Country Mouse,” “The Silly Little Rabbit”) with relatively clear lessons. Most of the stories, however, are fairly straightforward narratives that are teaching reading skills but are not wisdom-oriented.

In the *Journeys* book, teaching for wisdom just does not seem to be a major goal. There is just one chapter with folk tales in the entire book.

This analysis is not to say that the more modern books are somehow worse in all respects than the McGuffey Readers. Actually, in different respects, they are arguably, much better.

The Scott, Foresman books were, like McGuffey, straight readers. But they each had associated with them a “Think-and-Do” book (Gray, Monroe, & Artley, 1956), which contained exercises in developing cognitive and academic skills. These exercise books were optional, that is, one could work through the readers without the supplementary Think-and-Do books. But most schools used the supplementary exercise books, ensuring that students would develop at least some of the skills they were designed to teach. In the second grade Think-and-Do book corresponding to *The New Friends and Neighbors* (Gray et al., 1956), there are (a) reading passages and comprehension questions, (b) vocabulary items where a sentence is presented with a missing word to be filled in and choices are given as to the correct word, (c) ordering of fragments of a sentence so that the sentence as a whole makes sense, (d) word games, and (e) choosing the best title for a story. These exercises, by and large, develop analytical thinking skills. There are no wisdom-based activities at all in the book nor is the book intended to teach for wisdom.

Consider now in more detail the *Journeys* book. What kinds of material does it include that are absent in the McGuffey readers? Quite a lot.

After each story in *Journeys*, there are opportunities for students to reflect on what they have learned and to dig deeper. For example, after the introductory story, a major section is “How to Analyze the Text,” with two subsections, “Sequence of Events” and “Author’s Word Choice.” Lesson 1 contains informational text about dogs and cats. It is followed by a Grammar section and a section on Narrative Writing. Lesson 2 on “My Family” has a section teaching students to “Compare and Contrast,” “Analyze the Text” questions, “Write About Reading,” “Compare Texts,” “Grammar,” and “Narrative Writing.” These extensive exercises now are an integral part of the reader. (For me, at least, it is challenging to believe that such tasks are being given to second graders throughout the spectrum of reading skills.) In other words, although

one could still stick to the reading passages without doing the supplementary work, because the supplementary work is in the main textbook rather than in a separate volume, it would be difficult to ignore the material because it is so closely integrated with the text. There is no clear distinction between the passages, on the one hand, and the exercises, on the other.

Clearly, the emphasis in *Journeys* is very different from that in the McGuffey readers. In particular, the emphasis is on analytical thinking, or exactly the kinds of thinking skills measured by standardized ability and achievement tests. My reaction on reading this material was whether it is any wonder that IQs increased 30 points during the twentieth century (Flynn, 2016), at least in the United States. The emphasis in a major reader shifted very heavily from wisdom-based to analytical thinking. The book says it is geared to the Common Core, which in turn is the basis for many of today's standardized achievement tests. So from the late 1800s to the early 2000s, a clear shift took place from an emphasis on wisdom-based instruction to an emphasis on instruction highly oriented toward the development of the kind of analytical thinking that might produce an increase in IQ. Indeed, changes in schooling have been recognized as one source of the Flynn effect (Neisser, 1998) and Greenfield (in press) recently has argued that the shift in definitions of intelligence as societies tend to develop is toward more abstract, analytical thinking.

Societal Context

In the days of the early McGuffey readers, there literally were no standardized tests. There was nothing to prepare students for except generalized success in school but, more importantly, success in life. Even as late as 1940, right before the first edition of the Scott, Foresman texts, fewer than 30% of white students were graduated from high school and fewer than 10% of black students were (<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs93/93442.pdf>). Preparation for college, therefore, was far from most people's minds, as the large majority of people would not even finish high school. Elementary school was already preparing for life

after school because many of the children relatively soon would be done with school.

As the years went on, more and more children went to school. High school and later even college came to seem to be more important. One other factor probably was influential in the increase of the proportion of children in school. Two child labor laws were passed, in 1918 and 1922, restricting child labor. But the Supreme Court, amazingly, declared them to be unconstitutional. The Fair Standards Labor Act of 1938 finally restricted child labor for children under 16. Schooling eventually became compulsory, usually to the age of 16.

Schooling became more common, technology became more complicated. As technology became more complicated, people needed higher intelligence to deal with it, and as intelligence increased, people were able to deal with more complicated technology (Sternberg, 1997). These reciprocal forces—intelligence and technology—combined with changes in education, likely led to at least some of the rise in IQ.

Limited Resources

As early as 1985—well before the Common Core—I argued that society's emphasis on memory and analytical skills was resulting in the development of students who were highly analytical in their orientation for the development of their intellectual skills, but much less creative and practical in their orientation (Sternberg, 1985). That is, in instruction and assessment, emphasis on memory and analytical skills results in most of education's rewards going to students who are analytically adept but not to those who are creatively or practically oriented. However, there always were some rewards, however minimal, for creatively and practically oriented students. For example, students were sometimes allowed to do creative artworks, or to write creative stories, or even on occasion to design scientific experiments. Practically oriented students excelled if they learned the reward system of the school and used it to their advantage.

The student wanting to develop wisdom-related skills, however, had little going for him or her in the context of the school. I have defined

wisdom as the use of one's knowledge and abilities to achieve a common good, by balancing one's own interest with the interests of others and with higher order interests, infusing into one's decisions positive ethical values (Sternberg, 2019). If one considers the coin of the realm in standardized testing, the wise person is likely to come up short. There is virtually nothing in standardized tests measuring skills in any aspects of this conception of wisdom. Moreover, the academic funnel system gives short shrift to wisdom-related skills. What matters for getting ahead in this system is primarily a conjunction of memory and analytical skills, combined with enough practical skills to figure out the system and to actively maneuver one's place in that system in order to gain advantage.

Schools could, of course, insert McGuffey-like lessons in wisdom into the curricula they already have. But this is a long shot. First, they are unlikely to do this. Teachers usually view themselves as having too much to do already, especially with educating students in a way that is intellectually defensible and that is also academically defensible in terms of leading to high scores on standardized tests. But even if a well-meaning teacher infused wisdom-based instruction into a Common Core-based curriculum, it well might not work.

The problem is that students have only limited resources (Sternberg, 2018a). That is, intellectually, there is just so much they can do. In the augmented theory of successful intelligence (Sternberg, in press), intelligence expresses itself through three kinds of information-processing components—metacomponents, or executive processes; performance components, which are the processes that execute instructions of the metacomponents; and knowledge-acquisition components, or those components that learn how to do things in the first place.

For present purposes, most important are the metacomponents, which include recognizing the existence of a problem, defining the problem, setting up a strategy for solving the problem, mentally representing information, devising a strategy to solve a problem, monitoring that strategy while executing it, and evaluating a strategy after it has been completed. One's use of these components is limited by one's working-memory capabilities and one's speed in executing the components. That is, for any given person, there is just so much one can do at one time. The issue here is that if one is devoting one's mental resources

to applying components, and especially metacomponents, in one way, one's resources are limited for applying them in another way (Sternberg, 2018). People are limited by their working memory and speed of processing. That is, there is only so much a person can process at a given time and place. In this sense, schools may "crowd out" wise thinking if they place extremely heavy emphasis in instruction and assessment on memory and analysis.

One might argue that teaching for wisdom has no place in schools anyway—that it is something that ought to be done at home, in Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, in religious school, or in other activities outside the school. There are, I believe, two problems with this argument. The first is that it is not at all clear that this is happening. How many students engage in activities that actually impart wisdom-based lessons? The second problem is that it is not clear that even if there is instruction outside the school, the fact that it takes place outside the school may create a situation where there is little or no transfer to activities within the school. There is good evidence that transfer is very hard to obtain (Detterman & Sternberg, 1993; Gick & Holyoak, 1980, 1983). It generally does not just occur automatically. Teachers have to create learning materials that build in transfer. But if teaching for wisdom is occurring only outside the school, this simply cannot happen.

One might hope that, when children reach high school, there will be some opportunity for wisdom to be taught. But it is unclear that there are many if any opportunities. Students at that point are studying for tests such as the College Board Achievement tests and the Advanced Placement tests, and the focus of those tests is memory and analytical. We have found in our research that the focus could in fact be expanded to include creative and practical thinking skills—an expansion that would reduce ethnic-group differences—but there is no sign that this will happen any time soon. More generally, the international PISA tests also do not measure wisdom. They emphasize reading, mathematics, and science, none of which is oriented toward wisdom. There also is a group problem-solving test, but the problems are not wisdom-based problems.

At the college level, the percentage of humanities majors has declined somewhat over the years. The humanities are where wise thinking is

most likely to be taught, but the percentage of majors in 2015 was only about 12% in 2015 (<https://www.aacu.org/aacu-news/newsletter/2017/august/facts-figures>). This decrease is despite the fact that, over time, humanities majors close the gap with STEM majors in terms of financial compensation in their occupations (<http://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2018/02/humanities-major-income-0213>). Students may or may not realize this fact. But what is for sure is that students are generally moving away from humanities majors, at least at the level of four-year colleges. Some professional programs, on the positive side, are becoming more inclined to teach for ethical reasoning (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2019; Sternberg & Hagen, 2019).

The question then might be what a teacher is to do if he or she does indeed believe in teaching for wisdom, in the spirit of the McGuffey readers, without sacrificing the emphasis on analysis, which is likely to be prevalent in most contemporary texts. One option is to *integrate wisdom-based questions into the existing curriculum*. Consider some examples.

Lesson 1 of Volume 1 of *Journeys* for Grade 2 contains a story called “Henry and Mudge” (Rylant, 2012). The story is about the adventures of a young boy Henry and his new dog Mudge. First, Henry wants a brother. His parents say no. Then he says he wants to live on a different street. The chapter has in it a number of questions for students to answer, such as what the sequence of events is after Henry’s parents look at each other (p. 19), why the author uses certain words to describe Mudge (the dog—p. 22), why Henry wanted a dog (p. 28), and what happened as Mudge grew (p. 28). There are questions of different kinds, however, that the text also might have asked, such as why parents sometimes change their minds after refusing a child’s requests, what kinds of roles dogs can play in improving the life of a family, what is reasonable to ask a dog to do and what is unfair, and so forth.

Lesson 2 of *Journeys* for Grade 2 contains a story called “My Family.” It is about an extended Latino family. Some of the questions are about things families like to do together (p. 43), what photos show about a family (p. 51), and how the activities of parents and children are similar

and different (p. 54). But there are other questions that the text might ask that are in some degree wisdom-relevant, such as (a) when members of families disagree about things, how can they resolve their differences?, (b) what should children say or do when they disagree with what their parents tell them to do?, (c) why is it important to share use of toys and games with siblings?, (d) how can families help us make better decisions in our lives?

Why do we need to teach for wisdom in the schools? I believe there are three reasons.

First, schools exist, presumably, to prepare students for the problems they will face in their everyday lives. They do not exist only to teach students how to prepare for academic problems they will face later in their school careers. Although students undoubtedly will encounter problems in their lives that stem from straight reading comprehension or application of algebraic equations or of principles of physics, most people will find in their lives more weighty matters than application of algebraic equations or physical principles. These more weighty matters include ones like (a) resolving disputes with neighbors, such as over noise levels, property boundaries, or other matters, (b) resolving disagreements with partners over handling of children or religion in the household or acceptable behavior with in-laws or other relatives, (c) resolving disputes at work over the value of one's work or the compensation one receives for it, (d) disciplining one's children in a way that, on the one hand, teaches them proper behavior, but on the other hand, has no possibility of causing them lasting physical or psychological damage, or (e) recognizing when one is living or working in a situation that is a serious enough violation of whatever principles one holds dear that one must at least consider a change, even though that change may be psychologically and possibly even financially costly. These are the kinds of problems, above all others, for which education should be preparing students, but right now is scarcely doing so at all. It is time to return to the spirit, although certainly not the letter, of the McGuffey Readers. This would mean teaching students not only to think well analytically, but also think wisely.

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2

The Erosion of Democracy: Can We Muster Enough Wisdom to Stop It?

Don Ambrose

The primary purpose of democracy is to prevent domination, so ethical leadership is essential for the creation and maintenance of healthy democratic governance (Shapiro, 2016). The leadership of a nation is more likely to be intelligent, competent, and ethical when the government of that nation is a healthy democracy. But when the government slides down toward totalitarianism, its leadership is more likely to incorporate a hideous blend of unethical, selfish proficiency in some aspects of governance, devastating incompetence in others, and exploitative corruption throughout its workings. Examples of totalitarian regimes, which abound throughout history, include Stalin's Soviet Union, Hitler's Nazi Germany, Pol Pot's Cambodia, Pinochet's Chile, and so many more.

In earlier decades and centuries, totalitarian regimes inflicted severe damage on their societies. The loss of millions of lives and devastated economies within and beyond the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany are stark examples. But the stakes are far higher today. It is difficult enough for even an intelligent, competent, ethical government to grapple with

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_2

the enormous problems and opportunities of the twenty-first century. But incompetent, corrupt totalitarian governments could produce devastation of absolutely enormous severity, up to and including the destruction of life on Earth as we know it. The rapidly increasing power of twenty-first-century technologies combined with massive problems such as climate change and resource shortages make that outcome far more likely should totalitarianism become widespread (for elaboration on these and other *macroproblems*, see Ambrose & Sternberg, 2016a, 2016b).

Consequently, it has never been more important for societies to strive for the establishment of WICS leadership in their political systems. The WICS model stands for wisdom, intelligence, and creativity synthesized. The creativity component of the model stands for the ability to generate promising new ideas and products. The intelligence component is the ability to recognize and refine these ideas and products while promoting their development and use in particular contexts. The wisdom component represents the inclination to use one's abilities and knowledge to achieve the common good by balancing one's own interests with those of others (for elaboration, see Sternberg, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2009). WICS leaders are able to use these three components to produce wise, intelligent, and creative actions in their spheres of influence.

A government guided by WICS leaders will benefit from such a productive synthesis of abilities; however, sometimes, influential individuals and groups are intelligent but not wise or creative. In those cases, they will do proficient work that lacks a creative spark, and that work might be harmful to the extent it impacts the world because it lacks the exceptionally important wisdom ingredient. Other influential individuals and groups can be creative but not intelligent or wise. In those cases, they can produce outside-the-box ideas but the lack of intelligent refinement of those ideas might make practical implementation difficult. And if the implementation succeeds, it might generate negative effects due to the lack of wisdom. Leaders also can be intelligent and creative but not wise. This blend of ability can be severely destructive because creative ideas can be intelligently refined and implemented in practical, high-impact ways, but the lack of wisdom can make them devastatingly

harmful. A prominent example is the creative development and intelligent refinement of deceptive financial instruments that led to the 2008 economic collapse, which severely harmed the lives of billions around the world (Stiglitz, 2012). But when wisdom is present in the work of a leader, that work will be guided by ethics and the recognition of the needs and wants of all stakeholders. Leaders who guide their work with WICS are far more likely to creatively design processes and products, intelligently refine them for practical implementation, and guide that implementation with strong attention to ethical awareness. This is why political systems in the twenty-first century desperately need WICS leadership.

Wise, twenty-first-century sociopolitical leaders would find ways to navigate through the dogmatism-saturated conflicts that plague eroding democracies. For example, they might work to establish guiding frameworks in their societies that encourage productive, ethical behaviors without making rigid laws that forbid alternatives and deny freedom of choice. Instead of dictating behaviors they would strive to “nudge” citizens to make decisions that would benefit them personally while promoting the common good (see the description of nudge choice architecture in Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). This would be more palatable to citizens with libertarian inclinations who are inclined to strongly resist government regulation. Wise leaders also might find ways to nudge organizations to incorporate other decision-making processes that generate nuanced judgment, such as the jurisprudential group process, which encourages the emergence of compromise positions on controversial issues (see the discussion of the jurisprudential process later in this chapter).

Characteristics of a Healthy Democracy

Equity is a core component of a strong democracy because the government of that nation ensures that opportunities and resources needed for success are spread throughout the population. This doesn't mean that everyone has exactly the same resources. There can be significant economic inequality, for example, but it shouldn't be so extreme that it

creates enormous political power imbalances preventing large numbers of citizens from having any voice in the political system.

Gutmann (2003) identified three important elements of equity that contribute to a strong democracy: equal freedom, equal opportunity, and civic equality. Equal freedom means the government allows citizens to live their lives as they see fit as long as they respect the freedom of others. In a democracy that protects equal freedom there is no room for various forms of unethical exploitation such as serfdom, indentured servitude, or theft of resources needed for the common good. Equal freedom also means there is freedom of expression, association, and assembly. Equal opportunity means citizens have access to the requirements necessary for living decent lives. These requirements include freedom from discrimination when it comes to educational and career opportunities. Civic equality means citizens have equal standing in the democratic process. They benefit from accurate information about important issues in the society as well as the right to participate in democratic decision-making. They also enjoy civil rights that ensure equal protection under the law and due process. In short, a healthy democracy affords citizens the following: widespread opportunities for the pursuit of economic success and self-fulfillment combined with the fair distribution of responsibility for taxation and compliance with regulations that support the system, as well as access to the accurate information needed for effective political participation in the maintenance of governmental transparency.

Roughly equal access to freedom, opportunity, and political participation largely depends on effective journalism (Bakir & McStay, 2018; Belsey, 1998; Cagé, 2016). Belsey described a distinction between ethical and industrial journalism. Ethical journalism strives for objectivity and reveals corruption wherever it may be found. In contrast, industrial journalism is profit-seeking and sensationalist with distorted reporting often providing inaccurate, biased messages. In addition, industrial journalism is vulnerable to takeover by powerful elites. When objective, investigative journalism provides political transparency throughout a democracy, unethical, powerful individuals and groups become much less able to deceive the public into ignoring or supporting their attempts to capture and control the levers of power. They are deterred because

the citizens are more aware of corruption. With this awareness, the citizenry can exert considerable control over the political system by casting votes based on accurate information while engaging in influential activism when necessary.

Watch the Clock Model of Democratic Growth and Erosion

Democracies are not carved in stone. There is an expansive gray area between vibrant democracy and totalitarianism. The dynamics of democratic growth and erosion are illustrated by the clock face model in Fig. 2.1. Vibrant democracy is positioned at 12 o'clock while totalitarianism is at 6:00. The right side of the dial represents the positioning of an individual, group, or nation in right-wing ideological territory. The left side of the dial shows where an individual, group, or nation favoring left-wing ideology would be positioned.

The double-ended arrow in the center of the clock face illustrates the values that reside at the core of competing ideologies: right-wing beliefs in individualism, economic freedom, and limited government, and left-wing beliefs in community, distributive justice, and regulation. A right-wing ideologue tends to opt for deregulation of economic activity and favors the wants and needs of the individual over the needs of the general public. A left-wing ideologue tends to be egalitarian, favoring the needs of the society over the individual while promoting government regulation of the economy. The double-ended arrow also signifies the dynamic tension that exists between these ideologies.

The arrows on the outside ideological circle show how a nation can move upward or downward on the model. The upward arrows, left-wing moderate (LWM) and right-wing moderate (RWM), indicate movements up toward democracy. A nation can establish and preserve a healthy balance between right-wing and left-wing beliefs, which makes the arrows converge at or near the top of the dial in the territory of vibrant democracy. Such a society will make room for individuals to discover and pursue their goals while ensuring that the needs of the general public are met. The balance will be achieved through prudent

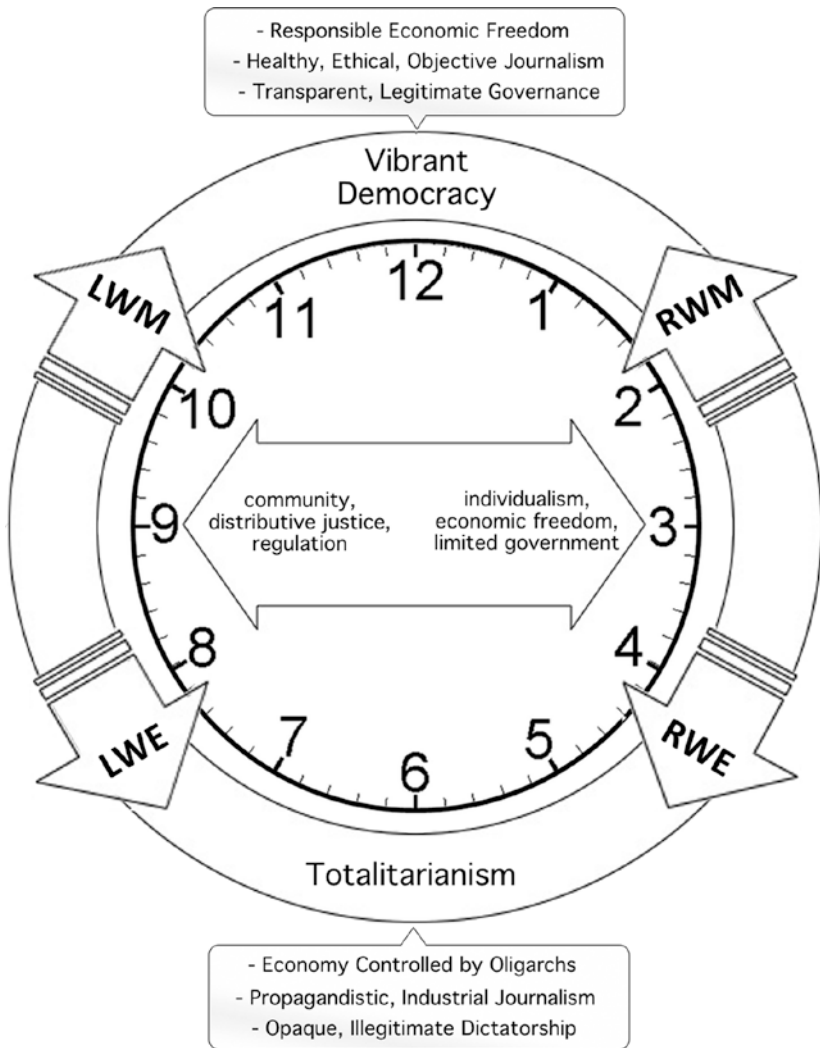


Fig. 2.1 Watch the clock model of democratic growth and erosion (Explanation of the arrows on the circle: RWM=right-wing moderate; LWM=left-wing moderate; RWE=right-wing extremist; LWE=left-wing extremist)

government regulation that doesn't intrude too much on the rights of the individual while also not retreating so much that the needs of most are cast aside in favor of a privileged or powerful few. Under these conditions, the vast majority of the population becomes optimistic and pursues self-fulfillment and ethical justice in a safe environment over the long-term.

The numbers on the clock dial represent locations where individuals and groups can position themselves ideologically. Anywhere between 11:00 and 1:00 near the top is the positioning for a strong, ethical democracy that provides its citizens with a balance between individual freedom and social responsibility. Those fortunate enough to live in such a society can pursue genuine self-fulfillment over the long-term instead of engaging in a frenzied pursuit of materialistic, hollow fulfillment or a day-to-day struggle for survival while being buffeted by the whims of powerful, psychopathic leaders or economic actors. Prominent ethical philosophers portray self-fulfillment as the establishment of a satisfying and worthwhile life well lived (Gewirth, 1998; Monroe, 1996, 2004). They argue that such a life blends the individual's pursuit of interests and achievements with relational altruism—the empathic support of others. Consequently, citizens in a vibrant democracy can discover and develop their aspirations, talents, and ethical sensibilities over the course of time. This gives them opportunities to achieve genuine self-fulfillment over the long-term while maintaining a strong sense of ethics and concern for the common good (Ambrose, 2005a, 2005b). Societies that locate themselves between 9:00–11:00 and 1:00–3:00 on the dial in Fig. 2.1 retain some of these benefits but they are in danger of sliding down toward totalitarianism because either left-wing or right-wing ideology has become strong enough to disrupt the balance required for healthy democracy. Societies between 8:00–9:00 and 3:00–4:00 still have a chance to achieve healthy democratic governance but they are well on their way to slipping into totalitarianism due to the excessive pressure from one form of extremism or the other. Finally, societies between 4:00–8:00 on the dial largely have succumbed to the unethical deception, exploitation, and authoritarianism that characterizes totalitarian systems, with those at 6:00 suffering from the most extreme forms of despotism.

Disintegrating Democracy

A healthy ideological balance near the top of the dial can be disrupted when the population of a nation becomes polarized (Bermeo, 2003). This occurs when the downward arrows, RWE and LWE on the model, push vigorously rightward and leftward and one ends up pulling much harder than the other. In these cases, there is a danger that either right-wing extremists or left-wing extremists will come to dominate the society, pulling it down either the right or left side of the dial toward totalitarianism at 6:00.

There are numerous examples throughout history. An especially stark example is the democratic German Weimar Republic rapidly transitioning into Hitler's Third Reich (Bermeo, 2003). Germany faced considerable angst and economic difficulties in the post-World War I years, which provided Hitler with an opportunity to energize a sufficient number of citizens around extremist right-wing ideology. Racist and ethnocentric demonization of scapegoat populations was a part of this process. The Nazis demonized the Jewish people, portraying them as primary reasons for German problems. This fired up Hitler's followers even more, adding considerable energy to the downward RWE arrow on the diagram.

Another, contrasting example comes from Russia. The extreme inequality and exploitation suffered by the Russian people in the czarist regime of the late nineteenth through early twentieth century provided the powerful, downward ideological energy on the LWE arrow. This spun the Russians around the clock from the czarist position at about 5:30 upward and to the left, over the top of the dial and down toward about 6:30, where the nation suffered under the oppression of extremist Communism. Metaphorically speaking, this spin around the dial didn't allow the Russians to make a stop along the way where they might enjoy democratic governance at the top. So, in this case, left-wing extremism pulled Russia from one form of totalitarianism all the way around to another. The only difference was the form of extremist ideology that made the Russian population suffer at the bottom of the dial. After the fall of the Berlin wall, Russia experienced another rapid spin all the way around the dial, this time in the opposite direction from

6:30 to about 5:00 when the downward communist pressure on the LWE arrow disintegrated and powerful oligarchs took control, exerting considerable RWE pressure (see Bartniki & Stefanowicz, 2010).

Ethical leaders and informed citizens must be vigilant because these movements on the dial can take place even in seemingly healthy democracies when polarization strengthens. Disturbingly, Galston (2018) argues that today's polarization of the electorate in the USA is unprecedented in American history and shows no signs of weakening. Its strength is a serious danger to the health of American democracy.

Are Twenty-First-Century Democracies Spinning Down the Dial?

At the end of the Cold War, there was a sense of euphoria because at that point democracy seemed to be triumphant and ascendant well into the foreseeable future. But as we move further into the twenty-first century, leading political scientists are concerned. Kurlantzick (2013) argued that democracies have been eroding around the world. Levitsky and Ziblatt (2018) reported the results of studies determining the dynamics of democratic erosion in various locations, concluding that democracy is disintegrating in the USA due to the ongoing weakening of important pillars of democratic governance such as the judiciary and the free press. They also lamented the erosion of political norms to the point where nuanced judgment and compromise are mostly off the table. Hacker and Pierson (2010) portrayed democracy as being hijacked by the superrich, who purchase control of the levers of power primarily to preserve and advance their own economic interests. They also illustrate how both political parties in the American system have shifted rightward for several decades in a competitive chase for corporate money, with one party extending into RWE territory more than the other. This chase accelerated with Supreme Court actions such as the *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* decision, which portrayed corporations as people and opened the floodgates for money to pour into the political system so powerful individuals and groups could purchase and control politicians. Similarly, MacLean (2018) showed

how the radical right, led by a few members of the economic elite, has been undermining American democracy for decades to strengthen their power. The influence of money in politics should be constrained in order to preserve democracy (Hasen, 2015) but the system seems to have turned its back on this ideal.

Meanwhile, the American presidency has been evolving to allow for the emergence of extremism and unethical actions (Ackerman, 2010) and this makes it far less likely that such constraints on the unethical purchase of power will be implemented. Most notably, Wolin (2008) foresaw the results of this erosion some time ago, arguing that democracy was devolving into a new form of government, which he termed *inverted totalitarianism*. In this system, corporate interests and enormously affluent individuals control most of the levers of power so that democracy now is more of a façade, far from the ethical ideal at the top of the dial in Fig. 2.1 (also see Bartels, 2008; Brill, 2018; Dahl, 2007; Deaton, 2013; Gilens & Page, 2014; Payne & Raiborn, 2018; Piketty, 2014; Ringen, 2007; Schlozman, Brady, & Verba, 2018; Schlozman, Verba, & Brady, 2012; Stiglitz, 2010, 2012; Winkler, 2018).

Symptoms of Democratic Erosion

The operations of governments in today's turbulent world obviously are complex so it can be difficult to determine whether or not a society is losing its grasp on vibrant democracy. There are some key indicators that illustrate the nature and extent of democratic erosion.

Unrestrained Growth of Inequality

While unequal societies can preserve their democracies to some extent, the presence and growth of severe inequality constitute a conspicuous symptom of democratic erosion. An array of prominent scholars has weighed in on this. Bartels (2008) showed how the American political system serves the affluent while ignoring everyone else, creating more severe economic and political inequality. Deaton (2013) pointed out that democracy is always under threat when inequality

becomes extreme. Stiglitz (2012) illustrated the ways in which socio-economic diseases such as predatory lending, excessive incarceration of the deprived, and political polarization become more prominent when inequality grows too quickly. Page, Bartels, and Seawright (2013) showed how most of the very rich are far more politically active and conservative than the rest of the American public; consequently, the few extremely affluent members of an unequal society pull the governance away from where those in the vast majority prefer to reside on the dial in the watch the clock model in Fig. 2.1. These dynamics tend to emerge from the currently dominant, unconstrained globalized form of capitalism, which aligns itself with the right-wing tenets on the democracy dial (Kuttner, 2018; Robinson, 2014). In essence, the tendency for severe inequality to undermine democracy emerges somewhat from the arrogance elites often hold toward the members of the paltry herd:

The idea that all societies are governed by elites and can only be governed by elites (i.e., that democracy is simply impossible) is one the central tenets of fascist ideology. At the basis of elite theory is a profound pessimism about the capacity of ordinary people (“the masses”) to understand their own interests and to collectively act in consequence. (Buzaglo, 2018, p. 98)

The unfortunate results of the rapid growth of inequality show up starkly in the erosion of the American middle class, which has been shrinking rapidly, leaving a chasm between the haves and the have-nots. Meanwhile, many of the poor live in conditions similar to those found in Third World nations (Temin, 2017).

Authoritarian Populism

Weitz (2003) showed how leaders who pursue utopian doctrines often promote nationalist and racist ideologies that can be taken to the extreme, up to and including genocide. As mentioned earlier, unscrupulous leaders attempting to take control of a political system tend to demonize minority groups in order to inflame the emotions of followers (Bermeo, 2003). Ill-informed citizens are especially prone to emotion-laden, divide-and-conquer strategies aimed at dehumanizing

minority populations to distract from important economic and political problems (Fording & Schram, 2017). This divide-and-conquer strategy does severe damage to democracies. Leading researchers now say that authoritarian populist leaders are enjoying success in previously healthy democracies throughout much of the world (Kirchick, 2018; Mounk, 2018; Plattner, 2017; Snyder, 2018). In essence, authoritarian populism is both a symptom and a cause of democratic erosion because it can exert strong, downward pressure in the form of the LWE or RWE arrows on the dial in Fig. 2.1.

The authoritarian element of this phenomenon shows up in other ways throughout societies. For example, in a nation suffering from democratic erosion, deprived populations, especially minority groups, suffer from overzealous attacks by an increasingly authoritarian justice system, which applies excessively harsh prison sentences to the powerless while ignoring the illegal behaviors of powerful individuals and corporations (Garrett, 2014; Gottschalk, 2015; Hinton, 2016). Gottschalk illustrated the strength of this anti-democratic symptom in her analysis of the *carceral state*—her term for the increasingly authoritarian American justice system. This system includes a vast array of overcrowded jails and prisons, which increasingly come under the control of for-profit owners. Millions of citizens suffer considerably throughout their lives under the constraints imposed by the carceral state. Gottschalk's words portray the extent to which this aspect of American society is an indicator of democratic erosion: "The US incarceration rate of 730 per 100,000 is still the highest in the world and rivals the estimated rate that citizens of the Soviet Union were being sent to the gulags during the final years of Stalin's rule in the early 1950s" (p. 8).

Dogmatic Ideology

Another important phenomenon that is both symptom and cause of democratic erosion is the tendency of the human mind to fall into the trap of dogmatism. An ideology that is saturated with dogmatism can control the majority of minds and the important institutions in a nation. Dogmatism is any blend of narrowminded, shortsighted,

superficial, or rigid thinking (see Ambrose & Sternberg, 2012; Ambrose, Sternberg, & Sriraman, 2012). Various forms of dogmatism have precipitated or at least significantly contributed to most human-caused disasters including massive exploitation, ethnic and cultural conflicts, wars, and genocide.

While ordinary and lesser minds easily can be captured by a dogmatic thought framework, the highly intelligent are not immune (Elder & Paul, 2012; Sternberg, 2002, 2004). In fact, they can be even more dogmatic than ordinary minds because intelligent individuals tend to overvalue their own thoughts and can come to think of their beliefs as nearly invincible. This makes them resistant to evidence. In view of these dynamics of the human mind, when the downward arrows on the model of democratic growth and erosion in Fig. 2.1 exert extreme pressure, as they did in Stalin's Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, Pinochet's Chile, and Pol Pot's Cambodia, they do so on the basis of an ideology that has become extremely dogmatic and forceful.

Authoritarianism is an obvious form of powerful dogmatism that hurts democracy. But another form of dogmatism—neoliberal ideology—also seems to be contributing to the erosion of democracy in today's world. This is ironic because neoliberalism is based on favoring individual freedom so it would seem to be a strong protector of democracy, which stands in opposition to totalitarianism.

Neoliberal ideology places high value on individual freedom so talented individuals can achieve economic success without facing oppressive government regulation (Duménil & Lévy, 2013; Friedman, 1962, 1975; Harvey, 2006; Hayek, 1944). This ideology strongly connects with neoclassical economics, which portrays the individual, economic decision-maker as a rational being making rational decisions based on complete information sets for selfish purposes. This economic model promotes the notion that large numbers of individuals making rational, selfish decisions will result in the greater good because the syntheses of their actions supposedly generate vibrant economic productivity.

Of course, this rather bizarre model of the human doesn't match reality very well because humans are not fully rational, seldom have access to perfect information sets, and very rarely are entirely selfish. Leading

economists who escaped the dogmatism embedded in mainstream economics have pointed out this and other flaws in both neoliberal ideology and neoclassical economic theory. They've shown how neo-liberal-neoclassical ideas, when taken too far, don't work well in the real world because they generate excessive inequality and periodic economic disasters (Madrack, 2011, 2014; Marglin, 2008; Piketty, 2014; Quiggin, 2010; Stiglitz, 2010, 2012). Nevertheless, neoliberalism has spread around the world and dominates the global economy as well as most democratic governments, to varying degrees. While the ideology has produced considerable wealth worldwide through the workings of economic globalization, these benefits have been reserved for a small percentage of the population. Meanwhile, the harm it has done to democratic governance, and to the lives of the vast majority, has been substantial.

High-profile scholars from a number of disciplines clarify the effects of this form of ideological dogmatism. Mounk (2017), a political scientist, shows how the dominant ideology has transformed conceptions of personal responsibility, making them harmful to the life chances of the deprived. Prior to the ascendance of neoconservative ideology, which is based on neoliberalism and neoclassical economic theory, personal responsibility revolved around ethics and altruism. Now neoconservatives imply that deprived individuals lack ability and character, so they don't deserve help from the government. This justifies the shrinking and fraying of the social safety net, or even its removal entirely. Meanwhile, the harsh economy established by neoliberalism, with virtually all of the rewards funneled to the very top, does severe damage to the impoverished and the middle class. All of this contributes to the erosion of democracy because those at the bottom lack political voice.

Slobodian (2018), a historian, clarified how toxic neoliberal ideology has become. While originally protecting the rights of individuals, it has devolved into a mechanism for using political power within and between nations to protect an extreme, increasingly distorted form of capitalism at the global level, beyond the reach of governmental regulation (also see Quiggin, 2010). In essence, neoliberalism is changing the structure of governments to fit the needs of a few key players in the globalized economy (Roberts, 2010).

Others have revealed some ways in which neoliberalism has been directly attacking democracy. Insidiously, a network of very wealthy libertarian extremists has been funding a behind-the-scenes plan to take control of American governance (Mayer, 2016). More specifically, according to Harvey (2006), an anthropologist, the ideology has been extremely harmful, strengthening class divisions, setting the stage for authoritarianism, and eroding democracy by putting the levers of power into the hands of a few influential insiders.

One trend promoted by neoliberalism exerts an especially toxic effect on democracy. Neoliberal dogmatists tend to believe that government always is wasteful and incompetent so any governmental functions that can be privatized should be. While inefficiencies in government do exist, they tend not to be as extreme as the ideological dogmatists contend. Moreover, neoliberal ideologues downplay or ignore the inefficiencies that occur in the private sector. For example, the mostly privatized American healthcare system is far more costly and predatory than mostly government-run systems in other nations and the results deriving from the American system tend to be worse (Davis, Stremikus, Squires, & Schoen, 2014; Hacker, 2013; Lasser, Himmelstein, & Woolhandler, 2006). The predatory nature of the system shows up in the control medical insurance and pharmaceutical corporations have over the political system. This control enables them to drive up costs to astronomical levels. The mostly government-run systems of other developed nations have little need for medical insurance companies and pharmaceutical costs are kept under control through regulation.

In another example, Newfield (2008, 2016) illustrated the harmful effects of attempts to privatize universities due to pressures from neoliberal ideology. The corporatization of public universities actually makes them less cost-efficient, more expensive for students, and far less focused on the public good. Instead, they further enrich private funders. The transition is due to neoconservative pressure to undermine the democratizing effects of public education.

The dominance of neoliberalism has pushed privatization to the extreme where it now stands to control many of the operations of government (Michaels, 2017). This commercialization of government is a serious threat to democracy because only the powerful who control

the privatized systems can make important decisions (see Brown & Jacobs, 2008; Duménil & Lévy, 2013). Considering this trend toward privatization through the lens of the watch the clock model of democratic growth and erosion in Fig. 2.1, recall that a healthy democracy depends on a dynamic tension between the RWM and LWM arrows. The RWM arrow promotes the economic freedom that provides individuals with opportunities for vibrant entrepreneurship. The LWM arrow promotes prudent governmental regulation of the economy that protects the interests of the population in the nation (see Croley, 2007). Scanning the international economic environment can provide helpful examples of the benefits this dynamic tension provides. For instance, the prominent economist Ha-Joon Chang (2010) showed how individual entrepreneurship tends to be healthier in nations with effective government regulation and social safety nets because young people wanting to start enterprises can quit their jobs to focus on their startups without losing important benefits such as healthcare coverage. Their healthcare is guaranteed by the government. Consequently, they don't have to worry nearly as much about ending up bankrupt and homeless if their enterprise fails. Meanwhile, in a nation lacking universal healthcare and other government benefits, only privileged young people can take entrepreneurial risks confidently because they know they will bounce back up if they fall onto the richly feathered mattresses of family wealth.

Undermining Journalism

As mentioned earlier, to maintain itself, a democracy needs ethical, objective, investigative journalism to reveal flaws in governance and efforts to diminish or dismantle democratic processes. There is growing evidence that this healthy form of journalism has been disintegrating (Bakir & McStay, 2018; Belsey, 1998; Cagé, 2016; González, 2017; Lance, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2007; Roper, Ganesh, & Zorn, 2016; Starkman, 2015; Sunstein, 2007; Wolfe, 2006). Some of the disintegration comes from corporate media entities that simply want to avoid the high cost of investigative journalism by replacing real, field-based journalists with entertaining but vacuous talking heads (Hamilton, 2003).

Other forms of journalistic disintegration come from the concentration of media outlet ownership in the hands of a few extremely wealthy individuals who tend to position themselves at or near the right-wing extremist arrow on the democratic growth and erosion clock in Fig. 2.1 (see Franklin & Pilling, 1998; Gans, 2003; Hamilton, 2003; Roper et al., 2016). For example, Roper, Ganesh, and Zorn analyzed communication emanating from right-wing American think tanks and discovered strategies designed to magnify ideological polarization and delay democratic policymaking that would address climate change. This is an example of the active distortion of objective, investigative journalism in efforts to serve the economic interests of a privileged few while ignoring the needs of everyone else. The weakening of journalism in recent decades has turned media outlets into conduits for soft, entertaining news and populist rhetoric and this has made it easier for those who want to distort the news to favor their particular initiatives and interests (Wolfe, 2006). The American citizenry now lacks the ability to evaluate important issues due to the suppression of scientific research because powerful players want to dismantle environmental regulations.

The ascendance of social media and ongoing advancements in information technology also have undercut the effectiveness of the remaining media outlets that strive to preserve objective, investigative journalism. More than a decade ago, Sunstein (2007) recognized that the Internet was creating echo chambers and information cocoons that made ideological polarization worse than it was before. More recently, these echo chambers have become louder and the information cocoons have rigidified to the point where it's exceedingly difficult to find common ground. Bakir and McStay (2018) described the rapid, powerful emergence of emotional messages and personal attacks in the tech-automated fake news phenomenon that has been influencing recent elections. This increases polarization and diminishes the ability of the electorate to consider the real essence of sociopolitical and economic issues. González (2017) studied big data analyses by Cambridge Analytica that influenced the last presidential election. New technologies facilitate harvesting of enormous amounts of data through social media platforms. This is an especially pernicious threat to democracy because it undermines and bypasses objective, investigative journalism. All of

these developments with the use of technology have made it easier for lobbyists, policymakers, and less-than-ethical media outlets to engage in the creative use of deceptive language designed to persistently undermine democracy and prop up flawed ideologies that generate severe inequality and injustice (Stanley, 2015).

These trends represent the sidestepping of journalism, and the transformation of some media outlets into conduits for propaganda. While not yet descending to the level of propaganda produced in totalitarian regimes, ideological manipulation of the news is troubling. Citizens should be watchful to determine whether or not this eventually approximates a classic example of totalitarian propaganda—*Pravda*, the prominent news outlet of the old Soviet Union. The primary purpose of the newspaper was to justify and prop up the sociopolitical system (see Cull, Culbert, & Welch, 2003). Some of the harm done by *Pravda* and the system it supported is evident in a common Russian saying during the Soviet era: “We pretend to work and they pretend to pay us” (cited in Burnheim, 2006, p. vi).

Predators Commandeering the Public Education System

Yet another indicator of democratic erosion comes from ongoing attacks on the American public school system (Rooks, 2017). A persistent privatization movement has been denigrating and undermining the public system, carving it up for capture by profiteers. This has created a form of segregation with an increasingly battered, diminished, tightly constrained public system serving the deprived and a combination of private schools and charters serving the affluent.

There are various ways to think about the purposes of education in a society. Here are some of the purposes that often come to the fore: (a) students must learn the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will enable them to establish productive, rewarding careers when they become adults; (b) they must develop the creative and critical thinking capacities that will enable them to deal with the turbulence of changing socioeconomic, cultural, and technological environments in the context of twenty-first-century globalization; and (c) they must develop the ethical awareness and collaborative skills that will make them good

citizens capable of supporting the maintenance and improvement of the democracy in which they live. In an ideal world, it's likely that all three of these purposes, and possibly a few others, would comprise the healthy mission of the education system in today's democracies.

At times in American history, such a synthesis of purposes seemed to be on the minds of leading thinkers and policymakers. For example, in the last decades of the twentieth century there was a movement to strengthen higher-order (creative and critical) thinking in American schools. But the reform movement took over and accelerated in the early twenty-first century, pushing higher-order thinking aside and strongly emphasizing mastery of content knowledge (Berliner, 2009, 2012; Berliner & Glass, 2014; Ravitch, 2013). In order to hold public schools and teachers accountable, the reformers, mostly self-appointed ideologues, promoted the use of standardized testing so schools, teachers, and students could be punished if their performance lagged (Berliner, 2011, 2012; Koretz, 2017; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Ravitch, 2013; Rooks, 2017). Interestingly, the test-and-punish agenda was applied primarily to public school systems in deprived regions. Moreover, the results were used as ammunition fired against the public system in efforts to denigrate government-run education and pave the way for educational privatization (Abrams, 2016; Ravitch, 2013; Rooks, 2017). Meanwhile, in nations featuring a healthier balance between the RWM and LWM arrows on the democratic growth and erosion clock dial in Fig. 2.1, public education systems are strongly supported by policymakers and the general public, and harsh, mechanistic accountability systems are not evident. The system in Finland is a good example (Sahlberg, 2010; Tirri, 2016).

Metaphorically speaking, the efforts of the reformers pushed the focus of policymakers and citizens into the easily "visible" range on a spectrum of human capacities (Ambrose & Ambrose, 2013). The metaphor is based on the electromagnetic spectrum in which visible light shows up as a narrow band on a frequency continuum, with other frequencies beyond that band. The frequencies beyond are much less detectable by the human sensory apparatus. They include infrared, ultraviolet, x-rays, gamma rays, microwaves, and long radio waves, among others. Similarly, the easily "visible" abilities on the metaphorical

spectrum of human capacities include superficial, narrow, standardized test scores, which give us limited portrayals of a student's strengths and weaknesses while ignoring other important capacities. They are easily visible because standardized testing used for accountability purposes magnifies their importance in a society. Important abilities that are far less detectable by standardized testing include the visual-metaphorical insights that great scientists use to produce paradigm-shifting discoveries; the reliability, resiliency, collaborative strengths, and courage necessary for success in a turbulent, twenty-first-century environment; the leadership, creative-problem-solving abilities and critical thinking strengths that help students become successful entrepreneurs; the empathy and altruism that help students develop into good citizens in a democracy, and more.

In a nation suffering from democratic erosion, the majority of students find their development and life prospects confined within the visible portion of the spectrum of human capacities because the 3Rs (superficial literacy and computational abilities) fit the standardized testing used for the test-and-punish accountability agenda imposed by dogmatic, often unethical, powerful, self-appointed reformers. Berliner (2012) used the term *creaticide* (the systematic killing of creativity in education) to capture the essence of this intellectual confinement. With the majority of students confined inside an education system battered by creaticide, most of the population will lack the creative and critical thinking skills necessary to engage in well-informed participation in democratic processes. They will be more vulnerable to propaganda spouted by the industrial media, and more likely to follow unethical leaders who inflame their darkest passions by demonizing scapegoat populations.

Strengthening Wisdom to Reverse Democratic Erosion

Healthy injections of wisdom, as Sternberg (2003, 2005, 2008, 2009) conceives of it in his WICS construct, are needed if democracies around the world are to reverse their slippage down the dial and return closer to the top where vibrant democracies reside. Emphasizing ethics in the

development of gifted young people who will become leaders in the future will help in this regard (Ambrose & Cross, 2009). Modifications to Kindergarten-graduate school education will be necessary if we are to emphasize WICS. For example, some prominent scholars argue that overemphases on trapping students' minds within number-crunching silos is stunting the development of ethics. Nussbaum (2010) recommended the injection of more humanities instruction to balance the dominance of the 3 Rs in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) because the nuanced judgement exercised in the humanities simulates the kind of thinking citizens and policymakers need for strengthening democracy. Similarly, Morson and Schapiro (2017) proposed the injection of English literature into economics because thinkers would then be exposed to empathy-stimulating ethical dilemmas, and economics is short on empathy and ethical thought and action. Sternberg (2017) proposed modifications more directly aimed at strengthening and preserving democracy with his ACCEL (active, concerned citizenship and ethical leadership) vision for education.

Injecting new creative and critical thinking strategies into education, and into the workings of leadership in organizations, also could provide some inoculation against democratic erosion by strengthening WICS and ACCEL. For example, the following are new strategies based on insights derived from interdisciplinary work (Ambrose, 2019). They are designed to strengthen ethical awareness and nuanced judgment, capacities that are necessary for the maintenance of democracy over the long-term:

- **Undermining your own position:** Participants describe their own position on a complex, controversial issue and then actively seek evidence that undermines this position. The process enables them to refine their belief, making it more accurate, or to replace it with something more aligned with the facts.
- **Moral-legal overlap analysis:** Participants map an issue onto a graph with moral and legal dimensions so they can discover the extent to which the issue is legal and ethical, illegal and unethical, illegal and ethical, or legal and unethical. The process builds appreciation for the fact that legal systems aren't always ethical, especially in societies that are sliding down toward totalitarianism.

- Altruistic analysis: Participants learn about the dynamics of identity formation and the ways in which it often leads to dogmatic, in-group favoritism. They use these insights to analyze the extent to which altruism is evident in, or absent from, actions and events in the world.
- Intellectual spectrum analysis: Participants use the spectrum of human capacities, briefly described in a prior section in this chapter, to analyze the skills and dispositions that could enable individuals and groups to more effectively grapple with complex problems in today's world.

In addition to these new creative and critical thinking strategies there are others that have been used for decades by innovative educators, although they tend not to be widely known. Just one example among many is jurisprudential analysis, which strengthens nuanced judgment by engaging participants in coming up with a compromise position between polarized positions on a complex issue (see Arends & Kilcher, 2010; Joyce & Weil, 1992).

Emphasizing WICS and ACCEL in education and throughout societal institutions can happen only if the leaders at all levels in a nation develop wisdom. This will be difficult because power tends to corrupt the leadership in organizations. According to Blaug (2010), leaders easily can succumb to corruption because their lofty positions incline them to allow their tendencies toward excessive self-confidence, pride, disinhibition, and arrogance to manifest; consequently, they ignore the needs of others. If political leaders, and the leaders of the powerful institutions and corporations that influence them, are even somewhat corrupted by power they will care little about the needs of others, and such caring is a key ingredient in the maintenance of democracy. Another pernicious influence on leadership comes from the tendency for leadership positions to attract a higher percentage of psychopaths than do the lower ranks of organizations (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Babiak, Neumann, & Hare, 2010). And when hubris syndrome and psychopathy infect political leaders, their exaggerated pride, overconfidence, narcissism, impulsiveness, craving of self-glorification, and lack of empathy can lead to

severe damage. This is especially the case when nations slide down the dial toward totalitarianism because the constraints on leaders infected with hubris syndrome and psychopathy weaken and disappear. When unconstrained, leaders who lack WICS will make their societies far more politically and economically unequal by commandeering power and wealth for themselves and their corrupt cronies while ignoring the needs of the vast majority.

These psychological weaknesses of individual leaders might be ameliorated if the development of WICS and ACCEL in today's young people, tomorrow's citizens and leaders, emphasizes teamwork and collaboration. It's possible that a group of ethical leaders can ensure that a member of their group who exhibits signs of psychopathy and hubris syndrome will not accrue excessive power. The aforementioned creative and critical thinking strategies are designed to develop ethical awareness through group processes so they could help strengthen ethical collaboration over time.

When highly unequal, corrupt pseudodemocracies stubbornly refuse to elevate themselves on the dial, the prospects for correction are not good. Scheidel (2017) studied the structure and dynamics of unequal societies throughout history, finding that inequality increases during times of peace and stability and only diminishes when major disasters arise such as large-scale warfare, bloody revolutions, and the collapse of nations or civilizations. In addition, he argued that humanity hasn't gained much wisdom since ancient times so shrinking the severe inequality that plagues today's democracies could require yet another massive disaster.

We must strive to do all we can to ensure that it doesn't come to this. Building awareness of the value in the nuanced judgment that allows citizens and policymakers to appreciate the dynamic tension between the RWM and LWM arrows on the model of democratic growth and erosion in Fig. 2.1 is essential for the preservation and strengthening of healthy governance in the decades to come. Pushing back against simplistic school reform to eliminate creaticide and strengthen the development of WICS and ACCEL in forthcoming generations will be important elements of this initiative.

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3

Wise Reasoning in an Uncertain World

Igor Grossmann and Anna Dorfman

Climate change, proliferation of ultranationalist movements in various parts of the globe, tribalism, and denial of science many parts of the world—in times like these social critiques and philosophers often call for greater wisdom. But what is wisdom and how does one develop it? Philosophers argue that knowledge is insufficient for wisdom. Instead, they have argued that wisdom requires certain aspects of metacognition to flexibly navigate complex environments without a clearly defined decision space: epistemic humility, consideration of multiple perspectives and ways a situation may unfold, and integration of different perspectives. Surprisingly, empirical scientists only recently started to explore these concepts. Our chapter highlights some of the evidence-based

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_3

advances in the study of wisdom made in the last decade and their utility for tackling some of the problems the world is facing today.

Defining the Core Pillars of Wisdom

Though there are many views on the nature of wisdom (Staudinger & Glück, 2011), one common thread in philosophy, folk beliefs, and scientific discourse suggests that central to wisdom are certain forms of reflection or “reasoning” that promote sound judgment about a challenging situation at hand. As reviewed by Oakes, Brienza, Elnakouri, and Grossmann (n.d.), lay people often view wisdom through the lens of knowledge and experience, along with reflective abilities (e.g., about the self or the world), and socio-emotional abilities (e.g., empathy, compassion). One can find such lay views on wisdom in studies of folk beliefs across many cultures, including North America, Western Europe, and East and South Asia (Grossmann & Kung, n.d.). Notably, the folk depictions of wisdom-related processes are often underspecified, requiring one to consult the philosophical literature. Particularly relevant are the reemerging ideas about *practical wisdom* (“*phronesis*”) as discussed by Aristotle. The central piece of the Aristotelian concept of practical wisdom has concerned reasoning about concrete features of a given situation, with action as an end point (Aristotle, 1953, Sec. 1139a8–9; Schwartz & Sharpe, 2006). According to Aristotle, *phronesis* facilitates proper decisions (*prohairesis*), which embody most appropriate prescriptions for a given set of circumstances. As circumstances change in different situations, these prescriptions also vary with the features of the situation. For instance, using such characteristics as bravery to handle challenging situations is not about running gung ho into every (metaphorical) battle, nor are they about constant bravery, but about showing bravery when the situation calls for it.

Building on this idea, scholars have defined practical wisdom as the ability to discern how to act in a particular situation, with an aim to achieve a situation-appropriate balance between different moral virtues and personal preferences (Brienza, Kung, Santos, Bobocel, & Grossmann, 2017; Kristjánsson, 2018). In other words, practical wisdom involves figuring out

the specific features of a situation to determine the appropriate action plan. Notably, this definition of practical wisdom is distinct from domain-general cognitive abilities such as those measured by intelligence tests. Like intelligence, wisdom involves some basic level of general knowledge and application of logic. At the same time, neither general knowledge nor logic nor efficient information processing should be confused with wisdom (Ardelt, 2004; Baltes & Kunzmann, 2004; Baltes & Smith, 2008; Grossmann, 2017b; Grossmann, Sahdra, & Ciarrochi, 2016; Jeste et al., 2010; Kekes, 1983; Sternberg, 1998; Vervaeke & Ferraro, 2013). Behavioral scientists have proposed that wisdom involves *context-sensitive* processing of information, enabling understanding and navigating complexities of one's social world (Baltes & Smith, 2008; Grossmann, 2017b; Santos, Huynh, & Grossmann, 2017). As Sternberg once pointed out, "information processing in and of itself is not wise or unwise. Its degree of wisdom depends on the fit of a wise solution to its context" (Sternberg, 1998, p. 353).

Building on this theoretical work, psychological scientists have outlined several aspects of reasoning that may fit the bill for the Aristotelian portrayal of practical wisdom by affording a context-sensitive processing of knowledge (Baltes & Smith, 2008; Grossmann, 2017a, 2017b; Santos, Huynh, et al., 2017; Vervaeke & Ferraro, 2013): intellectual humility, acknowledgment of different points of view, appreciation of the context within which the issue unfolds, sensitivity to the possibility of change in social relations, acknowledgment of the likelihood of multiple outcomes of a conflict, a self-transcendent viewpoint on the issue, and preference for compromise in resolving opposing viewpoints (see Fig. 3.1). We describe the features of these aspects of reasoning and how they can be expressed in Table 3.1. Notably, these aspects of reasoning appear across a wide range of definitions of wisdom in world's philosophies and the behavioral sciences (Bangen, Meeks, & Jeste, 2013; Glück, 2017; Oakes et al., n.d.). Moreover, they converge on a single latent factor that is distinct from intelligence and established personality traits (Brienza & Grossmann, 2017; Brienza et al., 2017; Grossmann, Na, Varnum, Kitayama, & Nisbett, 2013; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003; Staudinger, Lopez, & Baltes, 1997) and that affords less biased and more balanced inferences about the social world (Brienza et al., 2017; Grossmann & Brienza, 2018; Grossmann, Oakes, & Santos, 2019).



Fig. 3.1 Example characteristics of wise reasoning in everyday life (Adopted from Grossmann [2017a])

In what follows we will focus on these aspects of wise reasoning, reflecting on how they can be beneficial when addressing some of the world's pressing social problems, including social relationships, leadership, environmental sustainability, and civic discourse in politics and on social media. Whenever available, we will use insights from existing empirical evidence. In other instances, because existing empirical research on wisdom is still relatively new, we will offer somewhat speculative solutions, aimed to serve as a potential inspiration for future evidence-based interventions.

Table 3.1 Definition of different aspects of wise reasoning and their possible manifestations in everyday life

Feature	Definition	Possible manifestation
Intellectual humility	Recognition of limits of one's knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double-checking whether one's opinion on the situation might be incorrect • Searching for extraordinary circumstances before forming an opinion
Acknowledging uncertainty and change	Recognition that contexts change over time; open-mindedness about the direction of change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Searching for different solutions as the situation evolves • Considering alternative ways a situation may unfold
Perspective-taking of diverse viewpoints	Open-mindedness toward different viewpoints on an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making an effort to take the other persons' perspective(s) • Taking time to get different opinions on the matter before coming to a conclusion
Integration of different viewpoints	Search for a compromise between different interests at stake for the issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering whether a compromise is possible in resolving the situation • Searching for a solution that could result in most of the interests being satisfied (acknowledging that this may not always be possible)

Adopted from Grossmann and Brienza (2018)

Wisdom and Social Relationships: Toward a Robust *Gross National Happiness*

Social relationships play a central role in people's well-being (Diener, 1984) but unfortunately, societal trends in the last several decades suggest that relationship quality has been on the decline and egocentrism has been on the rise (Greenfield, 2009; Grossmann & Varnum, 2015;

Santos, Varnum, & Grossmann, 2017; Twenge, Campbell, & Gentile, 2012; Varnum & Grossmann, 2017). Many people report experiencing loneliness and social isolation, with significant negative consequences for their psychological and physical health (Cornwell & Waite, 2009; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, Baker, Harris, & Stephenson, 2015). This so-called loneliness epidemic (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018; Holt-Lunstad, 2017) is on the rise partly because now, more than ever, people in Western countries prefer to live alone. According to U.S. Census Bureau report from 2015, a quarter of the U.S. population reports living on their own, and the share of single-person households has almost doubled in the last 50 years (Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013). In addition to the statistics concerning objective loneliness, people also report experiencing loneliness and social isolation within existing but poorly functioning relationships. Maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships requires finding appropriate solutions to interpersonal conflicts, for example by being able and willing to adopt the other person's perspective and realizing that different circumstances call for different actions. In short, effective maintenance of interpersonal relationships requires wisdom.

When facing interpersonal conflicts that are saturated with emotions, people often do or say things they later regret, to the detriment of relationship quality and stability. Such day-to-day challenges as a conflict with a colleague at work or one's partner at home can have negative consequences for individuals and society at large, linked to outcomes that range from poor mental health for the individual to economic costs for communities (e.g., costs of a divorce).

To illustrate the need for wisdom in relationships, consider the following letter sent to an advice columnist, Abigail Van Buren:

My husband is very political, and around election time he becomes engrossed in news shows. He has a habit of showing his favorite political news clips to friends when they visit. I am uncomfortable with this, as I feel our friends are too polite to decline, and they allow my husband to preach politics to them out of courtesy to the host. They are like-minded, politically speaking, and the few who aren't are not going to be swayed by comedy news shows. I excuse myself from the room when he begins his

sermons. I have asked him to stop doing this when friends visit, but he refuses. How can I persuade him to have “friends time” with no politics? (adopted from Santos, Huynh, et al. 2017).

What approach could the wife adopt to wisely deal with this situation? The wife may consider the temporary nature of such behavior, comparing the present actions to those from the past and thinking about the variability of behavior in the future. She may also realize that she may need more information about her husband’s goals and attempt to consider perspectives of the friends as well as consider if it’s possible to balance friends’ and husband’s interests (see Table 3.1). The wife may also realize that there is no one single solution to the present issue. Indeed, practical wisdom in this context promotes focus on the bigger picture surrounding the issue instead of advocating for a single, “correct” solution. Notably, wisdom is not only needed to manage existing social conflicts, but also to have a foresight how to avoid potential conflicts before they arise. Here, again, metacognitive characteristics featured in Fig. 3.1 can help to improve predictions for how different strategies may impact interpersonal conflicts (Silver, 2012), and to select strategies that are more likely to minimize future conflicts.

Focus on the quality of interpersonal relationships is crucial because such relationships fundamentally contribute to the well-being of a nation, the so-called Gross National Happiness (Bates, 2009). Since the 2011 UN resolution, which encourages political leaders to find ways to promote happiness (rather than mere economic prosperity) of their constituents, various cross-national surveys such as the OECD Better Life Index or Social Progress Index underscore the increasing awareness of interpersonal well-being. At this point, it is worth once again calling attention to the difference in how wisdom as compared to intelligence relates to well-being. The rising levels of intelligence in many Western societies do not appear to correspond to societal shifts in well-being, as indicated by numerous studies reporting no relationship between well-being and scores on standard IQ tests (e.g., Sigelman, 1981; Watten, Syversen, & Myhrer, 1995; Wirthwein & Rost, 2011). In comparison, recently emerged empirical scholarship on the relationship between wise reasoning and well-being suggests that having a

wiser outlook on life can yield benefits for well-being. Higher scores on the wisdom-related characteristics reviewed in Fig. 3.1 and Table 3.1 have shown positive associations with superior emotional regulation (Grossmann, Gerlach, & Denissen, 2016), lower intensity of negative emotions (Baltes & Kunzmann, 2003; Grossmann et al., 2013), and greater interpersonal well-being in general (Grossmann et al., 2013).

Moreover, new national longitudinal data suggest that among U.S. Americans, a wise outlook on life (i.e., intellectual humility, consideration of different perspectives, and recognition of change in the world) is more likely to predict an increase in subjective well-being (i.e., life satisfaction and positive emotions) over the course of 20 years compared to effects of these features of subjective well-being on the development of the wise outlook on life over the same time period (Santos & Grossmann, 2018). Overall, it appears that when it comes to subjective well-being, philosophers who suggested that wisdom promotes a “good” life are correct (Bangen et al., 2013; Kekes, 1995; Tiberius, 2008). These findings have policy implications for fostering Gross National Happiness through wisdom, for example by educating for wise reasoning in a society, rather than solely focusing on improving economic productivity. In democracies, such wisdom-focused education can have positive downstream effects for personal well-being, whereas in autocracies it can promote greater appreciation of pluralism, thereby promoting the collective well-being in the long-term.

Wise Leadership

Many of the world’s problems in the last few decades call for effective leadership. Effective leadership requires more than making efficient decisions about regulations and policies. Instead, leaders often serve as role models used in business and the society with a lasting impact on people’s attitudes, behaviors, and values.

Looking at historical examples, wise leaders showed intellectual humility, an ability to adapt to societal challenges, willingness to compromise, and to seek greater good (e.g., Gandhi; Martin Luther King Jr.; Weststrate, Ferrari, & Ardel, 2016). Following these examples,

in the ever-increasing political, economic, and civic volatility and uncertainty, effective leadership requires wisdom to tackle societal challenges by balance interests of various stakeholders and personal interests.

What does wise leadership entail? As reviewed by Grossmann and Brienza (2018), wise leadership is oriented toward looking at the bigger picture, foregoing myopic short-term, egocentric preferences in favor of long-term prospects, and exercising intellectual humility in the decision-making process (also see the Fortune's 2017 "World's Greatest Leaders" column; Colvin, 2017). Such characteristics can be found in many successful leaders, including the former CEO of Xerox Corporation Anne Mulcahy (Grossmann & Brienza, 2018). Mulcahy took over the CEO position at Xerox at a turbulent time. The company had been fighting an uphill battle in the post-print digital age. Yet, instead of declaring bankruptcy, she took a big-picture perspective, recognizing that bankruptcy would ruin the company and any viable prospects for its future. She went around, consulted with numerous stakeholders, listened to their advice, and took personal responsibility for the company's past mistakes, thereby demonstrating intellectual humility and willingness to consider and integrate diverse perspectives. Even after the company bounced back during the time of her leadership, Mulcahy humbly deferred credit (e.g., CEO of the year, 2008) to other Xerox employees, stating that her success "represents the impressive accomplishments of Xerox people around the world" (Canada Newswire, 2007). Anne Mulcahy's orientation toward considering perspectives of other people in the face of complex challenges undoubtedly contributed to the positive outcomes for a company in trouble. Indeed, Xerox remained stable for a few years after Mulcahy's retirement in 2009.

When reflecting on wise leadership, it may also be informative to consider what wise leadership is *not*. Consider several examples of significant failures due to leaders' neglect of wisdom-related qualities, myopic vision, and excessive egocentrism. Such "failed" leaders may have a high level of intelligence, yet succumb to numerous fallacies. For instance, consider the diesel emission scandal at the Volkswagen car company: The company for year misrepresented emission values on its diesel cars. In this public actions, Martin Winterkorn, the former chairman of Volkswagen's board of directors, demonstrated the

omnipotence fallacy (i.e., a belief that one is invulnerable and can do whatever they want), and the *ethical disengagement fallacy* (i.e., a belief that ethics are essential for others but not the self; Sternberg, 2004), which may have contributed to the scandal. As *Fortune* magazine notes (Fortune Editors, 2016), Winterkorn also denied any wrongdoing on his part, despite his reputation for micromanaging, and in his actions prioritized myopic decisions over long-term benefit for the greater community. Such actions are the opposite of wisdom: they do not express intellectual humility, ignore changes in context, and fail to take different perspectives.

One should note at this point that wise leadership does not necessarily mean the consistent presence of wisdom-related characteristics. After all, even the most famous examples of wise leadership, such as King Solomon, were known both for wisdom in some domains and for foolishness in others (Grossmann & Kross, 2014). Although this asymmetry is evident in many wise leaders (e.g., Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Mother Teresa), this statement may appear paradoxical at first: Is “true wisdom” not stable? To address this question, we have to differentiate what people believe and how they perform. In many cultures, people believe highly desired human qualities are stable and invariant, reflecting some core “true self” (De Freitas, Cikara, Grossmann, & Schlegel, 2017; De Freitas, Sarkissian, et al., 2017; Strohminger, Knobe, & Newman, 2017). However, this belief is rooted in the *psychological essentialism* bias—a fundamental assumption that “all entities have deep, unobservable, inherent properties that comprise their true nature” (De Freitas, Cikara, et al., 2017, p. 634); a belief which may or may not correspond to situation-specific expression of wisdom-related characteristics. Recent work suggests that actual expression of wisdom-related characteristics varies dramatically from one situation to the next (Grossmann, Gerlach, et al., 2016). This work indicates that the variability in wise reasoning within a person across several days is at least as large if not larger than the variability between people in their average tendency to express wise reasoning. Notably, this does not mean that there is no stable underlying (trait) component to wisdom (Brienza et al., 2017). However, it does suggest that wisdom-related characteristics can be represented as probabilistic, such that even the overall wise

leader may sometimes “slip up” and show foolish behavior. Wise leaders are not without faults. However, these faults are not as frequent as among the foolish leaders, especially in domains that create harm to the community. We argue that the awareness of the variability in wisdom-related characteristics (Fleeson, Furr, Jayawickreme, Meindl, & Helzer, 2014) may help to shape a more nuanced, contextualized picture of leaders, their strengths and limitations in business, civic discourse, and politics. In the coming decades, wise leadership appears critical to ensure successful management of complex situations for companies (e.g., responsibly responding to and managing user-privacy concerns alongside the constant growth in private information and the need to increase company profitability) as well as for whole nations (e.g., balancing economic inequality and the need to help refugees).

Wisdom and Environmental Sustainability

Some of the most urgent challenges the world currently faces concern environmental sustainability and preservation. As with other real-world problems, environmental sustainability problems are complicated, and often do not have a single “correct” solution. In this context, one major challenge concerns the balance of long-term ecological considerations (involving notions of resource depletion and scarcity) with considerations of maintaining the well-being of most people (Gibson, 2005). Such concerns have also been outlined by the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, warning that “delaying global mitigation actions may reduce options for climate-resilient pathways and adaptation in the future” (The Core Writing Team, 2015, p. 31).

Sustainability researchers advocate for a worldview linking means and ends, acknowledgment of the world’s complex dynamics, and recognition of various social and economic concerns and dependencies (Gibson, 2005). At the same time, because real-world sustainability dilemmas often take the form of social dilemmas, they are sometimes oversimplified as situations in which individual self-interest conflicts with the interest of the group (Dawes & Messick, 2000). This view may lead to the notion that there is single “good” solution to such dilemmas,

namely promoting collective interests (i.e., cooperation). However, unlike the simplified social dilemma, most real-world environmental sustainability problems are complex and context-dependent, involving the welfare of different groups and conflicting collective interests. The examples in the following paragraph showcase how search for quick fixes may backfire. Instead of quick fixes, sustainability problems call for higher utilization of wise reasoning. Such reasoning directly targets the topics of complex dynamics, uncertainties, and multiple perspectives in a proactive manner (Grossmann, 2017b), and can help identify the balance between diverse intrapersonal, interpersonal, and extrapersonal interests (Brienza et al., 2017; Sternberg, 2014).

To capture the idea of complex dynamics and perspectives in sustainability challenges, consider a large polluting, yet profitable, factory located not far from an upper-middle class neighborhood in a U.S. town. As the factory is clearly polluting, one may quickly conclude that to promote collective interest, the factory should be shut down immediately. However, this may be a quick fix that would increase inequality in the community, because the first to suffer from it would be the lower-earning factory workers and their dependents who will lose their income and (possibly) health insurance and be in danger of prolonged unemployment and poverty. Another long-term consequence could be that instead of regulating and reducing the pollution from this factory, the polluting factory will be relocated to a poorer country, where the chances of regulation will be lower and the danger of pollution will be even higher.

As an example of weighting short- vs. long-term benefits, consider the decision by some political groups in the early twenty-first century to eliminate dependence on nuclear energy in favor of renewable energies. Though the goal was admirable and seemingly progressive from an environmental standpoint, one had also to consider the costs of producing renewable energy and resources needed for its maintenance. When renewable sources are not sufficient (as is currently the case in many Western societies), *immediate* rejection of nuclear energy implies dependence on coal and gas, leading to greater dangers for the environment!

To illustrate the complexity of balancing environmental concerns and social and economic welfare, consider the push to eliminate greenhouse emissions by reducing the use of conventional gasoline and diesel-powered cars in favor of electric vehicles. Again, the goal is highly admirable, but also raises the question: How much energy will be necessary to produce the required batteries for electric cars and how will one dispose of such (environmentally unfriendly) batteries when mass-produced? As the environmentally clean electric vehicles become more popular and sought-after, the demand for electric batteries increases, and with it also increases the need for lithium and cobalt—the key ingredients for electric batteries. Poor workers, many of them children, mine both metals (Amnesty International, 2016). For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the largest exporter of cobalt in the world today, children work in mines to procure cobalt that is then sold to battery component manufacturers in China and South Korea (Amnesty International, 2016). The current means for creating sustainable transportation is expected to increase the demand for child labor in mines in such parts of the world like the Democratic Republic of Congo. It appears that a seemingly beneficial and common good promoting goal of reducing reliance on crude oil can lead to a dependence on other raw materials and exploitation of the poor, especially children, in other parts of the world. This example illustrates how environmental sustainability problems pose complex situations that would benefit from wisdom, instead of “quick fixes” and trendy solutions.

Finally, consider the frequently occurred dilemma about the discovery of crude oil resources in developing countries. If the citizens of the given country vote in favor of using this resource to support their families and reduce rampant poverty, it becomes challenging for international environmental protection groups to communicate the value of preserving such resources, relying instead on renewable energies nobody in this developing country except for the wealthy few can afford. This example showcases the complexity of environmental considerations in a dynamic world.

How does one navigate the trade-offs between ethical considerations of sustainability and welfare? What would be the key features of a wise

strategy to approach these problems? We argue that effective navigation of such trade-offs may benefit from wise reasoning by allowing for consideration of the multiple perspectives and interests and weighting of the long and short-term benefits of different strategies. First, a wise strategy would carefully consider multiple interests at stake and consider the general benefit of each approach. In this process, one will need to show some humility, and talk to various stakeholders—interest groups, lay people from different political orientations, and most importantly, unbiased experts. A wise reasoning approach may advocate toward a solution that would focus less on immediate actions, and more on consideration of the most appropriate solution for the specific characteristics of this complicated situation. Hereby, a wise strategy would involve consideration of long-term and short consequences of different approaches at hand. At the end, a wise solution will strive for a balance, with an orientation toward the common good for humanity as a whole (Sternberg, 1998). For instance, to use one of our previous examples, instead of pushing for electric cars no matter the costs, a wise strategy would also aim to ensure restructuring and implementing restrictions on cobalt mining to prevent child labor and exploitation of the poor.

Civic Discourse in Politics and on Social Media

Across the globe, the second decade of the twenty-first century has seen a dramatic spike of political polarization and lack of civility in the public discourse across a range of societal topics (Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic, 2015; Oxenham, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2017). Political and ideological polarization is a threat for bipartisan solutions to such critical issues as inclusivity, health care, human rights, immigration, sustainability, or improvements to infrastructure for less affluent citizens. Some of the incivility can be attributed to the rise of the participation in online social media, which cater to the basic preferences and desires of the many users, including homophily, greater attention to extreme and moralistic signals, and avoidance of opinions which contradict one's position. Social media sites are based on a simple market-conscious idea of trying to keep users on their sites for as long as possible, as most

of the social media platforms make money by generating information about their users to provide targeted advertising. The more clicks from the users, the higher the gain for the company. Thus, it is in the interest of social media platforms to figure out what people may want and to show them this desirable information, avoiding other information that may be more representative but undesirable. The problem is that such a reward structure appeals to the most basic, primitive human characteristics, including a bias toward negative information. Such information does not have to be accurate and indeed has led to many con artists, conspiracy theorists, and fake news writers spreading misinformation. Because people are drawn to negative information (e.g., Rozin & Royzman, 2001), negative, inflammatory messages tend to spread faster and be communicated to a greater number of people compared to more mundane neutral messages (even if such negative information is made-up and is not reflecting any facts). Fake news appears to be transmitted faster and reach more people than true news (Vosoughi, Roy, & Aral, 2018). Such misinformation can be particularly effective when capitalizing on another basic characteristic called tribalism, one's tendency to show loyalty to the group one belongs to. This way, misinformation during the 2016 election campaign in the U.S. contributed to a dramatic polarization between Democrats and Republicans (Bessi & Ferrara, 2016; Enli, 2017; Metaxas & Mustafaraj, 2012). For instance, during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, adolescents in Macedonia made big money by publishing inflammatory, highly emotional (and fake) stories about the Democratic presidential candidate. Such stories are often more likely to go viral than more moderate, less inflammatory content (Brady, Wills, Jost, Tucker, & Van Bavel, 2017), further promoting misinformation. As recently identified in a large-scale analysis of social media posts on Twitter, presence of moral-emotional language in messages related to politics also contributes to diffusion within (and less so between) ideological group boundaries, creating echo chambers on social media (e.g., Bakshy et al., 2015; Brady et al., 2017). Anecdotally, similar processes can also be observed in other parts of the world, including the rise of radical right parties across Western Europe (Mudde, 2014), as well as political polarization in Eastern Europe (Smyth & Oates, 2015).

Understanding why negative, emotional messages are communicated faster is critical for understanding how to attenuate the consequences of such social media trends. As discussed by Brady and colleagues (2017), negative, moralistic language on social media can be viewed as a form of social signaling, communicating who one is and what group one belongs to. As a form of social signaling, moralistic messages often take an absolute (rather than relativist) tone, inviting further within-group affiliation, but also between-group antagonism and dissent. For instance, instead of stating that one supports a certain policy, one would state that the given policy is the best, that only this policy is valid, and that everybody who disagrees with that position is not thinking clearly. The more extreme positions appear clearer in communication of the message online, without the social costs associated with such others find an extreme position less appealing. However, online, such checks are not present, rewarding most extreme messages and the greatest degree of polarization. Indeed, according to the Pew Research Center, U.S. politicians with most extreme ideological positions also happen to have the largest number of followers on Twitter compared with more moderate politicians. Politicians with extreme ideologies tend to benefit more, in terms of donations, from their adoption of social media (Hong, 2013).

Tribal social signaling is not the only factor contributing to the “us versus them” divide on social media. Another tendency concerns the set-up of the social media platforms. Because social media platforms want you to stay online as long as possible, it is in their interest to show you only content that would motivate you to stay online. Thus, people are less likely to see content that contradicts their opinions; such content would be unpleasant and likely lead to less time online on the particular social media platform. As a result, social media platforms, along with people themselves (by “following” certain contents and avoiding undesirable content), create echo chambers or filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011) where each believes that his or her opinion is the right one, other opinions are ill-founded, and generally, people in the other political camp are unreasonable. Combining basic human biases (e.g., confirmation bias, homophily) with algorithms catering to one’s preferences aiming to keep one on a website results in a cascade of polarization-promoting choices: One starts by selecting an attention-grabbing post from

a friend with a shared ideological position, is subsequently presented similar content from like-minded people, often with content of similarly extreme nature. Over time, such selective exposure contributes to greater polarization.

Right now, the dominant strategy to combat the spread of misinformation and artificial polarization through social media platforms is to punish bad actors (e.g., block or delete accounts of identified con artists, “Russian bots,” or other disseminators of inflammatory media and misinformation). However, such an approach is not likely to be very useful if the fundamental principles driving these effects concern the basic, primitive, architecture of human nature. Here, we suggest that wise reasoning could be useful for combating these basic tendencies. In our view, wise reasoning can promote bipartisanship and attenuate within-group polarization on ideologically contentious issues, resulting in collective benefits across political aisles.

One way in which wise reasoning can combat group polarization is by creating a more inclusive, non-zero-sum perspective on the issue at hand. Classic work on intergroup conflict suggests that polarization emerges when viewing resources as limited (for a review, see Brewer, 1999), such that resources gained by one party are viewed as losses by another party (i.e., as a zero-sum; von Neumann & Morgenstern, 1947). Indeed, recent work has highlighted the role of wise reasoning in sustaining cooperation in a Public Goods Game, promoting greater sharing of resources in this game (Grossmann, Brienza, & Bobocel, 2017), as well as greater willingness to use effective problem-strategies when facing a conflict at work (Brienza et al., 2017).

Wise reasoning can also facilitate greater focus beyond primary emotional reactions to biased, inflammatory messages, thereby potentially reducing their appeal. Specifically, wise reasoning has been linked to greater balance in representation of emotionally charged negative experiences. Instead of solely focusing on the primary negative reactions (e.g., hate or anger), wise reasoners were more likely to consider other emotions elicited by a social conflict in conjunction to the primary emotional reactions (e.g., sadness, embarrassment) and they did so in a balanced fashion (Grossmann, Gerlach, et al., 2016; Grossmann et al., 2019). Wise reasoning can also enhance intellectual humility,

subsequently moderating extreme political attitudes. Recent work shows that increasing intellectual humility by drawing people's attention to their insufficient knowledge about a policy (e.g., asking people to explain what they know about a policy of instituting a "cap and trade" system for carbon emissions rather than explain why they hold a certain position on this policy) reduced the extremity of their attitudes toward this policy (Fernbach, Rogers, Fox, & Sloman, 2013).

Finally, wise reasoning can promote greater open-mindedness beyond one's initial viewpoints, thereby avoiding self-created echo chambers (e.g., Bakshy et al., 2015). In a similar way, wise reasoning can help reduce harmful social signaling (e.g., moralistic messages and third-party punishment) and promote helpful social signaling. For example, people's spontaneous reactions of outrage and moral righteousness are associated with a desire to punish transgressors by shaming them (Jordan, Hoffman, Bloom, & Rand, 2016). Without wise reasoning, people's reflexive emotional reactions and self-immersion into the situation can result in misunderstanding the situation. Such was the case for Justine Sacco. When boarding a flight to South Africa, Sacco posted an insensitive joke on Twitter ("Going to Africa. Hope I don't get AIDS. Just kidding. I'm white!"). By the time she landed, her tweet had gone viral and she was publicly shamed. As a result, Sacco was ostracized and lost her job. Wiser reasoning, both when posting messages on social media and responding to such statements, could have saved Sacco, and others like her, from a lot of grief. Or in the words of journalist Jon Ronson (2015): "after thinking about her tweet for a few seconds more, I began to suspect that it wasn't racist but a reflexive critique of white privilege." Ronson's realization of the limits of his existing knowledge and examination of the situation from a different perspective, two aspects of wiser reasoning, led to a different conclusion about Sacco's motives.

Indeed, there is some evidence demonstrating how wise reasoning may moderate extreme viewpoints and lead to more careful, less harmful use of social media. Wisdom appears to be uniquely associated with cooperation and socially oriented virtues (Brienza et al., 2017; Grossmann, Gerlach, et al., 2016; Huynh, Oakes, Shay, & McGregor, 2017; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003; Wink & Staudinger, 2016), even in the context of anonymous economic transactions (Grossmann et al., 2017). Greater wisdom

can also reduce political bias (Leary et al., 2017), and intergroup attitude polarization during the time of highly emotional political conflicts (Brienza, Kung, & Chao, 2018), and can motivate people to take divergent political viewpoints into account (Kross & Grossmann, 2012). For example, in a study on wise reasoning and intergroup bias (Brienza et al., 2018), conducted in the context of the 2015 protests in Baltimore, wise reasoning about the events was linked to more favorable attitudes toward police among people who identified strongly with the protesters, and more favorable attitudes toward protesters among people who identified strongly with the police. In other words, wise reasoning was linked to less polarized and more balanced intergroup attitudes. Additionally, wise reasoning was associated with greater acceptance and willingness to support policies benefiting the (minority) outgroup.

Together, this preliminary work starts to paint a consistent picture of wisdom-related characteristics as crucial for combating adverse consequences of tribalism and social signaling on social media, providing a possible antidote to the ever-increasing polarization between groups adhering to different ideological beliefs. In our view, fostering wise reasoning (as compared to self-serving rationality; Grossmann, Eibach, Koyama, & Sahi, 2019) can be an important step for overcoming incivility and polarization on social media, promoting solutions that are oriented toward society at large. Of course, wise reasoning alone, on the level of a single person, cannot be sufficient. Companies, including social media stakeholders, need wise reasoning to balance company-focused gains with ethical considerations of providing people with unbiased information and protect their rights for privacy and personal freedom. For instance, a wise strategy for dealing with filter bubbles may involve ethical checks for algorithms curating personalized user experience, prioritizing exposure to news across ideological aisles.

Evidence-Based Fostering Wisdom

How can we enhance wisdom in the face of contemporary world problems? Given the intra-person variability of wise reasoning across situations discussed above, researchers have begun looking for ways

to enhance people's use of wise reasoning. One effective strategy has involved reducing one's focus on the self as a way to facilitate wise reasoning (for a review, see Santos, Huynh et al., 2017). One of the key tools that researchers utilized to this end concerns the technique of ego-decentering (i.e., self-distancing)—that is, deliberating on an issue/situation from the perspective of a distanced observer (Kross & Ayduk, 2011). This technique has been useful for lowering emotional reactivity when working through negative experiences and has also been associated with an increase in the use of constructive problem solving (Grossmann & Kross, 2010).

Moreover, Kross and Grossmann (2012) demonstrated that instructions to adopt an ego-decentered (vs. egocentric) perspective facilitated greater use of wise reasoning when participants reflected on their future career during the time of 2008 U.S. economic recession, interpersonal and marital transgressions, as well as deliberations on contentious political elections (Grossmann & Kross, 2014; Grossmann et al., 2019; Huynh et al., 2017; Huynh, Yang, & Grossmann, 2016; Kross & Grossmann, 2012). Overall, ego-decentering instructions enhance participants' ability to reason wisely across fictitious and real interpersonal events, and across interpersonal and societal conflicts (Grossmann, 2017a).

The ego-decentering technique for promoting wise reasoning appears promising for future intervention-based research to concrete dealing with contemporary world problems. Notably, the ease with which wise reasoning is facilitated and inhibited (Grossmann & Kross, 2014) raises a provocative question about the nature of wisdom-related characteristics: Is wise reasoning a stable competence similar to intelligence, or is it better conceptualized as a set of strategies that may be available—but that are not necessarily consistently utilized—across different situations people encounter in their lives? This question is especially relevant to wise leadership. Specifically, do our leaders have to be “wise people” from the get-go, or can wise reasoning be fostered in leaders during decision-making processes to facilitate adoption of better policies, that are tailored to the problems at hand, and focused on longer-term benefits for the collectives (rather than governed mainly by the leader's self-interests)?

Fostering wisdom is also important with the growing urgency of sustainability and environmental problems that require long-term

solutions. Simply switching from one type of energy or transportation to another may not be a long lasting solution, especially when fixing one problem (e.g., reducing carbon emissions from cars by switching to electric cars) can create other societal and environmental problems (e.g., increase in child labor and pollution due to electric batteries). Here too, we suggest that ego-decentering, intellectual humility, and integration of multiple perspectives should prove essential to creating more balanced, if not immediate, solutions.

There is some initial evidence showing such ego-decentering strategies that boost wise reasoning also facilitate behaviors in favor of longer-term environmental sustainability instead of the short-term goals. Hou, Sarigöllü, Jo, and Liang (2018) surveyed 409 U.S. Americans, asking them to report their pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. Critically, they manipulated the self-perspective, asking participants to either adopt a first-person perspective or the third-person perspective of one's social group. Specifically, questions were framed as either "It is important for me to do ..." and "Engaging in ... costs me or saves me money" (egocentric condition) or "It is important for people to do ..." and "Engaging in ... costs people or saves people money" (ego-decentered condition). This simple experimental manipulation both shifted self-reported degree of immersion into the situation in the predicted direction, and influenced endorsement of pro-environmental behaviors. Specifically, when asked to report their attitudes from an ego-decentered perspective, participants were more likely to endorse using reusable shopping bags, recycle, and commute by bike, walk, or use public transit as compared to the self-immersed perspective. Moreover, ego-decentered participants perceived pro-environmental behaviors as less costly and reported greater satisfaction with these behaviors compared to egocentric participants.

Conclusion

We have highlighted the role of wise reasoning, which includes intellectual humility, acknowledging uncertainty and change, perspective-taking of diverse viewpoints, and integration of different viewpoints,

for tackling several contemporary world challenges. In our examples, we have focused on the loneliness epidemic and the changes in the dynamic of social relationships, sustainability, and environmental challenges, as well as incivility on social media platforms and in the political discourse. These challenges represent complex trade-offs, often pitting interests of an individual and the group, as well as short- and long-term outcomes. Decisions about such trade-offs cannot be efficiently solved via simple utility-maximizing algorithms, calling for a more holistic approach that benefits from wise reasoning. Drawing on emerging experimental research, we have highlighted strategies that can boost decision-makers' propensity for wise reasoning. Importantly, these experiments demonstrate that the capacity for wise reasoning is not fixed. In addition to a possible latent ability to reason wisely, wisdom-related characteristics appear to follow a probabilistic distribution and are amenable to ecological (Brienza & Grossmann, 2017) and cultural forces (Grossmann et al., 2012). The latter insight suggests that wisdom is not bestowed to a selected few individuals but rather can be obtained through structural and individual-level changes—a hopeful message for generations interested in utilizing wisdom's potential to combat numerous societal challenges of the twenty-first century.

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4

Wisdom vs. Populism and Polarization: Learning to Regulate Our Evolved Intuitions

Judith Glück

What's gone wrong with our world? I've lived in Europe all my life, and until three years ago I was never seriously worried about my future or that of my children. We were living in a rather safe, peaceful, and liberal society, the atrocities of the Third Reich serving as a distant memory that taught us important lessons about what we never wanted to happen again. Climate change has long been a serious threat, but it seemed like humanity might be able to act in global concert to avert its most dangerous consequences. Inequality was rising in European countries, but functioning social systems guaranteed for everyone to at least have a place to live and access to food and healthcare. Then, in 2015, the so-called "refugee crisis" happened, and seemingly all of a sudden, our world changed. At first, pictures of children drowned in the Mediterranean Sea and, in Austria, the horrible death of 70 refugees in the cargo bay of a refrigerator truck caused an incredible wave of support and "Refugees Welcome" rallies in big cities and small villages all

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_4

over Europe. In that spirit, German chancellor Angela Merkel gave her “We can do it” speech and borders were opened to let the hungry, tired, and poor in.

Then the tide turned. More and more people got worried as asylum seekers didn’t stop coming, and not just from the war zones in Syria, but from many parts of Africa and other deprived regions of the world. Bad things happened: a young woman was raped by four asylum seekers in a Vienna subway station, women were sexually assaulted by groups of drunk men at New Year’s Eve celebrations in Cologne and other German cities (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Year%27s_Eve_sexual_assaults_in_Germany), and so on. Many of those who came struggled with the very different world they had entered, and, of course, a small number of radical Islamists and criminals had come with the others. In my country, and in all European countries, the backlash was enormous. People in Austria elected a thirty-year-old right-wing politician as chancellor whose political program did not include a single meaningful idea except that no more refugees should be allowed into the country. Asylum seekers, and often immigrants in general, are blamed for every problem and treated like criminals—in fact, in some Austrian provinces they are essentially turned into criminals by giving them too little money to legally support themselves. Racist, intolerant, and stereotypical rhetoric has become mainstream political lingo. As I am writing this, right-wing rallies bordering on neo-Nazism are taking place in Chemnitz, Germany (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2018_Chemnitz_protests). Of course, what is going on in the United States isn’t much better. Not only does Donald Trump’s government not care about the welfare of other parts of the world, they do not even care about the welfare of most of their own population. In many countries in the “Western world,” populism seems to have replaced democratic dialogue and ideologies on the left and right are getting ever more polarized (see also Ambrose, 2019).

What’s happening—and can we, as wisdom researchers, do anything to reverse these scary developments? I believe that wisdom psychology may indeed offer perspectives through which some recent changes can be understood and perhaps counteracted. In short, research on moral

judgment and on decision-making shows that people often make judgments automatically, based on intuitions that evolved to optimize survival under very different living conditions. Humans have a strong propensity, for example, to favor in-group members over out-group members—someone who looks or sounds different may be automatically considered as suspicious. Humans tend to prefer information that confirms what they are already believing. Humans like simple, elegant-sounding explanations and solutions, even if they are not adequate to the complexity of a given problem. All of these tendencies are intensified if people feel threatened.

Unfortunately, modern media, particularly the so-called social media, may exacerbate the negative effects of these evolution-based tendencies. As someone recently wrote in the online discussion board of an Austrian newspaper, “There have always been idiots. They just didn’t know about one another.” Nowadays, people can meet like-minded others online who share and, thus, reinforce even the craziest beliefs (see, e.g., Oliver & Wood, 2018). These developments cause increasing polarization of worldviews—people on different sides of an ideological divide don’t seem to be talking to each other anymore. They just click on “thumbs down” and move on to chat with their more like-minded friends.

All of this—relying on intuitive judgments, judging others based on group membership, avoiding dissenting opinions, preferring simple explanations—is deeply unwise. The world, while enjoying a record high in the widespread availability of information, seems to be moving toward a record low in wisdom. I believe that wisdom research, and psychology in general, can contribute to halting this scary development. I am convinced that most people actually *like* wisdom—while they certainly feel attracted to demagogues and populists (Sternberg, 2019a), they also value politicians who stand for reason, balance, and care. My own province, Carinthia, which was long notorious for its right-wing governor Jörg Haider, has recently reelected Peter Kaiser as governor—a philosopher by training and a serious, deeply knowledgeable, and caring politician. It may sound naïve, but I think we can find ways to motivate people to value wisdom over simplicity more often.

Intuitions and Heuristics: Thinking Fast, Not Slow

How do you feel about letting refugees from, say, Afghanistan into your country—mostly young men who grew up in a very different and highly religious, hierarchical, male-dominated culture under extreme conditions of violence and poverty? If you are a typical liberal-leaning academic, you will probably feel that they should be let into the country and resources should be invested in supporting their integration. If you voted for Donald Trump or our Austrian chancellor Sebastian Kurz, you probably feel that they are both dangerous to women and scheming to turn your country into a Muslim state, and therefore should not be let in. While I have an opinion on which of these feelings is “better,” the point here is that both are just feelings. Unless you have in-depth knowledge about the subject, you will not have a strong rational foundation for these feelings. If someone challenges your opinion and asks you to explain *why* they should or should not be let into the country, you will certainly come up with some arguments (or anecdotes) that you’ve read online or offline and that support your feeling. But the feeling was probably there before the rational arguments.

This is the main point of Jonathan Haidt’s social intuitionist model of moral judgment: people’s moral judgments are based on gut feelings, or intuitions, much more than on the kind of sensible, argument-weighting reasoning that psychologists and philosophers long thought they were. In fact, as Haidt writes, “when faced with a social demand for a verbal justification, one becomes a lawyer trying to build a case more than a judge searching for the truth” (Haidt, 2001, p. 814). Where do people’s moral intuitions come from? Haidt argues that moral intuitions are the result of a combination of evolutionary adaptations and influences of socialization. He has proposed six so-called “moral foundations,” such as fairness, loyalty, or avoiding harm to others, that are evolution-based and therefore part of the moral systems of humans everywhere in the world. For example, people have an innate tendency to prefer people who belong to their own group over people who do not. Chimpanzees protect their in-group

members but fight out-group members—even if they know them well because they all were part of one group that split up a few years earlier (De Waal, 2009). The chimpanzee in humans makes them prefer students of the same university, people of the same skin color, or people who vote for the same party as they do. It depends on people's upbringing and experiences, however, to what extent they prioritize this preference over other moral aspects. To those who are against allowing more refugees into Austria, protecting their fellow Austrians from danger is a very important moral value. Those in favor of giving the refugees a chance feel that helping others in need and treating everybody as equal are more important moral values than protecting one's own group. The first group tends to overestimate and the second group tends to underestimate the actual problems and risks that arise from mass immigration. Importantly, neither group is acting egotistically, as both are following ethical principles—in fact, both probably feel that they are “more moral” than the other group, which explains why discussions about moral values often feel so fruitless. Graham, Haidt, and Nosek (2009) showed, for example, that liberals and conservatives prioritize the moral foundations in quite different ways. Liberals put most emphasis on fairness and care for the less fortunate, whereas conservatives value in-group loyalty, respect for authority, and purity/sanctity almost equally highly as fairness and care.

Haidt's intuitionist account of moral judgment built upon a large cognitive-psychological literature on the existence of two different systems in decision-making—a fast, intuitive one and a slow, deliberate one (Kahneman, 2011). When people make decisions in real life, they usually do not weigh all the relevant factors in a complex mathematical model in their minds. Rather, unless they are highly motivated to optimize their decisions, they tend to use mental shortcuts—so-called heuristics and biases. For example, when they are trying to decide for which politician they should vote, people would ideally look carefully at each candidate's positions on a large number of issues, decide to what extent they agree with each position and how important each respective issue is to them, and then somehow integrate these data into a mathematical formula that tells them which candidate represents their worldviews best. In reality, most people tend to use a couple of heuristics, such as

which party the candidate belongs to, whether they like him or her personally, or whether he or she has an attractive or competent-looking face (e.g., Ballew & Todorov, 2007; Verhulst, Lodge, & Lavine, 2010). These mental shortcuts, which focus on one or a few aspects of a complex problem and ignore others, lead to typical errors. The term “biases” refers to typical ways in which people deviate from rational thinking. For example, confirmation bias refers to people’s preference for information that confirms the beliefs that they already hold (Nickerson, 1998)—whether you are for or against allowing more refugees into your country, you are far more likely to read a newspaper article that supports your opinion than one that contradicts them. The “availability heuristic” (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974) means that people tend to base their judgments on information that they can easily access. Someone who has just read a newspaper article about a crime committed by an asylum seeker is likely to overestimate the dangerousness of refugees in general. The affect heuristic (Zajonc, 1980) shows that affect influences judgments—people who have friends from Syria are likely to judge asylum seekers more favorably.

In their classical book, *Judgment under Uncertainty*, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (1974) demonstrated that heuristics and biases underlie many of people’s judgments. Tversky and Kahneman considered the use of heuristics as not very good thinking: their main point was that heuristics often lead to suboptimal decisions. Other authors, however, most prominently Gerd Gigerenzer, have argued that simple heuristics can actually be very smart (Gigerenzer, Todd, & The ABC Research Group, 1999). Gigerenzer and colleagues have demonstrated that under relatively realistic conditions, simple heuristics such as “Take the best”—using only one out of a large set of indicators that are relevant for an optimal decision—can produce surprisingly accurate results. Similar to Haidt, they argued that heuristics evolved in the course of human phylogenesis to optimize the fitness of humans for the environments they lived in and that they can, therefore, be very useful. Especially under pressure of some kind, when resources are scarce, or when a problem is highly complex, using heuristics may lead to good-enough solutions.

Notably, no one says that we are hopeless victims of our intuitions. Even researchers who study heuristics or intuitive judgment generally

acknowledge that humans are also capable of thinking more rationally—intentionally ignoring their gut feelings and trying to gather a lot of facts and weigh them by some logical and transparent method. Dual-process theories (e.g., Greene, 2014; Kahneman, 2011) argue that people are capable of reflecting on their decisions and moral judgments in a relatively objective, unbiased way, but this type of reflection takes time and mental effort, while intuitive judgments are fast and automatic. It certainly makes sense that people do not always engage in conscious reflection, given our limited mental and temporal resources—after all, a “good-enough decision” should be sufficient for most of everyday situations. But most people would expect judges, politicians, or medical doctors to think carefully and deeply when they are faced with a difficult decision. In other words, heuristics may be very useful for solving less important problems, but they should not steer nations or determine global policies, especially given that they evolved for a very different type of society. As Joshua Greene (2014) argues, the human brain developed to optimize life in tribal groups where, among other things, it was very important to distinguish between “Us” (one’s in-group) and “Them” (the others out there). This is the reason why it is so much easier for people to empathize with and care about people whom they consider as part of their group, an evolved bias that may explain many of the perils that the world is in today. If any aliens from a higher developed culture on a far-away planet are observing us, they might find it quite strange that rather than cooperating globally—fighting the warming of our planet and sharing the resources abundant in some of its parts—we invest great effort into enforcing arbitrary-looking lines on the globe and allowing only selected people to cross them. Perhaps in order to feel as part of an in-group, people need an out-group as well.

To summarize, heuristics and biases may offer a good lens for understanding the increasing polarization currently happening in the rich democracies of this planet. Particularly relevant heuristics and biases include in-group bias, people’s preference for others like themselves, and confirmation bias, people’s preference to seek out and process information that confirms their beliefs, as well as its cousin, simplicity bias, which leads people to prefer simple explanations or solutions even

for complex phenomena. Many people like to listen to politicians, for example, who tell them that there is a very simple solution to a complex societal problem. Build a wall to Mexico and put a trading ban on China, and all economic problems of the United States will miraculously cease to exist! Wise people know that there are no simple solutions to complex issues and that seemingly simple solutions necessarily ignore the interests and needs of at least one party involved (usually the least powerful parties).

In sum, many of our judgments, especially if we make them under some kind of pressure (and most of us are under a lot of pressure a lot of the time), are not made by utilizing most of the knowledge available in the best possible way. They are made fast and intuitively, involving heuristics and biases. While this may be a very good method to select a car or an apartment for oneself, it may not be the best way to decide on a policy for a country, create new laws, or treat patients. Such decisions may require wisdom.

What's Wisdom Got to Do with It?

Although psychological wisdom research has been mostly silent on decision-making, there are a lot of reasons to believe that wisdom involves making good decisions: wisdom has been defined as expertise in the fundamental matters of the human existence (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000) and as knowing how to solve problems by balancing conflicting interests so as to optimize a common good (Sternberg, 1998, 2019a). Wise reasoning is assumed to be ego-decentered and to involve awareness of the limitations of one's knowledge, taking different perspectives, and a search for compromise and conflict resolution (Grossmann, 2017; see also Grossmann & Dorfman, 2019). Its opposite, foolishness, has been characterized by a number of fallacies including thinking of oneself as omniscient, omnipotent, and invulnerable (Sternberg, 2005, 2013; Sternberg & Glück, 2019)—that is, as being influenced by biases that are not particularly helpful for good decisions. Thus, one could be tempted to argue that wise thinking is equal to non-intuitive, unbiased, rational thinking. A wise person ignores his or her intuitions—he or she

collects all the necessary information and thinks deeply about how to best integrate it to obtain an optimal solution.

I have come to believe that this idea of wise thinking is too simple. To give an example, I once gave a presentation to the members of our department about a study we were planning. We were going to measure wisdom using the Berlin wisdom paradigm (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000), in which people are asked to think aloud about difficult life problems. Their response transcripts are rated for wisdom using criteria such as whether they acknowledge uncertainty, consider the effect of context on people's experiences and behavior, and take differences between values into account. After my presentation, one colleague, a psychotherapist, questioned the idea of measuring wisdom by analyzing people's verbal accounts of their conscious thinking about a problem. He was recalling occasions where he may have done something wise—the moments where he said something to a client that actually had an impact, that opened up a new approach or perspective to the client. He said that he had not brought these moments about by consciously and rationally weighing different options, but by following a momentary intuition. While he definitely thought that those were the moments where he had shown therapeutic wisdom, he could not, or only with difficulty, explain why exactly he had said that particular thing at that particular moment. Wisdom, he argued, may manifest itself in our intuitions as much as, or perhaps even more than, in our conscious problem-solving.

So there may be something like “wise intuitions.” They are probably not innate and evolution-based, although they certainly draw upon innate capacities such as empathy (De Waal, 2009). I believe that my colleague acquired his therapeutic intuitions in the course of a long and intense professional life. As he often consciously reflected about both his mistakes and his successes, the insights he gained may have actually changed his intuitions: he developed an ever-refining skill at recognizing subtle meaning in what his clients said and did. As Baltes and colleagues argued, an important component of wisdom is expert knowledge, and one characteristic of expert ways of thinking and acting is that steps that beginners have to perform consciously have been automatized with long-term practice (e.g., Bilalić, McLeod, & Gobet, 2009).

This also explains why wisdom-related knowledge is largely unaffected by aging, while basic mental capacities such as processing speed or working memory decline (Glück, 2019, in press).

So wisdom involves good intuitions, but that's not the whole story. The idea that wise reasoning is deliberate, slow, and rational is certainly not wrong. While wise people may often do the right thing intuitively, they also spend a lot of time thinking about the things they do. We have found that wisdom involves extraordinary amounts of self-reflection (Weststrate & Glück, 2017). Wise people reflect on their mistakes in depth in order to learn from them, and they reflect on what they did well in order to do it even better the next time. Many people think about difficult experiences with the goal of finding a kind of closure or redemption that reestablishes their self-esteem and wellbeing, but wise individuals think more deeply and question themselves more intensely because their goal is learning and growth. In this sense, wise individuals do not ignore their intuitions; in fact, they may be more aware of them than other people because they consider affect as an important source of information (Kunzmann & Glück, 2019). Wise people try to understand why a conversation with a colleague made them uncomfortable or why they could not resist being mean to a socially incompetent student. Being aware of and attentive to their own and others' emotions and intuitions helps them to gain self-knowledge, empathize with others, and regulate emotions without suppressing them (Glück & Bluck, 2013).

Importantly, however, while wise individuals are aware of their intuitions, they do not necessarily follow them. As my 16-year-old son recently told me concerning a lesson that someone in our family needs to learn, "Not everything that feels right is right." A wise person may notice anger rising when the young woman at the cash register in the supermarket is unfriendly to her. But she will not act upon that feeling by giving the cashier an even harder time—she will probably understand that the woman's behavior has nothing to do with her but with the fact that it's her first day with a new computer system and people have been complaining about her slowness all day long. She may even find a way to say something nice that reduces the tension. Wise people are able to factor their own emotions and those of other people into their thinking, just as they factor in actual facts and possible strategies.

As wise people have unusually high levels of knowledge about life, they have a rich “database” that enables them to consider many aspects of a complex situation.

As mentioned earlier, one important characteristic of wise thinking is that it is self-decentered (Grossmann, 2017). Wise people think deeply about an issue because they want to understand the issue, not because they want to prove that they are right or make themselves feel better. Wise thinking is also dialectical—it acknowledges that truth is rarely in the extremes. Wise people know that in most conflicts, neither side is completely wrong or completely right. They know that the majority of asylum seekers are decent people who are just trying to support themselves and their families and give their children a chance for a better life, but they also know that there is a small minority of potential Islamist terrorists and criminals. They can deal with the parallel existence of both of these truths and figure out solutions that are best for both the immigrants and the societies they migrate into (Grossmann, 2017; Grossmann et al., 2010). On a more general level, wise people know that people are all the same and also very different—that we all have the same basic psychological makeup, which is based on evolved, biological characteristics, but that our cultural background, upbringing, and personal experiences can make us experience things quite differently. Thus, wise people empathize with others without overidentifying with them.

Wise thinking is also ethical (Sternberg, 2005, 2013; Sternberg & Glück, 2019). Wise individuals may have the same intuitive in-group biases that we all have—after all, we do care more about people we personally know than for people far away in a part of the world we cannot even imagine. We certainly care more for our family members than for other people. We even tend to care more for our fellow psychology students or our fellow university professors. But wise people know that it would not be right to favor some people simply because they belong to the same group as we do, and they act accordingly. Thus, they do not draw their moral judgments from intuitions—they consider others’ situational context, perspective, and needs and take long-term as well as short-term outcomes into account (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Grossmann, 2017; Sternberg, 1998). Wisdom is closely related to mature moral functioning (Narvaez, 2010)—a

capacity for acting ethically in difficult situations that includes self-regulation and a motivation to learn and grow, the willingness to deliberate in depth, domain-specific ethical expertise, and flexible, empathy-based moral reasoning. Acting ethically is an important part of wise individuals' identity and it influences the way they think about every issue (Sternberg & Glück, 2019).

In sum, wisdom involves being aware of one's intuitions and being able to reflect on whether they are "good" intuitions, based on expertise about human life, or "bad" intuitions that are too simple for a complex issue or too selfish to be ethical. Wise people feel morally obligated to find solutions that at least take all interests into account and show all parties that their voices have been heard.

Wisdom as a Matter of Context

Up to now, I have been writing about "wise people" and contrasting them with the rest of us. However, this is a misleading simplification. Recent research demonstrates that wisdom varies not only by individual, but also by situation—in other words, all of us are sometimes very wise, sometimes very unwise, and most of the time somewhere in between. For example, experimental manipulations—imagining discussion of a problem with someone else before responding (Staudinger & Baltes, 1996), imagining that a problem concerns someone else rather than oneself (Kross & Grossmann, 2012), or even thinking about a problem in the third rather than the first person (Grossmann & Kross, 2014)—can make people think significantly more wisely. Also, even most not-so-wise people can recall situations in which they did something wise, and their narratives of those situations show considerable wisdom (Bluck & Glück, 2004; Glück, Bluck, Baron, & McAdams, 2005). In other words, how wise we are varies according to the situational context we are in (Grossmann, 2017). This does not mean that there is no such thing as a wise person—some people certainly are wise more often than others. But it seems very important that we develop a better understanding of how situational factors influence wise thinking and behavior. If we want to increase the amount of wisdom in

the world, creating more wisdom-stimulating contexts may be just as important as teaching people for wisdom.

An important factor that helps people think wisely seems to be what Grossmann (2017; Grossmann & Kross, 2014; Kross & Grossmann, 2012) calls self-decentering. People are far wiser when they consider different perspectives on an issue than if they think they know everything about it and do not need to listen to others (Sternberg, 2005). Research on the “wisdom of crowds” (Surowiecki, 2005) shows that groups of people can make smarter decisions than any of their individual members, but only if two conditions are fulfilled. First, the group needs to be heterogeneous, consisting of members who bring different kinds of expertise to the issue at hand (Page, 2008). Naturally, if all group members have similar knowledge, increasing their number will not increase the knowledge base they draw upon. Second, the group needs to have a “culture” that values the diversity of backgrounds and makes sure that all voices are heard. It is probably another evolved bias of humans that we like to follow leaders—if a strong personality takes control, many group members are not going to voice their disagreements and the group is not going to be any wiser than its leader.

While previous research on group decision-making mostly has not been about wisdom but rather about solving predefined and clearly structured problems, these results certainly have relevance for wisdom. If a politician is trying to find a wise solution to a complex societal problem, it seems unlikely that she will find it by consulting only with members of her party, and even more unlikely if she only consults with people who are eager to agree with her on everything because their job depends on it. It seems much more likely that the solution will be wise—broad-based, balanced, and long-term sustainable—if it is developed by a heterogeneous group of experts who represent the different interests involved and who are seriously motivated to solve the problem. In other words, it may be possible to foster wisdom by creating structures that enable, or perhaps even enforce, collective ways of decision-making that ensure that all voices are heard and considered. In fact, many democratic structures in our Western countries were invented to serve exactly this purpose—allowing for nonpartisan collaboration to create good and just laws and political systems. But recently, something seems to be going wrong.

The Context We Live in Today: Good for Communication but Bad for Wisdom?

As I just explained, wisdom is fostered by disagreement—by a communication culture that allows people to disagree with one another in a constructive way. Such a culture is also a necessary component of democratic governance. Currently, however, Western democracies seem to be abolishing a long-term culture of constructive dialogue. One important reason for this development may be modern media. One might have thought that the advent of social media, ranging from Facebook and Twitter to independent journalism and blogging, would foster the free exchange of viewpoints, helping people to develop informed opinions as they gain access to almost unlimited information and opportunities to hear many different voices. And indeed, this seems to be the case in many situations: if I want to buy a new pair of trail-running sneakers, I can find out not only which models are available, but also what buyers say about them and where I can get them at a good price. If I am worried about my mother's high blood pressure, I can look up possible reasons, the advantages and disadvantages of different kinds of treatments, and recommended doctors in her area. When my son got interested in avant-garde music, I was amazed by how fast he was building in-depth knowledge, discovering a whole new world and progressing fast through ever more “niche” styles, simply because the Internet was providing ever more well-tailored recommendations—and in addition, he made lots of music-crazy friends in other parts of the world. Studies indeed show that most people use many different media outlets and that people are interested in many different viewpoints concerning issues like leisure, health, or arts (e.g., Barberá, Jost, Nagler, Tucker, & Bonneau, 2015; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012).

However, when it comes to ideological and political issues, it becomes much harder for us to tolerate divergent opinions and we often resort to the echo chambers of like-minded people who share and confirm our worldviews (Barberá et al., 2015). People are quite emotional about the values they believe their societies should be built on and, as mentioned earlier, tend to feel that others who do not share their worldviews are not just wrong, but “bad” and immoral, and perhaps stupid as well.

Attitude polarization is currently increasing, at least in North America and Europe (e.g., Hmielowski, Beam, & Hutchens, 2016; Müller et al., 2017; Rodriguez, Moskowitz, Salem, & Ditto, 2017). The most important reason for the growing polarization is probably increasingly selective exposure to information. People on both sides of an ideological debate have no difficulty at all finding like-minded websites that support their viewpoints, often in even more radical ways. Getting in touch with others sharing their beliefs makes them even more confident in their viewpoints. In other words, while one could expect that the availability of a broad ideological spectrum of media information could foster engagement with views diverging from one's own, experimental research suggests that it actually leads to increased affective polarization (Lau, Andersen, Dito, Kleinberg, & Redlawsk, 2017). People's in-group biases are strengthened by the new opportunities to get in touch with like-minded people. Confirmation bias influences which sources of information people utilize (e.g., Knobloch-Westerwick, Mothes, Johnson, Westerwick, & Donsbach, 2015; Westerwick, Johnson, & Knobloch-Westerwick, 2017); in fact, there seems to be a vicious circle involved: Increases in polarization cause stronger confirmation biases, which, in turn, lead to more biased information search (Lau et al., 2017). Elective exposure to political information is also increased by customizability technology creating so-called "filter bubbles" (Pariser, 2011).

In other words, modern media create a context that is detrimental to wisdom. They allow people to easily satisfy their need for confirmation of their views and to avoid confrontation with divergent perspectives. This leads to further polarization of beliefs, up to a point where quite radical ideas are endorsed by increasing numbers of people. People's intuitive, gut-based judgments do not get challenged by others who know things they don't know—in fact, they get confirmed by people sharing those intuitions. Of course, the more people are telling us we are right on an issue, the less likely are we to question our position and take a reflective, balanced perspective. In other words, online media make many of us more foolish—more convinced that we are right—and less wise.

Obviously, ideological polarization poses a major threat to the functioning of democratic countries, which rests on dialogue and joint deliberation across ideological boundaries (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2017). The one piece of good news is that people differ in their susceptibility to such influences. Liberals, for example, have, on average, higher levels of tolerance of diversity and ambiguity than conservatives and are therefore more likely to engage in discussions across ideological borders (Barberá et al., 2015). Information-processing styles and personality factors such as openness to divergent views also moderate people's motivation to seek out unbiased sources of information and to let social media polarize their views (Choi & Shin, 2017; Westerwick et al., 2017). Although no study has investigated the relationship between wisdom, social-media use, and polarized ideologies directly, there are many reasons to believe that wise individuals would not be highly susceptible to in-group, simplicity, and confirmation biases and to polarization of ideological values. I have argued earlier that wise people generally question their own intuitions and biases. Also, wisdom is both conceptually and empirically related to openness to experiences and ideas (Glück & Bluck, 2013; Staudinger, Lopez, & Baltes, 1997; Webster, 2007), to tolerance of differences in values (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000), and to trying to balance different viewpoints (Grossmann, 2017; Sternberg, 1998). In an ethnographic study of the daily lives of a small group of highly wise individuals, we found that they were very interested in societal and philosophical issues and used media actively but quite selectively, looking for sources of balanced information and avoiding the sensationalist reporting of tabloids and private TV channels. They enjoyed controversial discussions with their friends, arguing that they liked to learn new perspectives on issues. As one participant put it, "You need people with whom you can discuss issues, not just the usual blah-blah. We talk about things that are really important to us. I grow through my friendships and relationships. Sometimes I really want to be challenged in those conversations" (Naschenweng, unpublished study, as cited in Weststrate & Glück, 2017, p. 468). Other facets of wisdom may also enable wise people to tolerate and learn from different perspectives: they are deeply curious about life and people (Ardelt, 2003), compassionate even with strangers (Ardelt, 2003; Glück & Bluck, 2013; Levenson, Jennings, Aldwin, & Shiraishi, 2005), and able to regulate their

emotions so as to not get angry or anxious easily (Glück & Bluck, 2013; Webster, 2007).

In sum, many aspects of wisdom suggest that it would be a natural antidote to selective information exposure and polarization. As discussed earlier, wisdom is never in the extremes, but in the dialectical integration of different viewpoints so as to achieve a solution best for the common good (Sternberg, 1998, 2019a). At the moment, wise leaders are what the world would urgently need, but the world does not really seem to care a lot about them. The polarizing elements in modern political discourse are probably one reason why politicians who trumpet simple, not particularly smart solutions are preferred over those taking a moderate, balanced stance on complex issues. Former chancellor Fred Sinowatz became the object of ridicule in Austrian media in 1983 for allegedly saying “It’s all very complicated”—a statement that even then, when there were only two television channels and both were state-owned, was taken by many as a sign of weakness. What he really said, however, in that government policy statement, actually was quite wise:

I know, ladies and gentlemen, all of this is very complicated, as is this world in which we are living and acting and the society in which we want to thrive. So let’s have the courage to point out this complexity more than we did before, to admit that perfect solutions for everything and everyone are just impossible in a pluralist democracy. (https://de.wikiquote.org/wiki/Fred_Sinowatz; translation by JG)

Many people seem to be becoming ever less willing to hear about complexity and compromise and ever more eager for simple, bold solutions that benefit their own group, not caring how other people, nations, or the world at large are affected.

What Can We Do?

How can we go about changing this situation—how can we invite wisdom and discourage polarization and radicalization? The good news is that, as discussed earlier, wise behavior can be fostered by targeted

interventions, and there is a growing body of literature on how people can be “nudged” (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) to do good things instead of bad things. There are at least two ways to increase the amount of wisdom in the world: first, by taking the long-term perspective and educating our children and young people toward wisdom (see, e.g., the chapters by Maxwell, Schwartz, and Sharpe, and Sternberg in this book). Second, in the shorter run, we can aim to create contexts—online and offline, small-scale and large-scale—that are conducive to wisdom.

Educating Wisdom

How can we teach our children to be wise? There are formal and informal ways in which children learn, and both are relevant. Wisdom-related thinking can certainly be formally taught and practiced, but it may be even more effectively learned by observing wise models.

Modelling wise behavior (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961) may be the most powerful tool we have to teach our children how to deal wisely with conflicts and problems. If, as parents and teachers, we do not practice what we preach, any formal and explicit attempts to teach wisdom are likely to fail. If we can show our children how it is possible to talk in a civil way to the neighbor whose political views we oppose, to empathize with the colleague getting mobbed, to voice our feelings in a civil way in a conflict with our partner, or to think beyond our own benefit in a business decision, we may teach them more than any school lesson will. Of course, this means that we need to be wise ourselves, which, according to the literature, most of us *sometimes* are. I believe that people can and should make a conscious effort to act wisely in difficult situations and that it is worthwhile—not only, but also, for the sake of our children.

Teaching wisdom is the topic of several other chapters in this book (see, e.g., the chapters by Maxwell, Schwartz, and Sharpe, and Sternberg) as well as other books (e.g., Ferrari & Potworowski, 2008), so I will discuss it here only briefly. Sternberg (Reznitskaya & Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg, 2001) has suggested ways in which wisdom-related skills and behaviors can be included in school curricula for children and adolescents. Among

many other things, the specific aspects of wisdom I discussed in this chapter—recognizing, appreciating, and critically reflecting upon one’s own intuitions and intuitive judgments—ought to be well teachable, and practice should lead to automatization of these skills; in fact, they might become heuristics themselves. Children can certainly be taught to be aware of fallacies like the in-group or confirmation bias in themselves and others. Of course, they can and should also be taught to be critical of the one-sidedness of most ideological discussions on social media.

Creating wisdom-fostering school contexts. In addition to direct teaching for wisdom, I believe we need to change systemic wisdom barriers in our school systems. At least in Austria, schools are quite hierarchically structured, with teachers being expected to have full authority over what happens in their classroom, headmasters and the ministry of education having full control over what teachers are allowed to do in the classroom, and children still expected to be largely passive and grateful for the pearls of wisdom fed to them. While this approach may never have been optimal for educating informed and empowered citizens, nowadays it is likely to clash with the more egalitarian culture prevalent in families. If we allow children to have a say in what happens in their classrooms—for example, choosing topics they want to work on, choosing when they want to work on what, etc.—we might be met by less reactance (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; e.g., Miller, Burgoon, Grandpre, & Alvaro, 2006). Studies show that school climate predicts the amount of bullying going on between the students (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2013)—in other words, an authoritarian vs. democratic school climate may permeate all levels of the system. This brings us back to the point of modeling wisdom: if we can create a school in which teachers feel free, empowered, and accepted, they are likely to transfer these feelings to their students.

Another feature that seems to belatedly find its way across the Atlantic is increased testing for so-called educational standards that all children at a certain age are expected to master. This practice is already making teachers prioritize “teaching to the test,” favoring training of specific academic skills over more important lessons that children might take home from school. It seems important to have a rather fundamental discussion about the most important goals of education (Sternberg, 2019b).

Outside Schools: Creating Cultures That Invite Wisdom

It is certainly very important to instill wisdom in our youngest generation, but if that's all we do, it is going to take a long time until we see the effects—more time than climate change and global inequality may allow us. Therefore, we also need to foster wisdom in those people who are in charge of making large-scale societal and political decisions now. The good news is that, as discussed earlier, wisdom is affected by situational context. If we manage to create and implement contexts that foster rather than hinder wisdom, we may achieve results fast. Several examples of wisdom-fostering contexts are described in this book. Schwartz and Sharpe (2019), for example, describe a context for wisdom in the palliative care center of Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. They describe how a team of individuals from different disciplines and at different levels of expertise collaborate to learn from each other and support one another, all in the service of creating the best care of their patients, based on their individual physical, psychological, and spiritual needs. In terms of Sternberg's balance theory of wisdom, this team brings together its members' practical intelligence and expertise to serve a greater good—maximizing the wellbeing of patients approaching the end of their lives. They do so in a climate of mutual respect and collaborative growth, caring not just for their patients', but also for one another's wellbeing. It seems very plausible that similar approaches could be very beneficial to world problems such as poverty and inequality or climate change.

As mentioned earlier, two main ingredients for creating wise contexts to solve difficult problems are discussed in James Surowiecki's book *The Wisdom of Crowds* (Surowiecki, 2005):

1. Create heterogeneous groups of people with different knowledge backgrounds. In other words, bring together well-informed representatives of all groups involved in or affected by the problem or conflict at hand (see also Page, 2008).
2. Make sure that the collaborative culture that evolves in the group is built on respect for diversity of knowledge and opinions—that everyone gets heard and taken seriously.

A third ingredient that is probably important to ensure that a group is working toward wisdom is to make sure that the goals that the group pursues are oriented at ethical values and aim to maximize a greater good (Sternberg, 1998, 2019a). In some cases, what constitutes this greater good may actually be part of what the group needs to discuss. For example, politicians tend to believe that if their party gets to govern the country, the greater good for the population will be achieved automatically. This is probably not the wisest way to define a greater good.

To some extent, political structures in democratic countries have been constructed so as to guarantee a certain amount of checks and balances on the power of single individuals or small groups to make unwise decisions. For example, recent experiences in the United States show that governmental structures can prevent the destructive effects of even a blatantly unwise President—if there are enough wiser people in charge of executing his orders who are willing and able to do what is right (see, e.g., <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/05/opinion/trump-white-house-anonymous-resistance.html>). However, such structures often rest on the courage and integrity of individuals, and these individuals may be overpowered over time. The decline of democracies into populist and then more and more dictatorial regimes is a slow and subtle process (see the chapter by Ambrose in this book or Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). There are several difficult challenges to the noble goal of bringing more wisdom into politics:

1. *Policies need to cross national boundaries.* If we want to stop climate change, reduce global inequality, and generally save our planet, we will need to collaborate globally. This notion is scary to many people who live in the first world, as it may require a more equal distribution of wealth around the globe. Faced with even the vague idea of losing some of their privileges, people's evolutionary inheritance makes them rely more strongly on "ingroup vs. outgroup" thinking, which leads them to vote for populist politicians who promise to close borders and restore past times of glory. In other words, politicians who think in global terms are less likely to be elected than politicians who speak to people's in-group instincts. Therefore, simply expecting politicians to change their goals is unlikely to work.

2. *Wise people may not want to be politicians.* Wise people are not only unlikely to be elected in times of fear (Sternberg, 2019a); wise people are probably also unlikely to be motivated to enter politics, or if they do, unlikely to stay there for long. While many people feel theoretically and retrospectively attracted by the idea of wise leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, or Nelson Mandela (Weststrate, 2019; Weststrate, Ferrari, & Ardel, 2016), these men faced brutal resistance from those who felt threatened by their movements. Many wise individuals who may feel motivated to enter politics at some point will be put off by strong opposition or by the need to make compromises and simplify messages in order to impress a public that wants to hear what feels right, not what is right. Perhaps it is only under conditions of relative security that people are willing to elect a wise leader, which is why populists usually emphasize how fragile and endangered our current privileges are (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).
3. *Who are “we”?* My third point is probably a consequence of the first two. In writing what would need to be done to make the world wiser, I repeatedly used phrases like “we need to ensure” or “we need to create.” The problem is that there is no such “we”—wisdom researchers thinking about the state of their world are not in any position to change the world, and those who are in such a position are unlikely to listen to them. Looking at the wisdom exemplars mentioned earlier, wisdom researchers probably need to be very wise in designing ways to get their messages to reach more and more people. Perhaps modern media, with all their potential to foster non-wisdom, can also help us foster wisdom.

Creating wisdom-supportive contexts on social media. Maybe we can learn to utilize the very characteristics that make social media a threat to communal wisdom in ways that actually foster wisdom. One approach may be to develop new reward systems for online commentary. Most people who engage in online communication—using Twitter, Facebook, or voicing their opinion in online discussion boards—are affected by the reactions of the anonymous audience out there. People can get quite upset if they receive a lot of “thumbs down” for an opinion they voiced, or even if there is no reaction at all to what they considered a great joke—so much so that fake online reactions are now used as a

means to induce feelings of social exclusion or inclusion in psychological experiments (e.g., Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000; Gross, 2009). Most online evaluations are quite simple and binary—either you click on “like” or “thumbs up,” or you click on “dislike” or “thumbs down.” I believe that we can do better than that—why not rate posts or comments for how much insight they created, how balanced they are, or even how wise they are? One example that I find quite interesting is the Reddit site “ChangeMyView” (Tan, Niculae, Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, & Lee, 2016). On this online platform, users can present their view on any issue (and they cover a broad range of issues) and invite others to convince them that they are wrong. Other users post their arguments, and the original users acknowledge when an argument has changed their original viewpoint. Tan et al. (2016) analyzed the conditions under which arguments were most likely to have an effect. Some characteristics of effective arguments are clearly related to wisdom: effective arguments typically are long rather than short, they bring in additional aspects that the original post did not consider, and they are more calm than intense in wording. Maybe we could create more such interactions in other platforms as well if users got to rate posts for wisdom. The chapter by Nic Weststrate in this book gives an interesting example of an escalating Twitter exchange and one wiser argument that is calm in wording and acknowledges both sides—it would be interesting to study systematically how such statements are valued in the current “like”-based reward system, and whether their occurrence could be increased by a wisdom-focused reward system.

Another feature of modern media is that movements by many can gain great traction—in the early days of the refugee crisis, large groups of people organized themselves online to organize support for the thousands of people needing help and to speak up against the cautious rhetoric of politicians. Avaaz.org is an example of a global platform that can put considerable pressure on politicians and powerful institutions. A worldwide organization that supports and rewards wise decisions by world leaders might be able to change some policies for the better.

Creating wisdom-fostering dialogue in our daily lives. Today’s polarized political climate is also affecting people’s everyday relationships. In the aftermath of the “refugee crisis,” recent political elections in my

country have been highly emotionalized, and I've found myself to be less and less inclined to even listen to or read arguments from the other side, be it in online discussion boards, TV discussions, or in everyday encounters. In such times, many of us tend to surround themselves with like-minded people and to avoid the hassle and effort of talking to those who have different views. My personal reality check is dog school. Saturday is my two dogs' favorite day because I take them on a walk led by an excellent dog trainer who teaches the owners about dog behavior while the dogs get to run free, play, and do whatever dogs love to do. Over the years, my dog-school group has come to be a close-knit community where we talk about everything from health to school to marriage to politics. How surprised I was when I discovered that some people whom I have come to like a lot, people who are neither stupid nor evil, turned out to have very different ideological beliefs from my own! Talking to them, I saw in real life what as a developmental psychologist I had certainly known theoretically: how people's beliefs are shaped by their upbringing and experiences. I learned how open, respectful conversations between people who basically like each other can teach both sides a lot about the complexity of ideological and ethical issues. An article in *The New Yorker* in November of 2016 showed that neighbors often serve a similar function as my co-dog owners (Rothman, 2016, referring to Rosenblum, 2016).

One important feature of ideological polarization is that direct communication does not necessarily have a remediating effect. In fact, discussions across ideological boundaries in real life sometimes just end (Wells et al., 2017), perhaps because the participants feel unable to find sufficient common ground, take the other side's perspective, or regulate their own emotions. In fact, a field experiment conducted in the Democratic Republic of Congo showed that increased discussions about intergroup conflict, triggered by a television talk show, did not lead to conflict reduction, but to increased intolerance and awareness of grievances and less prosocial attitudes toward disliked others (Paluck, 2010). Thus, discussion per se does not necessarily mediate conflict. Certain conditions, such as the existence of a preformed relationship—the unavoidability of neighborhood or the friendliness created through lots of dog-related conversations—may

make people more likely to enter such discussions with the goal of getting along and finding common ground. Coming back to the idea of modeling wisdom, I believe it may be quite important that we do not avoid but rather seek civilized, respectful interactions with people who do not share our beliefs. This may be an important way to overcome the divides opened up by ideological polarization.

Conclusion

In our modern Western world, several factors seem to have come together to make people believe that whatever feels right to them must be right. Populist politicians enhance people's fears and speak to their evolution-based intuitions, and social media intensify these effects by providing people with lots of reinforcement from like-minded others. We urgently need to communicate the importance of ethically based reflection of our intuitions to people at all ages and in all contexts—from elementary-school students to national leaders. Psychological research may play an important role in a struggle to save the world for our children.

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5

The Breakdown of Civic Virtues and the Problem of Hate Speech: Is There Wisdom in Freedom of Speech?

Howard C. Nusbaum

Violence and Vitriolic Language

On Saturday October 27, 2018, a gunman entered the Tree of Life synagogue and shot 17 people killing 11. As he opened fire, the shooter shouted, “All Jews must die.” Before the attack, on Gab, a social media site that asserts it supports freedom of expression, the shooter posted his motivation for the shooting, blaming a Jewish organization for the influx of immigrants to the United States, particularly in the context of a caravan of migrants approaching the United States. Prior to this, President Trump called this caravan an invasion that he blames on the Democrats. President Trump and Republicans have alluded to an involvement of George Soros, a Jewish philanthropist, in funding this caravan. It is no surprise then that a connection is made in some radical minds between Jews and the false threat posed by immigration. The dog-whistle anti-Semitic rhetoric used by President Trump is closely

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_5

mirrored by other elected Republicans and picked up by others on the right on social media. Referring to himself as a “nationalist,” disparaging “globalists,” and referring to opponents as “enemies of the people,” he is using the same language as did the Nazis in referring to Jews.

The mass murder at the Tree of Life synagogue followed closely on the heels of a series of explosive packages sent to President Obama, Hilary Clinton, prominent Democrats, former intelligence officers, and CNN, all of whom have criticized President Trump very publicly. All of whom also have been derogated by President Trump and indeed called crooks, liars, criminals, enemies of the people. The individual charged with sending these explosives is a supporter of President Trump, whose van sported stickers showing a cross-hairs targeting critics of President Trump. In fact, at political rallies, President Trump has encouraged violence against his protesters and when attacks have occurred, he has offered to bail the attackers out of jail.

But President Trump’s vitriol is not reserved for Jews and Democrats. He has disparaged Muslims, Mexicans, immigrants, and African countries in negative and often threatening terms such as “rapists” and “murderers” and “bad dudes.” Furthermore, following a white supremacist Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville on August 11, 2017, he referred to white nationalists and neo-Nazis chanting slogans against Jews and “a rising tide of color” as including some “good people.” All of this has taken place in the context of a rise of anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, anti-Hispanic, anti-immigrant, and anti-Democrat aggression and violence under the current administration.

At the same time, prominent Republicans like Nikki Haley and the White House point to mass shootings in a Charleston church killing African-Americans and other such attacks and argue it is wrong to attribute responsibility to President Trump when President Obama or other administrations were not blamed for such horrific events. Furthermore, the shooting of Congressman Steven Scalise by a supporter of Bernie Sanders indicates that political violence is not solely attributable to Republican supporters. However, this overlooks an important distinction between the present administration and rhetoric of some Republican supporters and the rhetoric of previous administrations both Republican and Democrat in recent decades. Other

administrations have sought to heal divisions in the country or at least paid lip service to the importance of reducing such divisions and did not explicitly derogate other groups or opponents and did not call for aggression against them. President Trump and a number of elected Republicans are unique in the invocation of aggression against protesters and opponents and derogating those with whom they disagree. Consider that Congressman Gianforte physically attacked a reporter and was then lauded by President Trump for doing so, which is consistent with President Trump's constant attacks on reputable news media such as the New York Times and CNN as "fake news" and "enemies of the people," a phrase used by authoritarian regimes in the past.

Language Has Impact

Around the world in 2018, there is a growing concern about the future of democracy (see Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Runciman, 2018; see also Ambrose, this volume). With an increasing number of authoritarian political leaders and populist movements, liberal democratic values seem threatened. Although authoritarian and fascist political regimes have risen in the past, over time, political change comes and goes and such governments have also given way to more democratic politics. For example, Italy, Germany, Greece, and Argentina have seen such nationalistic regimes in the past, only to move back toward democratic values. In some respects, the current rise of authoritarian governments in Turkey, Venezuela, and the Philippines could be seen as part of a cycle rather than a particular global direction. The question of what causes such change becomes more acute, it seems, when the concern focuses on the United States. After President Trump's election in 2016, with a recognition of the importance of accurate reporting, the Washington Post changed its masthead to read, "Democracy dies in darkness." An assault on the meaning of truth undermines the rule of law and degrades civil society.

Words matter. The way language is used has demonstrable impact on individuals and societal attitudes. Orwell (2013/1946) outlined the ways that language can be used in politics to make acceptable that

which people would not accept, to deceive and to convince. His novels illustrated these principles in which lies become accepted truths and unacceptable acts become justifiable, even necessary. This is the current way of political discourse in 2018. And politicians who previously criticized the President and his use of this kind of discourse have come to embrace him and it, much as Orwell's novels demonstrate.

Clearly there are two important issues surrounding language use that can affect society greatly. The first is the problem of hate speech and speech that calls for aggression and violence. The second problem is the use of language to deceive and mislead in order to garner support and obeisance and action. These issues are closely linked, given that the first is a special case of the second. Hate speech fabricates representations of groups, playing on fears, in order to instigate action against those groups.

President Trump has used this tactic repeatedly, but one example is extremely clear. On October 31, 2018, the President shared a video of comments made by an immigrant in the country illegally who was convicted of murdering two law enforcement officials. This was intercut with images of a caravan of immigrants heading toward the United States. The script attributed the killer's presence in the United States to Democrats, in spite of his having entered illegally when there was a Republican President and, at one point, his having been released by the Republican sheriff of Maricopa County, Joe Arpaio. In this case, the President (1) associates a killer with a caravan of migrants suggesting, without evidence, the presence of criminals in the caravan, and (2) falsely asserts the killer's presence in the United States was due to Democrats. While this is consistent with past false statements intended to derogate groups (e.g., falsely claiming to have seen Muslims celebrating the 9/11 terrorist attacks) in order to promote policies blocking immigration, in this case, the argument about immigration is used to increase fear in a population just prior to midterm elections. In this case, hate speech is predicated on falsehoods, with the goal of manipulating voters to affect the outcome of an election.

The combination of lies, eroding the notion of truth when expressed by the President of the United States, and the derogation of a group of Latin American migrants, is a powerful combination directed at

influencing voters by invoking fear. But fear is not just a feeling. Negative emotions can serve to motivate real action that goes beyond talk (e.g., Gerber, Green, & Latimer, 2008; Gronenedyk & Banks, 2014; Iyer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2007). This can do more than simply manipulate an election outcome by increasing political action and voting. Hate speech may lead to increased acts of aggression and violence against the vilified groups and promote lawlessness. It can erode the basis of civil society more broadly.

Waldron (2012) has argued that hate speech works against a well-ordered society. Citing Rawls' (1993) concept of a well-ordered society as one that is regulated by principles of justice in which people manifest the civic virtue of justice, he argues that hate speech disorders society. Manifestations of hate speech essentially disfigure the nature of a society. This is akin to the "broken windows" theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982; Zimbardo, 1969), which suggested that visible signs of disorder in a neighborhood promote others to act to increase disorder. It suggests a kind of "licensing" to act badly (Effron, Miller, & Monin, 2012). On the one hand, hate speech from the President might be viewed as making hate speech acceptable more generally. On the other hand, hate speech and group derogation may psychologically license more extreme behavior such as aggression (cf. Miller & Effron, 2010). Moreover, if society indicates that one could have done something worse in respect of some past action, future behavior becomes more immoral (Effron et al., 2012). For example, if someone has thought something negative about a group without speaking those thoughts but subsequently sees (e.g., from news reports of other examples) that they could have *done* something worse, they may feel licensed to act out in the future. In this way, hate speech and more generally, derogating and bullying speech, especially from elected officials, and particularly from the President of the United States, can have a dramatic effect on the people who respect them and voted for them. Derogating jokes (Hodson & MacInnis, 2016) dehumanize groups and dehumanizing descriptions (Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008) lead to endorsement of violence against those groups and even an increased bias to shoot group members (Mekawi, Bresin, & Hunter, 2016). It is a short step from using or being exposed to dehumanizing language to violence against the targets of that language.

In essence, unfettered hate speech can erode civic virtues and values. Civility, compassion, and fairness can be diminished in a society where respect, empathy, and perspective-taking have been reduced by the way people and groups are derogated. Dehumanization through language reduces respect, leading to incivility, and it reduces empathy and compassion, leading to harsher judgments, and it reduces the ability to take the perspective of the dehumanized, thereby decreasing fairness. Targets of derogation and dehumanization will get little justice in this context, thus increasing inequities in society. The social damage that this kind of language can produce is clear.

Furthermore, exposure to such derogating language may have personally damaging outcomes. For example, bullying, including verbal bullying online, has had adverse consequences such as leading to suicide (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_suicides_that_have_been_attributed_to_bullying). It is not really possible to identify the antecedents of these cases as verbal bullying, but there is a strong impression that such adverse negative interactions have contributed. Gottman (1994) has suggested that negative interactions need to be offset by more positive interactions. The ratio of positive to negative comments needs to be relatively high (5:1) in order to overcome the negative impact (see Losada & Heaphy, 2004). Words associated with pain can increase the feeling of pain (Swannell, Brown, Jones, & Brown, 2016). Moreover, this is not a subjective illusion. Pain-related words activate a neural network called the pain matrix that is specifically responsive to the experience of pain (Richter, Eck, Straube, Miltner, & Weiss, 2010). While these studies of pain-related words are not specific to social derogation and rejection, other research shows that social rejection activates the neural network that responds to physical pain (Kross, Berman, Mischel, Smith, & Wager, 2011). Words can hurt figuratively but also quite literally. On this consideration—that language can “assault” the audience—one might conjecture that there should be laws to limit this kind of “verbal assault,” just as there are laws to punish physical assault.

Indeed, a number of countries have passed laws that prohibit or restrict this kind of speech. Of course, directly advocating violence and aggression against particular groups or individuals is outlawed in many countries. But some countries have more specific and restrictive laws

that go beyond this. For example, in France, individuals and groups are protected from defamation due to group membership forbidding communication that increases discrimination or hatred. In Germany, inciting hatred or violating dignity through speech is outlawed. In Iceland, simply expressing derogation, even without inciting others to hate, is against the law. But in the United States, hate speech is protected under the First Amendment to the Constitution—it is protected speech under laws that support the freedom of expression.

Freedom of Speech

Freedom of speech under the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States has not always been taken as an unfettered license to express oneself freely. Lewis (2007) describes the changes in the interpretation of the First Amendment from its origins in 1791 to the challenges from the Sedition Act in 1798. This was passed in order to stop Thomas Jefferson from attacking President John Adams in Jefferson's newspapers and restrained the ability of the press to criticize the administration. However, the Pentagon Papers trial led to the increased and now well-established freedom of the press. And the freedom to express hate speech was affirmed in the right of neo-Nazis to march in Skokie, Illinois, among a population including Holocaust survivors. As Lewis explains, these changes over time have come through challenges of various kinds but make clear that the meaning of the First Amendment is not the inviolate and immutable freedom of speech and press that most Americans take for granted. Even today, there is substantial confusion about the meaning of the First Amendment. For example, there is no First Amendment right for a speaker espousing white supremacy to speak on a college campus or for a news outlet to keep a commentator who espouses positions at odds with the editorial views of the outlet. The First Amendment does not require that every venue must permit every kind of expression, nor does it prohibit speech calling for a boycott or boycotting a commercial enterprise based on the conduct of that business.

The First Amendment serves to keep Congress from passing laws that restrict freedom of speech or freedom of the press. In this respect, then,

on the face of it, Congress could not pass a law prohibiting hate speech or even speech that criticizes or derogates the President. However, the Sedition Act, passed by Congress in 1798, did just that, threatening fine and imprisonment for derogating the President in the press. The Sedition Act was putatively advanced by President Adams (see Lewis, 2007) in order to win the upcoming election in 1800 by nullifying Jefferson's editorial advantage. But Adams lost the election to Jefferson in part due to the public reaction to the draconian nature of the law. In essence, an attempt to abrogate the right of the free press to criticize a sitting President was addressed by the electorate in the court of public opinion.

This point is important and illustrates why the First Amendment has been treated as particularly important in US history. The checks and balances of the US government by which the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive branches hold each other to task are bolstered by one other important factor: The US electorate can criticize and debate actions of any of the three branches of government and can, through collective response, address such actions. The First Amendment guarantees the right of the people to discuss and hold the government accountable for its acts. However, the First Amendment also guarantees the freedom of hate speech, as in the 1977 case of neo-Nazis seeking to march, displaying Nazi insignia and symbols, in a predominantly Jewish suburb of Chicago. The Illinois Supreme Court ruled that an injunction against the march would violate the First Amendment (Stone, 1994). In essence, the First Amendment is taken to hold unconstitutional any laws restricting expression on the basis of its content, including hate speech (Stone, 1994).

There are basically two broad principles that appear to underlie this. The first of these is grounded in the intent to hold the government accountable to the people in ways that may not be anticipated. Stone (1994) argued that the rationale for hate speech to be protected speech is based on the concern of letting the government determine which ideas can be deliberated publicly and which should not be discussed in this manner. Is the derogation of communists hate speech or is it part of a political debate? What counts as derogation that leads to violence vs. valid political criticism? Would politicians calling President Obama a socialist be guilty of hate speech?

It is not objectively easy to always determine what constitutes hate or hatred expression. All language and communication is inherently ambiguous. The statement, “You are brilliant,” seems unambiguous unless it is spoken right after doing something that is catastrophically stupid. Even then it could be sarcasm or a simple reminder that even the smartest people can do dumb things. The quenelle gesture used by a French comedian has no objective sign of anti-Semitism but the gesture has been taken as such by the context in which it is used. The comic *Jesus and Mo* (<http://www.jesusandmo.net>) is certainly irreverent, but does it constitute hate speech if it is perceived as derogating certain religions? While some extremes of hate speech may seem clear when there are explicit negative statements about a group, there are many less clear examples that may be taken by some as hate speech and by others as the basis for discussion and deliberation of ideas. Is burning a flag or kneeling during a national anthem a sign of protest or derogation? Such acts may be offensive to some who identify as patriots but can represent legitimate acts of protest to others who consider themselves patriots too.

On November 6, 2018, the Associated Press reported that London police arrested six men for a video showing a model of Grenfell Tower being burned, along with images of people in the windows. The video reflected the tragedy that killed 72 people in London in 2017 and the Prime Minister called the video unacceptable. While this video is offensive to survivors of the fire and the Prime Minister, and sufficient to permit an arrest as a criminal act, in the United States this video would be protected speech. The risk of letting the judgment of a government determine what speech should be restricted is the threat to public dissent and deliberation of governmental action, even in the case of hate speech.

The second principle is derived from John Stuart Mill’s 1859 notion of the importance of freedom of expression, especially in the context of the tension between liberty and authority and the need to allow minority opinions to be voiced (e.g., Gordon, 1997). Lewis (2007) attributed to Mill the idea that even a false belief may be important if it gives rise to discussion in consideration of opposing views. In 1919, Justice Holmes expressed the importance of this “free trade in ideas” and debate as if free speech allows for competition within a marketplace of ideas (Lewis, 2007, p. 185). If hate speech stimulates debate that reveals

the lies and distortion, this benefits society. If hate speech is legally suppressed, hateful ideas may exist but there is no explicit counterargument and deliberation. In some sense, this can be conceived of in terms of an inoculation metaphor. Prejudice and stereotyping are an aspect of human psychology and will occur. Exposure to the existence of these may be inoculated against by knowing there are clear responses that negate the claims made in hate speech. But without that inoculation, encountering hate and prejudice may have personally damaging effects.

The Need for Wisdom and Civic Virtues

There are two strong but opposing positions regarding the government regulation of hate speech. From one perspective, hate speech damages society broadly, can lead to aggression and violence, and can be personally hurtful and damaging to its targets. This perspective argues that society has a vested interest in regulating hate speech, restricting it for the good of society and the people. This is the basis for hate speech laws in many countries. However, from the second perspective, the regulation of hate speech requires a government to judge what is hate speech and what is not. This judgment could, in principle, infringe on the people's right to criticize and debate government action and ultimately cede to the government power that should be in the hands of the people. While in recent practice such laws might be prudently enforced, changes in courts and governments could take laws and apply them in ways not previously seen which could act adversely to stifle speech not anticipated in the authoring of these laws. Furthermore, to elide from public discourse hate speech is to eliminate exposure to one set of false and derogatory claims about some people and therefore reduce exposure to the counterclaims and arguments, reducing inoculation against stereotyping, biases, and dehumanization.

Both of these positions have strong arguments in their favor. And both support the need for the civic virtues that underpin a civil society. If virtues are tendencies for action (see Battaly, 2015; van Zyl, 2015), civic virtues are those tendencies that work to maintain a civil society. Civic virtues such as civility, compassion, and fairness are undermined

by hate speech clearly. On the one hand, virtues are generally thought of as characteristics of individuals. One could imagine characteristics such as these might be considered traits or tendencies to be civil, to have compassion, and to be fair that are manifest over situations. However, it is also possible to imagine that such civic virtues are characteristics of a society. As such, government may express such civic virtues as guidance for policy, or perhaps the policies may themselves encourage civic virtues in the population. In this respect, there are two ways in which civic virtues may be held by government. On the one hand, civility, compassion, and fairness might be treated by different parts of government as the principles that govern the creation of laws and policies. On the other hand, the laws and policies of government may directly encourage or enforce civility, compassion, and fairness. In this respect then, if a government holds to these virtues, it might seem that these virtues call for the direct regulation of hate speech by the government. Of course imagining a government in which the virtues underlie choice and policy directives may be difficult in the best of times, much less under the current political climate.

However, this is not the only way to understand the role of civic virtues and government action. Hate speech is a manifestation of beliefs expressed as language by the people holding those beliefs. Regulation of hate speech can stop the manifestation, but there is no evidence to suggest that the inability to express publicly a belief eliminates the belief. Thus, while laws regulating hate speech might reduce the expressions that could work against civic virtues in a society, the beliefs and motivations would not necessarily be diminished. Microaggression and other behaviors that express stereotyping and bias could not be regulated. By driving explicit hate speech and expression out of sight, societal counterarguments and reactions would not be expressed. Such arguments and expressions which, in a marketplace of ideas could serve to counter biases and prejudices, would be lacking. The opportunities for change of those derogatory and negative beliefs would be lost. The reduced manifestation of hate speech could both allow hate to fester unchecked and, as with a failure to inoculate, reduce the awareness of such negativity in the targets of those beliefs. The lack of understanding of hateful attitudes would leave people unprepared for microaggression and other

forms of negative action against them. Civic virtues then could depend on society conveying an understanding that prejudice can be manifest as part of human nature but not all people may manifest prejudicial biases. Society would need the civic virtues that allow people to be willing to support those who are targets of prejudicial and derogatory beliefs. In other words, civic virtues could depend on the manifest contest between hate speech and the willingness of others to respond in countering it.

The contrast between these positions is therefore drawn on the basis of competing theories of what is best for civil society, grounded in different assumptions regarding the nature of people, in some sense. Given that both have beneficial intentions for the public good, but differ in underlying assumptions and theories of government, society, and human nature, this is a situation that calls for wise reasoning at a number of levels. Indeed, the potential clash in means of achieving civic virtues may be thought of as the basis for needing wise reasoning rather than a smart or clever solution.

Practical Wisdom

What is wise reasoning and how can it play a role in addressing the problem of hate speech and government regulation of free speech? Why would this issue not simply require intelligence? In vernacular use, intelligence is generally thought about as the ability that aids in understanding and adaptively solving difficult problems. This view of intelligence derives from a particular aspect of psychological science in history (Spearman, 1904; Thurstone, 1938), and societies value intelligence highly as a way of solving daily problems, financial problems, and societal problems requiring policy, and as important for education (cf. Sternberg, 2000). However, the kinds of things that are measured on typical intelligence tests (e.g., Stanford-Binet test, Roid, 2003) are closer to basic, simple cognitive abilities such as memory, rather than the complex psychological processes. In describing intelligence, Binet and Simon (1916) wrote: “It seems to us that in intelligence there is a fundamental faculty, the alteration or the lack of which, is of the utmost importance for practical life. This faculty is judgment, otherwise called good sense, practical sense,

initiative, the faculty of adapting one's self to circumstances." Practical judgment seems a lot like common sense (Rosenfeld, 2011), and practical judgment and common sense are definitely lacking in foolish people—one can clearly be smart but not have good judgment and common sense. This idea of judgment and good sense, then, is something that would be better for society and for people in society than intelligence alone, as conceived of as a cold cognitive process. Presumably, judgment and good sense are not simply cognitive calculations but take into account social implications and emotion and would involve empathy.

In many respects, this is similar to Aristotle's description of *phronesis* or practical wisdom in the *Nicomachean Ethics Book VI*—practical judgment in decision-making. But Aristotle's depiction of practical wisdom is specifically described as practical decision-making that leads to *human flourishing*. The notion of human flourishing then is a key aspect that distinguishes wisdom from intelligent decision-making or just good common sense. Human flourishing is critical to practical wisdom as opposed to being smart or having good practical judgment. Although in the vernacular, to flourish might be taken as "doing well" in health and personal wealth, and happiness and well-being generally, in Aristotelian terms, it may be better thought of as grounding in the moral virtues (see Roberts, 2015). In thinking about human flourishing, and thus for practical wisdom, it is important to consider moral virtues including the civic virtues such as civility, compassion, and fairness. And these and other moral virtues link practical wisdom to judgment and decision-making that goes well beyond one's own direct personal considerations and well-being to strengthen well-being in society overall. Although from Aristotle, the moral virtues such as the civic virtues are critical to human flourishing and thus serve as the driver of practical wisdom, it is important to note that they need not figure into common sense or good judgment to the same degree.

From Tiberius's (2008) view of practical wisdom, moral virtues are the value commitments that frame our affective responses to prospective choices both personally and in taking the perspective of others. We evaluate prospective choices against our and others' (through perspective-taking) value commitments, and the feeling states that are consequent of this evaluative process for us and others then are critical

to guiding a wise decision (Tiberius, 2013). In this respect, the moral virtues serve as guideposts in the prospective evaluation of a decision. To the extent that a decision is made based on the moral virtues, perhaps as guideposts to making a decision, this seems consistent with the Aristotelian view of practical wisdom as decision-making in service of human flourishing. Of course, there are other ways in which moral virtues play a role in practical wisdom—as general goals or principles, as patterns to shape choice or action. In this respect, practical wisdom is important specifically because we distinguish practical wisdom from other forms of judgment, whether the moral virtues function as goals, values, or action patterns, in the process of decision-making.

Regardless of the way in which the moral virtues actually function in respect of human flourishing for practical wisdom, we can consider moral virtues such as civic virtues to be a form of social intelligence (Snow, 2010)—a way of improving one's social interactions and relationships and benefiting society. The civic virtues provide the social intelligence that is critical for improving society and societal functioning. If human flourishing refers to someone doing well because of the overall well-being of society, then civic virtues such as civility, empathy and compassion, and fairness, are a critical aspect of practical wisdom. In this respect, from the perspective of psychology and philosophy, we can think about practical wisdom as going beyond the self in important ways that are linked to the moral virtues and in this way, have an important link to addressing issues such as considering the impact of hate speech and its regulation by the government.

We can think about “social intelligence” as a way of improving the performance of individual cognizers such as humans or computers. On the one hand, social intelligence can be viewed as abilities that improve social interactions and connections. On the other hand, social intelligence can, through such connections, yield emergent group social intelligence—better social connection and functioning can have the benefit of yielding better group deliberation, thought, and action. For example, Hutchins (1995) introduced the notion of “distributed cognition,” in which perception, thinking, understanding, and memory actually reside in (distributed among) a group of people rather than any particular individual. In this case, the memory or the understanding emerges from

the interaction of individuals such that no particular individual has the memory itself. For example, different group members can express associations of a particular memory (as one does in trying to think of a name and failing) and then bit by bit the group hones in on the actual memory. Of course, once reconstructed, then the entire group has access to the memory itself, although in the future, no one person may again actually hold the memory. Hutchins observed this in the interaction of people working in teams and described how such interactions yield distributed cognition and intelligence. This suggests there is substantial benefit in going beyond the self and connecting to others in effective teams. Individuals are limited in capacity, perspective, and scope of processing, but social networks can connect individuals into groups that broaden these. Indeed, computers originally were designed to be self-contained in terms of processing power, memory, and inputs and outputs such that each computer stood alone and everything to be processed was stored locally on that computer alone. And for the longest time, in the era of modern cognitive psychology (see Gardner, 1985), this was the operative metaphor for understanding the human mind, especially in respect of cognition.

However, the metaphor of the mind as a stand-alone computer was changed in two important ways. First, the development of a new computing metaphor based on analog neurons rather than the digital propositional computing provided a better model of some cognitive mechanisms and more closely fit how the brain might operate (e.g., see Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986). Second, engineering high-speed computing interconnections over networks changed the state of computing, and with wireless networks and omnipresent connectivity, along with constant human data flow the power of distributed digital computing has become clear. Information can reside across the network, distributed among different storage locations. Processing can be distributed as well, and as with people working in teams, different computers can address pieces of a computation. Networked computers that share information and distribute processing throughout the network transcend the limitations of the individual computer to harness the power of a network. In this way, we have a new model of human social cognition in which decision-making depends on social connections formed in a variety of

ways that transcend the cognition of a single person but are leveraged on the foundation of more fundamental human social group cognition as manifest in teamwork.

Given that practical wisdom is decision-making in service of human flourishing, the moral civic virtues serving as social intelligence may provide the interpersonal social connection that allows distributed cognition to function effectively over our more widely dispersed groups, connected by email, text, or voice. Practical wisdom, per Aristotle, depends on self-transcendence in the way that the moral virtues couple individual smart decision makers socially and through the social intelligence of the moral virtues, but there is more to wisdom than just this form of social intelligence. Practical wisdom, through its connection to human flourishing, provides an important function for society in reinforcing social relationships and societal flourishing. Moreover, the focus of practical wisdom on human social challenges and problems engages emotion, creativity, and intellectual struggle in ways that other kinds of decision-making may not.

There are multiple psychological theories, definitions, and descriptions of wisdom (e.g., Ardel, Achenbaum, & Oh, 2013; Grossmann, Na, Varnum, Kitayama, & Nisbett, 2012; Meeks & Jeste, 2009; Staudinger, Smith, & Baltes, 1992; Sternberg, 2013; Tiberius, 2008; see Ferrari & Weststrate, 2013; Staudinger & Glück, 2011; Sternberg, 1998; Sternberg & Glück, 2019). In spite of the variation in theories and approaches, there are important commonalities among definitions, such as the need for pragmatic knowledge about people and one's self, gained from life experiences, along with the skills of reflectiveness, engagement of intellectual struggle, and prosocial attitudes and behaviors. However, one aspect of all these theories is that they focus on wisdom as a property of a person or as an approach to decision-making in the individual. In other words, just knowing that we need to use wise reasoning, and having theories of wise reasoning does not address the problem of hate speech and the civic virtues. By identifying wisdom as inherent in the individual, and constituted by individual psychological processes specifically, this could possibly limit the means of addressing issues in hate speech and civic virtues to approaches that affect the individual. But given the scope of the problem in that it affects society, it may be important to conceive of approaches that go beyond the

individual. It is possible, however, to conceive of a broader view of wisdom than that which is inherent in a person. From the Defining Wisdom Project (Wisdom Research, 2011) a group of scholars and researchers proposed the following as part of a definition of wisdom:

Wisdom requires moral grounding, but is not identical to it (i.e., wisdom must be moral but morality need not be wise). Wisdom can be observed in individual or collective wise action or counsel. Wisdom flexibly integrates cognitive, affective, and social considerations....

This definition specifically includes “collective wise action or counsel” going beyond the individual wisdom of most theories and definitions of wisdom. This was intended to encompass two views of collective or “institutional wisdom.” In the first, one can imagine an institution (e.g., government agency) producing wise policies even if no individual in the institution is wise. The interaction among the governing members of the administration of the institution produces an emergent wisdom that can lead to wise policies, where a wise policy is a practical policy that increases societal flourishing. The second view of institutional wisdom is that an institution may have a policy that leads to wiser action on the part of the constituents affected by the policy. One example comes from the policy regarding organ donation (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). In the United States, people must explicitly declare their willingness to donate their organs after death whereas in France, they must explicitly declare the desire to not donate their organs. Organ donation rates are higher in France than in the United States. Nudge-based policies provide an example of wise policies using knowledge of human psychology and behavior to achieve better societal outcomes that lead to human flourishing when the goals of such policies are to benefit society without causing harm.

Wise Reasoning and Hate Speech

It is important to consider two broad approaches to the problem of hate speech. In general, when governments outlaw hate speech and group derogation, they focus on one kind of solution, legislation. Laws that restrict

hate speech can certainly reduce explicit statements fomenting aggression and violence against groups and reduce explicit derogation of groups. But such laws can also stifle protest, be used to arrest people deemed unpatriotic, and diminish more broadly the freedom of citizens. Further, such laws may not change attitudes, so that the same derogatory and negative stereotypes and attitudes exist without explicit voice, but still promulgate microaggression and other forms of more subtle discrimination and derogation. Consider that in countries with strong laws against anti-Semitic speech, such as in France and Germany, there is strong evidence of anti-Semitic attitudes (in 2014, 27% of the population in Germany and 37% of the population in France) whereas in the United States, without such laws, only 9% of the population has such attitudes (see <http://global100.adl.org>). This association simply establishes that the laws are not by their existence diminishing attitudes. Clearly there are complexities here not accounted for by the simple relationship. However, if such attitudes are not regularly given a public voice, there will be no public response and no debate and deliberation about such attitudes. This could act to reduce the target groups' explicit awareness of such beliefs and attitudes and reduces the general population from countering such beliefs openly and responding to show support.

Legal suppression of hate speech does not work to eliminate negative attitudes. Furthermore, legal suppression of hate speech can have negative consequences for the targets of hate speech, given that there is no public evidence of countering those negative attitudes. However, unfettered expression of hatred can lead to overt aggression and violence, promotion of negative attitudes, and the dissolution of civility, compassion, and fairness. What is a wise approach to this problem? Clearly there is no one solution because there is not one simple problem. Hate speech can be modeled by politicians and public figures and thus socially licensed in the public. Negative attitudes can be manifest in a variety of social behavior beyond speech and supported by local authorities and the government in different ways. The response to such complexity requires deeper and broader consideration than simply adding new laws.

Wise reasoning would suggest practical approaches based on deep knowledge about people as social beings and about society as a social

system. Given the origins of hate speech in negative attitudes and given the impact of hate speech as hurtful against targeted populations, it is important to consider how to foster civic virtues of civility, compassion, and fairness in a population. To be clear, it is possible that other moral virtues could benefit society and reduce hate speech. But on the face of it, gratitude, generosity, honesty, trust, courage, humor, spirituality, and other moral virtues do not seem as directly relevant to reducing hate speech. Thus, while hate speech diminishes civil society by eroding the civic virtues of civility, compassion, and fairness, bolstering these may work against both hate speech and hateful attitudes.

Civility as a virtue would motivate respectful communication so that increased civility would decrease hate speech. Compassion as a virtue would increase empathic concern and perspective-taking for others. Increasing compassion for others, being able to take their perspective, understand their values, culture, and situation, should also work to reduce hate speech and increase kindness. And fairness, as a virtue, should motivate people to use an egalitarian approach in treating all people equally, increasing tolerance. Given that hate speech is uniquely targeted at particular individuals or groups, this represents a very unfair treatment of some people and would be reduced by increased fairness in society, which may also increase respect.

Of course, this raises the question of how to increase these civic virtues. One approach is to reduce the biases and prejudices that serve to degrade the civic virtues. In general terms, we know that there are extant methods from social psychology that can be successful in reducing implicit bias (e.g., Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012). The approach generally is based on the notion that implicit bias is essentially a kind of habit and can be reduced or eliminated as can be any habit (see Forscher, Mitamura, Dix, Cox, & Devine, 2017). The basic approach is educational, informing people about the nature of bias as well as providing basic cognitive strategies that, with practice, can overcome biases. And reducing implicit bias and reducing negative affect should, as pointed out previously, reduce explicit negative acts. This suggests that one important means of addressing hate speech is to address its roots by increasing education about others and prejudice,

experience with others, and practice at self-regulation. But as described by Aristotle (cf. Russell, 2015), it is necessary to have the moral virtues as underlying motivations for behavior so that self-regulation and understanding alone are not sufficient.

While viewing implicit bias through the concept of “habit” can lead to ways of reducing bias that increases civic virtues, there is another perspective as well. The habit notion is a negative characterization that works via education and practice to reduce the “bad habit.” However, it is also possible to take a more positive view of the combination of education and practice, which is used in the method above of reducing the habit of implicit bias. It is possible to view the virtues not just as good “habits” but also as skills (Russell, 2015). In this case, skills are also developed through education and practice. Learning about others’ lives and situations through education and practicing interaction with others should increase epistemic humility and perspective-taking as skills thus increasing the skill of wise reasoning. If we take the perspective that strengthening the civic virtues is a form of skill development, this lays out one kind of plan for reducing hate speech. The means by which civic virtues such as civility, compassion, and fairness are strengthened may be diverse from interaction with targets of hate speech to modeling these virtues by political leaders.

If wiser reasoning is related to the civic virtues, then improving the skill of wiser reasoning should reduce hate speech in society. Learning about others’ lives, interacting with others, learning about the limitations of one’s own knowledge and the existence of others’ knowledge (epistemic humility), practicing perspective-taking, reflection, deliberation, and self-regulation should all lead to wiser reasoning. It is therefore in society’s interest to regulate hate speech not by legislating against it but by developing programs that develop wiser reasoning and the civic virtues. Moreover, to increase wise reasoning overall in a society can reduce hate speech but also increase the ability of people who are targets of prejudice to cope with manifestations of bias and stereotyping in speech and behavior. Increased perspective-taking and self-regulation can aid in the way targets of prejudice cope with discrimination and aggression.

Language Use as a Skill for Wisdom

While it seems difficult to conceive of wise reasoning as a skill, this seems to be a good framework for understanding wisdom. For example, if it is the case the moral virtues are a critical part of wisdom, then the moral virtues such as generosity, trust, gratitude can also be viewed as an important part of the skill. In some theologies, there is a notion that acting as if one has the virtues is sufficient—that means to practice acting as though one has the virtues. For example, Emmons and McCullough (2003) demonstrated that keeping a gratitude diary increased well-being and Kaplan (2016) argues from her own experience practicing gratitude that it increases human flourishing affecting those around one as well. Snow (2010) argues that the moral virtues are a form of social intelligence and that if practiced, they can become habits that serve as motivation. Indeed, if we think of moral and intellectual virtues as skills then wisdom is a skill as well. If wise reasoning is a skill, then extended practice should lead to increased performance and there is a significant relationship between some practices such as mediation and measured wisdom (Williams, Mangelsdorf, Kontra, Nusbaum, & Hoekner, 2016). In this way, each of the intellectual and moral virtues that is important in wiser reasoning can be conceived of as a skill on its own, meaning that one can learn about them and practice them to benefit improvement. One aspect of psychological processing that is important for practical wisdom is emotional self-regulation (e.g., Baltes & Smith, 1990; Glück & Bluck, 2013; Meeks & Jeste, 2009; Webster, 2007). Being overly swayed by one's emotional responses makes it difficult to achieve balance (Sternberg, 2013) in decision-making, which is critical, and overrides attempts to take the perspective of others (Tiberius, 2008). However, it turns out that language can be an important tool in this kind of emotional self-regulation.

Self-regulation can be improved if one learns specific linguistic methods that can be employed and practiced. For example, changing the framing of a problem allows one to be psychologically distanced from the problem, increasing self-regulation, and more objective in addressing the problem. The difference between a problem in terms of one's self

or someone else (first- vs. third-person framing or as political issue from a different country) has been shown to increase psychological distance (ego-decentering) and thereby improve wise reasoning (see Grossmann, 2017; Grossmann & Kross, 2014). Moreover, this distancing reduces physiological reactivity measured by heart-rate variability (Grossmann, Sahdra, & Ciarrochi, 2016). When thinking about a problem in terms of someone else, rather than one's self, people are able to make wiser judgments and this appears to be related to reduced physiological reactivity, suggesting that the shift in perspective through language increases emotional self-regulation. Similarly even imagining talking to a friend about a problem before responding (Staudinger & Baltes, 1996) puts a problem into a communicative context that may be less egocentric. This means that, through language, problems can be framed to distance oneself from the potential emotional impact of a problem. Similarly, a cognitive reappraisal of a problem in which a person explicitly reframes a situation to be less dire has substantial benefits for self-regulation and solving problems (Gross, 1998; Webb, Miles, & Sheeran, 2012). Clearly one needs to know what to do, using language to reframe a problem in the third person or as less dire, and one needs to practice this as a skill.

Speakers of a second language can reframe a problem effectively for self-regulation as well. Research comparing decision-making in one's native language compared to a foreign language demonstrates clearly that problems framed in a foreign language affect the choices people make (Hayakawa, Costa, Foucart, & Keysar, 2016). Moral decisions made in a foreign language appear to be more utilitarian (Costa et al., 2014). People are more willing to sacrifice one person to save many in moral decision-making. Of course, whether this is wise will depend on the situation but the ability to evaluate a difficult problem to see solutions that are more utilitarian as opposed to taking a knee-jerk response offers the possibility of wiser reasoning. Moreover, it appears that this change in moral reasoning happens not because people become more deontological but because the negative emotional impact of an imagined action is reduced using a foreign language (Hayakawa, Tannenbaum, Costa, Corey, & Keysar, 2017). Using a foreign language during reasoning allows people to take more strategic risks (Hayakawa, Lau, Holtzmann, Costa, & Keysar, 2017), which makes sense if the

negative affective impact of risks is reduced using a foreign language. Just as ego-decentering (Grossmann, 2017) allows a more reasoned and less affectively impulsive response, being able to assess risks strategically means less impulsive responding and more distanced and reasoned responding. This is important because it suggests that people can better balance risks and benefits (cf. Sternberg, 2013) when thinking about a problem in a foreign language, suggesting switching to a foreign language is a skill that can aid wiser reasoning. While this particular approach depends on the level of skill one has in the foreign language to understand the complexities of a problem, it also demonstrates the more general principle that ego-decentering can be achieved by a variety of means and thus aid in wiser reasoning.

However, the use of language as part of the skill of wiser reasoning is not confined to self-regulation. Compassion is an important civic virtue that is relevant for hate speech. Increasing compassion for others should reduce the propensity toward negative affect for those others and thereby reduce the use of hate speech. As with self-regulation, compassion also appears to have an aspect that is like a skill. Previous research has shown that training in loving-kindness meditation has previously been shown to increase compassion (Condon, Desbordes, Miller, & DeSteno, 2013; Leiberg, Klimecki, & Singer, 2011). In loving-kindness meditation, there is a specific script of language that is being used. We asked if simply listening to this language would increase compassion for others (Williams, Poljacik, Decety, & Nusbaum, 2017). In the language used in this kind of meditation, attention is focused on thoughts of compassion and love for self and others, but in our study no mention was made of meditation at all. The language of loving-kindness meditation was spoken to one group and for comparison, a second group listened to safety and health language that was not focused on compassion and love for self and others. To assess the effects of language, we used a task of rating the pain (as depicted in images) for oneself and for others (e.g., Decety, Skelly, & Kiehl, 2013). Typically, people rate the pain for oneself higher than for others, and this is the behavior shown by the control group. However, exposure to loving-kindness language without any meditation produced greater compassion for others than for oneself. While we did not test the duration of this effect, it is also possible that

a practice of listening to the language every day might yield enduring effects on compassion.

Self-regulation and compassion for others, as demonstrated with loving-kindness mediation language, are just two examples of virtues that are important for wise reasoning and also important for reducing hate speech. Providing the appropriate language experiences for people, either in an educational setting or in public messages could be very helpful as they have been in public health campaigns such as reducing smoking. It is apparent that language can change the way we experience a problem, the way we think about other people, the way we understand a situation. The way we use language can connect us to or distance us from the potential impact of choices, perhaps give us other perspectives, illuminate insights through metaphor, and move others to act. Thus, even beyond the information we can learn from a narrative or a speech, we can be moved or motivated, excited or calmed, and see the world differently. Moreover, the regular use of language patterns—a practice that is used in some wisdom traditions changes brain structures consistent with increased memory capacity (Hartzell et al., 2016). Language use is therefore an experience that can shape other experiences as well as confer new perspectives and even possibly new abilities for wiser decision-making.

John F. Kennedy’s “Ask not what your country can do for you....” and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I have a dream....” affected listeners deeply but not only on the strengths of a good argument. And while all these speeches were delivered beautifully and from the heart, it is not the performance of these speeches alone that can move listeners to act on behalf of others. Performance alone cannot give substance to an empty message. These speeches do demonstrate the power of language as experience. Language is at the heart of the power of sermons and can reach across time and space to change minds, feelings, and behavior and so it follows that understanding language may affect components of wisdom such as increasing epistemic humility, reflection, perseverance, the willingness to engage intellectual struggle, or engage the moral virtues.

On the one hand, this suggests the use of language as a potential “tool” for practical wisdom. If the strategy of reframing a problem is understood well, any problem could be thought of through this lens

and then decision-making could become a little wiser. However, it is possible that with enough experience with this reframing process this may become internalized, making it more of a fluent skill. In this way, the local experience of self-distancing can improve practical wisdom for a particular problem and, over time, this practice may develop into a personal approach for making wiser decisions.

Wiser Government Policy and Law

Although legislation that makes hate speech a crime could have adverse consequences for society, there may still be different kinds of approaches in terms of public policy that could work to reduce hate speech. Just as the leaders of a country can use the bully pulpit to encourage hate speech, the President and other elected officials can set an entirely different tone that models compassion, civility, and fairness. Rather than holding rallies that encourage aggression and anger, politicians could hold rallies that work to increase tolerance and acceptance of others who are different, model perspective-taking and epistemic humility, and engage in reflection rather than impulsive behavior. Rhetoric can motivate, support, and encourage and increase compassion and concern for others and speeches can build purpose whether it is the often quoted “I have a dream” speech from Rev. Martin Luther King 1963, (<https://www.archives.gov/files/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>) or the “Ask not what your country can do for you” speech from John F. Kennedy’s (1961, <http://www.ushistory.org/documents/ask-not.htm>) Inaugural Address. Such speech can move hearts and minds to act on behalf of society. And government agencies could adopt policies that are grounded in the civic virtues, placing these above other kinds of operating principles, thereby assuring the public of the importance of these virtues as guidance for government action.

Town-hall meetings have been used by politicians to learn about their constituents’ thoughts and concerns. However, town-hall meetings could be held by local governments as a way of holding open deliberative forums about problems that otherwise would fester and cause resentment. There is a concern generally that such public

meetings do not lead to belief change. But research has shown that if such meetings are held in a specific orchestrated way, there can be positive benefits in changing beliefs, finding compromise, and promoting effective deliberation (Jacobs, Cook, & Carpini, 2009). When there is an expert moderator who controls the flow of conversation, when speakers are admonished to support their statements with empirical evidence, and when speakers are expected to maintain civility in their discourse, there are positive outcomes from such deliberation. Although there is a presumption that town halls are venues for dissent and disagreement, local governments could sponsor such deliberative town halls that could lead to be better understanding of different groups and increased fairness.

Furthermore, we know that incentives work better to motivate behavior than does punishment. Thus, there can be a disconnect between laws that are intended to regulate hate speech and the manifestation of aggression against the same groups in those societies. An alternative would be for government policies to be put in place that serve to “nudge” more compassionate, civil, and fair interactions between groups. Rather than impose draconian threats and punishments, incentives for positive behavior could have a beneficial effect on civic virtues manifest in society.

Conclusion

The tension that exists in societies between the worst impulses of people and the manifestations of cooperation and civil interactions depends in large part on the strength of civic virtues of civility, compassion, and fairness. When the civic virtues are strong, the worst impulses may be checked but when the virtues are weakened, the worst impulses may be acted upon. Those worst aspects of people as manifest in hate speech work against the civic virtues and erode respect and justice and lead to increased aggression and violence. Rational-legal approaches such as the regulation of hate speech do not solve the problem and may simply increase resentment and hide from view the ugly truth of certain attitudes.

The wise approach is to find ways of addressing the underlying causes of hate speech and to establish policies that encourage open dialog and deliberation. Although encouraging debate and dialog seems risky and inviting of hate speech, when carried out in the appropriate venue it can lead to increased understanding and compromise. It is important to consider what kinds of policies can work to reduce the festering of resentment, to increase understanding of other groups, and to increase contact and interaction between groups.

The wise approach also entails trying to increase the civic virtues of civility, compassion, and fairness that are undermined by hate speech. If we consider wisdom and the virtues as skills (Russell, 2015) rather than immutable traits, it is possible to find ways of providing the training needed to increase these. The way language is used has a substantial effect on thinking, feeling, and how we understand and interact with others. This can serve as the basis for providing some of the experiences that may start to increase the strength of the civic virtues and in doing so, may also increase wise reasoning more generally.

Tiberius (2008) has suggested it is possible that one may cultivate wisdom by practicing self- and other-reflection. By understanding the underpinnings of wisdom, it may be possible to develop interventions or classroom practices that cultivate wise reasoning. Increased wise reasoning should also increase the civic virtues and therefore diminish hate speech. In this way, practical wisdom can help build a more civil society through prosocial reflection about civility, perspective-taking for fairness, and compassion in social interaction and engagement.

Acknowledgements Preparation of this chapter was supported by the John Templeton Foundation and the University of Chicago Center for Practical Wisdom.

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6

“Hate Begets Hate; Violence Begets Violence”: A Wisdom-Based Analysis of Contemporary Social Activism

Nic M. Weststrate

Contemporary Lessons from Historical Exemplars of Wisdom

When imagining how wisdom could be applied to contemporary world problems, it seems important to first reflect on how wisdom and wise people have positively influenced our world in the past. Although wise leaders are presently in short supply, our world has known many extraordinary figures of wisdom, considered wise not only for what they were able to achieve, but for how they achieved it. Thus, the point of departure for this chapter will be, first, to identify historical exemplars of wisdom and, second, to explore their shared characteristics, commitments, philosophies, and activities for lessons that can be applied to the problems of today.

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_6

By now, a number of studies have investigated people's conceptions of wisdom (see Weststrate, Bluck, & Glück, 2019), both in the abstract sense (e.g., general definitions of wisdom, traits of a prototypically wise person) and in the real world (e.g., specific exemplars of wisdom, situations involving wise thought or action). In exemplar studies, research participants are typically asked to nominate, and sometimes describe, wise people who are either personally known to them (e.g., Denney, Dew, & Kroupa, 1995; Glück, Bischof, & Siebenhüner, 2012; König & Glück, 2012) or well-known public figures (Jason et al., 2001; Paulhus, Wehr, Harms, & Strasser, 2002; Weststrate, Ferrari, & Ardel, 2016). Examining people's ideas about historical wisdom exemplars, particularly those who were influential public figures, may be especially instructive when it comes to answering the central question posed by this book (see Zagzebski, 2017). In addition to people's perceptions, there is a wealth of historical knowledge about real-world wisdom exemplars available for analysis, which may illuminate how these figures were able to wisely manage complicated, messy situations that resemble some of the problems we face today. Studies about decontextualized, abstract conceptions of wisdom, on the other hand, may tend toward overly idealistic portrayals of wisdom that have not stood the test of experience.

With that said, even real-world exemplars are idealized, to a degree, in our collective memory of them. Many of the people who are remembered as paragons of wisdom led private lives that were much more troubled and much less wise than their public personas. What people remember about a wisdom exemplar is based in reality, but it is not an exact replication of their life as lived. This memory is a selective and imaginative reconstruction of a life that bears some psychological significance to the rememberer, be that a person or society (McAdams, 2001). Perhaps it is better to think of any given historical wisdom exemplar as a character in a collected story (Schiff, Noy, & Cohler, 2001); a story that is much more limited, and perhaps quite different, than the exemplar's actual biography. When researchers tap into people's perceptions of wisdom exemplars, they are accessing a combination of historical truth and narrative truth (Spence, 1982), both of which are psychologically important. Individuals who strive to emulate wisdom exemplars do so based on what they remember the exemplar doing, not on what

the exemplar actually did. In this chapter, I draw upon both historical artifacts from the lives of wisdom exemplars (e.g., speeches, writings) and people’s collected stories about the exemplars, remembered from the perspective of today.

Three Paragons of Wisdom

Who are these extraordinarily wise people? Although studies about famous wisdom exemplars are few, the results are consistent across investigations, even when conducted over a decade apart (Paulhus et al., 2002; Weststrate et al., 2016). Three people who appear at the top of every wisdom nominee list are Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Seeking a deeper understanding of what is considered so wise about these particular individuals, in one study, my colleagues and I asked people to describe their nominee’s wisdom, to speculate as to how they became so wise, and to tell a story that exemplifies their wisdom (Weststrate et al., 2016; see also Ferrari et al., 2016). As a second step, we asked a new sample of adults to rate the 13 highest frequency exemplars in our previous study for their similarity to one another. We then used these similarity ratings to conduct a multidimensional scaling analysis, which allowed us to statistically group exemplars into clusters based on spatial proximity in a plot, with clusters representing underlying prototypes of wisdom. This procedure yielded three clusters of exemplars. Based on an analysis of the stories provided by our original participants, in combination with our own historical knowledge about the exemplars in each cluster, we proposed three prototypes of wisdom: practical, philosophical, and benevolent. The highest frequency exemplars—Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr—were all members of the benevolent wisdom prototype. Thus, the first lesson from history is this: Especially wise leaders are benevolent.

Benevolent wisdom exemplars were described by participants as compassionate, caring, empathetic, nonjudgmental, morally righteous, spiritual, and self-sacrificing. They were deeply committed to promoting the welfare of others and to minimizing the suffering of humankind,

often at their own expense. All but one of the exemplars in this cluster were imprisoned or killed for their cause. The other two members of the benevolent wisdom cluster were Saint Teresa of Calcutta (formerly Mother Teresa) and Nelson Mandela. Themes of benevolence correspond with theoretical models of wisdom that emphasize concern for the common good as a core characteristic and motivation of wise people (Ardelt, 2003; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Glück & Bluck, 2013; Levenson, Jennings, Aldwin, & Shiraishi, 2005; Sternberg, 1998; Webster, 2007). From this, we can conclude that a wise solution to any problem of today will necessarily prioritize compassionate concern for the common good, rather than one's own personal good.

The Shared Legacy of Jesus, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr

Among their many contributions to society, Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr were social activists. Jesus advocated for the welfare of the most vulnerable members of society, including the poor, homeless, orphaned, sick, widowed, and alien. Gandhi fought racial persecution faced by Indians in South Africa and later led the Indian independence movement against British rule. MLK Jr was a prominent leader of the Civil Rights Movement for racial equality in the United States. According to the stories told about Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr in our study of wisdom exemplars (Weststrate et al., 2016), having a noble cause was only part of the reason they were considered wise. The second lesson from history: It is not only *what* you fight for, but *how* you fight that matters. In other words, *ends* do not justify *means*. Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr were united in the method they used to realize their visions of social equality, namely, by employing the joint ethical principles of nonmaleficence and beneficence, which I will discuss in further detail shortly. To accept these principles as wise, we need only take a quick look into the life and times of Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr.

Jesus Christ is widely remembered for spreading a message of love in his teachings. Jesus's Sermon on the Mount found in the Gospel of Matthew, first book of the New Testament, provides two powerful

examples, both of which would later influence the philosophies of Gandhi and MLK Jr. First, Jesus proclaimed, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." (Matthew 5:38, New International Version). On the surface, this teaching seems to suggest that we should submit to violence rather than resist it, but in a somewhat deeper reading of this quote, Jesus is merely petitioning us to respond to violence through some nonviolent means. Jesus understood the cyclical nature of violence—that an act of violence in itself justifies a retaliatory act of violence and so on. Within each of us is the potential to either perpetuate or disrupt the cycle of violence, depending on our motivation and ability to suppress the impulse to retaliate. This level of emotional regulation is challenging for the average person. As with many things, the wise response to violence is, for many people, the more challenging response.

Jesus went on to say, "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Matthew 5:43–44). If controlling the impulse to retaliate is challenging, to love one's enemy must seem, for many of us, a total impossibility. Again, an extreme interpretation of this quote may be unwarranted. The word "love" is a particularly loaded term. Here, Jesus is referring to a type of love that aligns with compassion for all of humankind, including one's enemy, regardless of whether or not such feelings are reciprocated. It is a love of other people for their own sake. This unconditional, selfless type of love is referred to as *agape* in the New Testament and is not to be confused with *eros*, the affectionate or romantic type of love. Jesus is asking for a paradigm shift in how most of us think about the people on the other side of enemy lines. In today's world, perpetrators of violence seem intent on demonizing and dehumanizing their opponents (e.g., by characterizing them as barbaric, uncivilized, or immoral) and, in doing so, internally justify and rationalize their heinous acts. Dehumanization enables a level of ethical disengagement that psychologically clears a person of their responsibility to uphold basic moral agreements, such as doing no harm to others (Bandura, 1999). To love

one's enemy without condition is to respect the inherent value and interrelatedness of all human life, regardless of differences in appearance, behavior, or belief.

Gandhi was influenced by many of the world's religions, including the teachings of Jesus, whom he considered to be one of the great teachers of humankind. Like Jesus, Gandhi understood the cyclical nature of violence. He once said, "A thing acquired by violence can be retained by violence alone, while one acquired by truth can be retained only by truth." (Gandhi, 1968, p. 311). The issue of "truth" was central to Gandhi's nonviolent creed, which he called *Satyagraha*. Gandhi first devised *Satyagraha* in South Africa to counteract racial injustice and then later used it to emancipate India from British colonial rule. Gandhi (1968, p. 107) defined his philosophy as follows:

Truth (Satya) implies love, and firmness (agraha) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement 'Satyagraha,' that is to say, the Force which is born of Truth and Love or non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase 'passive resistance,' in connection with it...

Satyagraha, then, is achieving social change through a forceful insistence on love. Tactically, Gandhi employed *Satyagraha* through mobilizing mass boycotts, marches, and protests (e.g., his 26-day Salt March to Dandi in 1930 to protest British taxation on salt production by locals), while maintaining a firm adherence to nonviolence. Gandhi opposed the idea that *Satyagraha* and "passive resistance" were synonymous on the basis that passive resistance could turn violent at any point, which is philosophically impossible in the case of *Satyagraha* because violence and love are "purely antagonistic forces" (Gandhi, 1968, p. 110). Thus, in Gandhi's view, passive resistance could be employed strategically rather than philosophically, and for an act of resistance to be considered *Satyagraha*, it must, by definition, originate from a philosophical commitment to love and truth. For Gandhi, Christian pacifism was consistent with *Satyagraha*. He argued, "Jesus Christ indeed has been acclaimed as the prince of passive resisters but I submit in that

case passive resistance must mean Satyagraha and Satyagraha alone" (Gandhi, 1968, p. 111). The underlying motivation of nonviolent action is crucially important because it separates the type of nonviolence promoted by Jesus and Gandhi, and later MLK Jr, from alternative modes of nonviolence, which is an issue that is revisited in the next section.

Like Gandhi's early activism in South Africa, MLK Jr dedicated himself to fighting racial discrimination in the United States. MLK Jr was heavily influenced by the spiritual ideals and nonviolent tactics of both Jesus and Gandhi (King, 1958). By the mid-1950s, laws in the United States requiring racial segregation in public schools and on city busses were ruled unconstitutional. This progress emboldened MLK Jr's crusade for racial equality, culminating in the pivotal March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, where MLK Jr delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial. Less than one year later, the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* was enacted, prohibiting racial discrimination in major aspects of public life, including voter registration, employment, and housing. That same year, MLK Jr was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his activism. An excerpt from MLK Jr's (1964) Nobel Lecture powerfully demonstrates his view about the use of violence in achieving social change:

Violence as a way of achieving racial justice is both impractical and immoral. I am not unmindful of the fact that violence often brings about momentary results. Nations have frequently won their independence in battle. But in spite of temporary victories, violence never brings permanent peace. It solves no social problem: it merely creates new and more complicated ones. Violence is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding: it seeks to annihilate rather than convert. Violence is immoral because it thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue. Violence ends up defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers.

In reading this quote, I cannot help but feel a deep sense of awe at MLK Jr's words. In my opinion, this is a cogent and compelling argument against the use of violence and reveals MLK Jr's exacting insight into fundamental aspects of human nature. Thematically, we see that MLK Jr's core ideas echo the wise words of Jesus and Gandhi, particularly with respect to the cycle of violence and the need for love and understanding.

The Principles of Nonmaleficence and Beneficence

In reflection upon the teachings of Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr, it becomes evident that their approach to social activism was based on two core ethical principles. The first principle that they embodied was the *principle of nonmaleficence*—the moral duty to do no harm or to minimize harm when pursuing the greater good. Nonmaleficence is an ethical principle that is discussed frequently in applied ethics, for example, as it relates to medical decision-making (e.g., Beauchamp, 2003; Beauchamp & Childress, 1979; Macklin, 2003). It might be tempting, and in some cases appropriate, to simply call this first precept the “principle of nonviolence,” given how closely nonviolence has been associated with figures like Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr. However, incongruous as it might seem, nonviolent resistance does not necessarily mean that no harm or minimal harm has been intended or caused, as we will see in the next section. In other words, the principle of nonmaleficence always implies nonviolence, but nonviolence does not necessarily imply nonmaleficence.

The second principle is the *principle of beneficence* (Beauchamp & Childress, 1979). Whereas nonmaleficence is the moral duty to do no harm, the principle of beneficence is the duty to do good or to maximize goodness for others, whatever that might mean in a particular time and place. Lesson from history number three: A wise approach to achieving lasting social change involves the joint application of these two principles. Most of us can easily accept the *prima facie* legitimacy of these principles at an abstract level; however, putting them into practice

can, at times, require great strength of character and insight. Part of wisdom entails knowing what is good (or harmful) within the context of the problem and balancing the impacts of any decision across multiple stakeholders (Sternberg, 1998). Although difficult to implement, these principles give people in our world today guideposts for acting wisely in challenging situations and a metric by which we can assess how wise a particular solution is to any social problem.

Differentiating Strategic and Philosophical Nonviolence

As I have just outlined, Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr have been closely associated with the practice of nonviolence; however, not all forms of nonviolence are equal and, I would argue, some forms are wiser than others to the extent that they align with the dual principles of non-maleficence and beneficence. Contemporary scholarship on nonviolent resistance defines it as, "...the application of unarmed civilian power using nonviolent methods such as protests, strikes, boycotts, and demonstrations, without using or threatening physical harm against the opponent" (Chenoweth & Cunningham, 2013, p. 271; see also Shock, 2013). In this variation, nonviolence is a pragmatic, strategic, or tactical approach to social change that is employed for purely instrumental reasons. In other words, strategic nonviolence is used by some social activists because it is simply more effective than violence at producing social change. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011) conducted a systematic analysis of 323 violent and nonviolent antiregime resistance campaigns between 1900 and 2006 (e.g., Iranian Revolution, First Palestinian Intifada, Philippine People Power Movement) and found that nonviolent campaigns were nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success when compared to violent campaigns. Moreover, the success rate of nonviolent campaigns has increased over time, whereas the efficacy of violent campaigns has decreased. Large-scale resistance campaigns aimed at overthrowing authoritarian regimes reflect a very specific type of world problem; nevertheless, these findings are illuminating and, I suspect, apply to social problems at more local levels.

In contrast to strategic nonviolence, Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr promoted nonviolence for philosophical reasons. For them, the practice of nonviolence was motivated by underlying moral commitments. Nonviolence was an ethical position about how we *should* relate to other people in our world, even when those people are perpetrators of violence toward us. Philosophical nonviolence is therefore based on the principles of nonmaleficence and beneficence, whereas strategic nonviolence, entails no commitment to loving one's enemy and can be pursued with hostility and hatred in one's heart. Despite not using or threatening physical harm, strategic nonviolence is often highly aggressive and confrontational, and can be intended to cause emotional or material (e.g., loss of property or status) harm. In their campaigns, Gandhi and MLK Jr managed to be incredibly strategic without intending to cause any type of harm, therefore preserving their moral convictions. Thus, philosophical nonviolence is nonviolent action that causes no harm whatsoever or greatly minimizes harm, because it is based on a moral commitment to compassion, understanding, and love. Figure 6.1 locates approaches

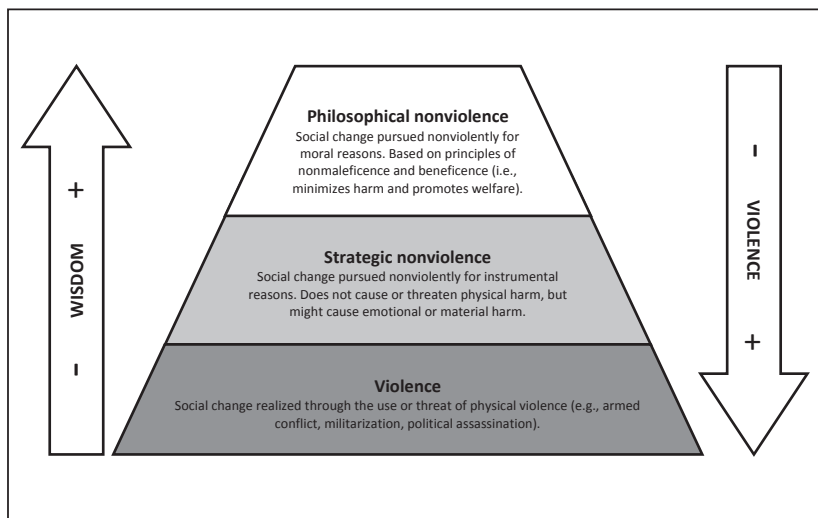


Fig. 6.1 Violent and nonviolent approaches to social change in relation to each other and continua of wisdom and violence

involving violence, strategic nonviolence, and philosophical nonviolence along the two continua of wisdom and violence, which themselves are inversely related.

Illustrative Case: Historical Variations in LGBT Nonviolent Activism

In the real world, it might make more sense to conceive of strategic and philosophical nonviolence as two extreme ends of a single continuum, rather than mutually exclusive practices. It should be possible to place any particular approach to social activism along this continuum. Within the context of the LGBT rights movement in the United States, early organizers in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the *Human Rights Campaign* and the *National Gay and Lesbian Task Force*, practiced a style of social activism that would be closer to the philosophical nonviolence end of the continuum. These groups relied on relatively conventional, assimilationist tactics that emphasized the *similarities* between LGBT people and heterosexuals as the basis for social change (Bernstein, 1997). Their goal was to foster mutual understanding between the LGBT and straight communities. Tactically, their approach was to cooperate with existing systems of change and encourage reform through the channels of public education and political lobbying (e.g., for anti-discrimination and human rights laws, recognition of same-sex marriage, removal of homophobic policies). This approach to social change had the long-game in mind, slowly amassing the social and political capital required to eventually realize their vision of equality.

Contrast this rather agreeable approach with a brand of social activism that gained traction in the 1990s, in the wake of the AIDS epidemic. Restless with the sluggish progress of the previous two decades, groups such as *AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP)* and *Queer Nation* were formed. These groups were, by definition, strategically non-violent; however, their methods were radical, militant, aggressive, and intensely confrontational. They wanted results and they wanted them

yesterday. If the earlier activists of the LGBT rights movement emphasized similarities between members of the LGBT and straight communities, these later groups boldly stressed their *differences*. Queer Nation coined the widely used slogan, “We’re here! We’re queer! Get used to it!”—which was more than just a slogan; it was an attitude. At the time, reclaiming the word “queer” itself was a shocking maneuver. Of the methods used by these groups, the most controversial was the practice of “outing”—that is, disclosing a prominent person’s sexual orientation without their consent, such as a celebrity or public official (Elwood, 1992; Guzman, 1995). Before the 1990s, outing was considered a morally reprehensible tactic used by homophobes and bigots. But groups like ACT UP and Queer Nation turned that idea on its head, and also turned on potential members of their own community, by putting up posters of allegedly closeted people’s faces in public spaces with captions like “Absolutely Queer” (Turque, 1991) or running stories in newspapers and magazines with broad readerships (Elwood, 1992). Outing was believed to advance the LGBT rights agenda and any harm caused to the outed person was collateral damage that the activists were willing to accept.

So, which approach is wiser? I am reminded of MLK Jr’s words about using violence as a means for achieving social justice: “[Violence] is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding” (King, 1964). These two flanks of the LGBT rights movement, one radical and one conventional, presumably had the same goal in mind; however, they disagreed on how to get there. The humiliation associated with a practice like outing could never be consistent with Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr’s vision of philosophical nonviolence because it caused emotional and material harm. In fact, it may indirectly cause physical harm as well, knowing that an outed person would be at much greater risk of physical violence in a society where homophobia was commonplace. Therefore, not all nonviolence is wise, and the approach taken by social activist groups like ACT UP and Queer Nation directly contravenes the principles of nonmaleficence and benevolence. Only philosophical nonviolence upholds these moral standards.

To be fair, these militant tactics were effective in securing important social changes for the LGBT community on a relatively quick timeline, although this does not necessarily make them wise (i.e., the end does not justify the means). Admittedly, the wise approach may be less successful, at least in the short run, than these other approaches. Yet, in the words of MLK Jr, quoted above, strategic nonviolence of this kind leads to “momentary results” and “temporary victories” but not “permanent peace.” MLK Jr further argued that such tactics, while expedient, can create “new and more complicated” problems in the longer term because they do not generate the buy-in needed for lasting change, which we so desperately need. Have social activists today gotten wiser and abandoned such aggressive practices? What does social activism look like in a digital age? I turn to these issues next.

Applying Lessons to Contemporary Social Activism

Most people would agree that we continue to live in a world divided and, sadly, the divisions run deep. Consequently, social activism is as important today as in the past. The remainder of this chapter will compare today’s dominant version of social activism to the ideals set by Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr. I will focus my attention on social activism as it is practiced in Western, industrialized nations, dealing with issues related to promoting social equality across groups of people who are divided along the lines of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics across which an arbitrary pattern of social dominance and marginalization persists.

Before I get to the heart of this issue, in the spirit of another great figure of wisdom, Socrates, I wish to acknowledge the limitations of the present analysis. The more I think about how to solve the problem of social inequality today, the less I seem to know about it, or rather, the more complicated the issue becomes. I wish to also acknowledge that my views on this issue are naturally influenced by my own subjectivity. Being born at a certain time and place and occupying a specific social

location in the world—white, cisgender male, gay, middle class—has influenced my engagement with these issues. So, take what I have to say with those caveats in mind. My hope is to contribute to the forward movement of an important and difficult conversation rather than to provide a magic solution.

Two Goals of Contemporary Social Activists

As I see it, contemporary social activists—a group in which I include myself—are motivated by at least two goals. First, we strive to create structural changes that will “even” the metaphorical “playing field” and, in turn, provide every person in society with an equal opportunity for success. Typically, calls for structural change involve legislative reforms, resource reallocation based on the principle of equity, and greater numbers of historically underrepresented people in positions of power.

In the last century, social activists have successfully lobbied for significant structural changes, leaving us with much to celebrate. Among these are the abolition of racial segregation laws, the installation of women’s voting rights, and the decriminalization of homosexuality. Anti-discrimination and human rights law are now commonplace in Western, industrialized nations. In addition to legislative changes, we have also seen the implementation of equity-based policies like affirmative action, differentiated taxation structures, and social welfare programs.

Structural change, however, is only one part of the social activist’s agenda. The second goal is to change people’s attitudes in the direction of greater tolerance, acceptance and, ideally, appreciation of diversity. The confusing and disheartening reality, however, is that structural changes are, I think, mostly uncorrelated with attitudinal change. As cynical as it sounds, governments do not endure the arduous and expensive process of making policy changes because they have suddenly become wiser about the issue of social inequality; no, they make change, and often the bare minimum, because of political pressure applied by lobbyists and interest groups. Structural changes do not necessarily represent evolving societal attitudes and values; in many cases, they simply

represent acquiescence to a vocal minority in an effort to appear “politically correct.” Thus, structural changes, while symbolizing progress, create an illusion of equality that masks a much more insidious problem existing at the individual rather than societal level, namely, deeply ingrained implicit and explicit prejudice.

While social activism has effectively galvanized many structural changes, it has been less successful, I think, when it comes to fundamentally shifting the ways that people think and feel about issues of diversity and social justice. There are at least two reasons for this. First, institutional structures are easier to change than deeply set prejudicial attitudes. Of course, structural change is difficult to achieve as well, mainly because people in positions of power typically profit from the status quo and, as we all know, bureaucratic processes are slow-moving and fairly resistant to change. Still, channels exist in democratic societies to make structural change, and such change can be clearly monitored, unlike people’s internal thoughts and feelings. Second, many activists assume that structural change will necessarily engender attitudinal change, so greater efforts are spent on the structural piece without paying attention to whether or not it has actually fostered attitudinal change in the desired direction. Here is where I think that we, as social activists, have made a fundamental mistake—we have failed to appreciate that the pursuit of structural change can have the exact opposite effect on attitudes than is intended, especially when these changes are pursued in particularly aggressive ways that leave people feeling guilty, defensive, and resentful.

Thus, structural change is only half the battle and may not even be the most important half. I would argue that structural change does not necessarily lead to desired attitudinal change, but the reverse is not equally true. Widespread positive changes in people’s attitudes will eventually lead to structural change. This begs the question, how do we change people’s attitudes in favor of social equality? By now, there is abundant literature coming from social psychology that demonstrates how difficult it is to reduce people’s prejudice, particularly when we want those changes to persist over time (see Lai et al., 2016). If we want to make a lasting attitudinal change, we need to take a wise approach, and to do that, we need to remember the lessons taught to us by Jesus,

Gandhi, and MLK Jr. Lasting social change comes from philosophically nonviolent tactics that are based on the principles of nonmaleficence and beneficence. Our approach can never aim to humiliate or defeat; instead, it must generate empathy and mutual understanding. How well are contemporary social activists currently faring in this regard? Spoiler: It is not good news.

The Problem with Social Activism Today: Too Much War and Too Little Wisdom

As I have said, I am worried that many contemporary attempts at social activism are failing to produce the level of attitudinal change that we so desperately need in our world today. It seems that militant social activism is currently enjoying a revitalization. Nowadays, many social activists approach structural and attitudinal change by using the twin tactics of “blame” and “shame.” That is, from a position of moral superiority, social activists first publicly accuse people or systems of being oppressive and then tell them that they should have known better all along. The blame-and-shame approach implicitly assumes that once aware of their prejudice, people will be naturally motivated to take responsibility for changing their own attitudes and behaviors (Pendry, Driscoll, & Field, 2007), which is a regrettably naïve perspective.

In light of their militant tactics, social activists of this ilk have been dubbed “Social Justice Warriors” or SJWs. This mode of contemporary social activism is flourishing in our digital age. In many cases, activism today amounts to publishing a post on social media, often anonymously, that accuses someone or something of racism, sexism, classism, or one of the other “isms.” A single incriminating, contextless tweet is all that is required for vigilante justice to be served. Forget about fundamental legal principles like the presumption of innocence and procedural justice, the Internet has become an extrajudicial space for public mobbing.

It is interesting to consider how technologies like the Internet can play a role in enabling or disabling wise forms of social activism. The Internet and social media have definitely elevated the reach of social

activists. In July 2018, the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag turned five years old. By that point, the hashtag had been used nearly 30 million times on Twitter, which is an average of 17,002 per day (Pew Research Center, 2018). Certainly, this means that social media is raising people's consciousness about critical social justice issues, but it is not necessarily changing people's attitudes in the desired direction. While about two-thirds of Americans believe that social media gives voice to underrepresented groups, an even larger group of people think that political engagement on social media "distracts people from issues that are truly important" (77%) and "makes people think they're making a difference when they really aren't" (71%; Pew Research Center, 2018, p. 10). Despite potential benefits, Internet and social media-based activism has been criticized as lazy, superficial, and disengaged. For this reason, online social activism has been given the irreverent nickname "slacktivism." Of course, this problem is probably not limited to the Internet or social media context, but the anonymity afforded by online environments is likely an enabling condition.

Raising collective awareness and holding people accountable for their prejudices is essential, but the method most commonly employed today is not only failing to inspire positive attitudinal change, it is also backfiring. The SJW approach seems to have inspired a reaction from an equally impassioned group, the so-called "Status Quo Warriors" or SQWs, who reject any form of censorship and control, and are extreme proponents of the individual right to freedom of speech, even that which many of us would call hate speech. If the policies endorsed by SJWs are characterized as extremely socially progressive, then the policies promoted by SQWs are, by equal measure, socially static, if not regressive.

To be clear, it is not my goal to position one of these groups as good and the other as bad. As long as one exists, the other will continue to exist, and as long as both exist, we are in deep trouble. We have a situation of extreme polarization that is self-perpetuating. Neither side listens to the other side with the goal of truly understanding their perspective; they listen with the intent to argue, chastise, and convert. It's a futile system of exchange that does more harm than good because it deepens divisions rather than healing them. Moreover, in their

extremity, both positions lack the complexity and nuance needed for application in the real world, and therefore neither position could be said to be wise. In these debates, a wise person would probably occupy some middle ground, remaining flexible and responsive to the particulars of any given problem, rather than doubling down on their initial position for the sake of winning their metaphorical war. As in actual war, SJWs and SQWs think in terms of winning and losing, rather than in terms of compromise or truth-seeking. Of course, by focusing on these two extreme positions, I have oversimplified the situation. There are many people “in between.” Unfortunately, the people in between are put off by the equally militant approaches of the SJWs and SQWs and are, therefore, understandably quiet in the conflict-zone-like online spaces that SJWs and SQWs tend to monopolize.

And so it goes: The SJWs and SQWs make war, with the Internet and social media as their primary battlefield. Although these groups do not typically use or threaten physical violence as part of their activist strategy, the violent image of a “Warrior” is not lost on me. These groups could never be considered philosophically nonviolent, as advocated for by Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr, because they aim to humiliate and defeat, and fail to promote mutual understanding across enemy lines.

Illustrative Case: Twitter Response to Amber Alerts by Edmonton Police Service

Take, for example, the following tweets made in response to an Amber Alert issued by the Edmonton Police Service in Alberta, Canada on October 5, 2018 concerning an abducted child, who they described as “mulatto.” For the worried reader, the girl was found “safe” 20 minutes after the Alert went out. Context-wise, “mulatto” is an outdated term, considered offensive, that is used to describe mixed-race people, particularly people with one black and one white parent. See Table 6.1 for a selection of tweets presented in three thematic groups and discussed next.

The types of comments in Table 6.1 are ubiquitous on the Internet and social media. If you read the comment section of any even semi-polarizing news article, you will see a similar pattern of response.

Table 6.1 Tweets in response to an Amber Alert issued by the Edmonton Police Service, Alberta, Canada

Category	Verbatim tweets
Inflammatory tweets (SJWs)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wait, did that amber alert really include the word "mulatto"? Maybe we should let grandpa retire from writing these 2. Seriously? Who came back from 1970 and told you that term was appropriate? Be better, this makes me wonder what other outdated biases your [organization] holds 3. The term mulatto is a racial slur. It is offensive and should not be used to describe someone of mixed race. Disappointing to see this coming from police
Retaliatory tweets (SQWs)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. You have to be kidding me. Grow some balls. There's nothing wrong with that word. Next you will be saying that the word "toast" is offensive 5. A dark-haired, nonbinary, gender fluid, multiracial human being has been abducted. No further information can be provided as it will offend multiple Social Justice Warriors 6. @edmontonpolice ignore those snowflakes complaining about the word used in an emergency situation. Keep up the good work
Relatively wise tweet (neither SJW nor SQW)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. "Mulatto" is a word that is derived from "mule." "Mulatto" is a word that was used to describe me and people like me for easily more than half my life. To see the @edmontonpolice use the term in an Amber Alert is problematic but it's a correctable problem

The authors of the first set of tweets (1–3) would be considered SJWs. The first two tweets use sarcastic incredulity to shame the Edmonton Police Service for using an outdated term. The second two tweets have notes of accusation and admonition, both of which convey a strong sense of moral superiority. Only the third tweet in this group has a whisper of educational value by naming the word *mulatto* as a "racial slur," but this is quickly followed by an attempt at guilt induction ("Disappointing to see this..."), which undermines the educational value.

The second set of tweets (4–6) are responses to the first set. The first tweet in this group is outright aggressive (“Grow some balls.”) and defensive (“There’s nothing wrong with that word.”). The second tweet dismissively satirizes the typical style of inclusive language used by SJWs and references their alleged oversensitivity, as does the final tweet by referring to SJWs as “snowflakes.” Snowflake is a newly minted pejorative term that now appears in the Collins English Dictionary as, “A person, especially a young person, viewed as lacking resilience and being excessively prone to taking offence.” (snowflake, n.d.).

The hostility and rivalry between the SJWs and SQWs is a very serious social problem. Presumably, the goal of the SJWs was to inform, enlighten, or inspire the Edmonton Police Service, and possibly other readers, to be more inclusive with its language use. They were at least partially successful in this venture, because the Edmonton Police Service later issued an apology which stated that through working with its Equity, Diversity, and Human Rights Section, it will ensure that future messaging will reflect its commitment to respect and dignity. This could count as an example of positive structural change. At the level of attitudinal change, however, the tweets coming from the SJWs were, in my opinion, a miserable failure. The tactics of blame and shame do not change people’s attitudes because they are inherently accusatory and belittling, and therefore incite defensiveness and retaliatory acts. Consequently, they reinforce and deepen divisions between groups of people. I am reminded of the idea that when parents yell, children don’t listen. When parents speak softly, children strain to hear every word. Attitudinal change is a delicate process, whereas blame and shame are blunt instruments akin to yelling at a child. In the end, Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr would be, I think, disappointed. First, the cycle of violence continues, as people volley aggressive and insulting tweets back and forth. Second, there is no measure of understanding between these two groups of people, with such antagonism precluding any chance for constructive conversation about the issue at hand. As MLK Jr (1964) said, “[Violence] leaves society in monologue rather than dialogue.” A wiser approach is needed.

The final tweet, presented in a category of its own, was exceptional among the initial responses to the Edmonton Police Service’s Amber Alert. In just 49 words, this tweet achieves a great deal. First, it does

not accuse, shame, or judge the Edmonton Police Service. It makes clear that the problem with the Amber Alert is the use of an outdated term; the problem is not the Police Service itself. The author manages to say that the Police Service's word use is a "correctable problem" without sounding condescending. Second, it makes an honest attempt at education by exposing the etymology of the outdated word. Third, and most importantly, the author tells a personal story, albeit briefly. She connects the word "mulatto" to her own lived experience by indicating that people have used this word in the past to describe her and people like her with clear subtext suggesting that the usage of the term on those occasions was experienced as hurtful and oppressive. It's remarkable that the author of this tweet had such a personal connection to the word yet managed to maintain a degree of neutrality. It is possible that the author of this tweet knew that constructive dialogue would require a degree of self-restraint. Before speaking our minds in a space like Twitter, as social activists, I believe it is incumbent upon us to first ask ourselves how we would realistically expect the intended audience to receive our comment, and whether or not that reaction will bring us closer to our goal of positive attitudinal change. A single tweet is a potential entry point into a constructive conversation, but only if approached in a wise way.

I understand that it seems somewhat unjust to ask a disenfranchised person to censor their anger in the spirit of social change and, in doing so, make a concession to someone who presumably has more power or privilege than them. But, as Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr. have demonstrated, sometimes self-sacrifice is needed to realize a bigger vision. As Gandhi proclaimed, "Rivers of blood may have to flow before we gain our freedom, but it must be our blood." (as cited in Wofford, 1958, p. 32). Similarly, MLK Jr (1958) wrote, "The nonviolent resister is willing to accept violence if necessary, but never to inflict it." (p. 103). Entering into constructive dialogue might require that a person tolerate intolerance before that intolerance can be transformed into acceptance and appreciation. I am humbled by the courage of Gandhi and MLK Jr, who were imprisoned, assaulted, and ultimately assassinated for their cause. They saw their personal suffering as secondary to the suffering of their people. Their sacrifices created a better world. And so, like the wise social activists before us, we will all need to make sacrifices in order to heal the divisions that we face today.

Rewriting the Story Through Sharing Stories

In the end, with the way things are going, I am not overly optimistic that the Internet or social media will catalyze positive attitudinal change in the direction of greater tolerance, acceptance, and appreciation of diversity. For this to be possible, online environments will need to be restructured in such a way that encourages the kinds of interpersonal interactions that are known to facilitate attitude change. For example, based on the intergroup contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), new research has shown that Internet-based interactions between outgroup members via text and video can lead to reductions in prejudice (e.g., Amichai-Hamburger & McKenna, 2006; White, Harvey, & Abu-Rayya, 2015; White, Verrelli, Maunder, & Kervinen, 2018), albeit under highly structured circumstances (e.g., students of equal status working collaboratively on a task to achieve a common goal that is endorsed by an authority figure). This very special type of contact lacks ecological validity and rarely, if ever, occurs spontaneously in online spaces. Still, these findings justify further research into more naturalistic forms of electronic contact that might facilitate the promotion of favorable attitudes toward diversity and social justice.

In the meantime, attitudinal change may have to come in a different venue. More and more, diversity education programs are being offered in school, community, and workplace settings. If implemented wisely, these programs have great potential for changing people's attitudes (see Bezrukova, Spell, Perry, & Jehn, 2016). The trouble with these programs is that they are often marketed as "anti-bias" or "anti-oppression training," which immediately runs the risk of inducing guilt and, in turn, compromises the effectiveness of the program before it even begins (Pendry et al., 2007).

My recommendation for the future of diversity education is to take the idea of a story-centered curriculum seriously (Schank & Berman, 2006). Presenting logical arguments and sharing statistics are not so good at changing people's deeply set attitudes, but stories might be (Pendry et al., 2007). Storytelling has a long tradition of use as a

pedagogical tool in the areas of moral development and moral education (Mitchell, 2010; Tappan & Brown, 1989; Vitz, 1990). Stories invite people, however briefly, to view the world from a different vantage point, possibly one that is quite different from their own (Mar & Oatley, 2008). Stories that are rich in detail, vivid imagery, and heartfelt emotion encourage perspective-taking by transporting the listener into the storyteller's narrative world (Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000).

More than just perspective-taking, storytelling can promote *experience-taking*, defined as "the imaginative process of spontaneously assuming the identity of a character in a narrative and simulating that character's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, goals, and traits as if they were one's own" (Kaufman & Libby, 2012, p. 1).

Experience-taking has been linked with more favorable attitudes toward homosexuals and African Americans (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). Perspective-taking has been associated with higher levels of empathy and prosocial behavior, and decreases in stereotypic processing and in-group favoritism (e.g., Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). From a process viewpoint, Coke et al. (1978) argued that perspective-taking first leads to empathic concern which in turn encourages helping behavior. It is reasonable to expect then that sharing stories across diverse peoples might encourage cognitive and behavioral change in the direction of social equality through perspective- and experience-taking (see Ferrari, Weststrate, & Petro, 2013).

Before these ideas are translated into policy, more research is needed into the potential for positive attitudinal change through storytelling within a context like a diversity education seminar. Many of us have had the experience of listening to so-called victim impact speakers share stories in a high school assembly, such as a mother telling the story of the son she lost to a drunk driver or a holocaust survivor sharing the horrors of life under the rule of the Third Reich. Despite their emotional intensity, these types of stories, I think, have limited lasting impact on audiences. This could be because they violate one of the contact hypothesis' main conditions, which is that members in such an exchange must have equal status (i.e., share similar qualities and

characteristics). The further apart the individuals are in age or experience, the less impact storytelling is expected to have. Thus, diversity educators who are working with high school students, for example, might consider how to draw out, in some safe and structured manner, the stories that are already in the room. Hearing a peer tell a story about a personal experience with discrimination might be particularly potent when it comes to attitudinal change, especially because the storyteller and listeners have a sustained relationship once the seminar ends. Further research will need to identify the additional conditions that must be put in place to induce high-quality experience-taking that leads to attitudinal and behavioral change through peer-based storytelling. Secondary and post-secondary educational environments are well-positioned for this type of work, because this is likely where exposure to diversity is at its peak in the course of a typical life and the developmental timing might make people especially open-minded to diverse perspectives.

Conclusion

Speaking of stories, when I was quite young, my aunt and uncle bought me a book about Greek mythology. I treasured that book and the stories held within it. I especially loved the stories about Athena, the Goddess of wisdom and war. It was not until much later that I realized the two halves of Athena were completely irreconcilable. How is it possible that a Goddess of wisdom could simultaneously be the Goddess of war? To my mind, war is a terribly unwise business, in large part, because it relies on violence and is therefore immoral and self-perpetuating. Jesus, Gandhi, and MLK Jr reminded us of this lesson, although somewhere along the way we managed to forget it. As contemporary social activists, we must remember to heed the wise words of MLK Jr: “Hate begets hate; violence begets violence; toughness begets greater toughness. *We must meet the forces of hate with the power of love*” (Washington, 1986, p. 17, emphasis added).

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7

Can Moral Exemplars Promote Wisdom?

Megan Mischinski and Eranda Jayawickreme

In recent years, many psychological perspectives focused on defining and assessing wisdom have developed (Glück, 2018). Wisdom can be defined as the traits and skills characteristic of generative behavior and reflective knowledge (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016), and such traits and skills are vital for the development of healthy societies (Sternberg, 2018). However, are the skills of wisdom sufficient to explain the actions of individuals who lived their lives in a morally exceptional manner? In other words, is wisdom a critical tool for moral exemplarity, or do moral exemplars provide crucial insights into the nature of wisdom? Moreover, can narratives of moral exemplars help promote wisdom? In the present chapter, we present a brief overview of current models of wisdom in

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psychological research and evaluate the life histories of a number of historical individuals frequently identified as moral exemplars for manifestations of wisdom. We subsequently discuss the utility of moral exemplar narratives for the promotion of wisdom, as well as the implications of these moral exemplars for how wisdom is currently conceptualized.

The Many Faces of Wisdom

As Glück (2018) has noted, there are almost as many dimensions of wisdom as there are wisdom researchers. This multiplicity of perspectives is a likely consequence of the nebulous nature of the term itself. The fact that there is no consensual definition of wisdom in the psychological literature (Ardelt, 2003; Walsh, 2015) complicates our ability to speak coherently about the nature of wisdom as well as its interpersonal and societal consequences. Here we follow Yang (2008) and Jayawickreme and Blackie (2016) in identifying at least four distinct perspectives on wisdom.¹

A number of psychological approaches to wisdom conceptualize it in terms of **specific personality characteristics or traits** rather than as a unified construct. In an early review, Holliday and Chandler (1986) identified exceptional understanding, judgment and communication skills, general competence, interpersonal skills, and social unobtrusiveness as key dimensions of wisdom. Ardel's (2008) conceptualization of wisdom defined it as a personality characteristic that integrates cognitive, reflective, and affective personality qualities. Grossmann (2017) specified four distinct skills: intellectual humility, recognizing uncertainty and change, integrating different perspectives, and seeking out other perspectives. Glück and Bluck (2014) claim that wisdom is an outcome of four resources: mastery, openness, reflectivity, and emotional regulation and empathy (MORE). People can develop these resources by seeking wisdom-fostering experiences and dealing with

¹The following section adapts a discussion first presented in Jayawickreme and Blackie (2016, chapter 5).

challenges in their own and others' lives in a manner that promotes wisdom (such as reflecting on memories of past events and using the power of hindsight in ways that shape their future plans and goals in positive ways).

Some researchers have also posited single dimensions as being central to wisdom. For example, secondary control (Helzer & Jayawickreme, 2015) involves the regulation of one's cognitions or reactions to the world, typically in the service of accepting present circumstances and adjusting the self to accommodate those circumstances (Morling & Evered, 2006). Secondary control stands in contrast to primary control, which involves behaviors aimed at changing the world to fit the desires or needs of the self (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982). Developing the skills of secondary control involves a diverse number of strategies, including cognitive restructuring, positive thinking, acceptance, and even distraction from a stressor (Connor-Smith, Compas, Wadsworth, Thomsen, & Saltzman, 2000). The development of the ability to utilize the skills of primary and secondary control has been central to some definitions of wisdom (e.g. Birren & Fisher, 1990).

Researchers in developmental psychology have defined wisdom either as **the optimal end stage of human development** (Erikson, 1950) or as psychological capacities that emerge after advanced cognitive structures have been developed (Yang, 2008). Labouvie-Vief (1990, 2000) has alternatively argued that that the development of wisdom is based on intellectual development across the lifespan. Kramer (1990, 2000) has argued that wisdom is a capacity that develops from the process of reflecting on and grappling with important existential life issues.

Erikson's (1950) approach to wisdom has also been conceptualized in terms of the development of related personality and character traits, such as humility. (Tangney, 2000). A humble person has an accurate self-appraisal of one's personality resulting from "an enduring commitment to constructing a self-conception that is responsive to the truth and to our ideals" (Tiberius, 2008, p. 125). An individual high in the trait of humility is therefore capable of tolerating and accepting weaknesses alongside an appreciation of her strengths non-defensively, and without any self-aggrandizing biases (Exline, 2008). Humility is associated with increased forgiveness, generosity, helpfulness, and better

social relationships, and has been associated with reduced trait levels of neuroticism and narcissism (Exline & Hill, 2012). Kesebir (2014) has further noted the relationship between the trait of humility and the notion of a “quiet ego,” defined as a perspective on life that enables a balance between concerns for the self and others, a compassionate and interdependent view of the self, and a tendency toward personal growth (Wayment & Bauer, 2008).

Wisdom researchers have also focused on humility in specific domains, such as intellectual humility (Grossmann, 2017; McElroy, et al., 2014). Given that wisdom has been conceptualized in terms of unbiased thought (Brienza, Kung, Santos, Bobocel, & Grossmann, 2017), intellectual humility has been posited as a core component of wisdom (Grossmann, 2017; Tiberius, 2016; Whitcomb, Battaly, Baehr, & Howard-Snyder, 2015; Zachry, Phan, Blackie, & Jayawickreme, 2018). Intellectual humility has been conceptualized as a disposition to be alert to, admit to, and take responsibility for cognitive limitations and mistakes (Whitcomb et al., 2015). Of note, such a disposition both allows individuals to be open to and accepting of other individuals’ perspectives, and further facilitates epistemic humility about value commitments and affective states of knowledge.

The Berlin Wisdom model proposed by Baltes and colleagues (Baltes & Smith, 1990; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003; Smith, Staudinger & Baltes, 1994) applies wisdom to life planning, life management, and life review, and is manifested as **an expert level of knowledge in the fundamental pragmatics of life** (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). Similar to developmental views, wisdom is thought to be the result of intellectual change in cognitive functions during adulthood and old age. Thus, the core of wisdom consists of knowledge one accumulates through employing those intellectual functions in domains related to dealing with human affairs (Baltes, Dittmann-Kohli, & Dixon, 1984; Baltes & Smith, 1990). In the Berlin paradigm, wisdom consists of (1) factual knowledge about life and lifespan development, (2) procedural knowledge about how to live life and deal with life problems, (3) knowledge about the contexts of life and their dynamics (e.g. the fact that life is made up of different themes and contexts, such as education, family, work, friends, the good of society; and that these contexts vary across

culture and time), (4) knowledge about the relativism of values and life goals (e.g. that life goals vary depending on the individual and culture), and (5) recognition and management of uncertainty, given that the validity of human information processing is itself limited, that individuals only have access to a limited part of reality, and cannot know the future in advance (Baltes & Kunzmann, 2003; Staudinger, Smith, & Baltes, 1992). Wisdom therefore provides a broad framework (or meta-heuristic) within which specific decisions about a one should lead a “good life” are made (Baltes & Freund, 2003).

Perhaps most relevant to the present discussion of moral exemplars, still other accounts of wisdom acknowledge the socially embedded nature of individuals. Moreover, these accounts note that a complete account of wisdom should entail embodied action and the resulting effects that can be evaluated by multiple parties. In other words, being wise is not simply an intellectual, psychological process, but **one accompanied by “doings” in the word that are socially recognized**. Sternberg (2003) defines wisdom as “the application of intelligence and creativity as mediated by values toward the achievement of a common good through a balance among (a) intrapersonal, (b) interpersonal, and (c) extra-personal interests, over the (a) short- and (b) long-term, in order to achieve a balance among (a) adaptation to existing environments, (b) shaping of existing environments, and (c) selection of new environments” (p. 123). Such a definition of wisdom affords the opportunity for corroboration of individuals’ perceptions of their own wisdom, as such perceptions are frequently affected by personal biases (Brienza et al., 2017) and the wisdom-relevant actions that are manifested can be evaluated by those affected by the target’s actions. Such corroboration is additionally important as individuals high in wisdom may downplay their ability in self-assessments due to their intellectual humility (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016).

Similarly, Yang (2013) has posited that at least three core components work together to produce wisdom: (a) a cognitive integration of separate ideas or conflicting ideals to form an idea that promotes the good, (b) the embodiment of this integrated idea or vision in actions, and (c) the positive effects of these actions for the actor and others. On this account, the process of wisdom is complete only when all three

components occur. Grossmann (2017) highlights empirical evidence indicating that people's ability to think wisely varies dramatically across experiential contexts. Staudinger and Glück (2011) similarly distinguished between two broad theoretical views on wisdom: personal wisdom—wisdom as self-related knowledge acquired through direct personal experience—and general wisdom—wisdom as world knowledge that can also be acquired in more indirect ways. The key difference between personal and general wisdom is their relative emphasis on first-person life experience, particularly with the role of critical life challenges (König & Glück, 2014). Following Grossmann (2017), personal wisdom is likely to manifest differentially across different contexts and develop in response to an individual's experiences in different social contexts.

In addition to developing formal theories of wisdom, psychologists have also examined people's **lay conceptions** (or folk understandings) of what wisdom is—that is, a view that is true to people's beliefs about wisdom, irrespective of whether the view is psychologically true or not (Sternberg, 2001; Weststrate, Ferrari, & Ardel, 2016). These implicit theories help organize commonsense conceptualizations of wisdom (Bangen, Meeks, & Jeste, 2013). Along with the association of exceptional intelligent problem-solving and reasoning, many people consider wisdom to involve reflection, integration of ideas, and learning from their own mistakes as well as the mistakes of others (Sternberg, 1985). A hallmark characteristic of wise individuals is advice-giving and the ability to provide guidance to a variety of people who experience a wide range of problems (Glück, 2017). Laypeople tend to characterize wisdom in older individuals and associate wisdom with increasing age, but they do acknowledge that wisdom is not exclusive to older individuals (Staudinger & Glück, 2011). It is important to note that these lay conceptions of wisdom tend to vary across ages, professions, situations, and cultures (Glück & Bluck, 2011; Grossmann, 2017; Takahashi & Overton, 2005), but cognitive characterizations of wisdom are the most common and consistent across laypersons' views of wisdom (Bangen et al., 2013; Glück & Bluck, 2011). Descriptors such as compassionate, positive, and understanding suggest that laypeople consider wise individuals to be characterized in part by moral thoughts,

feelings, and behaviors (Ardelt, 2003; Glück, Bluck, Baron, & McAdams, 2005). This is in contrast to theoretical perspectives on wisdom that emphasize epistemic or intellectual virtues (e.g. Grossmann, 2017). However, similar to experts' conceptualization of wisdom, only some laypersons distinguish an affective component of wisdom (Glück & Bluck, 2011). When distinguishing cultural-historical figures of wisdom, laypersons' nominations reflected different wisdom prototypes, including a prototype focused around compassionate thought and behavior (Weststrate et al., 2016).

As we have discussed, wisdom has been conceptualized in different ways in the psychology literature, leading to a proliferation of theories and assessment strategies (Glück, 2018). While we do not mean to further complicate the wisdom literature with yet another perspective on the nature of wisdom, we point out that one question that is deserving of further exploration by psychologists is the link between wisdom and morality. While Sternberg (2003) has provided an explicitly moral functional framework for wisdom, little is known about how the characteristics of wisdom interplay with those of moral character, the extent to which manifesting wisdom leads to morally exemplary lives (and vice versa), and the specific character virtues that may develop in concert with wisdom. In the following section, we example how prototype and exemplar perspectives can provide us with insights into these questions.

Prototypical Perspectives on Wisdom

Wisdom can be understood as an interpersonal process of addressing specific situations (Grossmann, 2017). This perspective on wisdom is best understood as a contextually embedded phenomenon that will vary from culture to culture. The content and outcomes of wisdom therefore depend on the particular historical circumstances, which itself can vary in countless ways. This makes it difficult to describe wisdom outside of a particular situation and attribute an abstract, overarching definition (Assmann, 1994). However, there are specific process-related characteristics that do describe wisdom. For example, wisdom involves a deep understanding of knowledge that goes past face value while also

recognizing the limitation of one's current knowledge and life circumstances. The wise process adapts to existing situations with flexibility toward uncertainty, all while striving toward balanced integration through practical problem-solving in order to live a good life (Assmann, 1994; Grossmann, 2017).

Assmann's Four Sage Approach

Assmann (1994) has identified representative figures that symbolize different aspects of wisdom, which can help our understanding by embodying the different elements that make up wisdom. This prototypical model of wisdom includes four historical folk characters that demonstrate the "roles of the sage."

Wisdom as Unbiased Judgment

The first sage figure is Solomon, who represents a just ruler skilled in unbiased judgment, makes thoughtful and considerate decisions, and discerns how to best address complex situations. This view closely identifies wisdom with concerns for justice. These problem-solving processes involve knowledge of the social world and often produce verdicts that are respected by the collective community. This justice-oriented ruler also supports the weak and respects the limits of his position of power (Assmann, 1994), demonstrating a strive for societal balance and harmony.

Transcendent Wisdom

The second sage prototype is a Shakespearian character from *The Tempest*: the exiled king Prospero. Prospero's wisdom is in relation to the cosmic world, the space of magic, alchemy, and mystery. His wisdom is in touch with the enigmatic elements and energies, along with a strong spiritual connection to the universe. However, the emergence

of empirical sciences overshadowed and disenchanting this form of wisdom, pushing it to the fringe while empirical science became the central explanation for the way things are in this world. Despite the lack of attention and the misfit in empirical studies, this mysterious and cosmic aspect of wisdom can still serve historical and cultural functions within societies (Assmann, 1994).

Pragmatic Wisdom

Polonius is a character from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that represents the common man who holds relevant pragmatic wisdom. This third type of wisdom is derived from experience and traditions and takes the form of practical advice. It involves socialization of repeated traditions, which revitalizes historical memory through present experiences, keeping generations connected through the persisting attitudes and values of a group, which one could argue is the foundation of culture (Assmann, 1994). However, it is also possible that such wisdom may be in tension with moral principles focused on promoting the common good (Sternberg, 2003).

Wisdom as Paradoxical Understanding

Finally, the fourth sage is another Shakespearian character: Jacques from the play *As You Like It*. His character is the king's jester who infuses cynicism and paradoxical considerations within his performances. This type of wisdom considers distance, taking the perspective of a detached observer, especially in the application of problem-solving. A measure of distance from the social world allows for different quality of thought regarding the self, one's surroundings, and mysterious unknowns (Assmann, 1994). This insight highlights the recognition and acceptance of paradox and impermanence as the nature of reality (Weststrate et al., 2016).

These four sage types represent different approaches to thinking about the world and its situations, each of which have the potential to inform each other and allow for a deep and intricate outlook. For example, these prototypes demonstrate a sense of balance between agency

and surrounding factors that contribute to wise thought. These different perspectives of thought can help with the development of solutions to problems of varying intricacy, as all of the prototypical elements of wisdom involve the tools for considering the different factors that contribute to ambiguity and complexity.

Wisdom Exemplars and Prototypes

Exemplars function as a reference point that demonstrate the expected qualities of concepts (e.g. wisdom) that help people define, judge, or possibly apply the concept in their own lives (Smith & Zárate, 1990, 1992). Studies that ask participants to nominate wisdom exemplars typically choose individuals from a diverse range of vocational categories, such as political leaders, social activists, spiritual and religious figures, scientists, business leaders, and cultural icons (Jason et al., 2001; Weststrate et al., 2016). Of relevance here, not all the exemplars identified could be considered moral exemplars. Based on such nominated exemplars, Weststrate et al. (2016) examined wisdom prototypes by grouping these exemplars on the dimensions of wise processing (from rational to emotional) and world engagement (from pragmatic to transcendent).

The Practical Prototype

The practical prototype of wisdom is near the rational and pragmatic ends of the dimensions, which typically represents political figures that engage in logic and strategic action toward immediate, everyday issues that affect much of society. This type of wisdom tends to be applied in circumstances when individuals are confronted with real-world dilemmas, aiming toward solutions that promote the “good life” for the people affected by these decisions. Exemplars for this prototype include Barack Obama, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson (Weststrate et al., 2016).

The Philosophical Prototype

Philosophically wise exemplars engage in thoughts and questions of scientific, philosophical, and theoretical nature attempting to discover the truth of the world. Philosophical wisdom involves inherent curiosity and a contemplative approach toward complex and ambiguous life questions. Examples of philosophical wisdom figures are Solomon, Albert Einstein, and Socrates (Weststrate et al., 2016).

The Benevolent Prototype

Benevolently wise individuals approach situations from a compassionate and emotionally connected standpoint, with high consideration for helping others. Those who fit this wisdom prototype can be considered moral, humble, spiritual, brave, and caring. They prioritize addressing the needs of the less fortunate, including the oppressed and disabled, with the hopes of well-being for all. Exemplars of this prototype include Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King Jr. , Jesus Christ, and Mahatma Gandhi (Weststrate et al., 2016).

It appears that different elements of Assmann's (1994) four sages can be identified in these three wisdom prototypes. Practical wisdom seems to primarily embody the first sage of unbiased ruling, which involves solving problems that concern the communal good. It also includes elements of the pragmatic sage as this type of wisdom can require an advisory role and is primarily concerned with everyday problems and decisions. Philosophical wisdom involves both the pragmatic and paradoxical sages: some of the big life questions will concern historical tradition and the extent of current collective understanding. Simultaneously, the "big" life questions will often be controversial and paradoxical by nature, requiring skeptical and innovative thought that is distanced from the social norm. Finally, benevolent wisdom includes the sages of unbiased ruling and transcendence. More specifically, this type of wisdom involves thoughtful problem-solving that is in the best interest of society as a whole and does so through compassion and emotional

connection to humanity, which is often expressed through religion and spirituality. Despite the many elements and contexts of wisdom, all forms of the practice strive to solve problems and improve situations for the collective good.

From the above integration, it seems apparent that wisdom has a foundational connection with morality. In the next section, we further examine the relationship between wisdom and morality as discussed in the extant literature.

Wisdom and Morality

On these views, wisdom can provide insight into addressing difficult uncertainties in life, including situations regarding moral challenges (Brady, Wills, Burkart, Jost, & Van Bavel, 2018). Though wisdom and its values are primarily context-specific, some theorists have argued that these values do consistently strive toward solutions for the good of everyone involved (Assmann, 1994; Pasupathi & Staudinger, 2001; Sternberg, 2018). Conversely, morality is frequently viewed as a constant set of virtues that universally apply to situations that involve issues of justice and fairness (Rest, 1983) and help solve problems of cooperation that occur in human social life (Curry, Chesters, & Van Lissa, 2019; Haidt, 2008). Individuals who are considered to be morally exceptional are classified as being humble, brave, inspiring, and consistently dedicated to one's moral virtues (Colby & Damon, 1992; Frimer, Walker, Lee, Riches, & Dunlop, 2012). The consistency of morality exists as the core force that drives critical judgments and decisions (Damon, 2000). On this account, wisdom would be one key process that manifests in morally relevant situations, in addition to moral reasoning and judgment. Moral intelligence (Paulhus, Wehr, Harms, & Strasser, 2002), the ability to comprehend and integrate ethical or virtuous ideas and apply them to existing problems and situations (Emmons, 2000), seamlessly fits within the wise reasoning process. Similarly, Kohlberg's (1973) post-conventional stage of moral reasoning reflects situations in which wisdom is of value: reasoning that is complex and abstract regarding concerns of humanity, involves

a nature of uncertainty that requires prioritizing moral standpoints, and calls for the consideration of different perspectives that the moral decision may affect. In sum, morality is the sustaining foundational factor that informs the practice of wisdom in situations of moral conflict or ambiguity.

One argument posits that having a fundamental understanding of one's personal moral values is an essential preliminary step toward wisdom (i.e. personal growth; Damon, 2000). Establishing a personal moral identity provides a stable foundation for guiding one's life decisions, interpreting the world, and balancing the subjective with the perspectives and needs of others (Damon, 2000). Wisdom and moral reasoning have been found to be typically higher for individuals with certain personal characteristics like creativity, social intelligence, and a personal growth orientation (Staudinger, Lopez, & Baltes, 1997; Staudinger, Maciel, Smith, & Baltes, 1998). The findings of Pasupathi and Staudinger (2001) demonstrate that wisdom-related performance and moral reasoning draw from similar cognitive resources such as specific epistemic virtues (e.g. questioning why and how things happened rather than placing immediate judgment; Staudinger et al., 1997) and personality characteristics such as openness and creativity.

A similar relationship between morality and personality characteristics was found in a specific type of moral exemplars. Care-based moral exemplars are individuals who are motivated by prosocial endeavors and who actively contribute to prosocial causes in their communities (Dunlop, Walker, & Matsuba, 2012). They also demonstrate characteristics such as optimism, openness to change, and commitment to personal moral values (Colby & Damon, 1992). Dunlop et al. (2012) found that these individuals can be recognized by their personality composition, providing evidence for a distinct care-based moral personality that persists across the lifespan and is defined by prosocial motivation and complex socio-cognitive abilities (although the authors did not elaborate on the nature of these abilities). More specifically, personal motives and motives for the greater good are interrelated for these individuals and they have exceptional reasoning skills for social circumstances. These cognitive abilities include evaluating and rationalizing moral conflicts or dilemmas in a way that broadens their perspective and utilizes principled moral

reasoning (Dunlop et al., 2012). The similarity between the care-based moral personality and high moral reasoners suggest that individuals who exhibit care-based morality would also demonstrate high levels of wisdom-related performance (see also Snow, 2010).

Yang (2013) has argued that wisdom is associated with living a satisfying and meaningful existence. More specifically, she argues that manifesting wisdom can help a person achieve this fulfilling lifestyle for both themselves and others. She proposes that one form of wisdom manifestation is providing a long-term contribution to the common good with the hopes of initiating long-term and widespread positive effects for society. This description reflects the benevolent form of wisdom (Weststrate et al., 2016) while describing the goals of morality as well. This form of wisdom involves cognitive integration, or connecting concepts that were otherwise distinct (Yang, 2013). Since these individuals have an outstandingly empathic and compassionate viewpoint, benevolently wise individuals may find such integration through understanding the interconnectedness of humanity. Additionally, a person can gain further wisdom by acquiring practical knowledge through experience (Polanyi, 1958). Such experiences can include adversity and hardship, which can provide newfound meaning and inspire determination toward contributing to the common good (Jayawickreme & Blackie, 2016; Yang, 2013). Striving toward a positive contribution to humanity is a key outcome for many ethical theories as well as some key accounts of wisdom (e.g. Sternberg, 1998).

Moral exemplars demonstrate a state of “enlightened self-interest” in which one’s own self-interests align with the interests of others on a communal level. This integrated personality provides a source of motivation for leading a virtuous life (Frimer, Walker, Dunlop, Lee, & Riches, 2011). Having the communal interest embedded into one’s own self-interest reflects the personality of an individual who demonstrates benevolent wisdom (Weststrate et al., 2016), addressing situations from an emotionally invested perspective with the ambition to help others. There is evidence also supporting that morally exceptional individuals utilize agency, or their self-focused goals, to help achieve a communal objective to enact positive change (Frimer et al., 2012). Similarly, *wisdom-related happiness* involves integrating the happiness of others as well as the

common good into one's own sense of well-being (Kunzmann, 2004; Le, 2011; Sternberg, 1998). The main purpose of some accounts of wisdom (e.g. Kupperman, 2005) is to derive solutions that can be justified on both personal and moral grounds (Damon, 2000). From these different profiles identifying wisdom and morality, a distinguishing characteristic of wisdom on this view involves fusing the concerns of the common good with one's own personal concerns (e.g. Sternberg, 1998).

The next section of this chapter extends the purported link between morality and wisdom by focusing on moral. We believe that a deeper evaluation of the lives of such figures can provide insight into the interplay of wise reasoning and moral action. Additionally, narratives of these moral exemplars may provide a powerful tool for the development of wisdom.

Wise Exemplars: The Example of Confucius

The value of moral exemplars for the development of optimal human functioning has been noted by philosophers since the time of Aristotle and Confucius. For example, Aristotle, elevates the wise person (*phronimos*) as the model of virtue whose character enables us to determine which action is virtuous and discern how to perform it. More recently, Zagzebski (2017) has developed a moral theory that examines how moral exemplars facilitate the development of virtue in others.

One important feature of moral exemplars is that their life stories can provide specific advice on how to confront moral dilemmas in their daily life and provides advice on what the "wise" course of action is. This feature is evident in the life of Confucius. From what little historical knowledge is available about his life, it is understood that he was born 551 BCE and raised in poverty by a single mother. During his youth, Confucius needed to work in order to help his mother support their family. He spent much of his youth gaining new and valuable skills that could help him attain a respectable work position during adulthood. He actively searched for mentorship to learn more beneficial skills that would help him acquire an esteemed job. Later in his life, Confucius founded his own school

of Ju (Confucianism) and took over seventy disciples (Shin, 2018). Confucius' autobiographical description of his own life *The Analects* (2014) is as follows:

At fifteen I set my heart on learning. At thirty, I found my balance through the rites. At forty, I was free from doubts [about myself]. At fifty, I understood what Heaven intended me to do. At sixty, I was attuned to what I heard. At seventy, I followed what my heart desired without overstepping the line. (p. 13)

He summarizes his entire life within a few sentences, only describing his cognitive and spiritual growth and neglecting any factors that contribute to his development (Shin, 2018).

From what we do know about Confucius' life, a number of factors stand out as experiences that would have a unique impact on his development and thus would influence his ideological beliefs. Growing up without knowing his father must have influenced the development of Confucius' moral identity and wisdom. With the sole presence of his mother, she strictly raised him to learn complex, socially desirable rites (e.g. music, calligraphy, mathematics) at a very early age (Shin, 2018). Such an early exposure to complex knowledge and intricate skill development likely heightened his cognitive abilities in a way that informed his thought process later in life. At the same time, the emphasis of structure while neglecting time for play and a lack of emotional attention from his mother must have deprived Confucius of some opportunities for development in different ways. One could also speculate that the adversity of pervasive poverty, a household with an over-extended single mother, and working rather than receiving a formal education (Shin, 2018) all significantly impacted his life course and outlook.

It is likely that these life challenges caused Confucius to turn to rules, regulations, and orders of human society as a source of stability that he otherwise lacked in his life (Shin, 2018). This newfound structure along with his value of learning and attaining skills that he kept from his childhood inform the philosophy of Confucius' work. His writing in *The Analects* emphasize the importance of learning and practicing at a pace similar to his own timeline and claims that doing so works as

the mode to personal and societal success (Shin, 2018). He posited that every human is capable of learning and achieving her ideology through education. However, if an individual is not willing to learn, then that person cannot become wise (Huang, 2011).

Virtuous conduct and virtuous management of the government are some of the Confucian moral teachings (Huang, 2011). In these teachings, Confucius proposes that “to be trustworthy is similar to being morally right” (*The Analects*, 1.13) and that one must stay true to one’s word, so actually carrying out the action as quickly as possible (rather than simply claiming to take such action) would be considered wise. Furthermore, Confucius intended the studies of poetry, rites, and music to stimulate moral thought and initiate an independent perspective in how such knowledge can serve a moral purpose (Huang, 2011). In other words, considering cultural experiences through a wise reasoning process both informs and is informed by one’s understanding of morality. In order for such insight to persist, Confucius emphasized structure and the value of rules of propriety. Studies of music, poetry, and similar cultural products also serve the purpose of igniting action that is not constrained by the rules of propriety and allows for intuitive virtuous engagement. Essentially, Confucius considered that all skills and lessons learned through life contribute to one’s own understanding of humanity and thus moral virtues (Huang, 2011; this is also consistent with Grossmann, 2017).

Confucian ideology and practices became foundational for many East Asian cultures and has been the role model figure for generations of Korean males (Shin, 2018). Some Koreans see him as an almost perfect exemplar of moral character while others view him as a historical figure who established a rigid social ideology for East Asian society (Shin, 2018). Confucian scripts and practices have been interpreted and applied quite literally, without consideration for his own life circumstances and psychosocial development and how that would influence his work (Shin, 2018). Though Confucianism does provide insight into how to approach morality, the nature of the teachings is strict and absent of any consideration of the role of emotion in life development (Shin, 2018). This influences East Asian cultural priorities and allows for a society that highly values education and knowledge but overlooks the importance of emotional development.

Centuries have passed since the era of Confucius, yet his teachings continue to inspire and resonate with people. The hallmark of his wisdom focuses on learning and the unbounded potential that knowledge can provide for someone's life and virtues. According to Confucianism, thinking and practicing new skills work as ways to broaden one's perspective in moral reasoning and understanding. We can see how Confucius' upbringing influenced his perspective and his own potential for deep, insightful reasoning. Learning about his life also reveals explanations for why his ideology so heavily focuses on intellectual endeavors and ignores emotion and relationship aspects that contribute to moral virtue. This implicit prioritization has carried through East Asian cultures over time, informing current values of education and knowledge emphasized over relationships and human connection. Our understanding of wisdom and morality is enhanced by not only appreciating Confucius' invaluable insight, but also acknowledging how his experiences shaped his perspective.

Conclusion: Using Moral Exemplars to Promote Wisdom

Exemplar narratives such as that of Confucius hold the potential to provide guidance to people seeking to develop wisdom and lead good lives. Philosophical explorations on the value of moral exemplars have indeed highlighted their numerous pedagogical functions. As Lamb, Brant and Brooks (in press) have noted, exemplars offer role models to admire and emulate (e.g. Zagzebski, 2017), serve as "counterfactual models" that can help us imagine how an exemplary person would act in a similar situation (Miller, 2014), and provide reminders that make norms salient and that show certain ideals or virtues are in fact possible to embody (Colby & Damon, 1992; Damon & Colby, 2015).

Empirical research on moral exemplars has however focused on specific exemplary groups, such as winners of national caring or bravery awards, helpers in the context of ethno-political warfare, adolescents nominated for unusual commitment to others or organizations, social activists, and others (Fleeson et al., 2016). Extant research has found

that members of exemplary groups are likely to incorporate morality into their identity (Frimer & Walker, 2009; Matsuba & Walker, 2005; Monroe, Guglielmo, & Malle, 2012; Walker & Frimer, 2007), possess moral goals and values (Frimer et al., 2012), manifest moral traits (Walker & Frimer, 2007), integrate a commitment the welfare of others into their own self-concept (Dunlop et al., 2012; McFarland, Brown, & Webb, 2013; Monroe, 2002), and exhibit a deeper religious faith (Colby & Damon, 1994; Matsuba & Walker, 2004).

While philosophers had clarified the possible pedagogical role of moral exemplars, and psychologists have provided insights into the nature of these exemplars, little is known on *whether and how* distinctly *moral* exemplars may contribute to the development of wisdom (and moral character more broadly). More specifically, more research is needed to examine how effective exemplar interventions can be developed. We are currently developing an intervention to provide wisdom and other character strengths among participants who have recently experienced a significant adverse event (e.g. bereavement). We recently developed and rigorously evaluated SecondStory, a new group-format intervention specifically designed to foster positive functioning in the wake of adversity (Roepke, Tsukayama, Forgeard, Blackie, & Jayawickreme, 2018). We are now examining whether augmenting SecondStory with narratives of moral exemplars who have overcome adversity and incorporating insights from recent work on wise interventions (Walton & Wilson, 2018) can improve the potency of the intervention in promoting changes in wisdom and other relevant character strength, virtues of love and trust (Brady, 2018).

Our review of the wisdom literature has focused on the interrelationships between wisdom and moral exemplarity. We have showcased how wisdom can help inform solutions to moral problems that are contextually and inherently complex and highlight how both morality and wisdom are associated with certain personality, social, cognitive, and reasoning characteristics. We also discussed the utility of moral exemplar narratives for the promotion of wisdom.

We note that our review highlights a possible challenge for theories of wisdom that conceptualize it purely in terms of epistemic character traits (for example, Grossmann's view that wise reasoning

should be conceptualized in terms of pragmatic—as opposed to idealistic—terms in the navigation of complex life challenges; see Santos, Huynh, & Grossmann, 2017). We believe that such a view of wisdom does have many advantages, including clearly specifying the content of wisdom (i.e. in terms of specific epistemic capacities; Zachry et al., 2018). However, a critical question for future theorizing on wisdom is whether wisdom should be seen purely in epistemic terms, or whether (as argued by theories such as Sternberg, 1998) wisdom only manifests itself when “right thought” is accompanied by “right action.” Indeed, Walsh (2015) has claimed that *benevolence* is a key dimension under-represented in current theories of wisdom. Moreover, a key feature of Sternberg’s (1998) view, as noted earlier in this chapter, was the presence of “values toward the achievement of a common good”—a feature shared by many moral exemplars. To paraphrase Sternberg (2018), do wisdom theories that focus only on epistemic virtues allow for the possibility of individuals who manifest wise reasoning, but do not deploy this reasoning to achieve moral goals that further the common good? If so, what is the ultimate value of promoting wisdom if not for the common good? We encourage further research focused on these questions, since they may help further clarify both our conceptualizations of wisdom and the ultimate value of wisdom for social progress. Examining the value of moral exemplars as a tool for promoting wise reasoning and behavior may further help clarify these questions.

Acknowledgements This publication was made possible through the support of grant #87 from the Templeton Religion Trust to Eranda Jayawickreme & Laura E.R. Blackie (University of Nottingham). Sections of this chapter have been adapted from Jayawickreme and Blackie (2016, chapter 5). The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Templeton Religion Trust.

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8

Practical Wisdom and Islam: Reimagining Islamic Law, from the Local to the Global

Tom Woerner-Powell and Ricca Edmondson

Mistrust of Muslims and Islamic practices is a significant intercultural issue on a global scale today (Rachman, 2017; Said, 1978, 1997). Yet, while growing tension between Muslim and non-Muslim populations and states is a worldwide concern, not all of this tension is rational or inevitable. It has many causes, each needing appropriate policy reactions.¹

¹Such causes (cf. Green, 2015) include socioeconomic pressures that have little intrinsically to do with Islam or any other faith. Others may be responses to the belligerence of the small minority of adherents of extreme forms of Islam. Still other tensions are connected with different forms of political change or result from cultural prejudice (Heath, Li & Woerner-Powell, 2015). Discourses relating to the position of women in Islam are dissected in detail by Leila Ahmed (1992) and Lila Abu-Lughod (2013).

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_8

Currently, many measures taken to counter Islamophobia centre on education, promoting sensitised political discourse, and anti-discrimination legislation (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2016; Elahi & Kahn, 2017). But effective policy requires ‘identity leadership’ on core goals and values (Mols, Bell, & Head, 2018), which need to be confronted in detail. We contend that it is a key necessity for any anti-Islamophobic policy that it should be, and help others to be, ‘open to difference’. It should not simply demand that Muslims be ‘just like us’ but rather find how to acknowledge the humanity in the ways they are different. To try to accommodate difference wisely, we can acknowledge that perfect understanding is not possible; efforts to achieve it would in any case tend to homogenise people and groups. But we can seek points of closeness where difference can be mediated. This chapter offers a way of being open to difference in this way. Specifically, it works to address the threat of conflict stemming from the presumption of Islam’s incommensurability with other traditions—an incommensurability which politically influential commentators have construed as both cause and justification for a global ‘clash of civilisations’ (Huntington, 1996).

This chapter brings a combination of legal anthropology and intercultural philosophy to bear on interpreting a major tradition of problem-solving and conflict-resolution: that contained in Islamic legal practices surrounding legal opinion (*fatwā*) and ruling (*ḥukm*). We show how it is possible to reimagine some features of Islam that may be felt, even by people wishing to be well-disposed, to be fearful or threatening. In particular, Islamic law, or Shariah, has come to signify an inflexible, intolerant, and perhaps intolerable threat to widening circles of non-Muslims. Focusing on this form of law, this chapter shows how it is possible to examine processes of Islamic legal opinion and judgement through a different lens, that of the purpose for which its practitioners see them as intended: supplying authoritative advice on how to live rightly and cultivate moral understanding in principle and in practice. We focus on *everyday* practices connected with Shariah law, trying to understand what they are basically taken to do—what they are understood as *for*. In this way, the chapter aims to guide readers through some arguments that can help acknowledge that Islam need not be seen as essentially ‘dogmatic and unknowable’ (Subramanian, 2018).

With particular reference first to Egyptian and Moroccan local contexts, then to the global context of anthropogenic climate change, the chapter engages with one of the planet's longest-established and most widespread approaches to addressing challenges, at scales ranging from the most local to the most global. For some fifth of the world's population, the family of practices analysed here are not only familiar but often paradigmatic: they are widely seen as authoritative means for addressing challenges facing humanity as individuals, groups, and species. Rooted in and reflecting local customs and cultures, their legitimacy is widely understood as global, indeed cosmic: they reflect a fundamentally religious discourse.

Nonetheless, these Islamic approaches to problem-solving and conflict-resolution are also widely (mis-)represented outside their practice-communities as the cause of many great global challenges of today. We shall argue that recent anthropological ethnographies offer us new avenues for understanding the functioning of these approaches—quite apart from their formal self-representation in terms of the texts and precedents their individual rulings and legal opinions generate. To help us to read these ethnographies in more depth, the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, often translated as prudence or practical wisdom, offers a fruitful window on these problem-solving practices as they are actually lived out. We claim that such a *phronesis*-focused analysis presents new opportunities even for those well acquainted with the often complex and sophisticated legal philosophies internal to the Islamic traditions described.

At the same time, it also offers a tool for those outside the Islamic tradition. It provides a means by which many Muslim communities' struggles to achieve wise and beneficial outcomes may be recognised, understood, and even engaged with on projects of common cause. This chapter, then, employs the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* both as an analytical method for describing Islamic legal reasoning, and as a heuristic device for mitigating intercultural conflict. In doing this it also explores that tradition's potential contributions to addressing contemporary global challenges.

The concept of *phronesis*, still a central term in ethical theory, is intended as a philosophical explanation of everyday acts, irrespective

of practitioners' own views (if any) on Aristotle. It has remained a perennially useful tool in exploring practical reasoning. By showing how these two deliberative traditions address similar problems in comparable ways, this chapter aims to explicate an often-misunderstood and much-maligned aspect of Islamic tradition to a non-Muslim readership, while simultaneously opening new avenues for dialogue and exploration. Inviting readers to perceive the confluence between these two traditions, the chapter itself constitutes overlapping efforts at understanding and at making understood.

We back up this case by encouraging consideration of Islamic scholars' own efforts towards solving not only local but pressing global problems—not least issues connected with the environment, in which Shariah law is increasingly being used constructively. Indeed, in such areas the application of Islamic legal reasoning to new global challenges has been argued to 'fill a critical gap in global persuasion... where other (non-religious) environmental messages fail' (Gade, 2015, p. 161; cf. Jenkins, 2005).

Our intention here is not to advocate for the Islamic legal traditions discussed—either within the Islamic tradition or among non-Muslims—nor indeed for the Islamic faith, however construed. Nor is it to claim that all real-world exercises of Shariah law conform to the examples taken as paradigmatic here. It is no novelty in political history that significant ideals can be appropriated in directions contrary to their previous intentions. Despite this, there are persistent and significant resources in Islam for addressing global challenges—and these can be explained and explored in terms that are accessible to non-Muslims. We aim to offer a means of understanding vital workings of Islamic law that do not require readers to embrace (or even entertain) the theological and historical presumptions through which this law is formally justified.

We shall argue in this chapter, then, that the process of generating legal opinions in the Islamic tradition has frequently taken a form more comparable to the Aristotelian conception of practical wisdom than to deliberations of secular positive law in the contemporary Western sense. Drawing on ethnographic accounts of particular cases, we show that the practices in question are far from a hidebound and inflexible reiteration of predetermined positions, as Orientalist stereotypes once had it (see Hallaq, 1984). In addition, they can be distinguished from what John

Dewey saw as a ‘Western’ legal fixation on antecedents. In other words, they are more concerned with what is likely to happen in the future than with what has happened in the past (Rosen, 1989, p. 50). As Lawrence Rosen argues in his *Anthropology of Justice* (1989), the practical procedures of Islamic law tend to shape processes in which participants are struggling with issues they find uncertain and indeterminate. They are directed to the goal of encouraging the questioner towards the most pious (and hence ultimately felicitous) state of being. We shall explore how Islamic legal experts respond to the details of predicaments in which individuals find themselves, as they try to assess their capacities to react to these predicaments constructively.

Wisdom is traditionally a quality needed in judging complex and difficult issues for which no straightforward solutions are available, problems without obvious choices or solutions (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 11, 1143a 6), but where there is a pressing need for action. Drawing in particular on recent ethnographic studies of the proceedings of fatwa-issuing courts (Agrama, 2010, 2012), this chapter does not only show that this phronetic model of practical wisdom goes a considerable way towards describing the forms of reasoning employed by Muslim jurists as they attempt to solve problems with which they are presented. It also suggests how the jurists’ activities can help us develop the phronetic model further. Our interpretation of forms of phronesis that are used among Muslim jurists, and clearly respected by those who consult them, allows us to envisage the seriousness with which Shariah law may be taken—in a way that can, we hope, dismantle some of the negative and fearful associations attributed to it. It also enables us to open up the question if there are further, modern traditions of wisdom scholarship that can help to make more perspicuous the processes these jurists are putting into practice. We shall find that they cast light upon each other.

The popular image of the fatwa, however, arguably represents a nadir in relations between those who are Muslims and those who are not. Since the Rushdie affair² following the publication of *The Satanic*

²Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses*, published in the UK in 1988, was in part inspired by the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Among other things it depicted characters as making various lewd references which were not, the author subsequently explained, intended to be derogatory of

Verses in 1988, the ‘fatwa’—a non-binding legal opinion issued by an authoritative scholar in response to a specific question—has become widely associated with the idea of the death sentence. Most prominent British Muslims in fact dissociated themselves from the fatwa enjoining Rushdie’s assassination (Asad, 1990, p. 455). We do not wish to defend this or any other particular fatwa in any respect, but we should point out that Khomeini’s call for the death of a British novelist is not characteristic of fatwas, which do not in general call for extreme punishments in this way (Tyan & Walsh, 2012). A Shariah judgement (*hukm*) or legal opinion (*fatwā*) may call for such a sentence, but may just as well advise against the moving of a garden’s boundary-wall, the ethical status of an investment, or the best way to dispose of a bequest.

In this chapter, we examine what we can learn from ethnographic work on the practice of generating fatwas more broadly, and how this can contribute to the ways in which we think about wise decisions. We begin by examining the concept of law in Islam, since it differs from Western associations of ‘law’ with secular legislation stemming from governments. Next, we outline what Aristotle meant by ‘phronesis’ and sketch in a number of questions raised by contemporary work on practical wisdom. This enables us to turn to work by Lawrence Rosen and Hussein Ali Agrama on how Shariah law, in particular the issuing of legal opinions, is practised in Morocco and Egypt. This evidence, we contend, is highly relevant to the concept of practical wisdom, and in fact can cast light on some of the questions that wisdom scholars now ask. While the legal processes we deal with here are generally connected with individuals and their problems of daily living, we argue that they can also be relevant to approaching larger problems, such as that of the environment. We are not arguing that all Shariah judgements and legal opinions are equally estimable in themselves, but that the *process* of seeking and issuing them can be understood in a way that is not alien to non-Muslims. Here the heritage of Aristotelian thought, shared by both

the Islamic faith itself. A number of Muslims saw these references as blasphemous. In 1989 the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran issued a fatwa that called on Muslims to assassinate Rushdie. Despite the fact that this fatwa was not issued after a trial by an Islamic court, and was rejected by significant numbers of authorities, a succession of violent events ensued. As a result, Rushdie himself was forced to live under ongoing police protection.

Muslim and (post-)Christian cultures, has not exhausted its usefulness as a tool of intercultural philosophy.

The Role and Centrality of Law in Islam

To be clearer about the role of practical reason in issuing Islamic legal opinion, and its potential contributions to addressing contemporary global challenges, we need to address the roles of law within the Islamic faith. It is difficult to overstate the centrality or significance of these roles, but easy to misrepresent them. Recognising the centrality of legal thinking to the faith of a fifth of the human race, let alone the importance of practical wisdom to that thinking, demands care and circumspection. Precisely because 'Islamic law is one of the most widespread legal and ethical systems on earth' (Llewellyn, 2003, p. 186) we must be wary of the real danger of overgeneralisation. While the idea of law is deeply significant in Islam, it is by no means the monolithic idea sometimes imagined. Indeed, the Islamic tradition has even included antinomian elements (particularly marked in some of its mystical strands; Karamustapha, 2006), and has in the last centuries seen some dramatically revisionist approaches to the faith and its ethico-legal dimensions (e.g. 'Abd al-Rāziq, 1966; Ṭaha, 1987). It is by no means our intention to offer an essentialised account of Muslim religiosity reduced to (orthoprax) legal observance, nor to denigrate the faith of less or otherwise observant Muslims.

Just as not all Muslims are jurisprudential scholars, however, neither are they all self-conscious religious reformers—still less radical sectarians or schismatics. The overwhelming majority are neither. What is here being described as Islamic law plays an important part in a very great many of their lives. It is critical to observance: prescribing rituals to be performed, the method of their performance, and the times at which they are to be performed. Practices from daily prayers and ablutions to the fixing of the dates of the holy lunar month of Ramadan are all subject to legal elaboration (*'ibādāt*). The law is also bound up with social interaction—and not only in the context of ritual observance (which, custom maintains, is most meritorious when undertaken together with

others). Rather, the religious law encompasses innumerable norms for social interaction (*mu'āmalāt*)—extending from when and how to return a greeting to rules governing inheritance, endowments, and affairs of state. While Orientalists have argued that theory and practice of Islamic law diverged from an early date (Schacht, 1964), the fact remains that Muslim rulers past and present have been anxious to be seen as acting within the confines of the Shariah. Even where one might argue that this anxiety is instrumental rather than pious, the persistent impulse to be *seen* as acting in conformity to the law is testament to its ethical significance.

But more than this can be said. The centrality of law in so many Muslims' lives is not only a matter of performance—even given that '[f]or Islam, orthopraxy is more important than orthodoxy' (Van Ess, 2006, p. 16). It is also a matter of understanding the world, and, through both action and understanding, of shaping it. The place of legal thinking is deeply interwoven with the structure and development of the other traditional Islamic sciences. It has been argued that law and theology in Islam are 'functionally interdependent' (Rahman, 1971, pp. 89–97; for a moderating view see Hallaq, 1997). The law proceeds from assumptions about the nature of human action and the divine will, of morality and of metaphysics; '...there is a cosmology underlying Muslim juristic theology or legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*)' (Moosa, 1998, p. 2). Its assumptions, methods, themes, and rhythms run into and through a far broader range of cultural and intellectual fields than we might expect in terms of common liberal and Western assumptions about the relatively formal and restricted role of law (and also, perhaps, religion) in everyday life. The ideas generated by Muslim approaches to law are felt not only by the sorts of theoretician who might discuss and dissect them; they are part of a wider culture, not restricted to scholarly elites ('*ulemā*'), and those elites do not exercise complete control over them. The law in this sense cuts across and communicates between distinctions of elite, professional, and vernacular ethical expression, emerging at all social levels. It is for these reasons that it has been argued that 'Islamic law and legal theory must be the true locus of the discussion of Islamic ethics...[It] is the central domain of Islamic ethical thought, both for Islamic studies and for comparative religious ethical studies' (Reinhart, 1983, pp. 186–187).

Law Between Truth and Interpretation: Shariah in Context

The distinction made here between law and legal theory is an important one—both in general terms and for investigating the place of practical wisdom in legal practices. The term most often translated as ‘Islamic law’ is *Shari‘ah*—a term implying a ‘way’ or ‘path’. This path is understood as the divinely ordained right course of action for humankind. It embraces the law in both its transcendent and its temporal dimensions: it connects the divine will and its articulation in human affairs (though it has been argued that these were more clearly separated in early Islam by the related terms *Shari‘ah* and *Shar‘*; see Smith, 1981, pp. 87–109). Yet in both of these senses the law is seen as more abstract than individual legal cases, the main focus of this chapter. The historical elaboration of the law—the law as practised as opposed to *the idea of law*—is properly called *fiqh*. In many instances where people speak of the Shariah, especially when they assert that the Shariah commands or forbids such and such, they are really speaking of *fiqh*: the Law as it is understood. The conflation of the idea or institution of law with a given interpretation of it is at best imprecise and at worst an attack on the legal traditions’ disciplines. A similarly misleading shorthand would be used if an Anglo-Saxon commentator blithely asserted that ‘The Constitution states that’ or ‘The law demands this’ when in fact they meant ‘Such-and-such a reading of this Amendment and that body of precedence supports the view that...’ Whereas legislating the Shariah is a by definition a divine prerogative, *Fiqh* ‘designates a human activity, and cannot be ascribed to God or (usually) the Prophet’ (Calder, 2002).

Fiqh, usually if imperfectly translated as ‘jurisprudence’, is an Arabic verbal noun denoting ‘understanding’. This choice of language is not accidental. It reflects the structure and methods of traditional Islamic legal thought. *Fiqh* is the limited and contingent human understanding of the divinely appointed Shariah. As such, it represents suppositional (*ẓanni*) rather than certain knowledge (see, for example, Al-Juwaynī, n.d., 2A; Al-Shāfi‘ī, 1979, p. 497). This is doubly true when applying this understanding to a given case through the legal opinion of a *muftī* (jurisconsult) or the ruling of a *qāḍī* (judge). *Fiqh* after all encompasses

both its methodological elements (*uṣūl al-fiqh*, ‘the principles of understanding’) and their practical applications (*furū‘ al-fiqh*, ‘the [ancillary] branches of understanding’). The implementation of divine law, however indispensable it is seen to be by its practitioners, is thus understood to be mediated by human understanding on multiple levels, most particularly at the point of application. ‘The jurist always knows that the truth is not easy to find in a concrete case. Judgement, as his colleagues the *fuqahā*’ [legal scholars; ‘those with understanding (*fiqh*)’] said, can attain only probability, never certainty’ (Van Ess, 2006, p. 16). This cautionary principle has affected the development of the law from a very early stage.

Differences in ‘understanding’ the law and its scriptural sources in Quran and Hadith literatures encompass a range of hermeneutic, epistemological, moral, and theological issues of interpretation and contextualisation. How should one approach the texts, and how figuratively may one interpret their language? Is there such a thing as a literal meaning, and how should one identify it? What sorts of inferences may be drawn from those texts? How should one resolve apparent contradictions between scriptural sources? To what extent and in what manner might analogical or casuistic inference (*qiyās*) be applied? What extra-scriptural concerns, such as the public good (*maṣlahah*) or customary law (*‘urf*), should one take into account, and how should one account for them? How should one conceive of the *ratio legis*, the purposes underlying the law itself (*maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah*), and how should this affect one’s deliberations? How do we conceive of the nature of human will, agency, and moral responsibility? How should recognising the inescapable distance between transcendent truth and temporal interpretation and application affect our attitude to human reason more broadly? How, ultimately, should one recognise the divinely willed path out of perplexity and into felicity, in a given time and place (*al-zamān wa al-makān*)? It is partly because Muslim legal scholars engage with such a range of questions (which some readers might regard as beyond the scope of ‘legal studies’) that the centrality of legal theory in Islamic sciences has become entrenched.

The range of responses to these and other questions of understanding, interpretation, and inference gave rise to a range of schools of

jurisprudence. These perspectives on the law, called *madhāhib* (singular *madhhab*) or ‘directions’, ultimately gave rise to the schools of law of the present day—which include the Ḥanafī, Shāf‘ī, Mālikī, and Hanbalī schools in Sunnī Islam as well as Shī‘ite jurisprudence’s Zaydī and Ja‘farī *fiqh*. Awareness that these approaches to the divinely appointed law are suppositional rather than certain, combined with an insistence on the necessity of such suppositional knowledge, led each school’s adherents to recognise the validity of rival schools even as they disputed with them. While Islamic law is sometimes caricatured by critics of Islam (and indeed by some of its more intolerant adherents) as peculiarly rigid, its very flexibility as a tradition is arguably the factor that has contributed most to its historical success across continents and through centuries of historical change. The unavoidability of differences of understanding between scholars and between schools (*ikhtilāf*) is so thoroughly embraced by the mainstreams of Islamic thought that (perhaps apocryphal) Prophetic narrations have for many centuries been quoted to valorise what might otherwise be seen as a problem to be overcome: ‘In my community, disagreement (*ikhtilāf*) is a sign of divine mercy’ (Van Ess, 2006, p. 18). It is in large part for this reason that Islamicists have insisted against translating the term *madhhab* as ‘sect’ (Goldziher, 1981, p. 47): legal scholars have routinely referred to other schools’ rulings, while members of the public are in principle free to seek guidance from one or more schools of their choice. Such mutual recognition made international waves during the 2004 ‘Amman Message’ calling for Muslim unity, and the conferences which followed. These recognised eight legal *madhāhib*—crossing Sunnī, Shī‘ī and Ibāḍī Muslim sectarian lines—as authentically Islamic. Yet it also reflects the long-standing methods of Islamic law embraced by the mainstreams of the tradition, if not necessarily by all believers. Again, recognising the contingency of a given legal opinion or school of jurisprudence is structurally ingrained in the theory and practice of Islamic law, and a source of its relative flexibility and pluralism. It is also key to the role of practical wisdom or phronesis in its application.

This is particularly significant when we are concerned with the most practical (and therefore most mediated by contextual understanding) application of the law through the legal *responsa* of the *fatwā*-giving

process (*iftāʾ*). These are specific legal opinions given as responses to specific legal questions by specific persons in time. These responses are traditionally only to be supplied by learned scholars of the more universal Islamic sciences (including the legal philosophy of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and scriptural hermeneutics of Quran and Hadith)—those who are qualified by their learning and their moral virtue (*ʿadālah*) to be called *muftī* (active participle of the verb *iftāʾ* which also gives us the noun *fatwā*). The role of the *muftī* is to bring his experiences and knowledge of the tradition to bear on the question of the fatwa-petitioner (*mustaftī*) so as to guide them towards the best possible outcome in their particular circumstances. It is this process, we argue, which can most clearly demonstrate the usefulness of accounts drawing on the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis*.

Phronesis in the Aristotelian Tradition: Influence and Questions

A variety of conceptions of wisdom have been held in different times and places, normally directed towards living as well as possible, or taking the most reasonable and constructive decisions possible, on the parts of individuals or societies or both. Each of these conceptions may include several varieties of what wisdom might be (for Aristotle, they were technical, practical, theoretical or theological). They vary along trajectories such as the degree to which they demand that practitioners should aim at some type of perfection, the extent to which they rely on particular forms of spirituality, or in how far they emphasise cognition, variously conceived. All contemporary work on wisdom draws on some version of older insights, among which Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* is a prominent example.

We shall start from Aristotle's version of practical wisdom,³ for three reasons. First, it is significant for stressing how decisions and

³By 'wisdom' Aristotle in fact meant 'sophia', broadly indicating an intellectually demanding knowledge pursued for its own sake, and knowledge of what is highest in the universe—for him, the working of the cosmos (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 7, 1141a 33–1141b 6). It includes knowledge of the first principles of human nature, but it is strictly theoretical contemplation. 'Phronesis' is nowadays translated as 'practical wisdom' to distinguish it from 'sophia'.

habits need to be assessed both concretely, in terms of their immediate impacts, and in the context of the on-going, underlying directions that give them meaning—*telē* in Aristotle's terms (see Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010). This means it can portray human action as in process in a complex, developing world of action. Contemporary writers such as Sternberg (1998) stress the orientation of wise decisions to the common good; Grossmann (2017) too underlines the notion of process. For an Aristotelian approach, both are central. Secondly, practical wisdom chimes with most modern accounts by rejecting rigid distinctions between thought, morality and feeling (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000, take their combination for granted; for other versions see Nussbaum, 2004; Ardel, 2005, or Edmondson, Pearce, & Woerner, 2009). It also provides specific clues about how this combination might work both theoretically and in daily practice without abandoning the key notion of reasoning itself. But, thirdly, the idea of *phronesis* is an ancient one, acknowledged in many cultures, not least Muslim ones (Alwishah & Hayes, 2015), rather than arising from within any recent period or discipline, and it stresses the analysis of ethical practice in more detail than some modern accounts are able to do.

Aristotle sees *phronesis* as the capacity to deliberate excellently about human action, specifically under the aspect of what best contributes to a life of flourishing or one that is well lived (*Nicomachean Ethics* VI, 5). In other words, this is deliberation about the action to be carried out in a particular concrete situation, but not just in terms of the action's immediate aims—voting or building or whatever it may be. Rather, the action needs also to be considered in terms of the ultimate goal of the person's whole life, his or her flourishing (*eudaimonia*). To give a twenty-first century example focusing on practices with ethical implications, Atul Gawande's book *Being Mortal* (2014) deals with how modern medicine may be used to serve the medical ends of trying, come what may, to cure an illness, irrespective of whether the illness is really likely to be cured or of what suffering the patient incurs in the course of treatment. This, Gawande argues, tends to ignore the ultimate goal of the patient's wellbeing. He suggests that focusing on the patient's real goals, needs, and priorities—time with family, freedom of movement or freedom from pain—can lead to better outcomes for patients, their families,

and even for society overall. Phronesis, Gawande's work implies, would involve both individuals and policymakers taking these deeper goals into account when planning for how people nearing the ends of their lives should live. At the same time, in the nature of Aristotle's understanding of human beings, phronesis will not neglect the good of the community: human beings learn their habits from their social surroundings and are supported by these settings in practising them. For Aristotle, the individual inhabits a society and relates to it on a constant basis. Even autonomy and independence of mind depend on a community that supports them (O'Rourke, 2012). For Aristotle, one cannot live virtuously *except* in the context of a community. As he says at the start of the *Politics* (Aristotle *Politics* 1, 2, 1253a 6–7), a person who lives outside a polis is like a piece in a game that no longer belongs to it.

In ch. VI 5 of the *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle says that we understand phronesis by looking at what the person with phronesis decides, the disposition this person has to hit on the truth in practical affairs, using reason and the capacity to discern what is good or bad for human beings (that is, not simply for this person individually). It is also a crucial quality in running states. Aristotle sees this in terms of devising appropriate laws on the one hand and, on the other, carrying them out in particular circumstances: that is, in terms of both legislation and practical policy. Phronesis is required in households or domestic economies, where people need to know how to run a small community, and for decisions made by individuals within their overall social circumstances. That is, it applies to the whole sphere of human goods. The 'zoon logon echon', the rational or reasonable animal, is a person embedded in the practices that make us human, centrally the practice of virtues, and these virtues are learned in society. Owing to their upbringing in a suitably supportive society where the virtues are taken seriously and citizens are habituated to them, *phronimoi* have developed strong moral dispositions. They are sufficiently intelligent and experienced to put these dispositions into effect as various situations demand and in a way that supports the common good, which Aristotle describes in terms of a constituent part of practical wisdom: the capacity for equitable judgement, 'a sort of justice that goes beyond the written law' (*Rhetoric* I, 13, 1374a 26–1374b 23; see Woerner, 1990, pp. 273–280). For

Aristotle, ‘equity’ ‘makes up for’ the fact that a written code of law cannot, in principle, cover every particular case. For individual cases, equitable judgement is needed. Equity must consider what the person *meant* to do and the sort of person s/he ‘has always or usually been’; it ‘bids us be merciful to the weakness of human nature’ (ibid.). Dispensing equity in Aristotle’s sense is therefore a holistic activity. It is retrospective, taking into account the past, circumspect in considering as many factors as possible that bear on the relevant people’s situation now, and also prospective in respect of trying to bring about a humanely better future for those involved.

We can draw on the broader Aristotelian tradition of *phronesis* to explore uses of practical wisdom in the Muslim contexts we go on to examine here, not least because it continues to be a constructive presence in contemporary work on wisdom. We do not argue that, in the ethnographic examples we interrogate, this idea is necessarily consciously followed, even though the work of Aristotle was familiar to scholars writing in Arabic long before it was rediscovered in medieval Europe (Adamson, 2015). What we suggest, instead, is that the idea of *phronesis* can help us make sense of some of what goes on in connection with Shariah law. Moreover, the examples we analyse cast light, in turn, on what *phronesis* may mean, and on some of the questions that contemporary wisdom scholars ask in relation to it.

‘*T’mashi umuruhom*’: Practical Wisdom and the Pedagogy of the Fatwa

We have seen that Aristotle suggests that in order to understand more about wisdom it is reasonable to examine the behaviour of people who are looked to for wise advice (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6, 5 1140a 24–25). Here we interrogate some ethnographic material that records processes of giving and receiving advice that is taken very seriously by both sides. Exploring what is said and done during the practices involved, our first aim is to locate Shariah-minded processes in relation to the activity of practical reasoning. We then go on, in the subsequent section, to ask more detailed questions as far as the exploration of wisdom

is concerned. We begin here with work by Lawrence Rosen, who for decades observed the workings of Islamic courts in Morocco that deal predominantly with family affairs (Rosen, 1989, pp. 5–6). Rosen highlights the extent to which legal language in Morocco blends with and forms part of everyday language, in contrast to the formal legal terminology of the West. This applies to participants' deportment too. Rosen observes, 'the qadi always begins by ascertaining who is who and how [those involved] are connected to each other' (1989, p. 7). The qadi tends to go into some detail here, seeking to establish who lives where, and what their various relationships are. (This may recall seeking to establish the 'elements of circumstances' [Sloan, 2010], a Graeco-Roman practice still used in legal reasoning and commonly known as asking 'who, what, where, when, why, to whose benefit and by what means'.) Then, Rosen remarks, '[h]is first substantive question is usually the signal for the shouting to begin' as everyone tries to state their case, 'women no less than men' speaking 'expressively and forthrightly with just that sort of keen timing and assured style they have developed in years of arguing' in everyday life among family and neighbours (1989, p. 7). Rosen's aim is to make sense of this apparent chaos.

The view of responsible action among the Moroccans Rosen describes is that, within the 'web of obligations that human beings create through their negotiated attachments to others' (1989, p. 13), individuals ideally seek to place themselves within associations of people such as 'teachers, wise men, and enlightened authorities' (1989, p. 12) to develop their own powers of reasoning (cf. Ferrari, Kahn, Benayon, & Nero, 2011, p. 144). But it does not seem to be the qadi's role to impose such choices. Instead, we read that 'the aim of the qadi is to put people back in the position of being able to negotiate their own permissible relationships without predetermining just what the outcome of those negotiations ought to be' (1989, p. 17). The aims of the law—'[T]he modes of reasoning' involved—'lay stress on the consequences of acts over their antecedents', where 'the central goal of the law is to place people on the track of negotiating their own relationships' (1989, p. 37). One the one hand, guidance is given; but it is offered relatively non-prescriptively. Where needed, hearers may be steered back to an appropriate path, but 'without predetermining just what the outcome of these negotiations

ought to be' (1989, p. 17; cf. pp. 41, 55, 79). We might remark that there is what Aristotle calls a *topos* in the background of this process, what for the sake of brevity we shall term a rule of argumentation. It advises identifying relevant states of affairs or actions, regarding them in terms of their consequences, then identifying which are likely to be negative or positive; the last step is advising or dissuading accordingly (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* B23, 1399a 11–17). But here, interestingly, the law does not advise directly, instead encouraging the person(s) concerned to be attentive to what might and should happen. For Rosen, the qadi could most effectively do this by returning people to their circumstances before the dispute had interrupted them (1989, pp. 43–44).

A simple example might be a newly constructed window overlooking someone's private dwelling area; it was ordered that this should be blocked up. The participants to the dispute can then start again to consider what the good and bad consequences of different steps might be. Where family relationships were concerned issues are clearly more complex, though they might be dealt with summarily. Rosen gives an instance in which a man in the army petitioned that his former wife should either give up their son to his care, or move to his posting so that he could oversee the child's upbringing. The court agreed with the wife's submission that this would compel her to keep moving house whenever her former husband's posting changed (1989, p. 67). Rosen's intention is to underline that qadis' decisions were not arbitrary or dependent on personal convictions, but shaped by 'attested opinion, social utility, and local practice' (1989, p. 50), tempered by fairness as in the case of the soldier's ex-wife. Rather than 'fairness', what we have described as Aristotle's concept of 'equitous judgement' might be the best fit for what Rosen is referring to here. As a rule, fairness applies to judging the correctness of following rules that participants accept as belonging to a 'game', in sport or elsewhere. It is irrelevant in respect of such rules to consider what is best for them in terms of the quality of their lives, their personal development or flourishing. In equity (*epieikeia*), circumstantial and circumspect considerations take precedence, with regard to goals of peace, reconciliation or human flourishing.

Given the qadi's aims, and given the largely personal relationships brought before these courts, finding out what people's behaviour has been

like in other contexts, as well as allowing them to argue in front of him (1989, p. 25), has practical utility so that the qadi can form an assessment of people's capacities as well as their histories. It will be a question not just of what ought to be done but also of what this particular person appears capable of doing. Rosen comments that for Moroccans,

to know what another is like it is not enough to use terms and concepts that speak of a basic psychic structure; a description is also needed of what the other has been reliably reported to have said and done in a host of particular interactions. (1989, p. 14; cf. pp. 52–53)

For Rosen, this is a culturally specific way of conceptualising other human beings (though their behavioural approach to understanding others can be found in other cultures too: Edmondson, 2013). But central here is that, as Aristotle would expect, *what people can be known to be like* is important to treating them in an equitable fashion.

To explore further individual cases of Shariah law as it is actually practised, we turn to observations by Hussein Ali Agrama in Cairo. His interest in practices connected with the fatwa combines a sensitivity to both tradition and secularity with his account of Islamic moral guidance in terms of 'the care of the self' (2010, pp. 4, 13–14) as explored by Foucault (who was in fact influenced by another wisdom tradition, that of the Stoics [see Curnow, 2006; Foucault, 1990]). We are less disputing this interpretation than suggesting an expansion of it here. Agrama, whose initial work in Cairo took some two years, followed by return visits on many subsequent occasions, begins his account of the workings of the fatwa by—like Rosen—outlining its homely and informal setting. He describes the spacious but dimly-lit room near the entrance of the Al-Azhar mosque, with leather couches along the walls occupied by 'several aged Azhari sheikhs', 'the muftis who provide fatwas freely for any one who asks'. On 'plain wooden chairs' before them are people 'either conversing with a mufti or patiently waiting their turn' (Agrama, 2010, p. 3). Note the term 'conversing', which is significant here. As in the case of Rosen, the process Agrama will describe is deeply embedded in the ordinary, everyday business of people's daily lives, and the

muftis' authority does not precisely conform to the top-down pattern one might expect. The legal opinions are voluntarily requested by people in perplexity about what to do in everyday predicaments—predicaments that may, nonetheless, be life-changing.

The muftis' decisions are not enforceable, and as we shall see they are not necessarily consistent, but they are very strongly respected. Ethics is regarded among the questioners as a serious business. Agrama begins with two features of this process that surprised him and might surprise us. He notes,

People do not have to obey the fatwas they receive. There are no institutionalized enforcement mechanisms for them. It is entirely possible for a person to seek more than one fatwa concerning the same issue. Given this, and the broad diversity of fatwas these days, one might expect that people would indeed seek more than one, especially if a particular fatwa put them at a disadvantage. But this is precisely what I did not see. Instead, those who received a fatwa tended to follow it even if this caused them difficulty or some unhappiness. I saw many examples of this. (Agrama, 2010, p. 4)

In contrast, the judgements of the more formal Personal Status courts, also based on Sharia law, may not be taken as seriously, even though legally they are binding. Also striking is that the fatwas given by the muftis are not necessarily consistent with each other:

...[D]ifferent answers were often given to people with seemingly similar questions and problems; more interestingly, the same mufti often reacted differently to people with the same question even if in the end he gave the same answers. (Agrama, 2010, p. 10)

For Rosen too, apparent inconsistencies are often explained because, Islamic judges stress, no two individuals are the same (1989, p. 74), while a litigant's origins, biography, and socio-cultural circumstances play a vital role (1989, pp. 12–14, 25). This is not an unknown feature of muftis' advice, and Agrama (2010, p. 13) quotes an instance that he says is familiar.

A well-known story has it that a mufti was once asked if a killer might repent and receive forgiveness. He replied that it was not possible. Asked the same question by another man, he replied in the affirmative. When confronted by the contradiction, the mufti said that, 'As for the first—I saw in his eyes a desire to kill [someone] and I prevented him from it; as for the second—he came in surrender, having already killed [someone] and I did not cause him to despair'. (Reinhart, 1993, p. 13)

Characteristically for an ethnographer, therefore, Agrama begins from observations that do not initially seem to make sense from the point of view of his audience, or even from his own before he began his work. His subsequent account, like Rosen's, throws more light on these problems, and, we argue, it does so in ways that allow us to take further some questions raised in contemporary accounts of wisdom. We shall now draw attention to further features of what he says that place the muftis' behaviour in the context of contemporary discussion of the phrnetic tradition. This includes connections between wisdom and experience, the sorts of knowledge and ability required to give wise advice, and the kinds of balance engaged in. In the following section we go on to make three points which, we think, the Islamic material can contribute to this contemporary discussion. These points together will cast some light on what Baltes and Staudinger (2000) mean by 'orchestrating' capacities needed with regard to wisdom.

Early in his article Agrama points out that 'advanced age and experience' were key qualifications for membership of the Fatwa Council. He speculates that 'the skill of discernment, and the capacity for memory' may allow one 'to discern, through obfuscating details, the fundamental similarity of present situations to past ones' (Agrama, 2010, p. 9). While it has seldom been asserted that becoming older necessarily involves growing wiser, and nor does Agrama do so, there are popular associations between age and wisdom—at least among younger people (Clayton & Birren, 1980). Aristotle, like modern researchers (such as Staudinger [1999]; Sternberg [2005] or Glück & Bluck [2011]), accentuates productively used experience rather than age as such (which on its own, Aristotle says, can lead to bitterness [*Rhetoric* B13, 1389b 13–1390a 23]). The Egyptian context offers a rationale that makes

plausible what such a connection demands and how it operates, at least among people who are accustomed to exercising the appropriate abilities. Agrama ‘frequently encountered the argument that human beings, in their relationships – as friends, lovers, enemies, kin, merchants and so on – have never really changed’ (ibid.). This would make it understandable to expect that the Shariah, despite its venerability, is still able to guide them. But, whether or not we agree that human nature does not change much, people’s circumstances are certainly enormously varied. What the muftis are held to demonstrate, on the basis of their experience, is the skill of insight into how particular kinds of people will react in the specific circumstances they encounter.

As in Rosen’s reports of Morocco, the muftis Agrama describes begin with detailed biographical questions that might at first seem irrelevant or prejudicial.

When a person came with a question, the mufti would very often ask more general questions about the person’s situation before he came up with an answer. Many times, I would see the mufti listening carefully, allowing the fatwa seeker to talk at length. There is a sense that he was fashioning his answer to the specific situation of the fatwa seeker. (Agrama, 2010, p. 10)

We should not idealise the muftis’ activities, since we do not know to what extent their advice is (what we, or participants, might hold to be) successful, but it seems clear that they are expected by the general population to possess the kind of life-knowledge about how human beings work that has been expected by writers on wisdom from Aristotle through Cicero to the ‘Berlin model’ influential in current literature (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). Agrama’s work provides compelling evidence of what goes on in situations where such broad practical wisdom is expected. Muftis seek to understand the specificities of the situations of those they are dealing with, estimating how petitioners will be affected, and what they are likely to be able to contribute to what happens around them.

The basic aim or *telos* we can see underlying the attention they give their interlocutors, as several muftis tell Agrama (and reiterating Rosen’s

Moroccan observations discussed above), is ‘to facilitate people’s affairs [*‘imashi umurohom*]’ or to help them get on with their affairs’ (Agrama, 2010, p. 10). It is not, in other words, to adjure them to perfect conformity with particular moral standards—which is not to deny that Islam is understood as envisaging significant ethical efforts by its adherents. The relatively best solution is sought that the circumstances will allow. The capacity to judge without dogmatism, without seeing all questions in terms of black and white, is generally a quality associated with wise people (Ardelt, 2003). The discussions Agrama is reporting on take place, as Aristotle would expect, within a situation of uncertainty, where solutions are not obvious.

In a sense, just as the fatwa seeker does not initially know what to do, which is why he or she goes to the mufti in the first place, the mufti also, initially, does not know what to say, which is why he typically inquires into the facts of the situation. One could say that what reigns in the Fatwa Council is a condition of perplexity and uncertainty, perplexity of the fatwa seeker about what to do, and the uncertainty of the mufti about what to say about what to do. (Agrama, 2010, p. 12)

Yet the muftis do not always behave with urgency; they wait, taking time to allow events to become sorted out, rather than being anxious about swift adjudication. ‘That the council was not much concerned with uncovering wrongdoing and bringing it to justice was also an aspect that crucially distinguished it from the law courts and its practices’ (Agrama, 2010, p. 12). Theirs is, rather, a question of what can practicably be done next (in the classical tradition, argument ‘to the lesser evil’).

We see here, therefore, some practical applications of conceptualisations such as those outlined by contemporary scholars in the phronetic tradition, including some ways in which balance can be applied in judgement (Sternberg, 1998). The muftis’ dispensation of judgements is not a matter of aiming for perfection as much as discerning what people are capable of, within their particular situations. One of Agrama’s examples concerns a young woman who wonders whether to divorce her much older husband. She feels towards him rather as if he were an older

relative such as a father or uncle, and in any case her husband wishes to marry her aunt (which he is not legally permitted to do). She, on the other hand, is attracted to her young cousin. After considering the details the mufti tells her to divorce her husband and marry the young man. Perhaps she feels surprised by this.

“But shouldn’t I persevere?” she asked again, with emphasis. No, he replied, it was better for her to go and marry the cousin. With this she thanked the mufti and left the council. (Agrama, 2010, p. 11)

Divorce is not considered ideal in the Islamic world. But it is sometimes necessary to consider what people are capable of doing, to prevent them from doing what is worse, and to help them towards life goals that they are actually able to fulfil, *guided by* ‘the range and limits of doctrine as well as overall conceptions of an ideal Muslim self’ (Agrama, 2010, p. 12). In other words, the mufti is balancing what might be ideal—‘correct doctrine’—with what can actually be done by this person living this particular life.

Contributions to the Idea of Phronesis

We now come to some respects in which this material from Islamic practice can *add* to our understanding of what phronetic deliberation might entail. The first feature to which we want to point is that the mufti who speaks to the young woman just mentioned does not seem exactly to be showing empathy with her, in any pointedly emotional sense. Now some form of emotional component is commonly held to be a key constituent of wisdom (see, for example, Ardel, 2003), and this chimes with the contemporary tendency to reject an artificially cognitivised conception of reason in connection with wisdom (Edmondson, 2005). Yet it is not obvious how best to describe this component. Reference to empathy is often made by contemporary writers on wisdom (including Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003; Staudinger & Glück, 2011, or Steuden, Brudek, & Izdebski, 2016). However, doctors, for example, sometimes explicitly deny the usefulness of the term

‘empathy’ in describing or prescribing for their work, at least as far as it might imply a re-enactment of others’ feelings. They point out that to be good doctors they cannot and must not mimic their patients’ feelings in their own emotional states (Marsh, 2017; Pemberton, 2009). What they must do, rather, is understand and respond to their patients’ needs, capacities, preferences, and predicaments. Gawande’s work (2014) strongly implies that they must also understand their patients’ life goals in the context of the underlying *telos* of their profession. In the case of the young woman just described, the mufti is taking into sympathetic account what she needs, what she is like, what her circumstances are likely to demand of her, what can be of use to her in living a good life. Agrama records this activity in terms of *attentiveness*, ‘not just to questioners’ particular situations, but also their weaknesses, drives, desires, hopes, and sufferings’ (2010, p. 13). We suggest that an expanded notion of phronetic attentiveness, properly developed to explore its demanding and multifaceted constituents, might sometimes provide a constructive complement to terms such as ‘empathy’ for the disposition enabling people responsively to take account of the feelings and overall situations of persons needing assistance or advice. There is a centuries-long debate on how to describe the interaction between reason and emotion in sympathising with others’ predicaments (see Smith, 1790), and emotional elements are indubitably part of the process. Yet, while it seems clear that the muftis Agrama describes are indeed taking account of others’ predicaments in a responsive way, many of the emotional capacities needed to do so are kept in the background, at any rate during the interaction. Here this notion of phronetic attentiveness may have potential for rebalancing the description of sympathy to stress that capacities for feeling, however essential to forming the muftis’ abilities to advise, may be subservient to attention in the process of actually offering this advice (cf. also Nussbaum, 2015).

Secondly, and consonantly with the demanding character of phronetic attentiveness, there are interpersonal and pedagogical demands involved, especially on the mufti. These we would term rhetorical demands of self-presentation, argument, and emotional effect (Edmondson et al., 2009). It casts significant light on the relationship between advice-seeker and advice-giver that the respect accorded to the latter depends

in part on his general demeanour. Agrama tells us that ‘What the mufti can say and how he gets to saying it cannot be seen as separate, particularly from the standpoint of the fatwa’s authority’ (2010, p. 12). Yet this does not translate into exaggeratedly formal respect. The mufti may be directly rebuked if he fails to deport himself appropriately (2010, p. 12), although the range of appropriate behaviour may be broad, providing that the mufti’s approach and attitude are directed towards encouraging insight in his interlocutor. (Aristotle says, ‘It is the hearer, that is the speech’s end and object’ [*Rhetoric* 1358a 37–1358b 2]).

It matters how the mufti conducts his inquiries.... [T]here are certain qualities or virtues he is expected to display in the process, consonant with his position as a mufti. His manner must reflect his experience with the affairs of life, his virtues, and his knowledge. He is supposed to be patient, humble, and to display compassion or a merciful attitude. He is not to be rude, loud, or insulting even if he scolds someone for certain actions (although righteous anger seems to be acceptable). (Agrama, 2010, p. 12)

A scholar he consults makes similar comments to Agrama’s, noting ‘that how the muftis interacted with the fatwa seekers was an important dimension of the fatwa’, constituting ‘a pedagogic element’ in it.

Tarbawiyah is the word he used, and it usually means education, cultivation, upbringing, and refinement. He said that the shifting use of fear, laughter, and rebuke was part of a pedagogic process to make them better Muslims. (Agrama, 2010, p. 10)

This process can nonetheless involve a certain lack of ceremony vis-à-vis its own pronouncements. One particular couple came for advice; the husband had a history of pronouncing divorce on his wife, but they wished to reconcile—though apprehensive that the husband might have rendered this unacceptable in formal terms. ‘[T]he wife noted that the mufti who reconciled them at the time stated that this was the last reconciliation that could be done, and that any subsequent pronouncement would mean an irreconcilable divorce’. The mufti asked for more details, and eventually replied,

...‘[U]nderstand that what the mufti said may have just been threats so that your husband won’t do it again.’ After discussing more of the particulars, the mufti came to the conclusion that none of the pronouncements were valid. ‘She is your wife,’ he concluded. (Agrama, 2010, p. 10)

This is remarkable for the way in which the mufti recasts his predecessor’s advice as in a sense unserious (even if well-intended). Such a move in effect elevates the communication situation above the formal meaning of its language. This might be considered a foolhardy thing for an adviser to do, and Agrama too sometimes seems ‘perplexed’ by the muftis’ communicative flexibility, as they scolded, joked, advised or even hesitated (2010, p. 10). But one further remark makes clear that the muftis see themselves as bound by an extremely strong underlying telos (even if the way in which this works is not always obvious to outsiders). When he asked muftis how they devised their responses, ‘They said that a thorough knowledge of the Sharia was necessary...’ (2010, p. 10). We see this as underlining that these instances of phronetic practice take place not abstractly but *within an overall rhetorical situation* which makes considerable demands on the interpersonal capacities and skills of advisers, while imposing on them a telos (in accordance with the Shariah) that schools and informs the directions in which these capacities are employed.

Our third point concerns the surprising mutuality of this entire process of giving and receiving advice. Agrama writes,

...the mufti in the Fatwa Council is understood to share a measure of responsibility for the fatwas he dispenses with the fatwa seekers who then enact his decisions. If a mufti issues an incorrect fatwa then he will bear the responsibility for the enactments of the people to whom he issues it, a responsibility he will face not in this life, but in the hereafter. (Agrama, 2010, p. 11)

This point solidifies and develops observations about phronetic encounters as *processes* (Grossmann, 2017) in which several people may be involved. For Edmondson (2015), wise processes are often

transactions, where give-and-take between participants is crucial, as they bring one another to see the world sufficiently differently to take a new perspective on problems (see Edmondson and Woerner, 2019). The added element from Agrama is that the person *giving* the advice is also involved, morally affected. The demands made on the mufti mean that he is not giving advice from on high, in a process that does not affect him personally. Whether or not the process awakes new opinions in him, he is now an ethical part of the petitioners' predicament. The advice he gives forms part of his own fate too.

In other words, from this material we have learned to specify our approach to 'empathy' in wise advice, suggesting that 'phronetic attentiveness' may be a fruitful line of enquiry to complement or expand notions of empathy. We have learned to accentuate its connections with rhetoric and the communicative situation. We have learned to see the wise person, not just the recipient of advice, as potentially affected by and in a sense subject to the phronetic process. Altogether we have witnessed some details of ways in which muftis may 'orchestrate' highly diverse capacities. They bring together their experience and capacities to find 'balance' in the form of equity in order to envisage the capacities, proclivities, and situations of multiple interacting others (Sternberg, 1998). Experience in conjunction with equity allows them to balance what people ought to do with what they can do at a given place and time. Agrama shows that this is not a question of issuing doctrinal pronouncements, but of negotiating 'the familiar friction that arises from the heterogeneity of life's affairs, of being young and growing old and sick, of dying along the way' that 'renders obscure whether one has ever fully arrived at a given place on the path, or whether one is even still on it' (2010, p. 14). Subject to an overall telos, the path 'toward an ideal Muslim self' (2010, p. 14), the mufti draws on principles and rules of doctrine with 'the skill of using them discerningly to "say the right words at the right time"... for the person who seeks guidance' (Agrama, 2010, p. 14). If this goes well, it results in '...the forging of a bond by finding a way to go forward together' (Agrama, 2010, p. 14).

Conclusions and Developments

While the focus in this chapter has been on flexible and contextual aspects of the practice of Islamic law, it is not our intention to suggest that this is an exhaustive account of the tradition. The issuing of fatwas can be formalistic (as it was through the legal ateliers of the Ottoman empire where junior scribes prepared standardised responses to await the imprimatur of senior jurists). Fatwas can also be removed from traditionally vital local context (as they increasingly are through online forums and social media where legal opinions shorn of their prompting question are broadcast to an undifferentiated global audience). Meanwhile, the more abstract realms of Islamic legal philosophy (*uṣūl al-fiqh*) are characterised by a significant degree of unanimity and continuity. This fact underlies both the coherence of the great legal schools known today and the long-standing Orientalist stereotype that Islamic law became ossified in the Middle Ages through the so-called ‘closing of the gates of *ijtihād*’ (independent legal reason). Yet recent scholarship has demonstrated that this stereotype is misleading, not least in the more practical branches of applied law which concern us here (Hallaq, 1984, 1994). On-going adaptation to new circumstances on the level of applied law and legal opinion has been shown to have contributed to substantive change in positive law throughout recent centuries (Hallaq, 1994). The great historical changes of the modern age, too, present enormous challenges and opportunities to the development of Islamic legal paradigms, even notwithstanding the burgeoning growth of reformist movements since the late eighteenth century.

The case may easily be made that no modern development presents a greater challenge than that of global climate change; this view is certainly taken by the United Nations and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. As a phenomenon, it imperils the survival of the human species in a fashion and to a degree that past threats simply did not. For this reason, it is also especially problematic for existing ethico-legal regimes, including those of the Islamic tradition (Llewellyn, 2003, p. 186), which may struggle to adapt, expand, or analogise existing norms to govern this pressing new case. In spite of the scale of these problems, and of the past century’s relative marginalisation of Islamic

legal experts (Agrama, 2010, p. 4; Llewellyn, 2003, p. 236) within their societies' centralising and bureaucratic modernising states, this challenge is now being taken up. In fact, it has been argued by scholars of the emerging Islamic jurisprudence of the environment (*fiqh al-bi'ah*) that it is characteristics of Islamic law such as those discussed here which are at the centre of such efforts as

[A] living school in successfully adapted modes of practical reason [which] may still offer norms for expanding Islam's normative competence to new social challenges. Jurisprudence offers pragmatic resources, therefore, precisely because existing Shari'a law inadequately addresses environmental issues. (Jenkins, 2005, p. 341)

What is more, it is precisely upon the most contextual and teleological tools that Muslim proponents of the emerging environmental jurisprudence most rely. In responding to a (legally and historically) unprecedented circumstance, the methods drawn upon are not only casuistic reasoning of argument by analogy (*qiyās*), but reflection upon the ultimate goals of the law (*ratio legis*; *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), and appeals to the public good (*maṣlahah*, *istiḥṣlāh*) (Jenkins, 2005, p. 342). Even commentators on this movement who are relatively critical in calling for more radical reform of the tradition, indeed, often find themselves making arguments which find their Islamic corollaries in those very terms—particularly the appeal to public good most characteristic of the Mālikite *madhhab* also discussed by Rosen (Foltz, 2003, pp. 249, 271–272). These cases too highlight forms of reasoning which focus more on 'the logic of consequence' than the 'logic of antecedence' (in the terms used by Dewey [1924]), and bring that awareness to bear in a context-sensitive and practice-reliant manner.

It is true that arguments have been made for the general desirability of such outcome-oriented legal regimes outside of the Islamic context, as Dewey does. It has also been argued that a phronetic approach is precisely what is called for in tackling environmental challenges (Flyvbjerg, 2015; Patten, 2016; Xiang, 2016). Nonetheless, it is not the purpose or intention of this chapter to advocate for a given approach to Islamic law, or for Islam in general. Rather, it is to illustrate and

describe the existence of such traditions which are engaged in tackling major challenges, and which show potential for doing so on a greater scale in the future. In this instance, the potential success of Islamic legal scholars' use of their own phronetic tradition is significant both for those concerned with environmental issues (including but not limited to Muslims) and for many Muslims themselves (cf. Islam, 2012). The emerging Islamic jurisprudence of the environment attempts to tackle a growing global crisis, doing so in a fashion which may successfully convince and mobilise sizeable populations thus-far unmoved by secular environmental discourses. This is the case not least because 'it shows how religious leaders can develop new moral precepts while maintaining the continuity of authority that makes them intelligible to communities organised around revelation' (Jenkins, 2005, p. 341). Many Muslim proponents of environmental *fiqh* have made precisely this argument (Gade, 2015). Equally, the phronetic application of Islamic legal methodologies to the environmental crisis offers an opportunity to proponents of the Islamic legal traditions. As Foltz argues:

It might be more productive instead to adopt the 'correlational method' proposed by Paul Tillich [Tillich, 1951, pp. 59-66] that it is precisely through a tradition's success in drawing upon its own internal resources to confront an ever-changing array of historical crises and concerns that a tradition reinvigorates itself and demonstrates its on-going vitality and relevance. (Foltz, 2003, p. 274)

In the case of what we see as phronetic judgement in Islam, a growing literature attests to the fact that the processes so understood are themselves increasingly tackling not only small-scale human problems, but also what is arguably the largest challenge facing the human species: that of anthropogenic climate change.

We have argued here that the process of generating legal opinions in many Islamic traditions may be fruitfully understood in terms of the Aristotelian tradition of phronesis, and we have used this process in return to throw special light on this tradition itself. This account of the experiences and deliberations of those involved in the process offers not only a fresh perspective on its central processes, but potentially suggests

a new path towards intercultural and inter-religious understanding. Understanding the activities of Islamic jurists and scholars in terms of phronesis, like Agrama's case for focusing on the notion of 'care of the self' (Foucault's *souci de soi*), offers those unfamiliar with the Islamic legal heritage an understanding of its workings which can avoid misunderstandings arising from a hasty transposition of non-Islamic notions of secular law and its functions. It is thus a tool both for analysing and for explaining, for understanding and for making understood. We are not trying to oppose 'othering' Islamic practices by choosing to obliterate or obfuscate all their differences from other traditions (Woerner-Powell, 2017). Rather, we have highlighted aspects of their humane flexibility and hoped to show how some activities that at first appear strange may actually belong to projects that are intelligible. Beyond mere intelligibility, we may in fact find that such projects can be learned from and engaged with constructively by theorists, policymakers, and practitioners alike.

Acknowledgements Ricca Edmondson is grateful for support in interdisciplinary research at the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, in Spring 2017.

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9

Can Wisdom Be Helpful?

Ursula M. Staudinger

Why Is Wisdom Absent from Current Public Life?

Let me start this essay on whether and how wisdom might be able to help with current problems facing the world by an analysis of the reasons for its conspicuous, yet bemoaned absence from current public life. This analysis will lead me outside my comfort zone as a psychologist, and will borrow from neighboring disciplines such as philosophy, economics, literary studies, and law. Hence, I apologize beforehand for necessary simplifications.

So, why is wisdom absent from current public life? In reviews of the ideational history of wisdom, the gradual disappearance of the notion

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of wisdom has been linked with secularization, the scientific revolution, and finally with the Age of Enlightenment taking center stage during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century (e.g., Assmann, 1991a; Baltes, 2004). The thinkers of the enlightenment searched for a new perspective on the human condition, which Pinker (2018) described as being tied together by four drivers: reason, science, humanism, and progress. All of these drivers were at odds with the perspective that left humankind's destiny to a greater power, called God, but rather emphasized the human ability to take control. Not surprisingly but bearing importance for our topic, it is also during the Enlightenment that first ideas about the distribution of wealth and notions of political economy emerged (Piketty, 2014). Now let us fast forward from the Scientific Revolution, the Age of Enlightenment, and the Industrial Revolution to the post-second world war era of globalization and more recently increasing digitization. In philosophical discourse, this era has been reflected, for instance, in postmodernism, with its two cornerstones of (i) value pluralism, or even absolute relativism, and (ii) ever-increasing complexity (e.g., Lyotard, 1979), both of which have been described as leaving many individuals confused and in search of orientation when navigating their lives (e.g., Hassan, 1986).

One should think that this is the ideal breeding ground for wisdom to reemerge in societal discourse. After all, offering orientation and guidance has been described as one the core functions that wisdom may serve for individuals and for society (e.g., Chandler & Holliday, 1990). Nevertheless, the prevalence of wisdom in policy circles, public debate, and media has by no means kept up with the need for this kind of orientation. The only exception to this rather bleak state of affairs is probably the expansion of Buddhism in the Western world, which has occurred since the 1960s and 1970s (Coleman, 2005). Instead, we have been watching and have been subject to the success story of what I would like to call the 'economic perspective,' which implies, among other things, that we are collectively operating under the assumption that the big challenges of our times can only be resolved by following the rules of the economic perspective. Indeed, there is a global consensus that it is the economic perspective that is affording our standard of living and guaranteeing the survival of our species on the planet. Ironically, it is exactly

this hegemony of the economic perspective that jeopardizes the very survival of our species and our planet. Isn't it at the core of wisdom to tackle these kinds of contradictory, dialectic situations? Maybe it is.

The Success of the Economic Perspective

What exactly is the economic perspective that has taken center stage? In my definition, it assumes that human well-being and even flourishing solely depend on economic (material) growth and that this growth is attained through competition in a mostly unconstrained, self-regulated market of an ever-increasing number of scarce goods or assets (e.g., labor, products, air quality, water quality, food quality, real estate, time, ideas, knowledge, education, art). This perspective has permeated all aspects of human existence and has far-reaching consequences for our planet (Franck, 2005). A focus on the *vita activa* (active life) has come in the wake of the economic perspective and has let the *vita contemplativa* (contemplative life) (cf. Arendt, 1958), one of the crucial pathways toward wisdom, go almost extinct. In particular, but not only, this lack of time to think and contemplate seems to apply to leaders in our societies, be it in policy or the economy, who might be turned to for orientation. Some of the defining characteristics of leadership and power nowadays aside from money seem to be overflowing calendars and racing through life. In contrast, having time or actually taking your time is by and large considered a sign of unproductivity and lack of purpose, as 'time is money.' The wisdom perspective, which I will introduce next, and the economic perspective seem to be at odds. It seems difficult, if not impossible, for the wisdom perspective to find space or even gain attention, if it is a mostly uncontested conviction, and fear even, that curbing the economic perspective implies losing the standard of living and the chance for the next generation to have a yet better life.

Let me be clear: The economic perspective has not led humankind into complete misery; some would even argue quite the opposite. It has brought us longer and healthier lives, higher living standards, major reductions of violence and hunger, clean water being readily available, the ability to communicate around the globe and to travel large

distances, to just mention some of the achievements. In a much-debated book, Pinker (2018) wrote about all the accomplishments of modern societies. This all being true, I would nevertheless argue that the absence of wisdom from public and, for the most part, from private life has led us to ignore or pay less attention to crucial challenges that come with the economic perspective, or with enlightenment, as Pinker would argue, such as air and water pollution, water shortage, and in particular social inequality (within and among countries). Social inequality, one can even argue, is part and parcel of the economic perspective.

We may ask, why is it that even though the economic perspective has been creating a host of problems, some of which with potentially fatal consequences for humankind and the planet Earth, that perspective still is thriving and going strong? For instance, the level of social inequality nowadays has reached levels that have last been seen before the French Revolution (Piketty, 2014), and this has happened in countries that call themselves democracies, meaning that the electorate has once and again voted for representatives that have contributed to further increase inequality.

One very interesting explanation for this phenomenon that has recently been put forward is that the economic perspective has been successful in perpetuating itself against all odds with the help of legal code¹ (Pistor, 2019). Pistor very convincingly argues that legal devices such as contract law, property rights, collateral law, trust, corporate, and bankruptcy law are the very tools that create assets or capital and inequality and help to maintain both over long stretches of time. This is the case because legal code bestows the following characteristics on assets, which provide almost a stealth quality to them: (i) priority, (ii) universality, (iii) durability, and (iv) convertability. Legal institutions even support the ‘discovery’ of the price in the seemingly unregulated market. Legal coding confirms the value. Taxes as a potential means of redistribution have become largely dysfunctional because legal devices

¹Legal code is a type of legislation that purports to exhaustively cover an area of laws or the whole system of laws as it existed at the time the code was enacted, by a process of codification. Codification is the process of converting and consolidating judge-made law and statute law.

protect capital. It is the quality of the legal coding (i.e., the lawyer that one can afford) that makes some assets 'more equal' than others. And note that legal code has globalized its impact. States have actively abolished legal barriers and acknowledge each other's laws. Consequently, Pistor argues, it is a threatening of the legitimacy of the law that may turn out to be successful in jeopardizing the distribution of capital (Pistor, 2019).

You may wonder, why do I discuss these issues here? I would like to suggest that acknowledging this easily overlooked reality of the economic perspective and its 'survival' mechanisms will inform the discussion as to whether and, if so, how wisdom may be in a position to help in solving the problems facing the contemporary world. But before we get to that, let me introduce my view of what the wisdom perspective has to offer.

The Wisdom Perspective

In contrast to the economic perspective, the wisdom perspective is not aimed at economic growth but rather, first and foremost aims to protect and further the greater good, which I would like to define here as truly enhancing and sustaining life (Plato, Aristotle). And it does so by (i) considering a multitude of perspectives (including the economic one), which usually are at odds with each other), (ii) taking not only a short-term but also a long-term view (which not rarely are at odds with each other), (iii) by incorporating the limitations of human judgement and the uncertainties of life, (iv) differentiating between what is possible to change and what needs to be accommodated (as hurtful as it might seem at that time), and finally and fundamentally, (v) transcending given circumstances or the constraints of the current system, and recognizing its blind spots in order to master the complex problems of life (Staudinger, 2019).

The wisdom perspective can be applied to our personal life problems or to complex life matters in general. The notion of general wisdom indexes the latter and personal wisdom indicates the former (Staudinger, 2013). As this essay deals with the role that wisdom may play in helping

to solve the problems facing the world, I would like to focus on general rather than personal wisdom. Human communities (e.g., cities, federal states, countries) and institutions (economy, labor market, education) take on a role of their own, which reaches beyond the sum of the members of these communities. I am not denying that increases in personal wisdom also contribute to addressing the big issues facing our world. But I do suggest that it is general wisdom and its realm of possible solutions as well as the art of advice giving and its potential role on a societal level that takes center stage.

Wisdom depends on broad and deep knowledge and skills as they are accumulated and continuously updated through learning, work, and everyday practice. In his seminal book on 'Knowledge and Human Interest,' Habermas (1968) distinguished three modes of knowing or types of knowledge: (i) technical or scientific knowledge, which aims at understanding and modifying nature; (ii) practical knowledge, which targets to maintain social and communicative practices, and finally (iii) emancipatory knowledge, which at the same time aims to free oneself from the concern of biological preservation and transcend sociocultural configurations in order to promote the possibilities of the human species. Different types of problems require different types of knowledge. Not all problems require wisdom. Rather, it is crucial when pursuing the greater good to carefully identify those issues that require wisdom, that is, emancipatory knowledge that helps to transcend given circumstances. The wisdom perspective extends beyond smartness and even prudence (e.g., Staudinger, Lopez, & Baltes, 1997) or technical and practical knowledge. It requires embracing rather than reducing complexity. This involves integrating knowledge and thought with balancing emotional reactions and contradictory values at stake. Wisdom is about deciding which is the greater good for all in the short term *and* the long run and finding ways to convincingly communicate such prioritizations.

Let me add another word of caution to avoid misunderstandings. Wisdom is not the same as doing good or acting morally (cf. Pasupathi & Staudinger, 2001). There is evidence that, in general, human beings would, for the most part, like to be 'good people' and 'be moral,' which in turn is linked with their happiness (Hofmann,

Wisneski, Brandt, & Skitka, 2014). But it remains unclear whether the world is always a better place afterwards. Impulsive morality, that is, morality without reflection and attention to the detail of the situation, can even cause more harm than good (Hofmann, Meindl, Mooijman, & Graham, 2018).

What Characterizes the Challenges of the Twenty-First Century?

Concern has been voiced (e.g., Harari, 2018) that we are living in times of increasing complexity, which makes it impossible for one person to ever have enough information to make an informed decision. Relying on experts may not be the solution either, as also experts may be subject to groupthink and other biases of human judgement. Therefore Harari (2018), amongst others, has suggested that everyone should meditate and practice mindfulness, as these practices will help us to learn more about ourselves and our inner demons. While such practices will not hurt, and if practiced regularly and with the intention to grow as a person, they likely contribute to progress on the personal wisdom pathway (e.g., Singer & Ricard, 2017). In complex systems, however, the behaviors and characteristics of its elements or subsystems do not directly determine the characteristics of the overall system (Luhmann, 1984). And the problems we are facing nowadays are complex and systemic in nature. The World Economic Forum 2018, for instance, has identified the most important problems to be climate change, water shortage, weapons of mass destruction, migration, and cyber security (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/01/these-are-the-biggest-risks-the-world-faces-in-2018/>).

Let me elaborate on the notion of complexity. It carries a very precise meaning, which may present quite a good match with wisdom. What is implied when a problem is characterized as complex? Based on dynamic(al) systems theory (sensu Prigogine, 1978), the following characteristics seem relevant for present purposes (e.g., Grimm et al., 2005; Mainzer, 2007): (i) The problem presents itself as one unified problem but at the same time it is composed of a potentially infinite number of

facets or subsystems. (ii) Not only the relevant elements of the problem are to be considered but also the relationships amongst those elements. These relationships are not linear in nature, that is, B does not always follow from A. Relations are recursive and interactive. For instance, even though we know all the natural laws necessary to understand the weather, we are still not able to perfectly predict it. The smallest changes in the starting points result in aberrations of predictions. (iii) Complex systems are self-organizing and striving toward stability. (iv) New characteristics and reactions can emerge at any time. A complex problem in that sense is never comprehensively described or conclusively solved. Nevertheless, complex problems jeopardize the wellbeing of humankind and the planet Earth. Thus, there is no choice but to address them, and the wisdom perspective may be helpful to do so.

Is There Room for Wisdom?

Even though there is a need for wisdom, rather than a rise of the wisdom perspective, we have been witnessing the sweeping political and media success of populism in response to increasing social inequality and increasing complexity of nowadays' world (Moffitt, 2016). Instead of calling for more wisdom to tackle the complex problems we are facing, or despairing about the fact that we cannot know all that is necessary in order to solve the problems at hand, or requesting more knowledge for everyone, populism has taken a very radical opposing position and has suggested that there are no facts, except for those that we make up. Political theory has labeled this as anti-intellectualism (Urbinati, 2013). Populism addresses many people's anxieties in the face of rising inequality and complexity and offers remedies like nationalism (as globalization is viewed as one of the reasons for all problems), or a position that is against the current political establishment, whatever it is (as the current approach to government is viewed as another reason for all problems).

A populist world with an overflow of information and faced with complex problems, as described above, requires more wisdom but it also necessitates making room again and protecting the value of knowledge

(not information or fabrications) and skills. Since World War II, the world has witnessed an enormous expansion of primary, secondary, and even tertiary education (Lazerson, 1998). This expansion was strongly driven by the need for more human capital (Becker, 1962), as the economic perspective would call it. Changing the availability of education as a 'good' at first indeed increased the availability of qualified labor. However, setting incentives in a way that more students be in higher education, has also had some negative consequences for the quality of education in the US (at least) as higher education of quality turned into a scarce good that is being sold for a higher and higher price. In addition, increasing social inequality drastically increased the differences in the quality of education between richer and poorer states, cities, neighborhoods, and accordingly, for parents living in these respective neighborhoods (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). It is highly likely that I am oversimplifying matters, and certainly I am not an expert in this field, but evidence has been presented showing that letting the economic perspective rule supreme has, not in the short run but rather in the long term, fundamentally jeopardized the quality and accessibility of education in the U.S. Beyond this jeopardy, secondly there is the challenge facing education to find adequate ways to teach knowledge and skills in times of overflowing information (cf. De Corte & Fenstad, 2010). Thirdly, there is the issue that, in times of rapidly changing knowledge and skills, learning needs to continue throughout adulthood and into old age in order to keep individuals updated, independently of whether they work and what their work is (e.g., Tuijnman & Boström, 2002).

It is pivotal to avoid the pitfall of subjecting education and its institutional setup to the unconstrained rule of the economic perspective, which tends to undermine the quality of education by aiming to optimize profits (e.g., short teachers' education, low teachers' pay, lack of quality classroom and school equipment). It also impacts curricular choices such that, for instance, students' test scores, which supposedly make performance of schools capable of being compared, become more important than the intellectual and personal qualities that students develop or do not develop across a school year (Duncan & Murnane, 2011). Education in the twenty-first century has a big task ahead of itself. It cannot let go of the goal to teach the knowledge and skills

necessary to enable students to update knowledge and to critique information that is overflowing from increasing numbers of sources. One crucial avenue to reach such goals, and this is not a recent revelation, is to develop students' critical-thinking skills (e.g., Glaser, 1941). Critical thinking is the objective analysis of facts to form a judgment. It is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It entails effective communication and problem-solving abilities, as well as a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism and ethnocentrism. This description makes it clear that critical thinking is an important stepping stone on the road to wisdom and that it has gained even more importance in times of overflowing information.

Improving the quality and the accessibility of high-quality education is a first important step and will support finding and even more strongly implementing solutions for the big problems facing humankind. Yet, it will not be enough, for at least two reasons. First, technical and practical knowledge, as Habermas (1968) calls them (see p. 7. for definitions), will not suffice, given the complex nature of these problems as just described. This complexity requires what Habermas called "emancipatory knowledge" or even more, and that is wisdom. The second reason, however, has to do with the fact that focusing on raising the level of knowledge and skills, and even raising the level of wisdom in individuals, does not suffice, given the global and systemic nature of these world problems. The whole is more than the sum of its parts or behaviors and characteristics of its elements or subsystems do not directly determine the characteristics of the overall system, as Luhmann (1984) phrased it. It takes additional measures at the system level.

Wisdom in the Twenty-First Century: Challenges and Opportunities

Addressing the challenges that humankind and the planet are facing, requires more than knowledge and skills, wisdom is a perfect solution. Wisdom helps to develop a hierarchy of importance by aiming to further the greater good, whether this hierarchy fits with the economic perspective or not, and thereby settle conflicting interests, which usually

are part and parcel of complex world problems (Scobel, 2008). The wisdom perspective may be ideally suited to deal with the indefinite character of complex problems by not rushing to quick solutions based on limited knowledge but rather opting for stepwise operations that allow one to insert checks for unwanted side effects and accordingly allow one to shift course if needed. Not rarely does wisdom offer surprising counsel antagonizing everyone; or it may suggest actions that seem contradictory to the cause. Often, only time will unfold the wisdom encapsulated in such counsel and actions for everyone to see.

As discussed before, it is not enough to increase the level of wisdom displayed by individuals. There is also the need to make room for wisdom at the systems level in order to make progress with the complex problems facing the world. In order for wisdom or wise counsel to have impact social as well as political acknowledgement and protection as well as effective means of dissemination are pivotal. So, the question we need to ask is whether we can conceive of ways that this acknowledgement and protection of wisdom and wise counsel on a societal level may actually happen?

Most of the ancient and contemporary wisdom literature assumes that humans in general are striving to become wise, yet there are also historical writings that portray wisdom as a phenomenon that is not for everyone but rather a profession for some than for the many (Assmann, 1991a; Lang, 1991). I suggest that besides being concerned with increasing the level of wisdom in each and every one, we also, and very much so, need to create room for wisdom within the governance of the modern state, such that wisdom has a chance to make a contribution to solving the complex problems facing the world or at least containing the problems that humankind and the planet are facing. There need to be roles for wise individuals (individually or as a group) that carry weight and respect and there need to be pathways toward wisdom and selection mechanisms in place in order to identify wise individuals who are eligible to take these roles. Historical examples for such roles are, for instance, the wise ruler or monarch, the wise judge, the position of the so-called 'Fools' at Medieval courts, which however were able to provide wise counsel, or the position of the Sage in tribal communities. All of these roles received attention and carried natural authority or authority

allegedly bestowed by God. Some modern democracies have established so-called councils of elders; however, the selection of the members of such councils is usually not guided by wisdom principles and also the weight their voice has within the political discourse is not prominent enough. Hence, their very purpose is undermined. There are also ways for wise individuals to raise their voice nationally and internationally via established and modern forms of mass communication. However, the impact of such statements is very uncertain.

In pre-secular times, most religions had prescribed practices that aimed to lead to enlightenment and thereby to wisdom (Assmann, 1991b). The pathways were clearly laid out and often included leading a life outside of the 'life of the many.' These pathways usually involve leading a life that is financially and physically secure and not weighed down by the trials and tribulations of finding, developing or keeping a position in society. Such a life allows for a distanced and balanced view on things that happen within a given society and yet religiously enlightened individuals used to be acknowledged by the powerful and the many within society. This distanced and balanced view may also be possible for individuals living as integral members of a given society if the 'professionally' wise ones were protected such that there was financial security and no repercussions to be feared for advice given or decisions taken. Which could be the pathways toward wisdom and which the selection mechanisms that allow to identify the wise ones?

When turning to the scientific wisdom literature for guidance about pathways toward wisdom, quite a number of conditions have been confirmed empirically. For instance, it has been demonstrated that growing older is not enough to become wiser. This finding contradicts the positive old-age stereotype that the older we get, the wiser we become. The two can be reconciled by the fact that under certain conditions, greater age indeed increases the probability for wisdom to emerge; it just is not automatic (Staudinger, 1999). It is not enough to collect experiences to become wiser but rather it is crucial which experiences are lived and how these experiences are evaluated and integrated into a deeper understanding of life (Staudinger, 2001). What we experience depends on a number of influences. Historical times are one of them. Cohorts living

through very hard times, such as war or dictatorship, may have a higher likelihood of being pushed out of their comfort zone and toward realizing the deeper “truths” of life. Personality make-up is another important influence. The degree to which individuals are open to new experiences and actually seek out new experiences impacts what they experience and whether such new experiences may challenge insights that they had derived from earlier experiences. When insights do not get challenged and modified, they crystallize and eventually have a high likelihood of turning into dogmas, which is the antithesis of wisdom. Longitudinal research on personality development across adulthood has shown that openness to new experience is a personality characteristic that tends to decline with age, starting around midlife, at least in most countries (see Reitz, Weiss, & Staudinger, in preparation, for exceptions). Finally, professional education and experiences impact exposure to wisdom-conducive experiences. Research has shown that occupations which, during training and day-to-day practice, deal with matters of life and the human condition, such as family doctors, psychotherapists, or judges, have indeed a wisdom-promoting advantage over non-human services professions that are comparable in level of education, such as engineers or accountants (Staudinger, 1999). Once experiences are lived, the capacity to draw inferences, evaluate, and integrate those experiences depends on both emotion regulation and the capacity to think abstractly. With regard to emotion, emotion-regulation research has shown that, with increasing age, on average there seems to be a tendency to prioritize positive emotions and disregard or avoid negative emotions (Scheibe & Carstensen, 2010). This tendency does not necessarily promote the pathway toward wisdom, as gaining insight into complex matters of life requires attention to negative experiences and the negative emotions that often are linked with them, in order to extract insight and make progress. The tendency to turn away from the negative in life (i.e., downregulate, disattend, perceptual bias) in order to maintain wellbeing is helpful from a hedonic perspective but much less so from a wisdom perspective (Staudinger & Kunzmann, 2005).

Where does this set of findings leave us with regard to wisdom as a profession in modern society? Combining this evidence with the

considerations laid out earlier, which professions might lend themselves to a wisdom pathway more easily than others? Given what was discussed above about the importance of the legal system in perpetuating and protecting the economic perspective, it seems that the profession of a justice (i.e., higher-court judge) might qualify to be a professional role to consider. Of course, the most recent events revolving around the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Kavanaugh have illustrated how far partisanship, not least driven by the economic perspective, has come in undermining the very essence of modern democracy, that is, the election process. This illustrates the problem of a selection process that is embedded in the political system. To minimize the likelihood of such undermining to happen one may consider a selection process that refers to peers as the one that make the decision, that is, from among the group of justices of a given country.

The Kavanaugh confirmation process also highlighted that the professional training and the professional experience toward becoming a justice, as we currently know it, does not seem to suffice but needs to be combined with further wisdom-conducive practices and personal characteristics, some of which have been described above, to forge wisdom justices. To which degree this type of 'wisdom training' needs to be formalized, in the sense that a clear pathway is laid out, is open for discussion. The wisdom justices would form a Wisdom (rather than a Supreme) Court and would deliberate the big challenges facing a given country. As many of the big challenges facing individual countries have an important global dimension, it is crucial that all or most countries around the world establish such wisdom pathways for higher-court judges and that similar roles of wisdom judges are introduced at the level of the United Nations. I realize that this is not a complete and detailed plan for what needs to be done to overcome partisanship and identify suitable candidates, but I like to think that it contains enough suggestions to get a serious discussion started, which may help us all to find a way toward how the wisdom perspective may get a chance to counterbalance the economic perspective for the sake of the future of humankind and of the planet Earth.

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10

Wisdom in the Workplace

Hannes Zacher and Ute Kunzmann

The workplace, along with family, is arguably one of the most important life contexts of adults in industrialized and post-industrial societies. Most adults spend a considerable share of their awake time working for pay, and work can have important ramifications for their health, well-being, and personality development (Bliese, Edwards, & Sonnentag, 2017; Woods, Lievens, De Fruyt, & Wille, 2013). Work can be a source of great joy, experienced meaningfulness, and self-actualization for employees, yet it may also lead to significant sorrows (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Many employees feel stressed due to their job demands and difficulties regarding the combination of work with other life roles, such as family, caregiving, or leisure time (American Psychological Association, 2017; Nohe, Meier, Sonntag, & Michel, 2015). Work stress can result in reduced work ability, chronic

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health problems, and even death. Indeed, a longitudinal study showed that poorly designed, “high strain” jobs (i.e., high demands, low autonomy) increased employees’ mortality risk by 15% compared to low-demands, low-autonomy jobs; in contrast, “active jobs” (i.e., high demands, high autonomy) reduced the odds of death by 34% compared to low-demands, high-autonomy jobs (Gonzalez-Mulé & Cockburn, 2017). Beyond job characteristics, employees’ health and well-being can suffer if they have to work with colleagues or supervisors who behave abusively and unethically, or if they work in an organization that prioritizes financial outcomes over human and social welfare (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007; Peus, 2011). Many of these individual, team, and organizational problems have their roots in an increasingly individualistic, competitive society and the neoliberal economic system (Bal & Dóci, 2018). Importantly, poor employee health and well-being can backfire and lead to substantial costs for organizations (e.g., absenteeism, turnover, replacement costs) and society as a whole (e.g., health care costs). Thus, it is important to practically prevent these significant workplace problems and provide answers to the question what empowers employees, supervisors, and organizations to address these issues.

The field of industrial, work, and organizational (IWO) psychology has traditionally focused on discrete psychological constructs such as general mental ability and the Big Five personality traits to select the “best” (i.e., highly motivated, adaptable, high performing, ethical) employees, with the idea that highly intelligent individuals with mature personalities would help prevent the problems described above (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Schmitt, 2014). In contrast, IWO psychologists have largely neglected the construct of wisdom as a desirable attribute of employees, supervisors, or organizations, even though this construct appears to be well-established in several psychological subdisciplines (Staudinger & Glück, 2011). Potential explanations for this inattention are (a) different research traditions in IWO psychology as compared to, for instance, developmental and social/personality psychology, (b) that some have found it challenging to define wisdom unequivocally, (c) concerns about construct and incremental predictive validity of wisdom, as well as (d) practical difficulties regarding the operationalization of wisdom. Another issue that may have prevented

IWO researchers from studying wisdom more frequently is that the modern workplace is a context in which people's self-interests (e.g., achieving high performance, productivity, pay raises, promotions, benefits) typically prevail over taking others' (e.g., coworkers, broader society) interests into account (Grossmann, 2017). In addition, given the many stressors that characterize the contemporary workplace (e.g., the pressure to continuously achieve performance gains in short timeframes, the pressure to constantly improve products and services), goal obstacles and problems are often seen in isolation rather than their contextual complexities as would be typical of wisdom.

In this chapter, we argue that the typical approach to challenges and problems in the workplace, which entails emphasizing particular interests, ignoring contextual variations, and adopting shortsighted and narrow views on problems, perpetuates rather than solves many problems. In addition, individuals who score highly on relatively narrowly defined cognitive abilities related to academic intelligence or specific mature personality traits, such as emotional stability or conscientiousness, may not be sufficiently equipped to prevent or at least mitigate the consequences of the complex problems described above. Rather, we argue that dealing with the often complex and uncertain problems of the modern workplace successfully requires individuals who score highly on integrative strengths such as wisdom (e.g., Nonaka, Chia, Holt, & Peltokorpi, 2014; Rooney & McKenna, 2007; Rowley, 2006). As discussed in greater detail below, wisdom-related strengths, which could play an important role in the workplace, include (a) balancing of various interests to maximize the common good, (b) adopting an integrative and context-sensitive approach to problems, and (c) acknowledging that knowledge is fallible (e.g., Grossmann, 2017; Kunzmann & Baltes, 2005; Staudinger & Glück, 2011; Sternberg, 1998). These strengths are not captured by other psychological traits and capabilities that are commonly considered in personnel recruitment and selection (Ployhart, Schmitt, & Tippins, 2017).

The overarching goal of this chapter is to make a case for the important role of wisdom for solving key problems in the contemporary workplace. We argue that, given the significant human and social costs associated with these problems, it is very worthwhile to consider,

measure, and implement wisdom at work despite the palpable efforts involved in doing so. We propose that enhancing wisdom among individuals in teams and organizations will benefit their well-being and, in turn, the well-being of organizations and society more broadly. In the following, we first outline how wisdom has typically been conceptualized and measured in the psychological literature. Second, we describe key workplace problems at multiple levels, including individual employees, teams and leadership, and organizations as a whole. Third, based on insights gained from the literature on wisdom, we discuss how wisdom could be used to deal with various concrete workplace problems, including high levels of stress, lack of meaning, incivility among colleagues, abusive supervisors, and corporate social, ethical, and environmental irresponsibility. We conclude this chapter by delineating implications for future research on wisdom and work, as well as implications for organizational practice.

Wisdom

The psychology of wisdom is still a relatively small field, yet several promising psychological models of wisdom have been developed during the last two decades (Bangen, Meeks, & Jeste, 2013; Grossmann, 2017; Karelitz, Jarvin, & Sternberg, 2010; Kunzmann, in press; Staudinger & Glück, 2011). In this section, we set the stage for subsequent discussions by reviewing how wisdom researchers have typically conceptualized and operationalized wisdom.

Conceptualization and Measurement of Wisdom

Although there is considerable agreement among researchers on several important ideas about the nature of wisdom, the existing psychological wisdom models also encompass their unique features and are associated with different methods of assessing wisdom. In this regard, two different research traditions deserve special note. A first tradition has conceptualized wisdom as a mature form of personality and developed self-report

questionnaires to gauge these personality traits, which researchers in this tradition have considered typical of a wise personality (Ardelt, 2003; Webster, 2003; Wink & Helson, 1997). A second research tradition has focused on wisdom as highly developed experience-based knowledge and reasoning skills (Baltes & Smith, 1990; Grossmann, 2017; Sternberg, 1998). In this tradition, researchers have developed performance-based measures to assess wisdom-related reasoning and knowledge about difficult and uncertain problems related to the meaning and conduct of life.

Wisdom as Mature Personality

Wisdom models developed in the tradition of personality research all share the idea that the wise personality has a range of distinct, highly desirable personality traits. Although the existing wisdom models slightly differ in terms of the number and nature of the traits subsumed, they often encompass affective (e.g., empathy and emotion regulation), cognitive (e.g., reflection or a deep understanding of phenomena), and motivational (e.g., an interest in other people's minds and openness to new experiences) traits (Ardelt, 2003; Webster, 2003; Wink & Helson, 1997). Consistent with many lay and expert theories of wisdom (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Staudinger & Glück, 2011), the wise personality is thought to be characterized by an exceptional integration of such mature affective, cognitive, and motivational strengths. This integration makes wisdom a resource people can turn to in times of crises and radical changes and if past approaches to problems are no longer appropriate.

Several psychometrically sound self-report questionnaires have been developed to assess wisdom-related cognitive, emotional, and motivational traits, including the three-dimensional wisdom scale (3D-WS) developed by Ardel (2003) or the Self-Assessed Wisdom Scale (SAWS) developed by Webster (2007). These questionnaires are highly reliable and often show theory-consistent relationships with other person-related characteristics, such as education or subjective well-being (Glück et al., 2013; Zacher & Staudinger, 2018). At the same time, potential problems with

the self-report approach to assessing wisdom deserve mention (for details, see Kunzmann, in press). These refer to introspective limits and processes of impression management and, thus, the conditions under which individuals are able and willing to provide valid information about their competencies. For example, some individuals might not want to communicate that they believe that they do not possess highly valued desirable traits. There may also be individuals who simply do not know how well they can reason about wisdom-relevant problems (i.e., the “Dunning-Kruger effect”; Sheldon, Dunning, & Ames, 2014). Yet other individuals might consider it inappropriate to communicate that they believe that they are good advisors, highly reflective, or emotionally competent. Thus, for different reasons, for many individuals it may be difficult, if not impossible, to report themselves how wise they actually are. In light of these difficulties, it seems mandatory to employ performance-based methods that are less influenced by what individuals can know and want to share with others (Staudinger & Glück, 2011). As discussed in subsequent sections, performance-based methods focus on wisdom-related knowledge as it manifests itself while individuals reason about their own, other people’s, or hypothetical wisdom problems.

Wisdom as a Highly Developed Form of Pragmatic Knowledge

Researchers working in the tradition of psychometric models of intelligence and expertise have conceptualized wisdom as procedural and factual knowledge as well as acquired skills and heuristics, for example, to give good advice or make sound judgments. Robert Sternberg’s wisdom model represents a first example. Proceeding from his triarchic theory of intelligence, Sternberg (1998) considers tacit knowledge, a component of practical intelligence, as a core feature of wisdom. According to Sternberg (1998), tacit knowledge is action-oriented, it helps individuals to achieve goals they personally value, and it can be acquired only through learning from one’s own experiences, not “vicariously” through reading books or through others’ instructions. Importantly, Sternberg

(1998) states that wisdom is not tacit knowledge per se, but rather is involved when people apply their tacit knowledge in order to maximize a balance of various self-interests (intrapersonal) with other people's interests (interpersonal) and aspects of the context in which they live (extrapersonal). Therefore, what sets wisdom apart from practical intelligence is its orientation toward the maximization of a common good, rather than individual well-being.

Paul Baltes and his colleagues instigated perhaps the most comprehensive research program on wisdom, promoting the idea of wisdom as knowledge, in the late 1980s (Baltes & Smith, 1990; Dittmann-Kohli & Baltes, 1990; Dixon & Baltes, 1986). According to Baltes, wisdom refers to knowledge about fundamental problems related to the meaning and conduct of life. Thus, at first sight, the scope of wisdom-related knowledge is broad because it refers to life in general. At the same time, however, the scope is narrow in that wisdom-related knowledge only deals with fundamental, that is, difficult, complex, uncertain, and ill-defined problems related to the meaning and conduct of life (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). The complex and serious problems that often occur in the modern workplace certainly belong to this class of problems. Baltes and his colleagues developed several criteria to describe wisdom-related knowledge about such problems; these include the following three in addition to deep factual and procedural knowledge about the meaning and conduct of life: lifespan contextualism, that is, an awareness and understanding of the many contexts of life, how they relate to each other and change over the lifespan; value relativism and tolerance, that is, an acknowledgment of individual, social, and cultural differences in values and life priorities; and knowledge about handling uncertainty, including the limits of one's own knowledge. To assess wisdom-related knowledge and reasoning, performance-based measures present people with hypothetical scenarios about fundamental problems related to the meaning and conduct of life (e.g., attempted suicide of a friend, teenage marriage). Participants respond to the global question of what one could consider and do about a given problem. Multiple trained coders then rate the resulting think-aloud protocols on various dimensions of wisdom (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000).

Although the Berlin wisdom paradigm has dominated much of the empirical work on wisdom as knowledge, several researchers have suggested highly valuable extensions of the standard paradigm (Grossmann, Karasawa, et al., 2012; Grossmann, Na, et al., 2010; Helson & Srivastava, 2002; Mickler & Staudinger, 2008; Thomas & Kunzmann, 2014). For example, Staudinger and colleagues (Mickler & Staudinger, 2008; Staudinger & Glück, 2011) have extended the Berlin paradigm, which focuses on general wisdom (i.e., wisdom as knowledge about difficult and uncertain problems in general and from an observer-perspective), to also include personal wisdom (i.e., wisdom as knowledge about the self).

More recently, Grossmann and colleagues introduced an approach to the assessment of wisdom that has focused on wise knowledge about intergroup and interpersonal conflicts (Grossmann, Gerlach, & Denissen, 2016; Grossmann et al., 2010; Kross & Grossmann, 2012). Thus, in contrast to the Berlin tasks, Grossmann's tasks focus on one particular problem type (i.e., social conflict). In addition, the tasks are more naturalistic and comparably context-rich in that they provide detailed information about the people involved, for example, their concerns, motives, and feelings. The interview itself also differs from the Berlin interview in that the experimenter asks a series of relatively concrete questions that the participant successively answers (for more details see Kunzmann, in press; Kunzmann, Nowak, Thomas, & Nestler, 2017).

Summary

Although no universally accepted definition of wisdom exists to date, there is much overlap among the specific definitions in that they all consider wisdom as a multidimensional concept that involves deep insight and sound judgment enabled through the ability to reflect and analyze as well as an unbiased and philanthropic attitude. In the tradition of personality research and the conceptualization of wisdom as a mature form of personality, these aspects are assessed via self-report questionnaires. Thus, the main question is whether a person believes that he or she typically feels, thinks, and behaves wisely and, thus, describes him- or herself as reflective, insightful, and compassionate.

In the tradition of research on intelligence, expertise, and the conceptualization of wisdom as a highly developed knowledge structure, these aspects are assessed via performance-based measures. Thus, the main question is whether a person can reason and think wisely and whether his or her knowledge about the self or life in general approaches wisdom criteria such as reflection, insight, and compassion.

Research on Wisdom and Work

Having established how wisdom is typically conceptualized and measured in the psychological literature, we now turn to an overview of existing research on wisdom at work. As it turns out, research in this area is currently very limited; particularly empirical studies that test assumptions of established wisdom theories in the work and organizational context are scarce.

Wisdom in Organizations and Different Professions

Several books and journal special issues on organizational and managerial wisdom have been published, which apply a broad range of conceptualizations of wisdom to the workplace. Most of these works are inspired by ancient philosophical literature (e.g., the Aristotelian notion of *phronesis*) rather than contemporary psychological conceptualizations of wisdom as discussed above (e.g., Bevan & Thompson, 2013; Kessler, 2006; Kessler & Bailey, 2007; Nonaka et al., 2014). Thus, these works are typically rather theoretical and abstract as compared to empirical and concrete. For example, in their research program on “social practice wisdom” inspired by Aristotelian thinking about wisdom, McKenna and Rooney discuss five prescriptive principles of wise organizations and management. Specifically, they suggest that wisdom should be based on reason and observation; incorporate non-rational and subjective elements into judgment; be directed to authentic humane and virtuous outcomes; be articulate, aesthetic, and intrinsically rewarding; and be practical (Rooney & McKenna, 2007, 2008; Rooney, McKenna, & Liesch, 2010).

Related research in the tradition of organizational knowledge management has conceptualized wisdom as the highest level of cognitive processing among managers and professional workers, assuming that wisdom helps improve learning and performance in an increasingly complex, knowledge-intensive workplace (i.e., data > information > knowledge > wisdom model; Mackay, Zundel, & Alkirwi, 2014; Prewitt, 2002).

Empirical research by Baltes, Smith, and Staudinger examined how people's profession or occupation relates to their wisdom-related knowledge as conceptualized by the Berlin wisdom paradigm (Baltes, Staudinger, Maercker, & Smith, 1995; Smith, Staudinger, & Baltes, 1994; Staudinger, Maciel, Smith, & Baltes, 1998; Staudinger, Smith, & Baltes, 1992). Their findings showed that human services workers and clinical psychologists performed better on a performance-based wisdom task than other highly educated professionals. These findings could be explained by attraction, selection, socialization, and/or attrition effects (Frese, 1982; Schneider, 1987). Attraction means here that wise people are more likely to be attracted to certain professions that involve working primarily with people—rather than, for instance, data or things. A selection effects involves that wise people are more suited to work in certain professions and are hired based on their wisdom-based competencies. In contrast, socialization effects entail that people become wiser through experiences in their chosen profession. Finally, attrition means that wise people are more likely to stay in the profession compared to less wise people, for instance because the latter leave voluntarily or are fired (Schneider, 1987). Thus, the findings by Baltes, Smith, and Staudinger confirm the assumption of wisdom theorists that high levels of wisdom-related knowledge require both motivation (i.e., selection) and practice (i.e., socialization). In terms of practical implications, the findings further suggest that it is particularly important to pay attention to the wisdom of employees and leaders in occupations that focus more on working with data (e.g., information technology) and things (e.g., construction) as compared to working with people (e.g., clients, customers). Importantly, even in occupations that focus on working with data and things, job incumbents still have to interact with other people, such as supervisors and coworkers. A lack of wisdom in these

occupations is likely problematic, because it should lead to suboptimal decisions and behaviors. For instance, the military, with its strong focus on hierarchies and subordination, is a context in which wisdom is not typically expected (Zacher, McKenna, Rooney, & Gold, 2015). At the same time, it may be that wisdom has particularly strong effects on positive outcomes in such contexts because it is not generally expected (i.e., prescriptive norms) or commonly shown (i.e., descriptive norms). Zacher et al. (2015) measured wisdom in the military context by asking senior noncommissioned officers to give advice to an inexperienced officer facing an in-extremis operation. They showed that contextualized wisdom was positively related to general wisdom and self-reported wisdom.

Wisdom and Leadership

Interestingly, several studies in the IWO psychology and business/management literature have examined (a) how wisdom is displayed through leadership behavior (i.e., “wise leadership”), and (b) wisdom as a predictor of established leadership constructs. Positive leadership generally plays an important role in contemporary workplaces as it has been shown to be associated with follower satisfaction and team effectiveness (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). In the IWO psychology literature, leadership has been defined broadly as the process of influencing other people toward the achievement of shared goals by structuring tasks, managing relationships, and explaining changes to followers (Yukl, 2006).

A reason for the focus on wise leadership in the literature may be that many laypeople and researchers associate excellence in leadership with wisdom and because many followers desire wise leaders (Kilburg, 2006; Küpers & Statler, 2008; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2011; Staudinger & Glück, 2011). Based on his balance theory of wisdom, Sternberg (2003, 2007) suggested that wise leaders make use of creativity, successful intelligence, and technical expertise to seek a common good, balance different interests and perspectives, and deal appropriately with their environment, such as drawing on other people’s strengths. McKenna, Rooney, and Boal (2009) defined wise leadership based on their five

principles of social practice wisdom (i.e., reason and observation; incorporate non-rational and subjective elements into judgment; be directed to authentic humane and virtuous outcomes; be articulate, aesthetic, and intrinsically rewarding; and be practical) and compared the concept with the notions of transformational, authentic, and spiritual leadership (see also McKenna & Rooney, 2008). Yet another perspective on wisdom and leadership was offered by Yang (2011), who observed that wise leadership seems to be incompatible with a focus on effectiveness and efficiency in promoting organizational performance and profits. Yang's process view of wise leadership includes cognitive integration, embodiment, and positive effects on others and the environment. Results of interviews suggest that wise leadership is typically displayed at the organizational or societal levels and involves fulfilling visions, solving problems, and starting new organizations. While these three conceptualizations of wise leadership at first seem to be rather different from each other, they all suggest that wise leaders successfully apply their expert knowledge and skills to benefit other people and the common good. Thus, wise leadership can be conceived as a specific yet integrative form of leadership that does not only focus on positive outcomes of the leader, followers, or the organization, but attempts to balance various interests (including members of other organizations and society more broadly) to achieve the common good.

The second line of empirical research in this area focuses on psychological conceptualizations of wisdom as an individual difference predictor of established leadership constructs. In a series of studies, Zacher and colleagues used adapted versions of the Berlin wisdom paradigm procedure (see Baltes & Staudinger, 2000) and Ardel's (2003) self-reported wisdom measure to link wisdom with leadership. First, using a sample of high school employees, they showed that the wisdom dimension "recognition and management of uncertainty" positively predicted coworker perceptions of leaders as "transformational," that is, a positive leadership style characterized by visionary communication, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Avolio et al., 2009; Yukl, 2006). In contrast, "relativism of values and life priorities" negatively predicted coworker perceptions of transformational leadership (Greaves, Zacher, McKenna, & Rooney, 2014). These findings suggest that leader

wisdom may be a double-edged sword with regard to others' perceptions of leadership. Wisdom is a multidimensional construct and its associations with established leadership behavior seem to depend on the dimension under investigation. Whereas dealing with uncertainty seems to be perceived as effective, relativism of values and priorities might signal a lack of confidence and direction to followers and, thus, result in lower transformational leadership ratings. Importantly, these results do not allow conclusions about actual leader behavior and its effects on more objective work outcomes, only about associations between leaders' wisdom and followers' perceptions and evaluations of leader behavior.

In another study, using a sample of leaders of religious institutions, Zacher and colleagues showed that self-rated wisdom has a positive indirect effect on follower ratings of leader–follower exchange quality through individualized consideration, a dimension of transformational leadership that entails positive interpersonal behaviors toward followers (Zacher, Pearce, Rooney, & McKenna, 2014). Thus, leaders with a wise and mature personality seem to enjoy relationships with their followers that are characterized by high levels of trust and loyalty. These findings suggest that some experienced leaders are able and motivated to demonstrate wise behavior toward their followers even under challenging working conditions.

Summary

Our brief review of research on wisdom in the workplace identified a number of theoretical works based on ancient wisdom philosophy. However, our review also suggests that empirical research based on contemporary wisdom frameworks developed in the psychological literature is currently quite limited. While some early research has explored wisdom levels displayed by people in different professions, and more recent studies have explored the role of wisdom in leadership, there currently is no systematic research on the potentially positive role of wisdom for solving key problems in the contemporary workplace. In the following sections, we introduce a number of such key problems in the workplace and offer possible ways to address and resolve these problems through the application of wisdom-related knowledge and behavior.

Key Problems in the Modern Workplace

In this section, we outline several key problems faced by employees in the modern workplace (i.e., stress and lack of meaning), as well as problems related to social interactions at work and teamwork (i.e., incivility), leadership (i.e., abusive supervision), and organizations more broadly (i.e., lack of ethical, social, and environmental corporate responsibility).

Employee Level

Working for pay has consistently topped the list of the most detrimental stressors in the annual stress survey by the American Psychological Association (2017). In 2017, more than 60% of U.S. Americans reported that their job was a significant source of stress symptoms, such as anxiety, anger, and fatigue. The experience of job stress is extremely costly to organizations and societies, as it can result in sickness absences, productivity losses, turnover, as well as job loss and early retirement (Bliese et al., 2017). Research in the field of IWO psychology suggests that the interplay of job demands (e.g., time pressure, excessive bureaucracy, competition for limited resources), job resources (e.g., social support, autonomy, learning opportunities), and individual characteristics (e.g., neuroticism, hardiness, psychological capital) impacts on employees' levels of job burnout (i.e., feelings of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced efficacy; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001) and job engagement (i.e., a positive motivational state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption; Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). In particular, increasing personal and job resources has the potential to buffer the detrimental effects of high job demands on employee exhaustion and engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; S. Cohen & Wills, 1985). Burnout and engagement mediate the cumulative effects of work-related stressors and resources on employees' long-term health and well-being (de Jonge & Dormann, 2006; Igic et al., 2017).

At the same time, research suggests that many employees frequently experience boredom and a lack of meaning in the modern workplace (Brodsky & Amabile, 2018; Graeber, 2018). These aversive experiences can, in turn, lead to various counterproductive work behaviors, such as aggression toward coworkers or customers, as well as sabotage of organizational processes (Bruursema, Kessler, & Spector, 2011; Semmer, Tschan, Meier, Facchin, & Jacobshagen, 2010). In contrast, employees who experience high levels of “task significance,” that is, the feeling that their work has a positive impact on others or the world at large (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), are more engaged and productive at work (Grant, 2008). Thus, it is an important task of leaders and other organizational decision-makers to reduce aversive job demands, increase employees’ job and personal resources, and to create tasks and jobs that employees experience as meaningful.

Teams and Leadership

Similar to the experience of job stress at the individual employee level, incivility among coworkers and team members, as well as between employees and customers or supervisors, has been on the rise over the past decades. In a survey, ninety-eight percent of workers reported being treated in a rude or disrespectful way at least once per week (Porath & Pearson, 2013). While incivility is a rather subtle form of employee misbehavior (e.g., excluding someone from social gatherings, interrupting others), more extreme, enduring, and systematic misbehaviors are also increasingly common. These misbehaviors include bullying (i.e., one coworker targeting another), mobbing (i.e., a group of workers targeting one of their coworkers), microaggressions (i.e., subtle discriminatory behaviors directed at members of marginalized groups), and sexual harassment (e.g., unwelcome sexual advances and requests for sexual favors; Branch, Ramsay, & Barker, 2013; Fitzgerald & Cortina, 2018; Ong & Burrow, 2017). When the aggressor is in a supervisory position, the harassment is called abusive supervision or abusive leadership

(Martinko, Harvey, Brees, & Mackey, 2013). Meta-analytic research shows that abusive supervision is positively related to depression, emotional exhaustion, and job tension, and negatively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and job performance (Mackey, Frieder, Brees, & Martinko, 2017). One cause of incivility and abusive behavior at work may be so-called “dark triad” personality traits (i.e., Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy) of perpetrators (A. Cohen, 2016). However, research also suggests that these counterproductive behaviors are triggered by contextual factors, such as illegitimate work assignments (Semmer et al., 2010), passive or “laissez-faire” leadership (Harold & Holtz, 2015), and a competitive psychological climate in organizations (Spurk & Hirschi, 2018).

Organizations

Modern organizations are increasingly concerned about demonstrating corporate social, ethical, and environmental responsibility, assuming that such positive organizational strategies benefit their employees, customers, as well as the financial bottom-line (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Norton, Parker, Zacher, & Ashkanasy, 2015; Shin, 2012). At the same time, the last few years have seen a number of major corporate scandals that impacted negatively on people and the natural environment. For example, Volkswagen and other German car manufacturers cheated during laboratory emissions testing; 21st Century Fox, the Weinstein Company, and Uber tried covering up allegations of sexual assault made by their own employees; and Facebook, Equifax, and other IT giants were at the center of major customer data breaches. Due to the significant personal and financial costs associated with such scandals, research in IWO psychology is therefore interested in how organizations can create an organizational culture (i.e., shared values and attitudes) and organizational climate (i.e., shared policies, procedures, and practices) that enhance social, ethical, and environmental responsibility (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013). This could, for instance, be achieved by leaders and other change agents communicating the importance of positive organizational changes (Dutton, Ashford, O’Neill, & Lawrence, 2001).

Research further suggests that employees themselves can more or less actively respond to and cope with such organizational changes (Petrou, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2016).

Using Wisdom to Address and Potentially Solve Key Workplace Problems

Research in IWO psychology has had only limited success in terms of developing suggestions to successfully address and resolve the aforementioned key problems in the workplace. While general mental ability and mature personality traits are related to important work outcomes such as job performance (Ployhart et al., 2017), the complex problems we have described in the previous section call for a more integrative solution. We argue that wisdom can help address these issues above and beyond high levels of academic intelligence, job-related expertise, and mature personality traits. Specifically, acquiring and activating wisdom offers a number of advantages to individuals, teams, and organizations (Kunzmann & Baltes, 2005; Staudinger & Glück, 2011). First, wisdom helps individuals to not see problems in isolation, but embedded in multiple contextual layers (i.e., lifespan contextualism). For instance, wisdom makes them aware of relevant short- and long-term causes and consequences of a problem, and how problems develop over time. Second, wisdom enables individuals to perceive and understand problems from different perspectives (i.e., value relativism/tolerance), including the perspectives of other people they work with (e.g., coworkers, customers, supervisors, employees). This allows them to balance different interests and to maximize the common good. Third, wisdom facilitates the understanding that a single person cannot know everything and helps to develop strategies for dealing with uncertainty and ambiguity (i.e., recognizing and managing uncertainty). Overall, wisdom is an integrative and holistic characteristic that can lead to better solutions for many, not only one person. In the following, we use research-based insights to discuss how wisdom can be activated and nurtured. Subsequently, we outline how these approaches can be implemented to solve key workplace problems.

How Can Wisdom Be Activated and Nurtured?

The work discussed earlier clearly suggests that wisdom could greatly benefit individuals, teams, and organizations, leading to the question of how one could enhance wisdom on individual and group levels. Past work on wisdom points to strategies that particularly target the individual. A first strategy is to organize one's life around the factors and forces of wisdom described in conceptual models on the development of wisdom over the adult lifespan (e.g., Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Glück & Bluck, 2013). Specifically, one can attempt to increase one's chances for moving in the direction of higher levels of wisdom-related knowledge by finding role models and mentors, increasing one's standing on personality dimensions such as openness to new experiences, or developing a motivational structure that emphasizes certain values and particularly an orientation toward the common good (e.g., Kunzmann & Baltes, 2003; Staudinger, Lopez, & Baltes, 1997; Wink & Staudinger, 2016).

There is another strategy that may have more immediate success. It focuses on different ways of activating those bodies of wisdom-related knowledge that are already part of an individuals' repertoire, but are not easily accessible. These methods of improving the expression of wisdom can be successful because we often have better knowledge in store than is evident in our immediate behavior. A first method is based on the notion that the acquisition and expression of wisdom has a strong collective, "interactive-minds" component (Staudinger, 1996; Staudinger & Baltes, 1996). Having the opportunity to interact with others and exchange ideas should facilitate the activation and expression of an individual's wisdom-related knowledge. To investigate this prediction, Staudinger and Baltes (1996) designed a study in which participants were asked to think aloud about a problem under several experimental conditions involving different modes of social interaction. For example, before responding individually, some participants had the opportunity to discuss a problem with a person they brought into the lab and with whom they usually discuss difficult life problems. Other randomly assigned participants engaged in an inner dialogue about the problem with a person of their choice.

As expected, some of these conditions produced increased levels of wisdom-related performance. Participants who had inner conversations and participants who had actual conversations and additional time to reflect upon what they had learned from these conversations demonstrated the highest levels of wisdom-related performance in the subsequent wisdom tasks. This evidence suggests that it is helpful to consult with others when being confronted with fundamental life problems that call for wisdom-related knowledge. Interestingly, actual conversations and imagined conversations seem to be similarly helpful. Thus, by invoking the strategy of inner conversations with respected others, individuals are able to activate their reserves (plasticity) in wisdom resulting in higher performance levels on the level of actual behaviors.

An alternative method of activating wisdom knowledge (Boehmig-Krumhaar, Staudinger, & Baltes, 2002) is a version of the method of loci, which has been shown to help people remember unrelated facts (e.g., word lists). The method requires individuals to (a) learn a path of well-known locations, (b) imagine visiting these locations, and (c) attach to-be-learned material to each location. Mentally revisiting these locations in subsequent testing sessions has been shown to improve people's memory performance in substantial amounts (Kliegl, Smith, & Baltes, 1989). Boehmig-Krumhaar et al. (2002) adapted this method to increase two of the five facets of wisdom described earlier, that is, lifespan contextualism and value relativism/tolerance. They instructed their participants to mentally travel on a cloud around the world, look from this cloud down below (e.g., starting from Berlin and moving on to Paris, New York, San Francisco, Mexico etc.), and consider the specific contexts, people, landscapes, and ways of life. The focus was on exposing people to large variations in people and contexts. Following the "traveling-on-a-cloud" intervention, participants were told to think about their mental travels while thinking-aloud about wisdom tasks (importantly, they were not instructed to apply their mental travels in certain ways). The intervention was effective: participants expressed higher levels of wisdom-related knowledge, especially in lifespan contextualism and value relativism and tolerance.

More recent research suggests that to enhance wise reasoning, attitudes, and behavior, individuals should distance themselves psychologically from problems (Grossmann & Kross, 2014; Kross & Grossmann, 2012). Establishing such “ego-decentering cognitive mindsets” is particularly important in contexts that emphasize self-interests and a self-focus (Grossmann, 2017), such as the workplace. Even on a daily basis, aspects of wise reasoning such as showing intellectual humility, self-transcendence, and consideration of others’ perspectives can lead to the experience of more positive emotions, lower emotional reactivity, and more reappraisal and forgiveness (Brienza, Kung, Santos, Bobocel, & Grossmann, 2017; Grossmann et al., 2016).

Related to this line of wisdom research, Trope, Liberman, and colleagues have used various self-distancing methods (e.g., visualization) to change temporal, spatial, and social construal levels, which are presumed to make individuals’ reasoning more abstract, less personally invested, and more morally responsible (Eyal, Liberman, & Trope, 2008; Trope & Liberman, 2003, 2010). Such distanced reasoning, in turn, is likely to lead to wiser decisions and behaviors, such as increased willingness to compromise. Similarly, work by Hayakawa and colleagues has shown that use of a foreign language leads to a change in moral reasoning and creativity (Costa et al., 2014; Hayakawa, Costa, Foucart, & Keysar, 2016; Hayakawa, Tannenbaum, Costa, Corey, & Keysar, 2017). Specifically, people using a foreign language are more likely to make more utilitarian (i.e., maximization of the common good) decisions when faced with moral dilemmas. Costa et al. (2014) argue that these effects are due to reduced emotional concerns and responses triggered by a foreign compared to one’s native language and, thus, increased psychological distance to the problem. These findings suggest that in linguistically diverse workplaces, where one language is used that is not native for all employees, wise reasoning may be increased.

In sum, the evidence reviewed above strongly suggests that wisdom-related knowledge and judgment are not fixed but dynamic and developable properties. As mentioned, there are at least three ways of making use of this plasticity and latent reserve potential. A first is to increase one’s level of wisdom-related knowledge by engaging in the behaviors that in general have been shown to facilitate the acquisition of

wisdom-relevant resources. An alternative to this long-term method is to use strategies (i.e., interactive minds, method of loci) that have been shown to activate those bodies of wisdom-related knowledge that are already in store, but need cuing for activation. Finally, distancing oneself psychologically from problems and establishing an “ego-decentering cognitive mindset” could boost wise reasoning, attitudes, and behavior. It is important to note that the latter two strategies overlap to some extent, as the interactive minds and method of loci paradigms can be said to also involve forms of ego-decentering.

How Can Wisdom Be Successfully Implemented in the Workplace?

Proceeding from the research reviewed above, employees and managers should be encouraged to take steps to increase their levels of wisdom-related knowledge and judgment. Organizations should help their members to acquire expertise in “the fundamental pragmatics of life,” including lifespan contextualism, value relativism, and management of uncertainty (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). Specific interventions in this regard include observing positive role models (Latham & Saari, 1979; Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002), procuring a mentor or personal coach (Kram, 1985; Moberg, 2008), as well as job changes and organizational mobility to enhance openness to new experiences (Nieß & Zacher, 2015). Furthermore, before addressing a difficult work-related problem, employees and managers should think and reason carefully about it by adopting relevant others’ perspectives (e.g., their manager, employees, customers; Staudinger & Baltes, 1996), contextualizing the problem (Boehmig-Krumhaar et al., 2002), or by distancing themselves psychologically from the problem for some time, particularly if the problem intersects with their self-interests (Kross & Grossmann, 2012).

Acquiring and activating wisdom-related knowledge and judgment should enable employees and managers to craft and design better jobs. Job crafting refers to the proactive steps individual employees can take, even on a daily basis, to increase the fit of their (changing) abilities and needs with the (changing) demands and supplies of the

workplace (Petrou et al., 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). For instance, research shows that obtaining more challenging work demands and social resources is associated with greater employee well-being (Rudolph, Katz, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017). Job design, in contrast, involves a top-down approach by which managers and organizations try to improve features of the job to enhance well-being and other positive employee outcomes, such as learning (Parker, 2014).

Employees and managers could also acquire and use emotion regulation strategies (Ardelt, 2004; Doerwald, Scheibe, Zacher, & Van Yperen, 2016) and motivational strategies (e.g., humor, self-reflection; Webster, 2003) as well as pragmatic wise reasoning (Grossmann, Na, Varnum, Kitayama, & Nisbett, 2013) to better cope with job situations that cannot be changed easily through job design and task/relationship-oriented job crafting and, thereby, improve their well-being. For instance, employees in customer service jobs typically cannot avoid difficult customers, but they could use wisdom-based affective-motivational strategies to better cope with demanding customer interactions and their negative consequences. Employees who feel bored at work, or who perceive a stigma associated with their job tasks (i.e., “dirty work”) could use cognitive job crafting strategies (e.g., thinking about how others perceive their job, how their job contributes to others and the greater good) to improve their work-related identification and well-being (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Grant, 2008; Wrzesniewski, LoBuglio, Dutton, & Berg, 2013).

With regard to the team level, a large body of research in social psychology has shown that group decision-making is not always better than individual decisions, due to mixed motives and constraints in shared information search and processing (e.g., De Dreu, Nijstad, & van Knippenberg, 2008). Based on the research reviewed, we argue that wisdom of employees and managers can be an asset here as it contributes to optimal group decisions by decentralizing and contextualizing decision-making, and by helping team members manage differences in knowledge and experience (see also the literature on managing team diversity; e.g., Kearney & Gebert, 2009). Leadership training and management development programs could incorporate elements of wisdom,

such as principles of wise reasoning (i.e., lifespan contextualism, value relativism/tolerance, and managing uncertainty), to help supervisors treat their employees with respect and tolerance for diversity and adopt a broader perspective, and to help managers contribute to organizational flourishing (Malan & Kriger, 1998; Small, 2004). However, as noted by Staudinger and Glück (2011), certain personal or organizational goals in a neoliberal economy (e.g., power, competition, profit growth) may prevent the inclusion of wisdom principles into leadership practice. Thus, leadership selection for facets of personal and general wisdom (e.g., emotional complexity, self-reflection, balanced reasoning, tolerance) in addition to more traditional predictors, as well as modification of the broader organizational context in which leaders act seem to be important as well (McKenna et al., 2009). Regarding the latter, research suggests that organizational cultures that emphasize social support, other-orientation, and the common good can enable leadership behaviors that reflect wisdom (Limas & Hansson, 2004).

Regarding the implementation of wisdom at the organizational level, Staudinger and Glück (2011) noted that broader organizational goals (i.e., visions) as well as organizational cultures and strategies established to achieve these goals may be more or less attuned to the notion of wisdom. For instance, companies that meticulously follow the neoliberal paradigm that dominates most Western societies and economies (Bal & Dóci, 2018) emphasize intra- and interorganizational competition and prioritize “money over man” (Peus, 2011). In contrast, organizations that strive toward contributing to the common good base their activities on a more ethical economic model that prioritizes the well-being of people and the environment (Felber, 2015). According to the vision statement of the “economy of the common good,” this economic model “...contributes to a culture of good living in a peaceful and sustainable civilization. Living together in the common good society is characterized by human coexistence, a high degree of trust and appreciation, strong social cohesion, manageable structures and fundamental rights” (see www.ecogood.org). Researchers and practitioners who developed this economic model have proposed that organizations should be evaluated using a matrix that focuses on four key values (i.e., human dignity,

solidarity and social justice, environmental sustainability, and transparency and co-determination) among five groups of organizational stakeholders (i.e., suppliers, owner/equity and financial service providers, employees, customers and business partners, and the social environment) (Economy for the Common Good, 2018). Several hundred organizations around the globe already support this alternative economic model and have created a common good balance sheet, including Sparda Bank Munich and Schachinger Logistics (see www.ecogood.org). Becoming (certified as) a business that contributes toward an economy for the common good might be a first step toward becoming a wiser organization.

Most modern organizations are still mainly self- and profit-centered, and some even pursue malicious goals, such as terrorist organizations or racist political parties. We argue that by thinking about, measuring, and working toward improving indicators of corporate ethical, social, and environmental responsibility, organizations can establish a culture and climate that allows for and boosts the effects of wise individual behavior. As with all desirable organizational practices (e.g., safety, initiative, work–family balance), wisdom needs to be part of an organization’s culture and supported by top management, otherwise individual efforts are unlikely to be sustained over time. Thus, managers and other decision-makers in organizations have to become more open to and motivated to enact wisdom (Kriger & Malan, 1993) and “practice to pursue ‘common goodness’ in each particular situation” (Nonaka & Toyama, 2007, p. 371). This is certainly not an easy task, as it requires individuals to invest high levels of energy and self-control, which are limited personal resources (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). It may also be difficult to make wise decisions if positive role models are sparse in contemporary organizations (Lockwood et al., 2002). Furthermore, enacting wisdom may require challenging the status quo, breaking with traditions, and taking personal risks. Encouragingly, however, research has shown that voicing one’s opinion with the goal of improving the workplace is often perceived favorably by others and can even enhance one’s social status (Weiss & Morrison, 2018).

Conclusions

Paid employment, working, and social relations with one's coworkers, supervisors, customers, and employees are important aspects of most adults' lives. For many, work is a significant source of joy, self-esteem, and social identification; however, work can also be associated with burnout, boredom, perceived lack of meaning, harassment experiences, and being part of an unethical, unsustainable corporate culture. The main goal of this chapter was to discuss the possibility of applying principles of wisdom-based reasoning to key problems facing the workplace. Work stress, incivility, and corporate scandals are very costly for individuals in terms of physical health and psychological well-being, and for organizations and society in terms of financial costs, environmental pollution, and reduced social cohesion. We argued that employees and leaders who develop fundamental expertise in life pragmatics, who are able to see others' perspectives on a problem, who understand the various contexts of a problem (including its temporal dimension), and who recognize and effectively manage uncertainty—in other words, employees and leaders who are wise (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000)—are in a good position to not only survive, but also thrive in the modern workplace (Taneva & Arnold, 2018). Yet, it is not sufficient to focus only on the (more or less wise) individual; wisdom as a construct resides at the intersection of the individual, social context, and society (Grossmann, 2017). We have argued that, through collective and leadership efforts (e.g., using wisdom to make better decisions), teams and organizations can become wiser (Limas & Hansson, 2004). However, wisdom is not easy to achieve and may even lead to unintended negative personal consequences, particularly when organizational cultures emphasize and reward decisions and actions that are not wise (e.g., maximization of profit by exploiting humans and the natural environment).

While psychological research on wisdom is now a rather well-established and growing field (Glück, 2018; Staudinger & Glück, 2011), scholars working in lifespan psychology, gerontology, and social-personality psychology have neglected the workplace as an important context for many (younger and older) adults. At the same time, most

IWO psychologists are skeptical about the validity of the wisdom construct and find it impractical to assess. This has led to a very limited and mostly theoretical literature on wisdom in the workplace. The theoretical works in this literature are typically not based on the psychological (empirical) wisdom traditions, but on ancient philosophy (e.g., Aristotle) and, thus, also due to their abstract nature, have only limited practical value. Thus, in terms of future research, we encourage more empirical research that, on the one hand, investigates how wise individuals and teams can affect positive changes in contemporary organizations and, on the other hand, examines which features of the workplace can help develop wisdom in individuals and teams. We are confident that, given the severe problems that plague many modern workplaces, this research will make important practical contributions and improve the lives of many individuals.

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11

The Practical Applications of Self-Transcendent Wisdom

Carolyn M. Aldwin and Michael R. Levenson

We typically think of wisdom as a characteristic of an individual, “achieved” either through age and general experience, or by undergoing adversity that makes a person “sadder but wiser.” However, there is growing evidence that wisdom is developed in a social context. Not only do individuals turn to others in stressful situations to develop new understandings, coping strategies, and ways of being (Igarashi, Levenson, & Aldwin, 2018), but most religions emphasize the importance of the community in the development of spirituality and wisdom in their members (Aldwin, Igarashi, & Levenson, 2019). Thus, wisdom and how it is characterized is not only a social construct, but it also develops in a social context, and, in turn, has implications for the efficacy of social organizations (Limas & Hansson, 2004).

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_11

In many ways, wisdom is the opposite of psychopathy. Wise individuals are often characterized by others as fair and compassionate, perspicacious and insightful, reflective and thoughtful (Ardelt, 2011; Glück & Bluck, 2011; Holliday & Chandler, 1988) as well as focused on the common good (Sternberg, 2018a). In contrast, psychopaths are characterized by a lack of conscience and empathy toward others; high levels of narcissism and shallow emotions; pathological lying, repeated violations of social norms, and disregard for the law. They are often highly manipulative and have a history of victimizing others (Hare, 1993). While many believe that psychopathy reflects defects in neural development and organization, Levenson (1992) argued psychopathic characteristics are learned, and discussed the ways in which organizations could become psychopathic. For example, psychopathic individuals who are highly manipulative can become heads of organizations and may implement policies which create a culture of psychopathy, e.g., maximizing short-term gain regardless of how destructive they are to workers, shareholders, and the company as a whole (see also Babiak & Hare, 2007). If organizations can become psychopathic, can they also become wise (cf., Bell, 2005; Rowley & Gibbs, 2008)?

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the two main approaches to wisdom, practical wisdom and self-transcendence. Focusing on the latter, we will discuss its importance for human development and public policy, and will explore what the characteristics of wise organizations might be, and how they can be developed and fostered.

Approaches to Wisdom

The past 20 years have seen a remarkable growth in research into wisdom (for reviews, see Ardel, 2011; Glück, 2018; Grossmann, 2017; Staudinger & Glück, 2011; Sternberg, 2018a). While many different approaches have been identified, Helson and Wink (1987) grouped them into two major camps: practical wisdom and transcendent wisdom (see also Levenson, Jennings, Aldwin, & Shiraishi, 2005). Practical wisdom,

what Staudinger and Glück called general wisdom, involves understanding the fundamental pragmatics of life (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000)—or, expert knowledge in how things work. Curnow (1999) referred to this type of wisdom as permitting the “good life.” In contrast, transcendent wisdom is more involved with adult development, and an individual’s ability to transcend the limitations imposed by one’s personal history or sociocultural conditioning. While both types are often correlated with well-being (Koller, Levenson, & Glück, 2017), they have very different implications for the application of wisdom in social domains.

Practical Wisdom

For Baltes and Staudinger (2000), practical wisdom had five dimensions. Rich factual knowledge refers to general knowledge in a variety of domains, while rich procedural knowledge refers loosely to the ability to know how to get things done. Vaillant (1995) referred to such individuals as “keepers of the culture”—individuals who have deep knowledge about how their organization or community works, what strategies work with which types of problems, and who can provide sage advice and mentoring to others in the organization. In turn, these are based on three other cognitive perspectives. The first of these is lifespan contextualism—understanding that problems are embedded in a particular historical time or phase of the lifespan, and within a particular context. In other words, what works for an individual at a certain stage in a particular life stage or historical context may not be appropriate for someone of a different age or time. Relativism involves the understanding of individual differences, and that there is no one right answer for everyone. Finally, management of uncertainty refers to the ability to tolerate ambiguity—understanding that rarely does an individual have all of the facts helpful in making decisions, but must make do with the knowledge at hand.

This seminal and well-reasoned approach was critical to the development of the study of wisdom. However, it was not without its critics. In particular, Ardelt (2004) argued that wisdom is not simply a

matter of expertise or knowledge, but also includes characteristics of being, including reflectiveness, compassion, and what Buddhists might call right motivation (see also Levenson & Crumpler, 1996). For example, individuals might develop a highly effective organization whose goal is to destroy a particular social group or ecological niche, but it is unlikely that this would be considered wise from a reflective, compassionate viewpoint. Thus, Sternberg's (2004, 2014) proposed a balance theory of wisdom heavily emphasizes action for the common good. However, understanding what the common good actually is may also be fraught with problems. Countless scholars of authoritarianism over the past few decades (e.g., Altemeyer, 1988; Cantal, Milfont, Wilson, & Gouveia, 2015) have demonstrated that individuals seeking to destroy outgroups often do so in the name of protecting their (narrowly defined) community. For example, a recent individual suspected of massacring worshippers in a synagogue stated that he did so because he could not stand by and let the "invaders" destroy his people—which makes no sense until one understands that there was an organization affiliated with the synagogue that assists refugees, and he had come under the influence of an unfortunate political meme that refugees were invaders that were going to destroy his (again, narrowly defined) community. Similarly, individuals seeking to turn the Amazon into farmland or strip-mine mountains may point to the need for agricultural products for a rapidly expanding population, or minerals critical to our industrial society, as well as the creation of much-needed jobs. Thus, we argue that the development of self-transcendent wisdom is necessary for an understanding of what is the common good (Aldwin et al., 2019).

Self-Transcendent Wisdom

Self-transcendence is focused on wisdom as an outcome of adult development rather than wisdom as an expert knowledge system. Curnow (1999) identified four characteristics of wisdom, which Levenson and Aldwin (2013) expanded into a developmental theory.

First, wisdom is based on self-knowledge. We are all subject to influences on and biases in our perceptions, beliefs, and values. These are based upon personal history, the immediate social context, and the larger sociocultural milieu—what one might call social conditioning. Without reflection on how and from where our values and beliefs have arisen, we cannot see through the illusions fostered by those who seek to influence us or those reflecting the consequences of poorly chosen actions for our own health or well-being. Thus, some politicians throughout the ages have used hatred and fear of outgroups as a means of manipulating their constituencies and consolidating their power; addicts often believe that “they can quit any time they want”; some justify their own injurious behavior in terms of their own feelings of victimization, and so on. Indeed, an early work by McKee and Barber (1999) argued that perspicacity, or the ability to see through illusions, was the *sine qua non* of wisdom.

As we have argued elsewhere (Aldwin & Levenson, 2004), self-knowledge can be something that individuals deliberately seek to develop, through spiritual practice or psychotherapy, or that they may be forced to confront during stressful situations. As many have noted (e.g., Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), trauma can shatter our assumptions about the world and ourselves, and force a painful re-examination of our beliefs. For example, many have an implicit belief that really bad things don’t happen to good people—that if they obey the rules, avoid smoking, work hard, etc., they’ll be fine. Unfortunately, illness, crime, accidents, natural disasters, and the like, do not respect those assumptions, and individuals may be forced to face and come to terms with their own vulnerabilities, or with how their own assumptions or characteristic ways of acting may open them up to repeatedly facing the same types of problems.

Second, wisdom is also based on *non-attachment*. This should not be confused with detachment, which is sometimes thought of as being cold or aloof, but rather is the ability to understand our motivations and not be defined simply by our values, beliefs, behaviors, or possessions. Thus, one can become attached to a self-image as a young, beautiful, strong, popular, or smart person, but all of these things may change with age. People can be attached (or addicted) to drugs, material goods, social

status, or the belief that the welfare of their children or family trumps the common good. The ability to not be defined by one's own desires, values, or belief systems may also help in seeing through illusions and in determining the common good with less influence from one's own filters.

Third, wisdom is also based on *integration*. Most of us have conflicting desires and goals, which can result in being at odds with one's self, hampering progression toward goals. For example, a former graduate student who was having difficulty finishing her dissertation was unconsciously conflicted because of a deeply held assumption that one could not be both a successful career woman and a good mother. Of course, integration requires both self-knowledge—to make the unconscious conscious, in Jung (1965) terms—and the ability to detach oneself from conflicting assumptions and goals.

Fourth, wisdom is based on *self-transcendence*. This can be seen either as a personality or character trait, as a motivation, as a value, or as the result of a developmental process (Aldwin et al., 2019). As a personality trait, Piedmont (1999, p. 988) defined self-transcendence as a universal construct that “refers to the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place to view life from a larger, more objective perspective.” This heightened perspective underlies the perception of the fundamental interconnectedness of all life. Similarly, Cloninger, Svrakic, and Przybeck (1993) defined self-transcendence as a character trait that “involves a state of ‘unitive consciousness’ in which everything is part of one totality” (p. 981).

Self-transcendence can also be seen as a value, consisting of both benevolence and universalism (Schwartz, 1994; Sortheix & Schwartz, 2017). The construct of benevolence refers to the preservation and enhancement of individuals' welfare, especially for those in one's immediate circle. Similar to Templeton and Eccles' (2008) expanding circle of morality theory, in universalism, that benevolence is extended to all individuals, as well as to the natural environment.

Others have defined self-transcendence as resulting from a developmental process. For example, Reed (1991, p. 64) proposed the following definition: “Self-transcendence refers broadly to a characteristic of developmental maturity whereby there is an expansion of

self-boundaries and an orientation toward broadened life perspectives and purposes.” Tornstam (1994) believed that “gerotranscendence” emerged in late life, resulting from a process of ego maturation, and was characterized by both ego and cosmic transcendence. Ego transcendence involves a decrease in self-centeredness, which others have referred to as decentering (e.g., Wink & Helson, 1997), along with a decrease in materialism and superfluous social interaction. This decentering is a prerequisite for cosmic transcendence, which includes feelings of interconnection with past and future generations, as well as the universe as a whole. This latter is reminiscent of Kohlberg and Ryncarz’s (1990) seventh stage of moral development, Transcendental Morality.

Simply put, self-transcendence reflects an intuitive form of systems theory in which all life is seen as interconnected. More importantly, it requires the recognition that one’s own self-interests are not paramount but may need to be subsumed into the common good, reflecting a sense of purpose that is not centered simply around one’s own needs. We argue that recognizing what the common good entails requires self-knowledge, non-attachment, and integration, as well as self-transcendence. Thus, it is all too easy to over-generalize one’s own self-interest as in, for example, the old saying that “What’s good for business is good for America.” While national prosperity is undoubtedly a common good, it may need to be balanced against destructive exploitation of the natural environment, social justice issues concerning the distribution of wealth, and the like. Understanding one’s own assumptions, blind spots, and often conflicting desires—in short, adult development and wisdom—is absolutely necessary to be able to perceive the common good, to weigh short- and long-term losses and gains, and the like. The viability of democracy itself may be dependent upon this process of adult development, as a certain level of self-knowledge, non-attachment, and so on, may be necessary for individuals to make informed decisions and not be unduly swayed by demagogues or transitory problems. Thus, wisdom is not simply an individual characteristic, but develops in, and has implications for, the social environment.

Social Aspects of Self-Transcendent Wisdom

Grossmann (2017) has argued that there are many contextual influences on wisdom—that individuals may be wise in some contexts but not others, or wise at some times but not at others. He argued that experiential, situational, and cultural factors may have major influences on the development and application of wisdom. For example, Igarashi et al. (2018) found that the characteristics and quality of social support provided influenced whether individuals grew or developed some aspects of wisdom from undergoing a major life adversity or simply adjusted and returned “to normal,” as it were. For example, some members of a social-support network might encourage simply adapting, for example, recommending that the person just give it time, “they’ll get over it.” Others would encourage seeking new opportunities or challenges that the adversity created, or seeking new meaning. Of course, this process is highly transactional, with some individuals actively seeking new role models that would help them grow and change, and others focusing more on seeking comfort and immediate problem-solving. Nonetheless, all major religious traditions emphasize the importance of community for spiritual and wisdom development (Aldwin et al., 2019). Communities can help with the development of self-knowledge, non-attachment, and integration by providing psychological mirrors for individuals to see their own actions in a different light, by providing emotional support for maintaining motivation, and by modeling wise decisions and ways of being. Thus, wisdom does not develop in a social vacuum, but rather is highly influenced by situational and sociocultural contexts.

Applying Self-Transcendence

At the beginning of this chapter, we briefly posed the question of whether social organizations can manifest traits that we typically attribute to individuals, such as psychopathy or wisdom. As mentioned earlier, Levenson (1992) argued that organizations can develop a culture that could be seen as psychopathic, that is, characterized by narcissism and manipulateness, a focus on individual or short-term gain at the

expense of longer-term well-being or even viability. The flip side of this is whether it is possible for organizations to be characterized by wisdom and/or promote wisdom among its members.

There is a growing literature addressing this question, with some authors even developing measures of organizational wisdom. For example, Limas and Hansson (2004) developed a measure that combined Baltes and Staudinger's five dimensions with three cognitive factors described by Sternberg (1985), including reasoning ability, sagacity, and judgment, as well as additional items concerning knowledge of the culture specific to that organization. They identified four general factors that characterized wise individuals within organizations. Being *broadly integrative in perspective* characterizes individuals who could listen to multiple and competing viewpoints and had a wealth of knowledge and a long-term perspective on the organization. They also *respected diversity*, understanding that differences could be a source of strength and that there may be different pathways to common goals. They were characterized by *practical political acumen*, being able to evaluate a situation without imposing their own values and understanding both the priorities and norms of the organization. Finally, they were *sensitive to the organizational culture*, understanding its beliefs and values. Coding of open-ended questions showed that wise individuals played an important role in the organization by providing stability and unity, helping to create a civil workplace and one that valued equity, and by providing vision and leadership.

Rowley and Gibbs (2008) more explicitly incorporated the self-transcendence aspects of wisdom, which they defined more in terms of imagination, creativity, and intersubjectivity, as well as ethics, but still focused on practical knowledge. However, they also shifted the focus from wise individuals within organizations to wise organizations. "Organizations are coming under increasing pressure not only to learn, change and adapt, but also to take actions that are ethically acceptable and sustainable, and which balance the interests of a range of different stakeholders. In other words, there are increasing expectations that organizations should act wisely or with wisdom" (p. 357). Thus, a wise organization is one that not only can learn and adapt to new situations, using wise judgment, but also is focused on the inherent ethics of the situation.

Rowley and Gibbs (2008) identified five “pillars” of a wise organization. The first is *systems thinking*, in which the fundamental interdependence among members of the organization, as well as its dynamic complexity, is recognized. The second, *personal mastery*, involves developing a vision, focusing energies, developing patience, and “seeing reality objectively.” The third involves *reflecting on mental models*, which are the assumptions and generalizations underlying the understanding of the organization. Reflection on the part of both leadership and staff is necessary to ensure ethical behavior on the part of the organization. The fourth, *building a shared vision*, encourages individuals to align their goals and purpose with that of the larger organization, with the understanding that shared visions are dynamic and are responsive to changing situations. The fifth, *team learning*, understands that learning (and wisdom) occurs at the collective level, which they call group wisdom dynamics.

Obviously, there are similarities between these models and the self-transcendence model arising from the developmental literature. Both emphasize dynamic inter-relatedness and the importance of ethical behavior. Both recognize the importance of community for the development of wisdom, the need for reflection and self-knowledge, continually re-examining assumption systems and (presumably) being able to detach from those assumptions that are no longer germane to the mission of the organization. Focusing energies and patience would require integration, e.g., unifying (or at least harmonizing) goals, rather than being scattered among conflicting goals.

Other organizational psychologists such as Küpers (2016), as well as Barnhardt and Phillips (2017), continue to argue for the development of wise organizations, but their work appears to be relatively independent of the research in adult development. It would be very useful if the two areas had more intercommunication, such as that provided by Biloslava and McKenna (2016), who attempted to synthesize the psychological literature and apply it to political leaders. In particular, the organizational-psychological perspective that wisdom matters, not only for individual well-being, but also other individuals as well as organizations, is critical to bolstering developmental science’s efforts to understand how wisdom develops in adulthood.

Summary

As Maxwell (2019) pointed out, there is an urgent need for social wisdom at the current time. While much of the focus on that need is on practical wisdom, we would argue that self-transcendent wisdom is equally crucial, if not more so. Despite its esoteric beginnings, self-transcendent wisdom does have significant practical or applied aspects. Models of self-transcendence detail how wisdom develops—through self-knowledge, non-attachment, and integration—at both the individual and the organizational levels. More importantly, the heart of self-transcendence lies in understanding the fundamental interconnectedness among people, generations, and nature. Thus, it promotes a view of individuals and organizations whose fundamental organizing principle is through developing a purpose in life, one that goes beyond the individual and is ethical, prosocial, and oriented toward higher purposes. The organizational psychological literature argues that this is important for the long-term health of an organization—and we would argue for the culture as well.

Perhaps especially crucial at this time is understanding the development and effect of wise political leaders (Biloslavo & McKenna, 2016; Sternberg, 2018b), and especially how individuals learn to see through illusion and develop the perspicacity to truly understand what is the common good from a compassionate perspective. Thus, applied wisdom may be critical to developing practical orientations to urgent, critical problems such as climate change, with its attendant problems of mass migrations prompted by climate-induced famine and political upheaval and the massive extinction of species.

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12

Vedanta Philosophy's Contribution to Wisdom Development for Leadership: Grounding Indian Practical Wisdom in Higher Knowledge and Purpose

Surya Tahora, Snehal Shah and David Rooney

Introduction

In this chapter, we reprise ancient India's (Advaita) Vedanta philosophy of wisdom through its (monistic) metaphysics particularly its assumptions about the nature of reality as a single reality, or ground. This (ultimate) ground is a dynamic, changing, and complex web of interconnections, called Brahman. Brahman's oneness, or non-duality, contributes in very practical ways to the development of people and to changing their way of being and engaging in the world. We, therefore, connect this ancient Indian metaphysical perspective to developing wise

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leaders and to extend understanding of practical wisdom development. Further, we introduce Vedanta's philosophical system and the idea of lucid wisdom as a practical way of being a leader. It is notable that in modern history, Mahatma Gandhi was a leader who was deeply influenced by Vedanta (Gier, 2004) and its practical wisdom.

Interconnectedness and interdependence are fundamental to Vedic (including Vedanta) metaphysics. We are all interconnected in that the fundamental laws of nature apply equally to everyone and also because our biological and psychological makeup is similar. We share these ordering or governing processes that support all our ways of interacting with the world. If interconnectedness is the support infrastructure of interacting, interdependence describes the ways interconnected people (and things) are dependent. The classic Vedanta example is the clay pot. The pot is dependent on clay, the potter, water, the wheel, etc. for its existence. While interconnectedness and interdependence have been explored to some extent, acceptance is almost invisible in contemporary wisdom research, and wisdom (and metaphysics) is almost invisible in contemporary acceptance research. In Vedanta, acceptance is a state of calm composure, or mindfulness, and non-reactivity (e.g. not jumping to conclusions or letting emotions run out of control). It is not, however, a passive acceptance or resignation. Acceptance is the composed state that creates clarity and insight before going on to make excellent judgments and decisions. Acceptance, then, is the precursor to wise practical action. An example of non-acceptance is often seen in MBA classes where students complain to their professor that theory paints a complicated picture of reality that is hard to deal with and therefore cannot be executed in the "real world." The professor might then offer an opportunity to the student to consider that the real world actually is complicated and that it might be wise to accept that it is so. The professor might then suggest working through an exercise where, for the sake of argument, we agree to calmly and non-judgmentally accept the world is complex, ambiguous, and uncertain. In a calmer state the student may see more clearly the extent of the complexity, understand it better, be less avoidant of dealing with it, and, ultimately, see how to work with the complexity of reality rather than unhelpfully trying to wish it away. Finally, the professor could suggest to the student that they acknowledge and accept the emotions

that are associated with feeling overwhelmed. This acceptance reduces dissonances between the mismatched perceptions of reality. Thus, acceptance is the pause before action and the quality of mindful acceptance in the pause is a significant precursor to practically wise action.

The focus of contemporary acceptance research is therapeutic psychology, rather than acceptance as a way of being wise. The central idea of Vedanta is that all things are interconnected and that acceptance of this reality unifies self, others, and the world to create the ground for practical wisdom. Vedanta predates Hinduism and its tantric metaphysics but it underpins much of Hinduism's understanding of wisdom, as well as sharing much intellectual history with the Yoga, Jain and Buddhist wisdom traditions. As an aspect of wisdom, acceptance is an avenue toward being an excellent social actor. Ancient wisdom traditions, including Vedanta, still have much to offer us in our quest because of their metaphysical foundation directly connects to achieving practical wisdom.

This chapter demonstrates how Vedanta's fundamental metaphysical dynamics of interconnectedness and acceptance of its implications can profoundly shape the ways in which people make sense of their experiences, orient themselves, and act in a complex and uncertain world. We, therefore, explore the practical transformative power of interconnectedness and acceptance of self, others and the world as a fundamental aspect of practical wisdom development.

According to Vedanta, when an individual embraces interconnectedness and shifts to a higher level of acceptance, it necessarily impacts the ways in which the individual engages with the world, relates to people, and deals with challenging situations. For example, when one becomes angry, triggered by some external stimuli, it stimulates a cascade of biochemical and electrical reactions in the body, which may, in turn, make one speak or act in an offensive manner, which then may hurt another person, who may also react, etc. and adversely affect a family or community. There is a metaphysical transcendence (or spirituality) that is deeply associated with liberation from suffering in the history of Indian philosophy. This chapter, therefore, highlights India's unique and important practical metaphysics of wisdom by using Vedanta, which is one of the richest and most influential philosophical systems in India's long and rich intellectual history.

In Vedanta philosophy, particularly its contemporary Advaita Vedanta form, wisdom has two meanings (like sophia and *phrónêsis*), one is pure wisdom or pure consciousness (called Brahman, roughly analogous to sophia, or contemplative wisdom), and the other is the “mundane” wisdom of acting ethically and with lucid social skill in accord with rules and duties set out in the Dharma (spiritual texts, scriptures or ethical framework) in the world to create positive or virtuous outcomes based on karma and lucidity (analogous to *phrónêsis*).

For us, acceptance implies that leaders, if they are to be practically wise, must be willing to focus on metaphysical development that will enable them to grow. Acceptance is the ability to be mindful and non-reactive through being non-judgmental and non-analytical as one considers a situation, a feeling, event, or one’s own position in the world. We could use a negative example here of a leader with profound narcissistic tendencies to make our point. A narcissist cannot make a genuine metaphysical commitment to humbly belonging to a higher collective consciousness or ground because they cannot commit to a collective or to the humility of being humbly interdependent. If such a leader also lacks mindfulness, then the combination of lacking both these preconditions of Vedanta’s practical wisdom will likely lead to unwise behavior in the form of compulsive decision-making, short-termism, selfishness, grandiosity, and malfeasance (cf. Oktaviani, Rooney, McKenna, & Zacher, 2015). Many corporate and political leaders already exhibit such characteristics. For example, the now infamous example, widely reported in the global media, of Travis Kalanick, founder and CEO of Uber. He and his company routinely spied on passengers and employees, behaved selfishly, and engaged in abusive behavior (Newcomer & Stone, 2018).

Motivation for the Study and Why Vedanta

Palmisano (2009) interviewed 1500 CEOs as part of a Global Trend Survey. One of the biggest concerns of the CEOs was the complexity of business and that they did not feel equipped to cope with it. To navigate wisely through complexity, it is helpful to have abilities such as ethical judgment, self-awareness, adaptability, open-mindedness,

and tolerance of ambiguity and then be able to act wisely in the social world using those abilities as a foundation (Rooney, McKenna, & Liesch, 2010). Petrie (2014) distinguishes the horizontal versus vertical aspect of leadership development in organizations. Horizontal elements are functional and behavioral skills crucial to work task performance. Apprenticeship training and on-the-job learning achieve the goal of imparting a breadth of competencies necessary for a leader to perform well. Vertical development focuses on personal development or growth to make sense of the world in more sophisticated and wise ways. Wisdom development requires a concerted effort in the vertical plane.

Helping leaders to develop a system of dispositions (i.e., habitus) (Küpers & Pauleen, 2015) that enables them to accept themselves and their place in an interconnected world is a necessary starting point to develop wise leaders. Thus, in Vedanta, as an individual, I understand that I am deeply connected to everything. I am clear that my actions can create ripples of consequences across my interconnections. Therefore, I move from a position of isolated individuality and self-centeredness to one of responsibility and care. Acceptance necessarily includes paying attention to one's interdependencies within a broader context and lucidly using this awareness to engage with the world with humility, ethics, and other aspects of practical wisdom. The word "lucid" derives from the Latin word, *lūx*, which relates to light and luminous clarity as well as elucidation. Acceptance involves dynamically defining one's sphere of influence and responsibilities, and then responding to challenging situations with more composure and insight because the composure that comes with acceptance deepens one's capacity to learn, to be luminous and insightful, and to know what ought to be done.

Vedanta is also relevant to wisdom research because of its monistic or non-dual understanding of the self. Vedanta's core message is that the diversity and multiplicity that we perceive and take as truth is part of a limitless, undifferentiated existence and shared ground. Its primary concern as a wisdom tradition is to lead the individual to know that they are not simply a self confined to a body. By helping people inquire into the nature of the self, the world, and the cause of the world, Vedanta helps them to understand that they are part of one undivided self (indeed, a shared consciousness) and are indivisible from all reality. In the end, all of us, including leaders, are caretakers of this fundamental ground, shared consciousness or source of life. If we all come from

this source, then we are all connected by a common reality, origin, and shared sense of belonging. However, even if most CEOs do not share this view, a CEO who comes from this position will have the humility and ethical fortitude to be an excellent leader. Furthermore, as a practically wise person, a leader embodies the business, social and political skills to still be competitive against firms run by less ethical CEOs.

A wave in the ocean is a classic Indian analogy to understand the relationship between the individual, the world, its cause, and the one limitless reality. In this analogy, a wave represents an individual who takes him or herself to be a small, solitary wave. As a small wave, it is isolated and may feel inadequate and fear its mortality. Wanting the wave to overcome its existential discomfort, a guru helps it to understand that it is part of the ocean, the cause of the totality of all waves and that the ocean sustains all waves. Second, the wave learns that it is part of a complex, changing, web of interconnectedness of the laws of physics, currents, and so on. Third, is the discovery that waves are simply water and, therefore, one wave is connected to all waves, all oceans, and all water. Individual waves come and go but oceans persist and all waves are of the ocean and, therefore, have a fundamental oceanic nature. Fourth is learning that water, or H_2O , is a molecule of hydrogen and oxygen atoms that were created at the origins of the universe (the Big Bang) which is literally part of the one vast reality and essential being of everything within the universe, and the cause of the universe. According to the first law of thermodynamics, matter cannot be destroyed or created and all matter in the universe was created during the Big Bang. This is our common origin. Such an understanding may lead to a higher consciousness and a higher sense of belonging and purpose. However, the experiencer and objects of ordinary experience will always remain in conventional discourse, but such dualities dissolve from the standpoint of the one, vast reality. As Shaw (1995, p. 11) puts it, when writing about Vajrayana Buddhism, the self is

not a 'soul' in a 'body' but rather a multilayered mind-body continuum of corporeality, affectivity, cognitivity, and spirituality whose layers are subtly interwoven and mutually interactive ... [the self is a] site of a host of energies, inter winds and flames, dissolutions, meltings, and floodings that can bring about dramatic transformation in embodied experience and provide a bridge between humanity and divinity.

It is worth noting that Vedanta's absolute, vast reality and self is different from the Buddhist assumption of non-self, that is, that the self constantly changes because it is only ever a momentary assemblage of changing parts (Loy, 1982), but the humbling effect of Buddhist existential metaphysics serves similar purposes. Both wisdom traditions seek wisdom and enlightenment through profound insight about the nature of reality, a reality in which the apparent duality between subject and object resolve at the empirical level of an interdependent and interconnected world, and then with the insight about a vast and luminous (lucid) existence and shared consciousness. Both these insights lead to transpersonal awakening, humility, compassion, equanimity, lucidity, and clarity.

Acceptance in Psychology

Acceptance-based therapy has roots in ancient philosophical and religious traditions, both Eastern and Western, including Stoicism, Christianity, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Yoga, and Vedanta. Over time, multiple streams of psychology such as the humanistic and existential (Maslow, 1998; Moustakas, 1956; Rogers, 1965), cognitive-behavioral psychotherapies, and other fields of clinical psychology have drawn inspiration from it. Acceptance and, in particular, self-acceptance has been researched in psychology (Williams & Lynn, 2010). Psychology studies have established the scientific validity of self-acceptance in treating, for example, depression and stress. A positive correlation between self-acceptance and acceptance of others has also been established (Ryff, 1989). Self-esteem and self-acceptance have been investigated by Ellis (2005), and Deci and Ryan (2000) and self-acceptance has been identified as a healthier psychological attribute than self-esteem.

Self-acceptance has been included in new forms of cognitive-behavioral therapy interventions such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) (Hayes & Strosahl, 2004; Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 1999; Hayes & Wilson, 1994), Dialectical Behavior Therapy (Linehan, 1994), Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (Kabat-Zinn, 1990, 1994), and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (MBCT)

(Segal, Williams, & Teasdale, 2002; Teasdale et al., 2000). Research has demonstrated that therapy-based interventions addressing aspects of self-acceptance positively impact well-being, meaningfulness, health, and happiness (William & Lynn, 2010).

Acceptance-based therapies are very important additions to clinical practice as they can restore health to many people, but the original application of acceptance was to foster wisdom in healthy people. Ancient India's focus on acceptance was for creating the foundations of lucidity in action, equanimity in meeting challenging situations and difficult relationships with others, and to foster contemplative and social excellence.

Acceptance in Leadership Through Mindfulness

Acceptance has not been researched directly in relation to leadership but has found its place under the broader construct of mindfulness (King & Nesbit, 2015). Although mindfulness is typically associated with Buddhism in this literature, mindfulness has a broader philosophical genealogy in yogic concentration and awareness traditions like Vedanta (Mikulas, 2011). Mindfulness is defined in various ways, but for the purpose of this chapter we note that most definitions point to the link between mindfulness and acceptance of ourselves, others, and the environment. Adapted from Brown and Ryan (2003), we say that mindfulness is awareness and acceptance of present experiences and events, both internal and external, in a non-judgmental, non-evaluative, open, and non-reactive way.

It is useful to begin discussing acceptance by explaining what it is not. Acceptance is not the same as the modern English word, which implies acquiescence, passivity, approval, or agreement. In the context of this chapter and Vedanta, acceptance means being open to the feelings (e.g., fear, anger) in moment to moment experience and a willingness to just feel without judging or analyzing the feelings or being reactive. We can learn to simply 'be' with one's feelings with an open curiosity that tries not to control the experience or have the experience control us. Controlling is the opposite of acceptance. Importantly,

acceptance only comes from the willingness to be with yourself, nakedly, openly, and lovingly, again and again over a long period of time: wisdom does not develop quickly and it takes discipline.

Acceptance should happen prior to choosing to act. Acceptance helps people to respond wisely in a situation rather than being reactive. Acceptance, as a process, may lead, for example, to understanding why wishful thinking is about things beyond our control and causes more pain than accepting that, at least for now, there is no point in continuing with an unachievable desire. A common saying in Buddhist philosophy is; $\text{Suffering} = \text{pain} \times \text{resistance}$. In short, accepting the pain (or reality, or experience, or relationship) causes less suffering than struggling against it.

Benefits of mindfulness-based interventions in workplaces are becoming clear (Hülshager, Alberts, Feinholdt, & Lang, 2013). Good et al. (2015) identified three core positive workplace outcomes of mindfulness: performance, interpersonal relationships, and wellbeing. Glomb, Duffy, Bono, and Yang (2011) identified improved self-regulation of thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and physiological reactions as outcomes of mindfulness in workplaces. For them, behind this improved self-regulation is the decoupling of the self from experiences and emotions. While Glomb et al. (2011) call this process de-coupling, Teasdale and Chaskalson (2011) refer to it as decentering and re-perception (cf. Kross & Grossmann, 2012). The other two mechanisms involve changing what is processed in relation to the content of experience and changing one's attitude to how the content of experience is processed. For example, when experiencing unpleasant feelings, one can focus intentionally on body sensations like breathing, or attending with curiosity and allowing the unpleasant feeling 'to be' instead of trying to avoid or control it. By attending with curiosity to the unpleasantness and not avoiding it we non-judgmentally accept its presence. Decentering is about how feelings, thoughts, and sensations associated with an experience are seen as mental events or mental objects, rather than as aspects of our subjective self. Such mental objects do not define who or what we are and so we can distance ourselves from those mental events. Teasdale and Chaskalson (2011) argue that even though the three decentering mechanisms are interrelated, the last mechanism is the most fundamental

for reducing existential suffering. For example, a leader who feels disablingly vulnerable because he or she is troubled by the complexity and ambiguity of the environment can accept the environment, non-judgmentally, like the MBA student (above), to better deal with being a leader and to overcome feeling disablingly vulnerable.

Non-acceptance Undermines Wisdom

Philosophical enquiry throughout India's history has explored the importance of not identifying the self with the body, as a critical part of wisdom development. Indian philosophy also addresses low self-esteem and self-depreciation and their consequences. Nevertheless, Vedanta suggests that existential suffering and dissatisfaction is caused by lack of self-acceptance. The underlying idea is that if identity is centered on body and mind, which are inherently limited, people will be unable to accept themselves and gain wisdom. Vedanta also adds that we cannot accept ourselves unless we also accept the world, and that we cannot accept the world unless we become fully aware of, familiar with, and have assimilated the perspective of interconnectedness and its implications for our engagement with reality. Thus, we cannot be wise if we cannot accept ourselves, the world and our ultimate ground of reality. Accepting the self, world and ultimate ground means openly, humbly, and non-reactively acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses, desirable and undesirable, and the good and the bad in everything. Practical wisdom requires this disposition (cf. Glück & Bluck, 2013). Vedanta helps us shift our outlook to change the lens through which we see our experience as inter-independent 'subjects' and 'objects'.

Acceptance is, therefore, about an interdependent view from which we can develop a lucid understanding and narrative about our place in the world (cf. Ferrari, Weststrate, & Petro, 2013). As individuals, our attitude to making sense of our experiences goes well beyond a decentered sense of self. According to Vedanta, although the process of decentering is beneficial for creating an inner space (cf. Rooney et al., 2010) from which our thoughts, emotions, etc. are observed, we also have to understand how we are deeply interconnected or inter-woven with other selves and the world. This process is based on relative self-acceptance.

Absolute and Relative Self-Acceptance

Because we are conscious of ourselves, we can judge ourselves. Being self-conscious, we have the potential to be aware of our limitations and incompleteness through accurate self-appraisal and, therefore, may desire to be free from feeling inadequate. Behind many of our pursuits is a vision or hope of becoming full, complete, and adequate, and therefore, acceptable to ourselves and others (Dayananda, 2000).

Social comparison research (Chae, 2015; Richins, 1991) suggests that whether one is Indian, French or Australian, man or woman, young or old, too often we strive to become somebody different from who we are. Social comparison theory points to inter-subjective awareness and a toxic misunderstanding by a person of how they compare relative to others. Social comparison leads people to misconstrue their social interconnectedness and this misconstrual impairs social judgment as well as self-judgment. Social comparison is the fundamental mechanism that much advertising uses to create a sense of need or inadequacy in consumers. The self we want to be is a self that enjoys more love, wealth, success, social status, power, influence, fame, etc., or we want a self who is less subject to emotional turmoil, less swayed by the adversities of life and is more compassionate and ethical. Self-transcendence (including serenity and spirituality) is positively related to adult development and is the starting point for wisdom development, according to psychological research (Levenson, Jennings, Aldwin, & Shiraishi, 2005). Similarly, the Greek philosophers took 'know thy self' as the starting point. More specifically, Vedanta scholar, Swami Dayananda (2000), explains that desiring to be different from what we are stems from self-non-acceptance. As a wisdom tradition, Vedanta addresses this basic human problem by leading a struggling individual to know that the self is already acceptable because it is one, non-dual, limitless whole. That is, the self, the world, its cause, and the ultimate reality are one ground. This is not a personal self but a distributed selfhood of shared consciousness. Thus, if a person truly knows themselves, they will not have any sense of dissatisfaction or inadequacy (cf. Levenson et al., 2005). To come back to our wave analogy, the wave needs first to discover it is part of the ocean before it can discover that its reality is water, and hydrogen and oxygen. These same hydrogen and oxygen atoms are essential components of every person, animal and plant.

I Am Part of an Interconnected Whole

Like other Eastern wisdom traditions such as Buddhism and Taoism, Vedanta emphasizes changing away from the radical individualism of neoliberal ideology to ‘I am part of a web of interdependent relationships’. This outlook is essential for wisdom development and leadership because it points to a distorted sense of separation between I and the world, a deeply ingrained pattern of thinking that informs and creates our subjective experience, and the ways we evaluate situations, take decisions, relate with others, and then act. According to Vedanta, adopting a new lens of interconnectedness and interdependence will have effects at the level of acceptance of oneself and the world and lead to flourishing individuals, communities and world, and to wisdom. Moreover, it is possible to create communities of such people, wise communities. The Sanskrit term that Buddhists use for this kind of community is *sangha* and the broader Indian wisdom tradition understands that wise community and wise individuals are coterminous.

We now move to examine further what Vedanta says about developing wise leaders.

Vedanta and Integration

An Infinite Web of Interconnectedness

In this section, we will explore the fundamental metaphysical insight of ‘interconnectedness’ as illustrated by a classic story from the Vedas called the Web of Indra¹ that illustrates how interconnectedness helps us to move to a wider, self-transcendent, and coherent perspective that creates wisdom.

¹While the story of Indra’s net originates from Atharva Veda 8.8.6, 8.8.8, it is also often quoted in Mahayana Buddhism to illustrate *paticca samuppada*, co-arising or interconnected origination and Hua-yen school of Chinese Buddhism to depict the universe as one great scheme of interdependency.

Over the palace of Indra—the king of the Vedic deities—hangs a spider's web that brings together an infinite number of jewels from all directions (Thiele, 2011). The jewels stand for the multitude of events, things, and beings that include atoms, mountains, people, animals, communities, planets, and galaxies. The strands of the web are the various laws and physical, biological, ecological, physiological, sociological, and psychological, etc. processes, as well as principles of *karma* (actions and results) and *dharma* (ethical values) that govern interactions between jewels. The web of strands and jewels form an immense and dynamic grand order of complex patterns that inform, hold together and support the universe (Dayananda, 2006).

Contemporary society is characterized by growing webs of interconnectedness, activities and people. Increased interaction has led to dramatic impacts like standard of living inequalities that are exacerbated by globalization. The 2008 global financial meltdown is also an example. A positive reaction to such impacts is a growing awareness of the need to shift toward an ecological or holistic perspective. Vedanta suggests that we change from an attitude of disunion, confrontation, domination, aggression, and alienation that leads, inevitably, to dissatisfaction and non-acceptance, to a sense of belonging, participation, collaboration, and satisfaction. This change begins as we experience metaphysical growth and begin to understand how we are part of a unitary whole. With further growth, we develop the humility, empathy, and will to act with the compassion that underpins practical wisdom.

Interconnectedness in Acceptance-Based Action

Vedanta's Practical Wisdom Through Harmonized Participation

We may fight against the world or try to maximize our personal gains in the short-term and at the expense of others. Such states of mind create non-acceptance of self, others, and the world, resulting in dissatisfaction and behavior that is unenlightened and discordant rather than lucid and harmonized.

Acceptance enables a person to (1) see more clearly the immensity and the complexity behind the dynamic patterns and relationships within the great web; (2) to be inspired with awe and a deep sense of humble belonging to something larger; (3) to create the feeling of being at peace with ourselves in keeping with *dharma* (acting ethically and compassionately); (4) to find one's place in the grand scheme of things; (5) to accept and care about others because they are also part of the integral and interdependent Whole; and (6) to become aware that however small our actions are, they nevertheless count and make a difference. This is a lucid way of being. Vedanta, therefore, says that when lucid, we intimately feel how we are endowed by three *shaktis* or powers—the power to know (lucidity or metaphysical insight), desire (wise conation or compassion-driven will to act), and do (act with lucid social skill). As a consequence, we mobilize our unique talents and skills, perform every action as our contribution to the Whole, and turn into active participants and co-creators within the web of interdependence (Dayananda, 2015). This is the make-up of practically wise leaders. Wise leaders, therefore, are mindful, compassionate, humble, and practical because they have achieved acceptance. Again, we point to Gandhi as the modern example of applying this way of being a leader. His success was gained through acceptance, non-violence, and kindness.

Chapter three of *Bhagavad Gita* says that when we contribute actively and meaningfully to the whole within the ecosystem of society, we are, in turn, deeply nourished (Majmudar & Tahora, 2012). The basic conditions under which people can flourish and realize their full potential are founded on harmony created by acceptance of self and the world. According to Vedanta, the basic human pursuits are categorized as *Artha* (wealth, security, influence, power, fame, etc.) and *Kāma* (various forms of pleasure). The necessity and significance of *Artha* and *Kāma* have to be recognized as they fulfill essential individual needs. However, and of great importance, Vedanta emphasizes that they are situated within the overall context of a third pursuit, *Dharma* (ethics or a compassionate concern for others) (Dayananda, 2013), which originates in metaphysical commitments. Wise people choose to be attentive to the welfare of others and strive to meet their obligations to society and nature with

excellence. This view is supported by Self Determination Theory, which says the satisfaction of basic needs for belongingness or relatedness (among other things) contributes to our sense of psychological growth, integrity and well-being. And if these needs are not satisfied, pathology and ill-being result (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Defining a Leader's Sphere of Influence and Dharma

Lucid metaphysical insight, ethical conation, and lucid sociological excellence in practice create situated harmony for practical wisdom. To strengthen and nourish the communities and organizations to which we belong, leaders must be sensitive to their sphere of influence and its context, and be guided by the compassionate values of *Dharma*. But how can this be done?

First, we can encourage leaders to map their personal web of relationships. They are related to family and community, are employees and citizens, and are human beings who are dependent on the earth. They can further describe these relationships in terms of their specific roles and the responsibilities they entail. As leaders visualize themselves in multiple roles, it is important for them to understand their place in their web of relationships. It is important to recognize that everyone has their own position of power and influence in the web.

Second, leaders differ in terms of the possibility and scope for making an impact in their given areas. Each person has a different position of power or influence and different sets of skills with which to act and have impact. Recognizing one's position/s creates a realistic foundation from which constructive action can be taken (Lappé, 2010; Majmudar & Tahora, 2012).

Since interdependence isn't a nice wish, it is what is, there can be no single action, isolated and contained. All actions create ripples — not just downward through hierarchical flows but outward globally through webs of connectedness. And we never know what those ripples might be. Beneath our awareness, perhaps, we are coming to realize that our acts do matter, all of them, everywhere, all the time. (Lappé, 2010, p. 115)

As situations unfold and call for responses, wise leaders distinguish between what is within their sphere of influence and what is not. They are aware when they are overburdening themselves by trying to change what they cannot, or are falling into passivity and inaction by underestimating their sphere of influence. The delusion of omnipotence that is associated with megalomania and grandiosity that creates foolishness is the antithesis of Vedanta's wisdom (cf. Sternberg, 2004). The diminished sense of responsibility that many leaders exhibit is a form of non-acceptance. Similarly, Giambattista Vico, the Eighteenth Century Italian neo-Aristotelian, identified the imprudent savant and astute ignoramus (Miner, 1998) as rational lunatics who are products of an over-reliance on rationality, non-acceptance of the complexity of reality, and a lack of wisdom development.

Third, leaders can examine how their actions are aligned with *Dharma*, what they can do or undo to fulfill their roles and responsibilities, ethically, in each situation, to bring their behavior into harmony with *Dharma* (Dayananda, 2013). *Dharma* is the matrix of ethical values that supports and binds together the relationships we have with others (Dayananda, 2006). The *Mahabharata* defines *Dharma* with three words (Chaturvedi, 2007); *ahimsa* (safety), *dharana* (supportiveness), and *prabhava* (nurturing). Are leaders making sure that for each stakeholder and relationship their actions are as much as possible within *ahimsa*, that is, do they secure freedom from violence and freedom from fear for all living beings? Are leaders' actions consistent with *dharana*? In other words, are leaders supporting, sustaining, bringing together, and respecting all living beings and the environment (*Bhagavad Gita* 2,50 in Dayananda, 2012)? And further, situated within the domain of *prabhava*, are leaders nurturing and cherishing, and amply enriching stakeholders and the environment? Put negatively, leaders can make sure that their actions in relation to each stakeholder are not *adharma* (unjust) or *anacara* (oppressive). Further, do leaders ensure that actions are not depriving, starving, diminishing, separating, uprooting, hurting and degrading?

Wise leaders, therefore, are not manipulative, debasing, or harmful; instead, they foster cooperation and nourish people (Bunting, 2016; Chi Vu & Gill, 2018). They communicate their disagreement or displeasure in healthy ways (Van Dierendonck, 2011). They appreciate the contributions of others, whoever they are, and give them their due share of recognition (Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013). Vedanta suggests that wise leaders also cultivate a culture conducive to the overall well-being and development of all stakeholders.

Accepting the Results of Our Actions with Composure

We often find that things do not turn out the way we want even though we try very hard to achieve our desired outcomes (cf. Baltes & Staudinger, 2000). If we look back on our life, there are many things that we would have liked to do, but not everything was accomplished as we wanted. We often carry a substantial amount of pain and lack of fulfillment because of these experiences. The core of such dissatisfaction is that the premise on which we interact with the world—that things should happen according to our desire (the hedonic cycle)—is unhelpful and reflects an out of place sense of entitlement. Vedanta points out that when things do not go our way, they are not random in nature, but are governed by an order, Indra's web. Vedanta says the order combines individual actions with many past actions and interconnects present and past variables to determine the outcome (*karma*). Therefore, an isolated action is only one of the variables that determine outcomes along with many hidden or unknown variables within the web of Indra (Majmudar & Tahora, 2012). In other words, our actions have social histories (*karma*) and making metaphysical commitments of the sort that Vedanta does is a vital element of humility and practical wisdom development.

Using this perspective, we are able to receive the results of our actions with an attitude of *samatvam*, non-entitled, composed or equanimous (mindful) acceptance when things do not go our way (Dayananda, 2000). Anchored in this understanding is abandoning attachment to outcomes so that we greet success and failure with composure. This evenness of mind is called *yoga* (Dayananda, 2012).

Acceptance Leads to Lucid Practice

Composed acceptance, we argue, paves the way for lucid social responses that are not distorted by what is known in Vedanta (and Buddhism and Yoga) as afflictive emotions (anger, attachment, ignorance, jealousy and pride) that are associated with non-acceptance. With acceptance, leaders are no longer caught in anger, regret, blame, being judgmental, etc. This lucid freedom makes leaders lucid enough to act in an intentional, compassionate, and holistic manner (Majmudar & Tahora, 2012). With lucidity, leaders begin to see more clearly situations and events and how they should respond. In addition, when things do not go their way, instead of jumping to conclusions or blaming others or themselves they focus on lucid responses. Leaders can look back and examine if they did everything they could, learn what they could have done better, and if they think they did their best and still did not get what they wanted, they recognize that there are factors that did not make it possible for them to gain what they wanted. When things go their way, they are capable of welcoming success with humility and gratitude. Wise leaders free themselves from arrogance, self-conceit, and the need for superiority. They realize how many other people and factors have contributed to that success.

Implications for Leadership Education and Practice

Education at all levels should take wisdom seriously (Sternberg, 2001), and if it does, this chapter makes it clear that simply learning about quotidian reality is insufficient on its own. Our point is doubly important if it is a purpose of the education system to develop leaders for the future. Explorations of metaphysical or higher knowledge and selfhood, we suggest, should be part of all education, including practice-based or profession oriented higher education (Zhu, Rooney, & Phillips, 2016). It is not necessary to believe the specific metaphysical assumptions of traditional Indian philosophy or to take its metaphors like the wave and

Indra's web literally. The important thing is to develop the sense of a higher reality and its oneness or unity to which we all belong (cf. Ardel, 2008). Seen through western eyes, the decentered self and dissolution of ego challenges ideas of heroic individualism deeply embedded in much leadership theory. The Indian approach to self-formation challenges egotistical development and fosters positive, agentic humility that is so often missing in leaders. In addition, an Indian perspective is dependent on the guru, the wise teacher. In Western contexts, teacher training curriculum designers might ask, what do we have to do to the teacher training curriculum to be certain that we are graduating guru teachers (Halverson, 2004)? From preschool to Ph.D., there is good reason to include wisdom development in the curriculum (Intezari, Pauleen, & Rooney, 2016), and to recognize the age-old wisdom of India's knowledge of the practical role of metaphysical development in practical wisdom development. A sad reflection is that, in reality, corporate and political leaders go through selection processes but those selection processes do not come close to guaranteeing wise choices; yet our wisdom traditions have known for millennia what wisdom looks like.

Vedanta-Based Leadership Development Curriculum

Historically, a pre-occupation of business school (and other) education has been providing knowledge and skills that prepare students for the 'real world'. Some business schools, however, have adopted a more balanced approach to their curriculum. Datar, Garvin, and Cullen (2010) point to three pillars, 'knowing', 'doing' and 'being' for a different kind of business school education. While the knowing and doing pillars refer to knowledge and skills required to be effective managers, it is the 'being' component that resonates with the Vedanta wisdom tradition of compassion, empathy, virtuous living, and interconnected reality. The purpose of this pillar is to develop values-based leadership practices and to (re)define success.

We now discuss the first author's Vedanta-based leadership interventions within the S.P. Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR) in Mumbai, India, where participants include management

students and senior managers attending executive development programs. He applies similar methods through his private practice with CEOs, senior managers, consultants, artists, professors, investment bankers, and finance directors. The objective of this section is to explore ways to adapt the insights of Vedanta, to create a framework of tools and practices that promote practically wise leader development. Central to this process at SPJIMR are non-classroom learning (NCL) initiatives that promote self-awareness, enhance emotional intelligence, and develop social consciousness. Five core NCL processes have been developed; Personal Growth Labs (PG Lab), *Abhyudaya* (mentoring), Corporate Citizenship internships, Assessment and Development of Managerial Potential (ADMAPP), and Wisdom in Leadership (or Science of Spirituality).

The Personal Growth Lab is an initiative that provides theoretical and empirical organizational behavior information in an experiential learning setting off campus. At the individual level, students complete a battery of self-assessment instruments to build self-awareness and inform the development of an action plan for their growth and development. At the team level, they engage in a variety of team building and team problem-solving activities where they learn inter-personal skills in challenging situations. This occurs in the first three months of their MBA studies.

Abhyudaya requires each SPJIMR student to mentor a child aged 9–14 who comes from an underprivileged background. These mentees, referred to as *sitaras* (stars), are typically children from urban slums who are studying in government schools that have meagre resources. SPJIMR students are expected to visit their *sitaras* in their own environment (e.g., slums) once a month to interact, listen, engage and learn from mentoring. This intervention aims to help MBA students develop empathy, compassion and social sensitivity as well benefit the *sitaras*.

The Department of Corporate Citizenship (DOCC) places MBA students in an 8–10 week course where they do a summer internship with an NGO. They work on projects that give them an opportunity to apply their classroom learning to the NGOs to improve their business performance. The MBA students gain experience in using their management knowledge, and they see its relevance in a broader context that shows its wider value to society than they would see if they only used their knowledge in a corporate setting.

Assessment and Development of Managerial Potential helps students to develop two areas. First, students learn how to do management and administration by becoming members of one of the committees that run the Institute. They are, therefore, responsible for planning, budgets and administrative decision-making with real consequences. Second, students take the opportunity to identify and work on three competencies that they would like to develop as part of their management education and ongoing personal development.

MBA students also take the Wisdom in Leadership (also called Science of Spirituality) course. The purpose of this course is to deepen and integrate the various NCL experiences students encounter. It draws upon insights and contemplative practices from Eastern Wisdom Traditions (including Advaita Vedanta and Buddhism), findings from Cognitive and Developmental Psychology, and research evidence from Neuroscience. The course helps students to develop awareness and mastery over their inner landscape through various practices, such as meditation, and learn how this awareness influences their relations with others and the world. Students also explore how they can widen their personal sources of meaningfulness and fulfilment. Finally, MBA students develop a deeper understanding of the implications of the concept of interconnectedness in their future leadership roles and their responsibilities to society.

Future Research and Practice

This chapter has taken a small and limited excursion into Indian philosophy but it raises some significant considerations for practical wisdom research. Indian metaphysics is, according to Priest (2014), enriching, distinctive, and practical. The idea that we all share a connection to and origins in a vast unit of consciousness or ground runs deep in India's philosophical traditions. India's philosophical explorations have also delivered a tradition of non-violence, and non-coercive, negotiated cosmopolitanism and pluralism that are worthy of consideration as products of its metaphysics and wisdom tradition (Priest, 2014). Gandhi very much embodied this tradition as a leader. Vedanta (and other Indian traditions) also emphasizes compassion, whereas the ancient

Greeks emphasized ethics. Although it would be easy to make too much of this distinction, it is an important one because compassion more vibrantly emphasizes deep awareness of another's suffering and desire to relieve it through acts of care, than did the ancient Greeks'. It certainly is the case that the contemporary western view of ethics is much more abstract and cognitive in comparison to how Indian philosophy understands compassion. In its ancient, Greek, conception, ethics was also a way of living and an aspect of practical wisdom (Eikeland, 2008), that is, wisdom as a social practice (Rooney et al., 2010); yet it has shifted markedly from its origins to become a theoretical preoccupation within the university (Cooper, 2012). Indeed, ethics is most often taught, particularly in business schools, as a set of conceptual tools for deciding what ought to be done rather than as a *practiced* way of acting, as we describe in the previous section. Perhaps encouraged by the Dali Lama (2011), compassion is now increasingly seen as a moral emotion (not separate from ethics) that helps cultivate moral behavior and to create the volition to alleviate others suffering (through acts of kindness) (Ozawa-de Silva et al., 2012). The research challenge remains to find how best to develop this *practiced* kind of ethics (compassion) in a social practice wisdom.

Eastern ideas of harmony as a rich and more nuanced alternative to western notions of integration in wisdom are also potentially rich veins of research and practice. In particular, the notions of improvisation through the Indian raga and the western use of harmony in jazz and blues are potential sources of inspiration for this. Harmony theory is conceptually rich in comparison to integration and can very likely yield powerful practical insights about how wisdom works in everyday life. Harmony brings palettes of color and tone, emotional and aesthetic impacts, and conscious and unconscious communication, it can be orchestrated, and it offers limitless variation in the hands of a virtuoso.

Phenomenology (theorizing the structure of consciousness and experience) is the closest western analogue of Indian philosophy and could act as a bridge for western research and practice. Using

phenomenological research methods (Moustakas, 1994) could, for example, be used for examining yoga and tantra for better understanding embodied wisdom. Segal (2010) uses practical phenomenology-based interventions to explore with leaders their embodied experience of leading so they can become better leaders. For the sake of developing wise leaders (and citizens), practical wisdom research is essential and can significantly inform and change leadership practices.

Conclusion

Leadership Development training is a multi-billion-dollar industry. In 2015, the US spent \$70 billion while the worldwide expenditure was close to \$130 billion. The *raison d'être* for such programs is to develop a pipeline of leaders who are capable of leading their organizations lucidly through the complexities of the social and economic landscape. There is evidence to suggest that such efforts have had limited success (Grint, 2007). We have in this chapter made a case for infusing the practical wisdom of Vedanta in leadership development to bring about transformative changes in leaders' behavior. More specifically, we have suggested that integrating or harmonizing the concepts of interconnect- edness and acceptance—of self, others and the environment—in leader- ship development is worthy of consideration.

When individuals begin from the perspective that 'I am not an iso- lated self but a part of a larger interconnected world', they no longer feel the need to resist or control reality in impractical ways, but accept reality, fully, and thereby find meaning, values and purpose by being grounded, open, and lucid for wisdom to support life's multiple roles, responsibilities and challenges.

The metaphysical commitment to a shared consciousness that engen- ders empathy and compassion, non-reactivity, humility, and equanimity is vital to practical wisdom. This shared consciousness is a unity that brings with it an overarching strength and courage that provides a prac- tical foundation or ground for being a wise leader.

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13

How Wisdom Can Help Solve Global Problems

Nicholas Maxwell

Our Global Problems

Our future looks grim. We are confronted by grave global problems which show every sign of intensifying in the future. Millions, possibly billions, of people may suffer and die prematurely from disaster as a result.¹

In this chapter I argue that the key thing we need to do to save humanity from disaster is bring about a revolution in academia so that the basic aim becomes wisdom, and not just knowledge.

¹See Pinker (2018) for a much more optimistic account of our future, and see Maxwell (2018a) for a decisive criticism. Steven Pinker fails to appreciate that he invokes a profoundly defective and damaging version of the Enlightenment programme, one which is, in part, responsible for the genesis of the global problems that confront us—a point that I will highlight as we proceed.

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But could more wisdom really help? Before I tackle that problem, let me first indicate in a little more detail, the nature and scale of the global problems that confront us.

There is the problem of rapid population growth. A few years ago it was thought that the world's population might level off at something like ten billion by the middle of the century. Now it is thought there may be as many as eleven billion people by the end of the century.² There is the problem of habitat destruction and increasingly rapid extinction of species. We are living in a period of mass extinctions, only this time the cause is us. There is the problem of vast inequalities of wealth and power around the globe—inequalities that have in some respects increased in the last few decades: see, for example, Piketty (2014), and Wilkinson and Pickett (2010). There is the problem of the spread of modern armaments, conventional, chemical, biological, nuclear. The mere existence of nuclear weapons held ready for launching is a menace: sooner or later they will be unleashed, whether as a result of international conflict, accident, malfunctioning equipment, or hacking. And on top of that, there is our proclivity for war, our record of war, and the increasingly lethal character of war: something like twelve million people killed in wars in the nineteenth century, around one hundred million in the twentieth century—and we have not been doing too well so far in this century. There is the problem of pollution of earth, sea, and air. And most serious of all, there are the impending threats of climate change. As the population goes up way beyond what one imagines the earth can sustain, the capacity of the earth to support and feed people goes down as climate change decreases habitable land as a result of drought and flooding; food production is threatened, people attempt to migrate *en masse*, and all the conditions likely to provoke war and devastation come to prevail.

²See www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/sep/18/world-population-new-study-11bn-2100, accessed 12 April 2015.

What Is Wisdom?

How might greater wisdom help solve these grave global problems? Before I can say anything about that question, I first need to indicate what I take wisdom to be. I can do no better than quote from a book of mine called *From Knowledge to Wisdom*, even more relevant today than when it was first published, long ago in 1984.

Wisdom [is] understood here [to be] the desire, the active endeavour, and the capacity to discover and achieve what is desirable and of value in life, both for oneself and for others. Wisdom includes knowledge and understanding but goes beyond them in also including: the desire and active striving for what is of value, the ability to see what is of value, actually and potentially, in the circumstances of life, the ability to experience value, the capacity to help realize what is of value for oneself and others, the capacity to help solve those problems of living that arise in connection with attempts to realize what is of value, the capacity to use and develop knowledge, technology and understanding as needed for the realization of value.³ Wisdom, like knowledge, can be conceived of, not only in personal terms, but also in institutional or social terms. (*From Knowledge to Wisdom*, Chapter 4)⁴

Wise Policies to Save the World

Let us suppose that, magically, one night, the world's population acquires wisdom in this sense. Or, to make it fractionally more plausible, let us suppose that 60% of humanity acquires wisdom in this sense,

³See Maxwell (1984, ch. 10) for an account of what is of value in existence. See also Maxwell (1999) for an exposition of the argument that what is of value is both objective and conjectural in character.

⁴I characterized wisdom in this way so that wisdom, so construed, could be taken to be the proper, basic intellectual and social aim of academic inquiry. I have argued subsequently, however, that this is indeed an acceptable way to construe wisdom; it accommodates most more specific interpretations of wisdom that have been put forward: see Maxwell (2013).

while the remaining 40% continue with as much, or as little, wisdom as they had before.

Abruptly, 60% of humanity has acquired the desire, the active endeavour, and the capacity to discover and achieve what is desirable and of value in life, both for themselves and for others. This suddenly acquired desire, capacity and endeavour will presumably, for each person, have all sorts of desirable, valuable consequences specifically for that person, and for those the person loves and knows. There will be limits to these good consequences, of course. Some suffering, some bad things, cannot be got rid of, however wise we may be. If you are dying of cancer, you will die, whether you are wise or not—although, if you are wise, you may be able to make better use of the time that is left to you. If you live in conditions of unrelenting poverty, imprisonment, or enslavement, acquiring wisdom may not be of much help. Wisdom can only help when actions are possible which, if performed, lead to the realization of what is desirable and of value, and it requires wisdom to discover what these actions are, and perhaps to perform them in the way that is required.

But in addition to purely personal benefits that might flow from the abrupt acquisition of wisdom, there would be public benefits too. Our 60% of humanity, on acquiring wisdom, would see all too clearly the desirability, the value, of progressively resolving the grave global problems that confront us. They would appreciate that retaining nuclear weapons ready to be unleashed at the touch of a button in itself threatens the future of humanity. They would appreciate that population growth, destruction of the natural world, decimation of living things, extinction of species, war, gross inequality, pollution of earth, sea, and air, and impending global warming are all disastrous. They would appreciate that everything possible must be done to put a stop to these disastrous outcomes.

Why can we be sure that our 60% of wise humanity would appreciate all this? Because, being wise, they hold the future welfare of their loved ones, children, friends, and fellow citizens, fellow human beings to be profoundly desirable and of value, and they would have no difficulty in appreciating that all this is under threat if nothing is done to solve these global problems. In order to achieve what is supremely

desirable and of value for the future, these global problems must be solved!

This point may be conceded. After all, most reasonably educated people today appreciate that we must solve these global problems if we are to avoid heading toward disaster. Not all educated people appreciate this, but most do, with the modicum of wisdom that the educated of the world possesses. So it is not unreasonable to conclude that our wise 60% of humanity will rapidly come to the same conclusion.

The crucial question is, then: But what could the wise 60% actually *do* to solve these global problems? That is the question that we must try to answer.

My view is that most of the 60% would agree that the key to solving our global problems is to get governments to implement appropriate policies. What would these policies be? They would include the following.

1. Proper funding to make birth control freely available to everyone on the planet.
2. Agreement among the nuclear powers—USA, China, Russia, UK, France, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea—to eliminate progressively all nuclear weapons, and at the same time establish an international body with powers to inspect any nuclear facility anywhere in the world to ensure nuclear weapons are not being developed in secret.
3. Governments around the world put on a war footing to take action to stop climate change.
4. Adoption by governments around the world of a policy to tax CO₂ emissions, primarily the use of oil and coal, this tax being such that it increases at a steady, announced rate, year on year. The rationale behind this tax is that it would discourage use of oil and coal, and would encourage development of alternative methods of energy production.
5. At the same time, a crash programme by governments around the world to replace energy production by means of coal, oil and gas, with sustainable technology of energy-production: solar panels, wind farms, hydropower, wave power, tidal power, nuclear power.

- World-wide CO₂ emissions due to electricity production to be halved in ten years, and brought to zero in 20 years.
6. The creation of vast solar panel power stations in desert regions such as the Sahara, to produce electricity for heavily populated regions, local regions benefiting from the sale of electricity.
 7. A crash programme to convert transport so that, instead of being fueled by petrol and oil, it is fueled by electricity and hydrogen (the presumption being that 4 to 6 are being implemented simultaneously). World-wide CO₂ emissions due to transport to be halved in ten years and brought to zero in 20 years (excluding air traffic).
 8. Active collaboration of democratic nations to do what can be done to encourage undemocratic nations to become democratic.
 9. Creation of democratic world government.
 10. Protection of natural habitats, such as tropical rain forests, and adoption of policies to put a stop to species extinctions, and the loss of wild life.

Wisdom Politics

But how would the wise 60% of humanity succeed in getting governments around the world to implement these policies? Much depends on whether we are considering a democratic or a dictatorial state. Let's consider the case of a democracy first.

If 60% of the electorate clamoured for their government to implement the above policies, 1–10, sooner or later, I believe, the democratically elected government would indeed come to put these policies into practice. The 60% would need to create a “global problem solving” (GPS) campaign. Public figures, the media, social media, would need to be galvanized to promote the campaign. Members of the 60% would have to be prepared to desert their political party of choice if it proved recalcitrant in agreeing to adopt GPS policies. It would need to be made clear to political parties that failure to support GPS policies would be electoral suicide. And once a government is in place that declares its determination to put GPS policies into practice, every action of the government

would need to be closely watched by the 60%—or by its representatives. It is to be expected that big and powerful bodies with interests at stake, oil and logging companies, car manufactures, and the military, for example, would lobby governments to perform only window dressing, so that it looks as if GPS policies are being implemented when actually nothing very much is being done. There would be set-backs, deceptions and betrayals, all of which would have to be pounced upon, highlighted, and punished. But our 60% are wise; that is, they have the desire, the active endeavour, and above all the *capacity* to achieve what is of value—in this case what is of value being the implementation of GPS policies by the government—policies designed to save the world from disaster. Our wise 60% would be able to do what needs to be done (a) to get a government committed to implementing GPS policies, and (b) to get the government actually to do what it is committed to doing.

So much for those nations that have democracy, free speech, a free press, the rule of law. What, though, of nations governed by dictators—perhaps with a deceptive patina of democracy, as in Egypt or Russia at the time of writing (2018)?

The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index of 2016 finds that there are only 19 "full" democracies in the world. There are 57 "flawed" democracies, 40 "hybrid" regimes, and 51 "authoritarian" regimes.⁵ It can be assumed that it would be very much more difficult to establish a government committed to implementing GPS policies in a flawed democracy, and all but impossible to do it in a hybrid or authoritarian regime. It seems that toppling authoritarian regimes and transforming hybrid regimes and flawed democracies into full democracies may be a very time consuming first step toward establishing governments committed to pursuing GPS policies.

In some respects, this is too simplistic. China is certainly not democratic. Nevertheless, China's government is well-aware of the dangers of climate change—much more aware than Donald Trump's USA government, again at the time of writing (2018). China at present emits more CO₂ than any other nation, but in terms of CO₂ emissions per person,

⁵See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index#Democracy_Index_by_country_\(2017\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy_Index#Democracy_Index_by_country_(2017)).

a number of nations emit more CO₂, including the USA, Canada, and the UK. Dictatorial regimes, nevertheless, pose a very serious problem. It seems unlikely that Putin's Russia, Assad's Syria, or Kim Jong-un's North Korea will be keen to do what they need to do to help solve global problems—especially as that would involve handing power over to democratically elected governments. Nations that implement policies designed to solve global problems in desirable ways can impose trade sanctions on nations that do not, but the result of that tends to be more suffering for the people of the sanctioned nations—people already suffering in living in a nation governed by a dictator. It may be more just and effective to target sanctions against those who hold power or are cronies of those in power. What to do about undemocratic nations, and nations that refuse to implement GPS policies, must be a fundamental problem for democratic nations, and nations that do put GPS policies into practice.

Not only are there recalcitrant nations to contend with; there are recalcitrant conflicts, such as the civil war in Syria, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians, the situation in Afghanistan, Yemen, and in the Ukraine (again in 2018). It is possible that democratic nations will need to create an international body, open only to democratic nations, with power to enforce cessation of hostilities and gradual resolution of conflicts, so that the international democratic community has the capacity to bring about resolution of conflicts, both within and between nations.

Even if 60% of humanity miraculously acquired wisdom overnight, there would still be a long, hard struggle to get wisdom into world politics, industry, economics, finance, agriculture, law, the military, media, the social and cultural fabric of life. There would be no instantaneous transition to a wise world. But nor would our 60% of humanity abruptly acquiring wisdom make no difference at all. This constituency of the wise would be able to change for the better what goes on in countless social contexts, and above all in the context of politics and government.

The crux of the matter is simply this: How can 60% of humanity acquire the necessary wisdom to have the necessary impact on world affairs?

My answer to that question is one that I have been trying to get into the public domain for over 40 years. We urgently need to transform our institutions of learning, our universities and schools. We need a new

kind of academic inquiry which takes, as its basic intellectual aim, not just to acquire knowledge, but rather to seek and promote social wisdom. This academic revolution is needed in the interests of reason, and in the interests of humanity.

This is an argument that I have been expounding, in and out of print, as I say for over 40 years,⁶ so here I will be brief.

The Damaging Irrationality of Knowledge-Inquiry

Academic inquiry as it mostly exists at present in universities around the world is an intellectual and humanitarian disaster when viewed from the standpoint of helping to promote human welfare. Academia suffers from profoundly damaging, structural irrationality. In giving intellectual priority to the pursuit of knowledge, academia is so devastatingly irrational that it violates *three* of the four most elementary rules of rational problem solving conceivable.

In what follows I consider two conceptions of inquiry, two kinds of inquiry, that I call *knowledge-inquiry* and *wisdom-inquiry*. Both hold that the basic social or humanitarian aim of inquiry is to help promote human welfare by intellectual, technological, and educational means. But the *intellectual* aims and methods of the two conceptions of inquiry are very, very different.

Knowledge-inquiry holds that the proper, basic intellectual aim of inquiry is knowledge. First knowledge and technological know-how are to be acquired; then, once acquired, they can be applied to help solve social problems, and thus help achieve the social aims of inquiry. As far as the intellectual domain of inquiry is concerned, only those factors relevant to the acquisition, assessment, and dissemination of *factual knowledge* are allowed entrance: observational and experimental results,

⁶For books expounding the argument, see Maxwell (1976, 1984, 2004, 2014a, 2014b, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2019a). For articles summarizing the argument in a variety of ways, see Maxwell (1980, 1991, 1992, 1994, 2000, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2013, 2016, 2018b, 2019b).

valid arguments, theories, facts, logic. Everything else must be excluded: expressions of feelings, views about values, ideals and objectives, cries of pain, emotional reports about human suffering. All this must be excluded so that inquiry may obtain what can alone be of human value, namely: objective, factual knowledge. Values must be excluded so that what is of value—objective knowledge—may be obtained.

Science operates an even more severe censorship system. In order to enter the intellectual domain of science, an idea must be, not just factual, but empirically *testable* or, as Karl Popper would put it, empirically *falsifiable*. Everything unfalsifiable must be excluded from science.

Knowledge-inquiry is what we have inherited from the past. It was once upon a time—in the 1950s perhaps—rather more dominant than it is today. Nevertheless, knowledge-inquiry still dominates academia. It determines what the aims and methods of academic work should be. It exercises a profound influence over research, criteria for publication, what counts as a contribution to academic thought, academic promotions, rewards and prizes, education, the way diverse disciplines are developed and related to one another, the way academia is related to the rest of the social world. Almost every branch and aspect of academic activity is obliged to conform to the edicts of knowledge-inquiry.⁷

Knowledge-inquiry is, nevertheless, very seriously irrational in a structural and profoundly damaging way. It is hardly too much to say that all our current global problems have arisen in part because our institutions of learning have been dominated by this appallingly irrational conception of inquiry.⁸

What ought we to mean by “reason” in the present context? What we require is a conception which holds that there is some, possibly rather ill-defined, set of rules, methods or strategies such that, if implemented when we seek to solve problems or achieve aims, give us our

⁷See Maxwell (1984, ch. 6; and especially 2nd ed., 2007, ch. 6) for data that establish the extent to which knowledge-inquiry dominates academia, in 1983, and in 2006. See also Maxwell (2019a, ch. 6).

⁸For a detailed discussion that establishes the damaging irrationality of knowledge-inquiry, see Maxwell (1984 or 2nd ed., 2007, ch. 3). See also Maxwell (2004, 2014a, 2017a, 2017b).

best chances of achieving success, other things being equal.⁹ The rules of reason tell us what to attempt; they don't specify precisely what we should do. And they don't guarantee success. They are meta-methods, in that they assume that there is much that we can already do, many complex problems we can already solve, and they tell us how best to marshal our already solved problems in order to give ourselves the best chances of solving new problems, of realizing hitherto unobtainable aims. The rules of reason can be formulated either as rules designed to help us solve problems, or rules designed to help us attain aims. I make use of both formulations. It needs to be noted, incidentally, that all problem-solving is aim-pursuing, and vice versa—except sometimes our brilliant brains may solve a multitude of problems involved in attaining an aim without our even realizing that it was necessary to solve any problem at all. A decade or so ago, it would take an artificial-intelligence device ten minutes or so of rapid problem-solving to recognize that a cup is a cup. We do it instantaneously, without even being aware we have thereby solved intricate problems of recognition.

Four absolutely basic, wholly uncontroversial rules of rational problem solving are:

- (1) Articulate and seek to improve the articulation of the basic problem(s) to be solved.
- (2) Propose and critically assess alternative possible solutions.
- (3) When necessary, break up the basic problem to be solved into a number of specialized problems—preliminary, simpler, analogous, subordinate problems—(to be tackled in accordance with rules (1) and (2)), in an attempt to work gradually toward a solution to the basic problem to be solved.
- (4) Inter-connect attempts to solve the basic problem and specialized problems, so that basic problem solving may guide, and be guided by, specialized problem solving.¹⁰

⁹For a brilliant account of rational problem-solving see Polya (1957).

¹⁰See Maxwell (1984, pp. 67–76) for more details concerning rational problem-solving. The key to solving a problem of living may come, not from (1) articulating the problem, and (2) proposing and critically assessing solutions, but from the solution to some apparently unrelated

Any problem-solving endeavour which persistently violates one or other of these rules will be seriously irrational and will have its capacity to solve problems seriously degraded as a result. Academia as it exists today in universities around the world, as a result of implementing knowledge-inquiry, violates *three* of these four basic rules of reason. It is as serious as that.

Granted that academia has, as its basic aim, to help promote human welfare, the problems that academia will fundamentally be concerned with are problems of living, problems people encounter in their lives that are solved by what people do, or refrain from doing: problems of poverty, exploitation, suffering, unemployment, illness, misery, loneliness, despair. Knowledge and technology may be required to solve some of these problems, as they are in the case of such things as agriculture and medicine, but it is always what knowledge and technology enable us to do, or refrain from doing, that solves the problem of living, not the knowledge or technology in itself.

There is an additional point about the nature of the problems that academia needs to try to help solve, at the most basic level. In order to achieve what is of value in life more successfully than we do at present, we need to discover how to resolve conflicts and problems of living in more *cooperatively rational* ways than we do at present. There is a spectrum of ways in which conflicts can be resolved, from murder or all-out war at the violent end of the spectrum, via enslavement, threat of murder or war, threats of a less extreme kind, manipulation, bargaining, voting, to cooperative rationality at the other end of the spectrum, those involved seeking, by rational means, to arrive at that course of action which does the best justice to the interests of all those involved. A basic task for a kind of academic inquiry that seeks to help promote human welfare must be to discover how the resolution of conflicts and global problems can be moved away from the violent end of the spectrum toward the cooperatively rational end.

specialized problem, solved by means of rule (3)—as when solutions to problems of pure research are discovered to have unexpected practical applications. That involves the implementation of rule (3). It does not, of course, go against the claim that we need to implement (1)–(4) to be rational.

Taking these points into account, we can declare that academic inquiry, if it is to promote human welfare in such a way as to implement the above four rules of reason, must:

- (1) Articulate, and seek to improve the articulation of, personal, social, and global problems of living that need to be solved if the quality of human life is to be enhanced (including the global problems indicated above).
- (2) Propose and critically assess alternative possible solutions—alternative possible *actions, policies, political programmes, legislative proposals, ideologies, philosophies of life*, especially those that promote enhanced cooperative rationality.
- (3) Break up the basic problems of living into subordinate, specialized problems—in particular, specialized problems of knowledge and technology.
- (4) Inter-connect basic and specialized problem solving.¹¹

Academic inquiry today, still massively influenced by knowledge-inquiry, puts rule (3) into practice splendidly. Academia is composed of a maze of ever more specialized sub-divisions of specialized disciplines. Disastrously, academia fails to implement rules (1) and (2). There is, of course, some discussion of problems of living, including global problems, within academia. It proceeds in such disciplines as peace studies, economics, politics, international studies, climate science, and departments of law. But such discussion is not put at the heart of academia; it is not given the prominence and intellectual status it needs if it is both to influence, as well as be influenced by, more specialized research that goes on in more specialized disciplines, from mathematics and physics to technological research and studies in higher education, in accordance with rule (4). Discussion of problems

¹¹The first two of these rules of rational problem-solving are stressed by Karl Popper. He asserts, for example, “the one method of all *rational discussion* ... is that of stating one’s problem clearly and of examining its various proposed solutions *critically*”: Popper (1957, p. 16). Popper was, however, too adverse to specialization to include rule (3) as a basic rule of rational problem-solving. He did not appreciate that the evils of specialization can be counteracted by the implementation of rule (4).

of living, and what needs to be done to solve them, does not take place within academia in an intellectually fundamental way; it is pushed to the periphery, and it is that which ensures that academia violates rules (1) and (2). Having violated these two rules, academia cannot put rule (4) into practice either.

Three of the four most basic rules of rational problem solving are, as I have said, violated, in a wholesale, structural way by academic inquiry as it mostly exists today. And this is a direct consequence of the implementation of knowledge-inquiry. The intellectual standards of knowledge-inquiry demand that (1) discussion of problems of living, and (2) discussion of actions required to solve them, are excluded from the intellectual domain of inquiry, because (1) and (2) do not contribute to the acquisition of knowledge. Items (1) and (2) involve raising political and value issues which knowledge-inquiry holds to be inimical to the pursuit of knowledge, and thus in need of being excluded from the intellectual domain of inquiry. In so far as some discussion of problems of living does proceed within academia, academia has to struggle against the influential prohibition of such discussion by the dominant creed of knowledge-inquiry.

This gross, structural irrationality of academic inquiry is no mere formal matter. It has profoundly damaging consequences. It means academia fails to do what it most needs to do in order to help humanity resolve conflicts and problems of living in increasingly cooperatively rational ways. Failure to put rules (1) and (2) into practice means that academia fails to give priority to what it most needs to do to promote GPS policies and actions in the social world. Not only does academia fail itself to give intellectual priority to the tasks getting clearer about what our problems are and what we need to do about them; it fails too, of course, to engage with the social world to promote these tasks in the diverse contexts of politics, industry, the public, the media, international relations, development, economics, the law, finance, agriculture, the military. And, as a result of failing to put (1) and (2) into practice, academia fails to put rule (4) into practice as well; specialized academic problem solving is pursued in a way that is unrelated to sustained thinking about our most urgent global problems, and thus may develop in ways unrelated to human need.

Wisdom-inquiry arises when the rationality defects of knowledge-inquiry are put right, and all four of the most basic rules of rational problem solving are put into academic practice. The central, intellectually fundamental place in academic inquiry is given to the dual tasks of (1) articulating problems of living, including global problems, and (2) proposing and critically assessing possible solutions—possible actions—from the standpoint of their capacity, when put into practice, to resolve conflicts and problems of living in an increasingly cooperatively rational way. These intellectually fundamental tasks are carried out by social inquiry and the humanities, together with academics with backgrounds in relevant specialized disciplines, especially the natural and technological sciences. These tasks are undertaken in such a way as to influence research priorities in more specialized disciplines, and to be influenced by the results of these disciplines. Furthermore, academics engaged in these tasks are in two-way interaction with the social world, by means of the exchange of ideas, arguments, expressions of experiences, feelings, successes and failures, values and aspirations.

What really matters is the quality of our lives. Next to that, what matters is the quality of personal and social thinking guiding our actions, the quality of our lives having a great deal to do with the quality of our thinking guiding our actions. It is the quality of this thinking, influencing our personal, institutional and social lives, that really matters—how rational it is, how relevant, honest, cooperative, effective. *This* is the thinking that should be our fundamental concern—how cooperatively rational it is, how wise. Academic thought as a whole needs to be conceived of as a specialized aspect of our personal and social thinking in life, guiding our actions; it has the fundamental task of helping us to improve our personal and social thinking guiding our actions. In tackling specialized aspects of fundamental problems of living we face and seek to solve in life, academia needs to observe rule (4) in its relationship with the social world. There needs to be a two-way interaction between personal and social thinking—problem-solving—in life, and more specialized academic thought, academic problem-solving. I have tried to illustrate what is involved in Fig. 13.1.

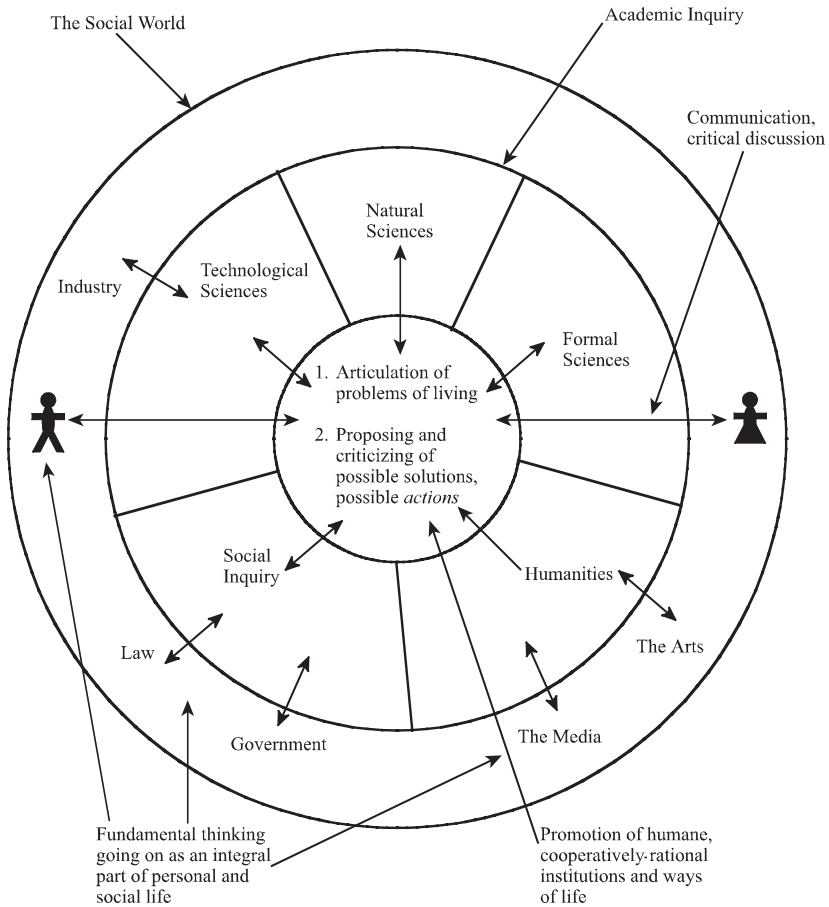


Fig. 13.1 Wisdom-inquiry implementing problem-solving rationality

If universities around the world repudiated knowledge-inquiry, modified academia just sufficiently to put wisdom-inquiry into academic practice whenever political circumstances made it possible—primarily in democratic nations—the capacity of people, institutions, and social endeavours to acquire the wisdom needed to solve global problems would be massively enhanced. Wisdom-inquiry is designed to promote social wisdom in the world in a way in which knowledge-inquiry is not.

Correcting Blunders of the Enlightenment

Academic inquiry as it exists today in universities around the world is grossly and damagingly irrational, in a structural fashion, and it is this gross irrationality of our institutions of learning that is, in part responsible for the genesis of our current grave global problems, and our inability to resolve them. That is what I have argued so far.

At once it may be asked: But how did this gross, structural irrationality of academia come about? For the answer, we have to go all the way back to the eighteenth century Enlightenment—especially the French Enlightenment. The *philosophes*—Voltaire, Diderot, Condorcet and others—had the wonderful idea that it might be possible to learn from scientific progress how to set about achieving social progress toward an Enlightened world.¹² Unfortunately, in implementing this magnificent idea, the *philosophes* blundered. They made three serious mistakes. As a result, they sought to implement a seriously defective version of the profoundly important Enlightenment idea. It was this defective version that was developed throughout the nineteenth century, by J. S. Mill, Karl Marx, Max Weber and others, and built into academia in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries. The result is what we still have today: academia dominated by the profoundly irrational knowledge-inquiry.

We tend to hold that natural science is of value in two rather different ways: it is of value intellectually or culturally, in enhancing our knowledge and understanding of the world and ourselves, and it is of value practically or technologically, in enabling us to achieve desirable human goals such as health, sustenance and travel, by means of technological applications. The profound idea of the Enlightenment *philosophes* appeals to a third, and much neglected, way in which science can be of value. It can be of value *methodologically*. There is the possibility that we can learn from the astonishing intellectual progress of science how to achieve social progress towards a good, civilized, enlightened

¹²I have not found the basic creed of the Enlightenment stated explicitly in this way; nevertheless, this is what the Enlightenment at its best, especially the French Enlightenment, amounted to. For two accounts of the Enlightenment along these lines, see Gay (1973) and Israel (2013).

world. We may be able to get into social life progress-achieving methods generalized from the progress-achieving methods of science, thus getting into social life, something of the astonishing progress achieved by science. But in order to put this profound Enlightenment idea into practice successfully, it is absolutely essential that we get the first step right—the precise nature of scientific method which, in practice, has made it possible for natural science to achieve such astonishing progress over the decades and centuries. It is here, at this first step, that the *philosophes* got things wrong, and we, today, continue to get things wrong. It is vital, then, in assessing the Enlightenment idea, that we scrutinise very carefully this first step, the precise nature of scientific method. In particular, we need to look at the basic aim and methods of natural science at its most fundamental: theoretical physics. It is here that the issues arise in their clearest form.

There are, in fact, three steps that must be got right if the profoundly significant Enlightenment idea is to be implemented properly. They are:

1. The aim and progress-achieving methods of physics need to be correctly identified.
2. This aim and these methods need to be correctly generalized so that they become relevant and fruitfully applicable to any worthwhile human endeavour with problematic aims, whatever the aims may be, and not just applicable to the endeavour of improving knowledge.
3. The correctly generalized progress-achieving methods of physics then need to be exploited correctly in the great human endeavour of trying to make social progress toward the immensely problematic aim of creating an enlightened, wise, civilized world.

Unfortunately, the *philosophes* got all three steps wrong. I take these three steps in turn.

Step 1: Scientific Method

The hero of the Enlightenment was Newton. And Newton claimed to have derived his law of gravitation from the phenomena by induction

without appealing to metaphysics.¹³ Such was Newton's prestige that the *philosophes* took it for granted that this method summed up how science ought to proceed: derive laws and theories from phenomena by induction, and ignore metaphysics and philosophy. Improving on Newton a bit, we can say the *philosophes* held a version of the following view. The basic intellectual aim of physics is truth, and the basic method is to accept and reject laws and theories on the basis of their empirical success and failure. It is legitimate to take into account the simplicity, unity, or explanatory character of a theory as well, but not in such a way that nature herself is assumed to be simple, unified, or comprehensible. A central thesis of this quasi-Newtonian view—which I have called *standard empiricism*—is that *in science, no thesis about the world can be accepted as an item of scientific knowledge independently of empirical considerations* (and certainly not in violation of empirical considerations). This view—standard empiricism—is still taken for granted by scientists and non-scientists alike, including most philosophers of science.¹⁴

A key feature of many real-life social endeavours—above all, the endeavour to make progress towards a good, civilized, wise world—is that the actual aims of our social endeavours are profoundly problematic. There are conflicting views about what our aims and ideals ought to be, and aims we pursue have all sorts of unforeseen, undesirable consequences, and conflict with other aims we hope to realize. Almost all our current global problems have arisen because we have pursued aims that seemed desirable—economic, agricultural, industrial and medical progress—without appreciating, initially at least, the highly undesirable consequences inherent in the realization of these aims: habitat destruction, wild life loss, pollution, population growth, global warming. All this ensures that scientific method, if it is to help us achieve desirable ends when generalized and exploited in social life, must be such that it facilitates the *improvement* of problematic aims. But standard

¹³In his *Principia*, Newton claimed: “In [natural] philosophy particular propositions are inferred from the phenomena, and afterwards rendered general by induction. Thus it was that ... the laws of motion and of gravitation, were discovered” Newton (1962, p. 547).

¹⁴For evidence that scientists and philosophers do take standard empiricism for granted, see Maxwell (1998, pp. 38–45).

empiricism holds that physics has a *fixed* aim—truth—and *fixed* methods—select those theories most empirically successful. Standard empiricism is thus, on the face of it, unlikely to help us, when generalized, to *improve* our problematic social aims so that we achieve what is genuinely desirable and of value.

Standard empiricism is however untenable. It very seriously *misrepresents* the basic intellectual aim of physics, and *misrepresents* the methods of physics. Physics seeks, not the fixed aim of truth, but rather the profoundly problematic aim of *truth presupposed to be unified or explanatory*. There is a big, highly problematic metaphysical assumption inherent in the real aim of physics, and the correct methods of physics are such that they facilitate the *improvement* of this aim as physics proceeds. This aims and methods improving conception of scientific method—which I call *aim-oriented empiricism*—is, potentially, when generalized, of great help in enabling us to improve the aims and methods of our social endeavours: politics, industry, agriculture, social media, the law, the endeavour to make social progress towards a good world.

Why is standard empiricism untenable? The answer is that physics cannot select the theories that it does without making a very substantial metaphysical—that is, empirically untestable—assumption about the universe. That clashes with standard empiricism (which holds physics must make no assumption about the nature of the universe independently of empirical considerations).

Physics only ever accepts unified theories even though endlessly many empirically more successful *disunified* rivals can always be concocted to fit known phenomena even better. A unified theory is one which makes the same assertion throughout a range of phenomena to which it applies; a disunified physical theory is one which, for different phenomena, makes different assertions about how the phenomena evolve.¹⁵ In persistently accepting unified theories only, and ignoring endlessly many empirically more successful disunified rival theories that can easily be concocted, physics thereby makes a big, implicit metaphysical

¹⁵For detailed expositions of this account of theory unity, improving in some respects as the years go by, see Maxwell (1998, chs. 3 and 4; 2004, Appendix, Section 2; 1984, 2nd ed., 2007; 2017a, ch. 5).

assumption about the universe: it is such that all disunified theories are false. Some kind of underlying unity exists in nature.

This metaphysical assumption of underlying unity is implicitly accepted, as a part of scientific knowledge, independently of empirical considerations—indeed, in a sense, in opposition to empirical considerations (which tell us that the most empirically successful theories are thoroughly *disunified*). This means that standard empiricism, the conception of scientific method we have inherited from the Enlightenment that is still taken for granted by scientists today, is *false*.¹⁶ A big metaphysical assumption about the world is implicitly accepted by physics independently of evidence, *and any physical theory which clashes with it is rejected, however empirically successful it might be*. The astonishing success of physics since Galileo has been achieved *despite* the allegiance of physicists to standard empiricism, not *because of* it.

We need a new conception of scientific method to replace standard empiricism. The first step is to appreciate that the metaphysical thesis of underlying unity, implicitly accepted by physics, needs to be made explicit within physics, so that it can be critically assessed, and so that alternatives can be developed and assessed, in the hope that the specific assumption that is accepted will be improved. The second step is to appreciate that, in order to subject the problematic metaphysical assumption of unity to the kind of scrutiny that is required, we need to represent it in the form of a hierarchy of assumptions, these assumptions asserting less and less as we go up the hierarchy, and thus becoming more and more likely to be true, and also becoming more nearly such that their truth is required for science to be possible at all: see Fig. 13.2. As we descend the hierarchy of assumptions, they become increasingly substantial, and thus increasingly likely to be false. Criticism and attempted improvement need to be concentrated low down in the hierarchy, at levels 3 and 4 in Fig. 13.2.

At level 7 in Fig. 13.2 we have the assumption that the universe is such that we can acquire knowledge of our local circumstances sufficient to make life possible. If this assumption is false, we have had it,

¹⁶For much more detailed expositions of this crucial argument refuting standard empiricism, see Maxwell (1974, 1984, ch. 9; 1998, ch. 2; 2004, chs. 1 and 2; 2015, 2017a, 2017b).

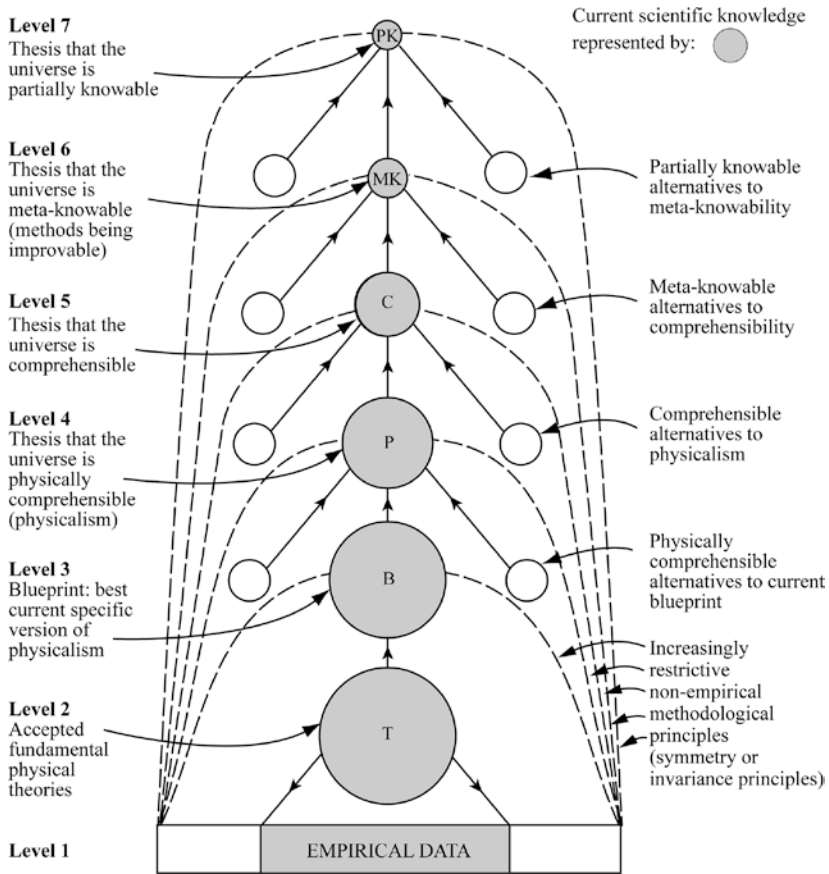


Fig. 13.2 Aim-oriented empiricism

whatever we assume. Even though we have no good reason to hold this level 7 assumption is true, it can never hinder the pursuit of knowledge to accept the assumption as a part of our knowledge, and may well help this pursuit. At level 6 there is the more substantial assumption that the universe is such that we can make a discovery about it which enables us to improve our methods for the improvement of knowledge. The universe is such, in other words, that we can *learn* how to learn. At level 5 there is the even more substantial thesis that the universe is comprehensible in some way. There is a standard kind of explanation

as to why phenomena occur as they do. It might be that they occur as a result of the will of God, or to fulfil a cosmic purpose, or to be in accordance with something like a computer programme, or to accord with a unified pattern of physical law. This conjecture exemplifies the level 5 thesis since it holds out the promise that, by modifying our ideas about how the universe is comprehensible to accord with those explanatory theories that meet with the most empirical success, we will be able progressively to improve our methods for discovering and accepting new theories. The level 4 thesis of physicalism has arisen in precisely this way. It asserts that the universe is such that all phenomena occur in accordance with a unified pattern of physical law. This assumption has proved to be astonishingly fruitful empirically, in that the whole enterprise of theoretical physics accords with it. Ever since Galileo, as physics has progressed, the totality of fundamental physical theory has become both (1) increasingly unified, and (2) increasingly vast in empirical scope, in that more and more phenomena are successfully predicted with increasing accuracy. At level 3 there is our best conjecture as to what specific kind of unified pattern of physical law is inherent in all phenomena. Here, we are almost bound to get things wrong, as the historical record indicates.

Associated with each metaphysical thesis, at levels 7 to 3, there are methods which require that theses and theories, lower down in the hierarchy, must be (as far as possible) compatible with the given thesis. At level 3, that thesis is to be accepted which best accords with the thesis at level 4 and, at the same time, accords best with the most empirically successful physical theories, at level 2. The hope is that, as a result of modifying the thesis at level 3 so that it accords better with the level 4 thesis, ideas for good new level 2 theories will emerge, new metaphysics leading to new physics. As physics advances, and theoretical knowledge at levels 1 and 2 improve, so too metaphysical conjectures at levels 3 and 4 may improve as well, this leading to an improvement in associated *methods*. Something like positive feedback can take place between improving knowledge and improving assumptions and associated methods—improving knowledge about how to improve knowledge, in other words.

This process of positive feedback between improving knowledge, and improving methods for the improvement of knowledge, has actually

gone on in science,¹⁷ but in a somewhat furtive, curtailed fashion, due to the general acceptance of standard empiricism and the failure of the scientific community to conceive of and adopt *aim-oriented empiricism*, my term for the hierarchical conception of scientific method depicted in Fig. 13.2.¹⁸ The extraordinary success of physics is due to the somewhat constrained implementation of aim-oriented empiricism—constrained as a result of the (mistaken) conviction of the physics community that they ought to implement standard empiricism.¹⁹

What I have said so far about problematic *assumptions and methods* can be reformulated to be about problematic *aims and methods*. The basic aim of physics is not truth, as standard empiricism assumes. It is rather truth *presupposed to be unified or explanatory*. Precisely because this aim is so profoundly problematic (we conjecture, but do not know, that the truth is explanatory), we need to represent this problematic aim in the form of a hierarchy of aims—aims becoming increasingly unproblematic as we ascend the hierarchy, and metaphysical assumptions implicit in the aims become increasingly lacking in specific content. In this way, we provide ourselves with a fixed framework of relatively unproblematic aims and associated methods (high up in the hierarchy), within which much more problematic aims and associated methods may be improved, in the light of which meet with empirical success and which do not, as we proceed with scientific research. Aims and methods evolve with evolving scientific knowledge.

¹⁷It is a platitude that this goes on at the experimental level. New knowledge leads to the development of new methods—new instruments, for example, such as the telescope or particle collider—which in turn lead to new knowledge. Because of the pernicious influence of standard empiricism, it is less widely appreciated that it goes on at the theoretical level as well (just as aim-oriented empiricism says it should). A classic case in point is the way Einstein's special theory of relativity becomes a methodological principle (an acceptable theory must be Lorentz invariant) which in turn contributes to the discovery and acceptance of major new physical theories, such as quantum electrodynamics and quantum chromodynamics.

¹⁸For much more detailed expositions of, and arguments for, aim-oriented empiricism, that have been progressively improved over the years, see works referred to in footnote 16.

¹⁹See Maxwell (1993, pp. 275–305) for an account of Einstein's exploitation of aim-oriented empiricism in discovering special and general relativity. See Maxwell (2017b, ch. 5) for an account of how physics would have met with even greater success if it had implemented aim-oriented empiricism explicitly over the centuries, undistracted by standard empiricism.

This is the conception of scientific method, implicit in scientific practice since Galileo and Newton, that is responsible for the astonishing progress achieved by natural science over the centuries.²⁰ It is this conception of the progress-achieving methods of science that the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment ought to have pounced upon, generalized, and applied to the task of making social progress towards an enlightened world. If they had done that, we might today live in a far more enlightened world than we do. Alas, right from the outset, the *philosophes* got the progress-achieving methods of science seriously wrong—as we still do today!

Step 2: Generalizing Scientific Method

Having failed to capture correctly the progress-achieving methods of science, the *philosophes* naturally failed to generalize these methods correctly, so that they became fruitfully applicable, potentially, to any worthwhile human endeavour with problematic aims: politics, economics, the law, industry, agriculture, and above all the endeavour to make social progress towards an enlightened world. In order to generalize aim-oriented empiricism in the required way, we first need to interpret the metaphysical theses at levels 3 to 7 as aims; in each case, the aim of physics is to transform the metaphysical thesis into a testable, true, physical “theory of everything” (a theory able, in principle, to predict all physical phenomena). Next, this hierarchy of aims needs to be freed entirely from science to become aims of any worthwhile human endeavour with problematic aims, whatsoever it may be. At level 2, instead of *theories* there are *human actions*, actual and possible, and at level 1, instead of the results of scientific observation and experiment, there is *human experience*—what we enjoy and suffer as a result of what we do, the policies we pursue. Aim-oriented empiricism, generalized in this way, may be called *aim-oriented rationality*. It provides a framework for the assessment of actions, and proposals for actions, in terms of human experience, what we enjoy and suffer as a result of what we,

²⁰For a discussion of this issue, see especially Maxwell (2017b, especially chs. 1, 2, and 5).

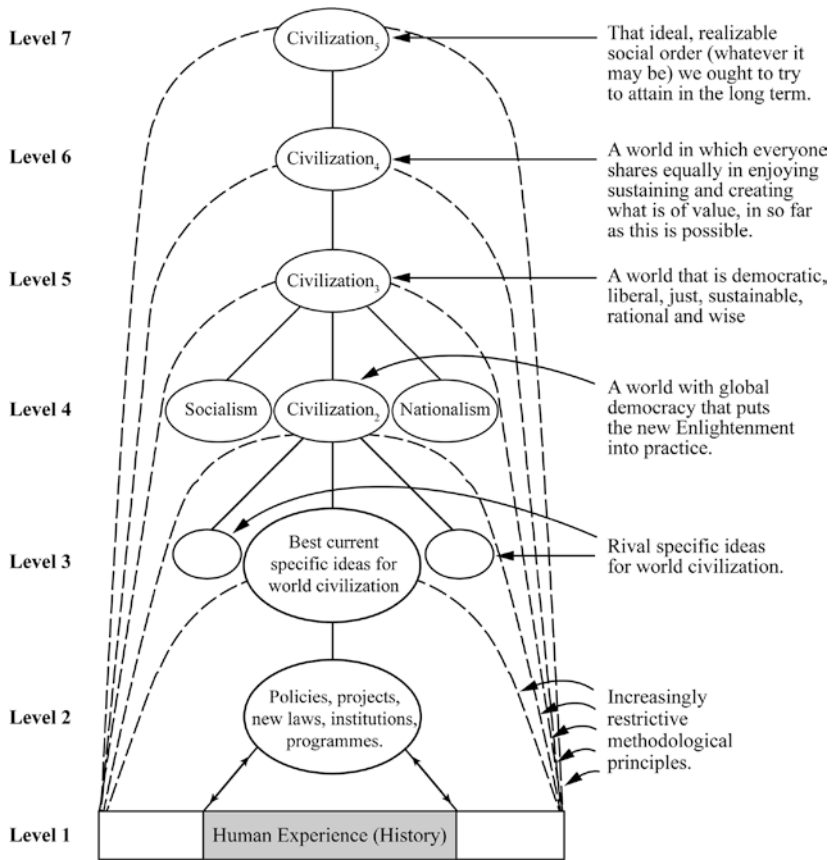


Fig. 13.3 Aim-oriented rationality applied to the task of making progress towards an enlightened, civilized world

or others, do. At the same time, it provides a framework for the progressive improvement of problematic aims, and associated methods, as we act, as we engage in our endeavour, whatever it may be. Aim-oriented rationality is designed to help us improve our aims, and the methods we employ in seeking to realize our aims, whatever it is we are doing: an individual person trying to resolve a quarrel with a friend; a police force, school, or political party, trying to improve the way they serve their community; a group of individuals attempting to alert their

fellow citizens to the impending disasters of climate change. Figure 13.3 depicts aim-oriented rationality applied to the task of achieving civilization.²¹

The hope is that, as a result of employing the progress-achieving methods of aim-oriented rationality in personal and social life in this way, arrived at by generalizing the progress-achieving methods of science, we will be able to get into personal and social life something of the astonishing success achieved by natural science.

Step 3: Applying Generalized Progress-Achieving Methods of Science to Social Life

It is here, at this crucial third step of the Enlightenment programme, that the *philosophes* made their most disastrous mistake. Instead of applying generalized progress-achieving methods of science directly to *social life* to help humanity make social progress towards an enlightened world, the *philosophes* applied their conception of scientific method to the task of improving *knowledge* of the social world. They set about creating the *social sciences* in other words. Instead of developing social inquiry as *social methodology*, actively engaged in helping humanity pursue worthwhile but problematic aims in more rational ways, the *philosophes* made the dreadful blunder of developing social inquiry as *social science*: economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science. And this dreadful blunder is still with us today. It was enthusiastically developed throughout the nineteenth century by figures as diverse as J. S. Mill, Karl Marx, Max Weber, and others, as I have already mentioned, and was built into academia by the early twentieth century with the creation of departments and academic disciplines of the social sciences. It is this monumental blunder that is responsible for the gross, damaging, structural irrationality of academia today, for it is this blunder that is the historical source of the current domination of academia by *knowledge-inquiry*.

²¹For much more detailed expositions of, and arguments for, aim-oriented rationality, see Maxwell (1984 and 2nd ed., 2007, chs. 5 and 7 to 11; 2004, 2014a, 2019a).

It is perhaps understandable that the *philosophes*, in the eighteenth century, made the dreadful mistake of assuming that the first step we need to take to make social progress toward an enlightened world is to acquire *knowledge* of the social world. The prestige of the natural philosophy of Galileo, Kepler, Boyle and Newton was such that it would have seemed overwhelmingly obvious to the *philosophes* that, in order to achieve social progress, knowledge of the social world must first be acquired. Francis Bacon had emphasized just how vital it is to acquire knowledge of nature in order to alleviate human suffering and promote human welfare: all the more important, so the *philosophes* assumed, to acquire knowledge of ourselves, our human world, the laws of social development.

The *philosophes* can be forgiven their blunder. What is unforgivable is that this blunder is still inherent in academic inquiry today. And what makes the matter all the more unforgivable is that the blunder has been laid bare for all to see, in book after book, article after article, since the publication of my *From Knowledge to Wisdom* in 1984.²²

But is it a blunder? Perhaps we do first need to acquire knowledge before rational action is possible? Perhaps knowledge-inquiry is exactly what academia ought to implement, it being entirely correct to give priority to the pursuit of knowledge before rational tackling of problems of living becomes possible.

I have six points to make in criticism of this suggestion.

First, even if the objection were valid, it would still be vital for a kind of inquiry designed to help us build a better world to include rational exploration of problems of living, and to ensure that this exploration guides priorities of scientific research (and is guided by the results of such research).

Second, the validity of the objection becomes dubious when we take into account the considerable success people met with in solving problems of living in a state of extreme ignorance, before the advent of science. We still today often arrive at solutions to problems of living in ignorance of relevant facts.

²²See works referred to in footnote 6. And see too Sternberg (2016).

Third, the objection is not valid. In order to articulate problems of living and explore imaginatively and critically possible solutions (in accordance with Popper's conception of rationality: see footnote 11), we need to be able to act in the world, imagine possible actions, and share our imaginings with others: in so far as some common sense knowledge is implicit in all this, such knowledge is required to tackle rationally and successfully problems of living. But this does not mean that we must give intellectual priority to acquiring new relevant knowledge before we can be in a position to tackle rationally our problems of living.

Fourth, simply in order to have some idea of what kind of knowledge or know-how it is *relevant* for us to try to acquire, we must *first* have some provisional ideas as to what our problem of living is and what we might do to solve it. Articulating our problem of living and proposing and critically assessing possible solutions needs to be intellectually prior to acquiring relevant knowledge simply for this reason: we cannot know what new knowledge it is *relevant* for us to acquire until we have at least a preliminary idea as to what our problem of living is, and what we propose to do about it. A slight change in the way we construe our problem may lead to a drastic change in the kind of knowledge it is relevant to acquire: changing the way we construe problems of health, to include *prevention* of disease (and not just curing of disease) leads to a dramatic change in the kind of knowledge we need to acquire (importance of exercise, diet etc.). Including the importance of avoiding *pollution* in the problem of creating wealth by means of industrial development leads to the need to develop entirely new kinds of knowledge.

Fifth, relevant knowledge is often hard to acquire; it would be a disaster if we suspended life until it had been acquired. Knowledge of how our brains work is presumably highly relevant to all that we do but clearly, suspending rational tackling of problems of living until this relevant knowledge has been acquired would not be a sensible step to take. It would, in any case, make it impossible for us to acquire the relevant knowledge (since this requires scientists to act in doing research). Scientific research is itself a kind of action carried on in a state of relative ignorance.

Sixth, the capacity to act, to live, more or less successfully in the world, is more fundamental than (propositional) knowledge. Put in

Rylean terms, “knowing how” is more fundamental than “knowing that” (Ryle, 1949, ch. II). All our knowledge is but a development of our capacity to act. Dissociated from life, from action, knowledge stored in libraries is just paper and ink, devoid of meaning. In this sense, problems of living are more fundamental than problems of knowledge (which are but an aspect of problems of living); giving intellectual priority to problems of living quite properly reflects this point.²³

Almost all the grave global problems that threaten our future have arisen because we have failed to put something like aim-oriented rationality into practice in our political, economic, industrial, international life. We have failed to anticipate undesirable consequences of major new social endeavours, made possible by science and technology or, when such anticipations have been made, we have failed to act—to modify what we do—so as to avoid experiencing these undesirable consequences. We have failed to develop the social-political-economic *muscle* needed to perform such actions. We develop modern hygiene and medicine around the world but fail to make birth control freely available universally, to check rising populations. We develop agriculture but fail to modify how it develops when it becomes apparent we are destroying natural habitats, destroying wild life, and causing mass extinctions. We develop modern industry, power-production and transport, but fail respond adequately when we discover we are transforming our climate so that densely inhabited regions of the earth may become uninhabitable, mass migration will ensue, with wars a likely outcome. We develop nuclear weapons to increase our security, when in fact the mere existence of such weapons, ready for launching at the touch of a button, threatens the future of humanity. We develop the internet and social media, and fail to anticipate how they can subvert democracy. And when we do make this discovery, our efforts to change the way the internet and social media operate seem hopelessly inadequate. Again and again, enormous changes in the way we act, made possible by scientific and technological developments, have an admixture of good and bad outcomes. We fail to anticipate the bad outcomes. We may not even actively try to do so.

²³For a development of this point, see Maxwell (1984, pp. 174–181).

When a few do succeed in such anticipations, initially they are ignored. When no longer ignored, there is a lamentable failure for those involved to *act*. All this amounts to a failure to put anything like aim-oriented rationality into social, institutional practice. Even worse, we have failed even to see just how profoundly important it is that this should be done. A proper, basic task of social inquiry and the humanities is to help humanity learn how aim-oriented rationality can be built into social and institutional life. Social inquiry and the humanities have failed to take up this task. They have not even conceived of their tasks in these terms. Even worse, academia makes no attempt to put aim-oriented rationality into practice as far as its own activities are concerned. Worse still, rationality is, in general, not even conceived of in these terms.

One outcome of getting into social and institutional life the kind of aim-evolving, hierarchical methodology indicated above, generalized from science, is that it becomes possible for us to develop and assess rival philosophies of life as a part of social life, somewhat as theories are developed and assessed within science. Such a hierarchical methodology provides a framework within which competing views about what our aims and methods in life should be—competing religious, political and moral views—may be cooperatively assessed and tested against broadly agreed, unspecific aims (high up in the hierarchy of aims) and the experience of personal and social life. There is the possibility of cooperatively and progressively improving *such philosophies of life* (views about what is of value in life and how it is to be achieved), much as *theories* are cooperatively and progressively improved in science. In science, ideally, theories are critically assessed with respect to each other, with respect to metaphysical ideas concerning the comprehensibility of the universe, and with respect to *experience* (observational and experimental results). In a somewhat analogous way, diverse philosophies of life may be critically assessed with respect to each other, with respect to relatively uncontroversial, agreed ideas about aims and what is of value, and with respect to *experience*—what we do, achieve, fail to achieve, enjoy and suffer—the aim being to improve philosophies of life (and more specific philosophies of more specific enterprises within life such as government, education or art) so that they offer greater help with the realization of what is of value in life.

This hierarchical methodology is especially relevant to the task of resolving conflicts about aims and ideals, as it helps disentangle agreement (high up in the hierarchy) and disagreement (more likely to be low down in the hierarchy).

Wisdom-inquiry, because of its greater rigour, has intellectual standards that are, in important respects, different from those of knowledge-inquiry. Whereas knowledge-inquiry demands that emotions and desires, values, human ideals and aspirations, philosophies of life be excluded from the intellectual domain of inquiry, wisdom-inquiry requires that they be included. In order to discover what is of value in life, it is essential that we attend to our feelings and desires. But not everything we desire is desirable, and not everything that feels good is good. Feelings, desires, and values need to be subjected to critical scrutiny. And of course feelings, desires and values must not be permitted to influence judgements of factual truth and falsity. Wisdom-inquiry embodies a synthesis of traditional rationalism and romanticism. It includes elements from both, and it improves on both. It incorporates romantic ideals of integrity, having to do with motivational and emotional honesty, honesty about desires and aims; and at the same time, it incorporates traditional rationalist ideals of integrity, having to do with respect for objective fact, knowledge, and valid argument. Traditional rationalism takes its inspiration from science and method; romanticism takes its inspiration from art, from imagination, and from passion. Wisdom-inquiry holds art to have a fundamental rational role in inquiry, in revealing what is of value, and unmasking false values; but science, too, is of fundamental importance. What we need, for wisdom, is an interplay of sceptical rationality and emotion, an interplay of mind and heart, so that we may develop mindful hearts and heartfelt minds. It is time we healed the great rift in our culture, so graphically depicted by Snow (1969).

Cultural Implications of Wisdom-Inquiry

Wisdom-inquiry does not just do better justice to the social or practical dimension of inquiry than knowledge-inquiry; it does better justice to the “intellectual” or “cultural” aspects as well.

From the standpoint of the intellectual or cultural aspect of inquiry, what really matters is the desire that people have to see, to know, to understand, the passionate curiosity that individuals have about aspects of the world, and the knowledge and understanding that people acquire and share as a result of actively following up their curiosity. An important task for academic thought in universities is to encourage non-professional thought to flourish outside universities. As Einstein once remarked, “Knowledge exists in two forms—lifeless, stored in books, and alive in the consciousness of men. The second form of existence is after all the essential one; the first, indispensable as it may be, occupies only an inferior position.” (Einstein, 1973, p. 80).

Wisdom-inquiry is designed to promote passionate curiosity in a number of ways. It does so as a result of holding thought, at its most fundamental, to be the personal thinking we engage in as we live. It does so by recognizing that acquiring knowledge and understanding involves articulating and solving personal problems that one encounters in seeking to know and understand. It does so by recognizing that passion, emotion and desire, have a rational role to play in inquiry, disinterested research being a myth. Again, as Einstein has put it “The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead, and his eyes are dimmed.” (Einstein, 1973, p. 11).

Knowledge-inquiry, by contrast, all too often fails to nourish “the holy curiosity of inquiry” (Einstein, 1949, p. 17), and may even crush it out altogether. Knowledge-inquiry gives no rational role to emotion and desire; passionate curiosity, a sense of mystery, of wonder, have no place, officially, within the rational pursuit of knowledge. The intellectual domain becomes impersonal and split off from personal feelings and desires; it is difficult for “holy curiosity” to flourish in such circumstances. Knowledge-inquiry hardly encourages the view that inquiry at its most fundamental is the thinking that goes on as a part of life; on the contrary, it upholds the idea that fundamental research is highly esoteric, conducted by physicists in contexts remote from ordinary life. Even though the aim of inquiry may, officially, be *human* knowledge, the personal and social dimension of this is all too easily lost sight of, and progress in

knowledge is conceived of in impersonal terms, stored lifelessly in books and journals. Rare is it for popular books on science to take seriously the task of exploring the fundamental problems of a science in as accessible, non-technical and intellectually responsible a way as possible.²⁴ Such work is not highly regarded by knowledge-inquiry, as it does not contribute to “expert knowledge.” The failure of knowledge-inquiry to take seriously the highly problematic nature of the aims of inquiry leads to insensitivity as to what aims are being pursued, to a kind of institutional hypocrisy. Officially, knowledge is being sought “for its own sake,” but actually the goal may be immortality, fame, the flourishing of one’s career or research group, as the existence of bitter priority disputes in science indicates. Education suffers. Science students are taught a mass of established scientific knowledge but may not be informed of the *problems* which gave rise to this knowledge, the problems which scientists grappled with in creating the knowledge. Even more rarely are students encouraged themselves to grapple with such problems. And rare, too, is it for students to be encouraged to articulate their own problems of understanding that must, inevitably, arise in absorbing all this information, or to articulate their instinctive criticisms of the received body of knowledge. All this tends to reduce education to a kind of intellectual indoctrination and serves to kill “holy curiosity.”²⁵ Officially, courses in universities divide up into those that are vocational, like engineering, medicine and law, and those that are purely educational, like physics, philosophy or history. What is not noticed, again through insensitivity to problematic aims, is that the supposedly purely educational are actually vocational as well: the student is being trained to be an academic physicist, philosopher or historian, even though only a minute percentage of the students will go on to become academics. Real education, which must be open-ended, and without any pre-determined goal, rarely exists in universities, and yet few people notice. These considerations are developed further in Maxwell (1976, 1980, 1984, 2004, 2014b, 2017b).

²⁴A relatively recent, remarkable exception is Penrose (2004).

²⁵I might add that the hierarchical conception of science indicated here does better justice to the scientific quest for understanding than does orthodox standard empiricist views: see Maxwell (1998, chs. 4 and 8; 2004, ch. 2; 2017b, ch. 5).

In order to enhance our understanding of persons as beings of value, potentially and actually, we need to understand them empathetically, by putting ourselves imaginatively into their shoes, and experiencing, in imagination, what they feel, think, desire, fear, plan, see, love and hate. For wisdom-inquiry, this kind of empathic understanding is rational and intellectually fundamental. Articulating problems of living, and proposing and assessing possible solutions is, we have seen, the fundamental intellectual activity of wisdom-inquiry. But it is just this that we need to do to acquire empathic understanding. Social inquiry, in tackling problems of living, is also promoting empathic understanding of people. Empathic understanding is essential to wisdom. Elsewhere I have argued, indeed, that empathic understanding plays an essential role in the evolution of consciousness. It is required for cooperative action, and even for science. For a fuller exposition of such an account of empathic understanding, see Maxwell (1984, pp. 171–189 and ch. 10; 2001, chs. 5–7 and 9).

With knowledge-inquiry, empathic understanding hardly satisfies basic requirements for being an intellectually legitimate kind of explanation and understanding (Maxwell, 1984, pp. 183–185). It has the status merely of “folk psychology,” on a par with “folk physics.”

Wisdom-inquiry is both more rigorous, and better able to serve the best interests of humanity, than knowledge-inquiry. It does better justice to both aspects of inquiry: the intellectual or cultural aspect, and the humanitarian or practical aspect. We urgently need to bring about an intellectual/institutional revolution in academia in universities around the world. We need a change of paradigm in the whole conception of what constitutes intellectually worthwhile inquiry devoted to the best interests of humanity.

Conclusion

If 60% of humanity acquired wisdom, we might be able to solve the grave global problems that confront us. But how is this crucial, widespread wisdom, personal and social, to be acquired in the first place? It could be acquired if academia corrected its current, glaring, structural,

rationality defects, corrected the three grave blunders we have inherited from the Enlightenment, and transformed knowledge-inquiry so that it becomes wisdom-inquiry. Wisdom-inquiry is specifically designed to help humanity acquire wisdom—acquire the capacity, active endeavour and desire to realize what is of value in life, for one's own person and for others. If academia had taken up the argument of *From Knowledge to Wisdom* when it was first published in 1984, and had begun to make the changes required to put wisdom-inquiry into academic practice, we might now, in democratic nations at least, have universities that put wisdom-inquiry into practice, and we might already be on the way to acquiring the essential 60% of wise citizens. But this has not happened. The log-jam that prevents the world from solving its global problems is, fundamentally, the stubborn, irrational prejudices of academics.

Here, to conclude, is a list of 23 structural changes that need to be made to academia as it is at present constituted, by and large dominated by knowledge-inquiry, if we are to have what we so urgently need: institutions of learning rationally organized and devoted to helping us solve problems of living in increasingly cooperative ways, so that we may make social progress towards a good, civilized, enlightened world.

1. There needs to be a radical change in the basic aim of academic inquiry. Knowledge-inquiry has two distinct aims: the intellectual one of acquiring knowledge, and the social or humanitarian one of helping to promote human welfare by intellectual, technological and educational means. Wisdom-inquiry fuses these two aims into one: the intellectual/humanitarian aim of seeking and promoting personal and social *wisdom* as characterized above.
2. There needs to be a change in the nature of academic *problems*, so that problems of living are included, as well as problems of knowledge—the former being treated as intellectually more fundamental than the latter.
3. There needs to be a change in the nature of academic *ideas*, so that proposals for action are included as well as claims to knowledge—the former, again, being treated as intellectually more fundamental than the latter.

4. There needs to be a change in what constitutes intellectual *progress*, so that progress-in-ideas-relevant-to-achieving-a-more-civilized-world is included as well as progress in knowledge, the former being indeed intellectually fundamental.
5. There needs to be a change in the idea as to where inquiry, at its most fundamental, is located. It is not esoteric theoretical physics, but rather the thinking we engage in as we seek to achieve what is of value in life. Academic thought is a (vital) adjunct to what really matters, personal, and social thought active in life.
6. There needs to be a dramatic change in the nature of social inquiry (reflecting points 1–5). Economics, politics, sociology, and so on, are not, fundamentally, *sciences*, and do not, fundamentally, have the task of improving knowledge about social phenomena. Instead, their task is threefold. First, it is to articulate problems of living, and propose and critically assess possible solutions, possible actions or policies, from the standpoint of their capacity, if implemented, to promote wiser ways of living. Second, it is to promote such cooperatively rational tackling of problems of living throughout the social world. And third, at a more basic and long-term level, it is to help build the hierarchical structure of aims and methods of aim-oriented rationality into personal, institutional and global life, thus creating frameworks within which progressive improvement of personal and social life aims and methods becomes possible. These three tasks are undertaken in order to promote cooperative tackling of problems of living—but also in order to enhance empathic or “personalistic” understanding between people as something of value in its own right. Acquiring knowledge of social phenomena is a vital but subordinate activity, engaged in to facilitate the above three fundamental pursuits.
7. Natural science needs to change, so that it includes at least three levels of discussion: evidence, theory, and research aims. Discussion of aims needs to bring together scientific, metaphysical, and evaluative consideration in an attempt to discover the most desirable and realizable research aims. It needs to influence, and be influenced by, exploration of problems of living undertaken by social inquiry and the humanities, and the public.

8. There needs to be a dramatic change in the relationship between social inquiry and natural science, so that social inquiry becomes intellectually more fundamental from the standpoint of tackling problems of living, promoting wisdom. Social inquiry influences choice of research aims for the natural and technological sciences, and is, of course, in turn influenced by the results of such research. (Social inquiry also, of course, conducts empirical research, in order to improve our understanding of what our problems of living are and in order to assess policy ideas whenever possible.)
9. The current emphasis on specialized research needs to change so that sustained discussion and tackling of broad, global problems that cut across academic specialities is included, both influencing and being influenced by, specialized research.
10. Academia needs to include sustained imaginative and critical exploration of possible futures, for each country, and for humanity as a whole, policy and research implications being discussed as well.
11. The way in which academic inquiry as a whole is related to the rest of the human world needs to change dramatically. Instead of being intellectually dissociated from the rest of society, academic inquiry needs to be communicating with, learning from, teaching and arguing with the rest of society—in such a way as to promote cooperative rationality and social wisdom. Academia needs to have just sufficient power to retain its independence from the pressures of government, industry, the military, and public opinion, but no more. Academia becomes a kind of civil service for the public, doing openly and independently what actual civil services are supposed to do in secret for governments.
12. There needs to be a change in the role that political and religious ideas, works of art, expressions of feelings, desires and values have within rational inquiry. Instead of being excluded, they need to be explicitly included and critically assessed, as possible indications and revelations of what is of value, and as unmasking of fraudulent values in satire and parody, vital ingredients of wisdom.
13. There need to be changes in education so that, for example, seminars devoted to the cooperative, imaginative, and critical discussion of problems of living are at the heart of all education from

- five-year-olds onwards. Politics, which cannot be taught by knowledge-inquiry, becomes central to wisdom-inquiry, political creeds and actions being subjected to imaginative and critical scrutiny.
14. There need to be changes in the aims, priorities, and character of pure science and scholarship, so that it is the curiosity, the seeing and searching, the knowing and understanding of individual persons that ultimately matters, the more impersonal, esoteric, purely intellectual aspects of science and scholarship being means to this end. Social inquiry needs to give intellectual priority to helping empathic understanding between people to flourish (as indicated in 6 above).
 15. There need to be changes in the way mathematics is understood, pursued, and taught. Mathematics is not a branch of knowledge at all. Rather, it is concerned with exploring problematic *possibilities*, and to develop, systematize, and unify problem-solving methods.²⁶
 16. Literature needs to be put close to the heart of rational inquiry, in that it explores imaginatively our most profound problems of living and aids personalistic understanding in life by enhancing our ability to enter imaginatively into the problems and lives of others.
 17. Philosophy needs to change so that it ceases to be just another specialized discipline and becomes instead that aspect of inquiry as a whole that is concerned with our most general and fundamental problems—those problems that cut across all disciplinary boundaries. Philosophy needs to become again what it was for Socrates: the attempt to devote reason to the growth of wisdom in life.
 18. Academic contributions need to be written in as simple, lucid, jargon-free a way as possible, so that academic work is as accessible as possible across specialities and to non-academics.
 19. There needs to be a change in views about what constitute academic contributions, so that publications which promote (or have the potential to promote) public understanding as to what our problems of living are and what we need to do about them are included, in addition to contributions addressed primarily to the academic community.

²⁶See Maxwell (2010).

20. Every university needs to create a seminar or symposium devoted to the sustained discussion of fundamental problems that cut across all conventional academic boundaries, global problems of living being included as well as global problems of knowledge and understanding.

The above changes all come from my “from knowledge to wisdom” argument spelled out above, and in detail elsewhere (see footnote 6). The following three institutional innovations do not follow from that argument but, if implemented, would help wisdom-inquiry to flourish.

21. Natural science needs to create committees, in the public eye, and staffed by scientists and non-scientists alike, concerned with highlighting and discussing failures of the priorities of research to respond to the interests of those whose needs are the greatest—the poor of the earth—as a result of the inevitable tendency of research priorities to reflect the interests of those who pay for science, and the interests of scientists themselves.
22. Every national university system needs to include a national shadow government, seeking to do, virtually, free of the constraints of power, what the actual national government ought to be doing. The hope would be that virtual and actual governments would learn from each other.
23. The world’s universities need to include a virtual world government which seeks to do what an actual elected world government ought to do, if it existed. The virtual world government would also have the task of working out how an actual democratically elected world government might be created.

Conclusion

Two great problems of learning confront humanity: learning about the nature of the universe and about ourselves and other living things as a part of the universe, and learning how to become civilized. The first problem was solved, in essence, in the seventeenth century, with

the creation of modern science. But the second problem has not yet been solved. Solving the first problem without also solving the second puts us in a situation of great danger. All our current global problems have arisen as a result. What we need to do, in response to this unprecedented crisis, is learn from our solution to the first problem how to solve the second. This was the basic idea of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. Unfortunately, in carrying out this programme, the Enlightenment made three blunders, and it is this defective version of the Enlightenment programme, inherited from the past, that is still built into the institutional/intellectual structure of academic inquiry in the twenty-first century. In order to solve the second great problem of learning we need to correct the three blunders of the traditional Enlightenment. This involves changing the nature of social inquiry, so that social science becomes social methodology or social philosophy, concerned to help us build into social life the progress-achieving methods of aim-oriented rationality, arrived at by generalizing the progress-achieving methods of science. It also involves, more generally, bringing about a revolution in the nature of academic inquiry as a whole, so that it takes up its proper task of helping humanity learn how to become wiser by increasingly cooperatively rational means. The scientific task of improving knowledge and understanding of nature becomes a part of the broader task of improving global wisdom. The outcome would be what we so urgently need: a kind of inquiry rationally designed and devoted to helping us make progress towards a genuinely civilized world. We would succeed in doing what the Enlightenment tried but failed to do: learn from scientific progress how to go about making social progress towards as good a world as possible.

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14

Practical Wisdom and Health Care

Barry Schwartz and Kenneth E. Sharpe

In 2010, we published the book *Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing* (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010). The book argued that none of the central institutions of modern American life—educational, medical, financial, legal, and political—are giving people what they need and want from these institutions. America, in short, is broken. We further argued that efforts to fix broken institutions take two forms. First, create more and better rules to force people to do the right thing (sticks). And second, create smart incentives to encourage people to do the right thing (carrots). In recent years, owing to the influence of what is called “behavioral economics,” people have come to realize that sometimes, these smart incentives may need to be subtle, indeed, to nudge imperfectly rational creatures like human beings in the right direction (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008). However, these modern interventions are largely

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,

https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_14

directed at making incentives more effective rather than adding a different kind of influence to one's toolkit.

In our book, we further argued that lots of sticks and carrots had been designed and implemented without making key institutions work any better. Indeed, the more reliant institutions were on rules and incentives, the worse the problems became. Efforts to fix broken institutions were actually creating a downward spiral.

What, then, might one do instead? Our suggestion, derived from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, was to focus on cultivating character—virtue—rather than promulgating rules and manipulating incentives. What was needed was people who did the right thing, not because they would be punished if they didn't, or because they would be rewarded if they did, but just because it *was* the right thing. What was needed was people who internalized the purpose or *telos* of their endeavor and had the expertise to pursue that *telos* effectively. Such people had to possess a large set of virtues, and central among them was the virtue of practical wisdom—*phronesis*.

We looked at many different real-life practices and described what practical wisdom is, why it is needed, what psychological processes might enable it, and why it seemed to be in such short supply. We will not here rehearse these arguments but instead focus on medical care to show why a good medical care provider needs virtue, and especially practical wisdom. And we will discuss three different institutional settings in which wise medical practice is encouraged, nurtured, and supported, with good medical results. Our examples contrast sharply with the way medical practice is actually conducted in most settings. Unless we find a way to scale up the examples we describe, health care in the United States will continue to fall short of what people need.

An Example

Vibha Gandhi would not be at the Special Care Center in Atlantic City in 2010 if she were simply suffering from a sore throat or the flu or needed a bone set. The 57-year-old Vibha was there because she suffered from multiple chronic conditions: diabetes, obesity, and congestive heart failure. In 2009 she suffered from her third heart attack and her

coronary-artery disease was so advanced that it was inoperable. When she arrived at the clinic in a wheel chair for her first visit, she would lose her breath and suffer severe chest pain after taking even a few steps. A heart transplant is often the next step in such cases.

What was Vibha Gandhi doing at a place like the Special Care Center, a primary care clinic with two physicians, two nurse practitioners, a full-time social worker, a front desk receptionist—and eight full-time “health coaches”? This clinic, one of a number of primary care centers discussed by Atul Gawande (2011), focuses on a special kind of primary care that has been emerging around the United States in recent years. The centers aim to provide an alternative to hospital emergency rooms for patients with complex medical conditions and few economic resources—patients who often incur some of the highest costs. Emergency rooms might be just the thing for a pedestrian hit by a car, but they are not adequate for patients with complex, chronic problems: “the forty-year-old with drug and alcohol addiction; the eighty-four-year-old with advanced Alzheimer’s disease and a pneumonia; the sixty-year-old with heart failure, obesity, gout, a bad memory for his eleven medications, and half a dozen specialists recommending different tests and procedures. It’s like arriving at a major construction project with nothing but a screwdriver and a crane” (Gawande, 2011, p. 46).

Vibha Gandhi credits the clinic for her great improvement. She still has a purse full of medications for her fragile condition but a year and a half after becoming a clinic patient, she is out of her wheel chair and can walk a quarter mile with her walker. “I didn’t think I would live this long,” Vibha said through Bharat, who translated her Gujarati into English. “I didn’t want to live.” She and her husband Bharat credit dietary changes, exercise, strict monitoring of her diabetes, and medication adjustments. In interviewing her, Gawande wanted to know why she did not follow such standard advice after her first two heart attacks. What made the difference this time? “Jayshree,” Vibha said, naming the health coach who had previously worked at Dunkin’ Donuts, who also speaks Gujarati. “Jayshree pushes her, and she listens to her only and not to me,” Bharat said. “Why do you listen to Jayshree?” Gawande asked Vibha. “Because she talks like my mother,” she said (Gawande, 2011, pp. 48–49).

The Special Care Center in Atlantic City, New Jersey, was organized by Rushika Fernandopulle, a young Harvard internist. Fernandopulle

carefully tracked the statistics of the twelve hundred patients who used the clinic. After twelve months in the program, he found, their emergency-room visits and hospital admissions were reduced by more than forty percent. Surgical procedures were down by a quarter. The patients were also markedly healthier. Among five hundred and three patients with high blood pressure, only two had poor blood-pressure control. Patients with high cholesterol had, on average, a fifty-point drop in their levels. A stunning sixty-three percent of smokers with heart and lung disease quit smoking. In surveys, service and quality ratings were high (Gawande, 2011, p. 49).

In setting up the clinic, Fernandopulle benefitted from the advice and counsel of Dr. Jeffrey Brenner, who had pioneered a similar clinic in Camden, New Jersey. One of Brenner's "ah hah" moments, he told Gawande, was meeting (and treating) Frank Hendricks. He asked emergency-room doctors and social workers he knew in Camden to introduce him to one of the "worst-of-the-worst" patients. Hendricks had spent as much time in hospitals as out during the last three years. His history of alcohol abuse and smoking was compounded by his weight (five hundred and sixty pounds) and his uncontrolled diabetes, heart failure, and chronic asthma. Dr. Brenner visited him daily when Hendricks was in intensive care with a feeding tube, having developed septic shock from his gallbladder infection.

"I just basically sat in his room like I was a third-year med student, hanging out with him for an hour, hour and a half every day, trying to figure out what makes the guy tick," he recalled (Gawande, 2011, pp. 42–43). He learned that Hendricks used to be an auto detailer and a cook. He had a longtime girlfriend and two children, now grown. A toxic combination of poor health, Johnnie Walker Red, and, it emerged, cocaine addiction had left him unreliably employed, uninsured, and living in a welfare motel. He had no consistent set of doctors, and almost no prospects for turning his situation around.

Hendricks recovered enough to be discharged after several months, but his life "was simply another hospitalization waiting to happen" (Gawande, 2011, p. 42) Brenner tried to figure out what he could do to help. He followed Hendricks closely enough to spot serious problems emerging. He double checked that the plans and prescriptions from

the specialists actually fit together, and sorted things out by phone when they didn't. He teamed up with a nurse practitioner who made home visits to check blood pressure and blood-sugar levels and to make sure he was getting his medications.

Brenner also went beyond “the usual doctor stuff” to address some of the conditions that exacerbated Hendricks' health issues. He teamed up with a social worker to help Hendricks get disability insurance so he could afford a stable place to stay instead of the chaos of welfare motels and thus also have access to a consistent group of physicians. Brenner's team also got Hendricks to return to Alcoholics Anonymous, urged him to start cooking his own food, and to return to church (he was a devout Christian). The aim was to fight Hendricks helplessness by finding sources of stability and value. He had given up. “Can you imagine being in the hospital that long, what that does to you?” Brenner asked (Gawande, 2011, p. 42).

When Gawande spoke to Hendricks a few years later he found that Hendricks had been off alcohol for a year, off cocaine for two years, and off smoking for three years. He was living with his girlfriend in a safer neighborhood, was going to church, and was weathering family crises. He had started cooking his own meals. His diabetes and congestive heart failure were under much better control. He had lost two hundred and twenty pounds, which meant, among other things, that if he fell he would be able to pick himself up, rather than having to call for an ambulance.

“Working with him didn't feel any different from working with any patient on smoking, bad diet, not exercising--working on any particular rut someone has gotten into,” Brenner said. “People are people, and they get into situations they don't necessarily plan on. My philosophy about primary care is that the only person who has changed anyone's life is their mother. The reason is that she cares about them, and she says the same simple thing over and over and over” (Gawande, 2011, p. 43). So, Brenner tries to care, and to say a few simple things over and over and over.

The thing about the care that mothers (and fathers) provide to their children is that it is “high-touch” care, with lots of personal attention provided by the caretaker. Parents provide high-touch care without

even thinking about it. For doctors, it is a deliberate decision, and one for which they have had little preparation in their training. Moreover, mothers and fathers care about *everything* that affects the welfare of their children. Unlike most physicians, parents do not wall off physical health from other aspects of well-being. Their care is directed at the whole person and not just the organic machinery.

“High-Touch” Care, the Virtues of Medicine, and Practical Wisdom

Patients like Vibha Gandhi and Frank Hendricks are particularly complex, with multiple chronic illnesses that require extensive and expensive medical care. Although they constitute only a fraction of people needing health care in the United States, the kinds of chronic problems they face are quite common. That is in part because of medicine’s extraordinary ability to treat acute disease successfully—at least in the developed world. This success keeps people alive longer. But longevity makes people ripe for chronic diseases—diseases that must be managed, rather than cured. Treatment for such illnesses demands something beyond pills, surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, immunotherapy. Treatment demands that patients become partners in their care, often making extremely difficult life changes.

Treatment as life change has become increasingly common in the United States as modern medicine has become less about responding to acute conditions than it is about managing chronic conditions, like arthritis, congestive heart failure, hypertension, obesity, diabetes, AIDS, low back pain, or osteoporosis. Patients who feel vulnerable, frightened, hopeless, depressed, and confused must be encouraged to participate actively in often arduous life changes. Quit smoking, lose weight, eat more fiber, avoid salt and fat, exercise, stop drinking. A doctor could diagnose a chronic condition and know exactly what the patient has to do to mitigate its effects. The doctor could hand the patient a printed sheet of instructions. And the doctor would know that only a tiny fraction of patients would follow those instructions. Indeed, the doctor

would know that most patients already have those instructions burned into their heads.

What can patients reasonably be expected to do as partners in treatment? This is not quite the right question. The right question is “what can *this* patient, sitting in front of me, reasonably be expected to do?” Doctors and nurses—like any good professionals—need to assess what a particular patient can manage, and how to motivate her. Is it feasible to tell this patient that she needs to lose fifty pounds? Or that he needs to walk at a brisk pace for thirty minutes a day? Will it do any good to tell him he needs to lower the stress level of his job? If the doctor enlists the help of the patient’s family, will the patient find that move encouraging or demeaning? Knowing how to treat patients demands balancing what is medically sound with what the patient can or will do, and that demands understanding the perspective and life circumstances of the patient. What’s right for one patient may be disastrous for another.

This means that to practice good medicine, a doctor must know her patient. This is why effective medicine must be “high-touch” medicine. A critical component of medical care is care aimed at enabling patients to change their behavior. This kind of care demands medical practitioners with the capacity to do the kind of relationship building that Drs. Brenner and Fernandopulle and their staffs are doing. And this, in turn, will demand to organizing medical clinics that encourage practitioners to learn how to provide this kind of care, and also designing medical schools to encourage young doctors to learn how to give this kind of care from the start. What kind of capacities do doctors need to give this kind of care? The examples Dr. Brenner and Dr. Fernandopulle provide clues.

Brenner and Fernandopulle need good medical knowledge and skills to treat patients like Vibha and Hendricks, but they need something more. They need the capacity to build a certain kind of long term relationship with their patients. When Gawande asked Hendricks what he first thought of Dr. Brenner, Hendricks said: “He struck me as odd. His appearance was not what I expected of a young, clean-cut doctor.” There was that beard. There was his manner, too. “His whole premise was ‘I’m here for you. I’m not here to be a part of the medical system. I’m here to get you back on your feet’” (Gawande, 2011, p. 43).

The patients with multiple chronic conditions, particularly if they are poor, have been through the revolving door of the medical establishments often and for a long time, dealing with scores of different health care personnel who temporarily get them through one severe crisis after another. The things they must do to manage their long term chronic problems demand consistent, on-going care, with people who they trust will be there for them. The doctors and nurses and health care personnel who work with these patients have to be certain kinds of people: people who aim at the right thing and have the character traits and skills to achieve them. What are these skills and character traits?

Medical practitioners must be people who are motivated by the aims of their profession—not financial gain, not status or power within the profession, but a passion to relieve pain and suffering, to give comfort, to make their patients healthier and happier. In language stretching back to Aristotle, these aims or ends are the *telos* of medicine, the purpose of the practice. From Aristotle's teleological point of view, every human activity has its own appropriate *telos*. The *telos* is like the "true north" on a compass. It is an essential guide to keep you on your path. A good practitioner embraces this path as part of her purpose, as who she is. It is not simply a principle or rule that one is paid or pressured to follow. It is integral to what makes a doctor a doctor. One might say that dedication to the *telos* of the practice of medicine is what gives practitioners the will—the motivation—to do right by their patients.

But knowing the *telos* and having the will are not enough. A medical practitioner also needs skill to follow this path. Not just diagnostic skills or skill listening to a beating heart but character traits that help the doctor navigate with the patient in particular circumstances, in contexts that are ambiguous, uncertain, and contradictory.

Such doctors need to be caring and compassionate. They need to be careful in how they treat and how they counsel. They need to be honest so patients can trust what they say and use the information the doctor provides to make important choices about how to manage their care. They need to be loyal—to have their patients' backs. They need to be patient. They need to have the resilience and courage to face their fears of angry reactions, of failures, of obstinate superiors with the

power to sanction them. They need to be empathic, to listen well to how the patients see the world and understand their thoughts and feelings. They need to balance engagement and caring with being objective, detached, and firm, to convince or insist (gently or firmly) that patients change behaviors—drinking, smoking, drugs, eating too much and the wrong things, being couch potatoes who never exercise—that are very difficult to change.

A longer list of needed character traits would include being resilient (having fortitude), humble, mindful, curious, self-effacing (disposed to place the patients' interests over the doctor's), being faithful to the trust a patient puts in them, having the desire to continue to inquire, to learn, and to improve, a willingness to accept responsibility for one's actions, an openness to criticism and feedback, and a disposition to collaborate with and learn from others. It is such character traits, coupled with the will to pursue the *telos* of their practice, that enables doctors to practice well. Aristotle called such traits "virtues."

The importance of such traits has a long, venerable tradition in the history of medicine. As reported by Coulehan (2017, p. 8), where the quotes in this paragraph appear), in 1772, John Gregory, professor of medicine at the University of Edinburgh, wrote, of the moral qualities of a physician, "the chief of these is humanity, that sensibility of heart that makes us feel for the distress of our fellow-creatures..." Thus, he warned his students to maintain "a gentle and humane temper" despite "being daily conversant with scenes of distress." In 1889, William Osler told the medical graduating class at the University of Pennsylvania that they should face "the exigencies of practice with firmness and courage (but) without, at the same time, hardening the human heart by which we live." In 1927, Francis Peabody, at Harvard Medical School, warned that hospitals create a hostile environment for humanism, and urged his students to consciously commit "time, sympathy, and understanding" to creating a "personal bond" with their patients. And Thomas Inui, in a 2003 report to the American Association of Medical Colleges (AAMC) wrote, "What the literature and rhetoric of medicine lacks is a clear recognition of the gap between these widely recognized manifestations of virtue in action and what we actually do in the circumstances in which

we live our lives.” Coulehan (2017) sums these various thoughts about what it takes to practice medicine well thusly: “All of these physicians viewed medical education as a lifelong process of character formation, rather than just an accumulation of facts and technical skills.” And in recent years, other medical practitioners have come to appreciate the importance of wisdom, as well as other virtues, to the successful practice of medicine (Kaldjian, 2014; Plews-Ogan, Owens, & May, 2012).

Some aspiring physicians, lured by the technical wonders of modern medicine, might be surprised by this list of virtues, or even question their relevance to contemporary, high-tech medical practice. But many experienced practitioners might not even ask why these character traits are essential to the practice of medicine because they are so deeply embedded in the very nature of their practice that they are just presupposed. To say that a doctor lacks compassion, is a coward, lacks empathy, is not sufficiently detached, or is unreflective, is to say that this person is a bad doctor.

Practical Wisdom as the Master Virtue

As the most prominent of western virtue theorists, Aristotle would probably be sympathetic to our suggestions about the need for virtues of character for excellence in medical practice. However, for Aristotle the virtues in our list would not be enough. Excellence, he thought, required *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, what we might call a “master virtue.” In fact, the other virtues could not even be exercised—could not really *be* virtues—without this master virtue. Aristotle put it this way:

Virtue in the full sense cannot be attained without practical wisdom. That is why some people maintain that all the virtues are forms of practical wisdom....Socrates...was...right in saying that there is no virtue without wisdom....[V]irtue is a... characteristic guided by practical wisdom... But we must go a little beyond that. Virtue or excellence is not only a characteristic which is guided by right reason, but also a characteristic which is united with right reason; and right reason in moral matters is practical wisdom. (1144b, pp. 17–28)

Aristotle wanted to be clear to his readers that practical wisdom is the necessary guide to acting virtuously, but he also wanted to emphasize that a person cannot have practical wisdom without also having the habits of good character—the virtues—“that a man cannot have practical wisdom unless he is good” (1144a, 35). “Our discussion,” Aristotle concluded “has made it clear that it is impossible to be good in the full sense of the word without practical wisdom or to be a man of practical wisdom without moral excellence or virtue” (1144b, 30–31).

In practicing medicine, it is therefore not enough for a doctor or nurse to be deeply motivated to care. She or he also needs the capacity (some might say the competency) to actually act in a caring way—to act in the *right* caring way. This takes a certain know-how, certain moral skills. A doctor may be empathic, but be *too* empathic. As Aristotle famously argued, most virtues are located as the “mean” between non-virtuous extremes. Or a doctor may be empathic at the wrong time, in the wrong way. The display of virtue must be sensitive to context; it cannot be mechanical. And according to Aristotle, the virtue that enables this sensitivity to context and to finding the balance, or mean, is practical wisdom. A doctor without practical wisdom will generally lack the capacity to know how to *be* compassionate, empathic, detached, courageous, mindful, and reflective, and will be unable to balance different “virtues” when they inevitably come into conflict. Empathy, for example, demands good listening skills, as well as the capacity to engage those skills even when exhausted and stressed. Compassion demands more than the desire to alleviate a patient’s suffering; it demands the capacity for empathy (understanding how the patient is thinking and feeling), and the capacity to engage that empathy even when the patient is belligerent, angry, or violent toward the doctor. It demands the know-how to figure out what the patient wants and to balance that with what the patient wanted before, may want after more treatment, and what the patient actually needs. Without such moral skills, compassion deteriorates into feel-good incompetence. Similarly, courage demands more than fearlessness or the willingness to act in the face of fear. It demands the technical skills of diagnosis and treatment, knowing how and when to take a risk, and the emotional self-mastery to control both anger and fear; otherwise would-be courage degenerates into foolhardiness. It is

the *will and the capacity to do the right thing in the right way at the right time* that constitutes what Aristotle, and we, are calling practical wisdom. Practical wisdom enables health care providers who are motivated to act well to actually act well, to *be* virtuous. Absent practical wisdom, the good intentions, good motives, good desires, and good emotions we often associate with good character will not translate into good action. We often describe people who have the will to treat others well but lack the skill as “good-hearted.” We say “his heart was in the right place,” or “she meant well.” Locutions like these typically accompany efforts to do the right thing that have gone wrong.

Character and practical wisdom are thus integrally linked. You can't really have one without the other. A doctor can only have practical wisdom if she has developed the character traits that motivate her to do the right thing. Without these character traits—the virtues we discussed—a doctor can't be practically wise. But without practical wisdom, a doctor can't really be compassionate, patient, empathic, courageous, and so on. The way Aristotle put it was that no one can have the moral virtues without *phronesis* and anyone with *phronesis* has the moral virtues: “It is plain, then, after what has been said, that it is not possible without practical wisdom to be really good morally, nor without moral excellence to be practically wise” (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VI.13, 1144b, pp. 30–31). As Zagzebski (1996, p. 12) writes, “the very concept of moral virtue refers to the person with *phronesis*.”

Doctors like Brenner and Fernandopulle, and health care coaches like Jayshree, need to help their patients make better choices in challenging economic circumstances in which situations are complex, ambiguous, conflictual, and uncertain. There is no one-size-fits-all way to proceed in such situations. There is no rule or formula that would enable Frank Hendricks or Vibha Gandhi to change what they ate or smoked, or how they exercised. The kind of relationship medicine Brenner, Fernandopulle, and their colleagues practice demands understanding the lives and circumstances of their patients, what makes them want to live, what their hopes and fears are, what motivates them, what family and cultural milieu they act within. This, in turn, demands that the providers be perceptive, that they listen well, that they are able to see things from their patients' perspectives, that they can communicate in

a way that is both comprehensible and motivating, that they reflect on their past practices to notice and correct mistakes. There are no reimbursement codes for any of these attributes, but they may well make the difference between success and failure in treating people with complex, chronic conditions.

Institutional Design and Wisdom

We have argued that patients with long term chronic health problems whose treatment demands behavioral changes can, in fact, be treated. And if the severe cases faced by Dr. Brenner and Dr. Fernandopulle and their teams can gain better health, so to can cases involving patients with fewer chronic problems in less dire circumstances. We have also argued that such treatment demands medical staff whose medical knowledge and technical skills are complemented by the character traits, moral skills, and sense of purpose (*telos*) that we have characterized as practical wisdom. How is such practical wisdom nurtured and encouraged in the doctors and teams that deliver the care and in the institutional environments (structures) to which the patients come for their medical care? How does one design environments that nurture and enable doctors to exercise practical wisdom in delivering care and that enable patients to make the (wise) choices that will improve their health? We will approach this question through three examples, each of which will provide a different perspective on how medical institutions can be designed for wisdom: the design of the clinic in Atlantic City, the re-design of a medical school, and the re-design of hospital services that deliver palliative care (for a detailed discussion of key design elements see Plews-Ogan & Sharpe, 2017).

Atlantic City

The treatment that Vibha Gandhi received at the Special Care Center was not a serendipitous encounter with an unusual and particularly wise and skillful doctor. When Dr. Fernandopulle designed the

organization and training at the Center, he designed it to encourage the kind of treatment that Vibha Gandhi received. He designed the daily operations to encourage teamwork and on-going learning through reflective practice. And he recruited staff members for character, not simply technical skills. The team members included two doctors, two nurses, a social worker, a receptionist, and eight full-time health coaches. Fernandopulle understood that a critical condition for enabling a patient to manage chronic illness and change behavior was the relationship between the health care provider and the patient. In Brenner's words: "The ones you build a relationship with, you can change behavior" (Gawande, 2011, p. 44). So Fernandopulle recruited coaches from the community with an eye toward people with the character, habits, and background that would allow them to establish trusting, understanding relationships with patients. "Their most important attribute," Fernandopulle explained, "is a knack for connecting with sick people, and understanding their difficulties. Most of the coaches come from their patients' communities and speak their languages. Many have experience with chronic illness in their own families. (One was himself a patient in the clinic.) Few had clinical experience" (Gawande, 2011, p. 48). He went on: "We recruit for attitude and train for skill." Fernandopulle added, "We don't recruit from health care. This kind of care requires a very different mind-set from usual care. For example, what is the answer for a patient who walks up to the front desk with a question? The answer is 'Yes' 'Can I see a doctor?' 'Yes.' 'Can I get help making my ultrasound appointment?' 'Yes.' Health care trains people to say no to patients" (Gawande, 2011, p. 48).

Fernandopulle had to replace half of the clinic's initial hires—including a doctor—because they didn't grasp the focus on patient service. Jayshree, the health care coach that worked with Vibha Gandhi, had been running the cash register at Dunkin' Doughnuts. Why did Vibha listen to her about changing her diet and exercise and adjusting her medications when she had not listened to doctors in the past? "Because she talks like my mother," Vibha explained (Gawande, 2011, p. 49).

Good recruitment of personnel is thus essential, but it is not enough to create the kinds of relationships demanded to deliver good care. Building relationships requires on-going learning and improvement, and the routine morning “huddle” in the clinic was critical to making the clinic a learning organization. Every morning, for forty-five minutes, the two doctors, two nurses, the receptionist, the full-time social worker, and the eight full-time “health coaches” sat around a table together, previewed all the patients who they were going to see that day and followed up on all the patients they had seen the day before (all of them contacted within 24 hours of their visit). Were all needed tests ordered? What were the results? What unexpected problems surfaced that needed to be addressed? Mr. Green didn’t turn up for his cardiac testing or return calls about it. “I know where his wife works. I’ll track her down,” the receptionist said. Ms. Blue is pregnant and on a high-blood-pressure medication that is unsafe in pregnancy. “I’ll change her prescription right now,” her doctor said, and keyed it into the computer (Gawande, 2011, p. 48). A handful of patients required longer discussion. One forty-five-year-old heart-disease patient had just had blood tests that showed worsening kidney failure. The team decided to repeat the blood tests that morning, organize a kidney ultrasound in the afternoon if the tests confirmed the finding, and have him seen in the office at the end of the day.

These daily morning huddles insured sharing data on patients and on the different facets of their medical care—prescriptions, daily routines, and behavioral changes. But there was much more happening in the huddles. The regular sharing of the data across the team was teaching the power of teamwork and highlighting the skills a team needs. For example, there had to be mutual respect. The coaches, the receptionist, the nurses and the doctors all had something to contribute—a perspective that the others might not see, a picture of the whole of a patient’s life. There had to be trust. Members of the team learned to rely on each other. In having their morning discussion, the team members practiced reflection and deliberation. They developed the skills and habits of good listening and empathy, learning to see things from

multiple perspectives—the medical and scientific, the struggles of the patients, the perspectives of the patients’ families, the social context and environment in which they lived, the cultural resources and obstacles to behavioral change. Nobody told the members of the team “you are developing practical wisdom.” But Fernandopulle has helped design a system that achieves precisely that.

Medical School: The Cambridge Health Alliance

A number of medical schools have designed programs to encourage young doctors to develop the practical wisdom they need to practice well. One of them is the Cambridge Integrated Clerkship (CIC) Program for the third year of medical school. It was designed by Harvard Medical School faculty at the Cambridge Health Alliance and launched in 2004. It is a model that has been adopted by many other medical schools. (See for example the Consortium of Integrated Clerkships: <http://www.clicmeded.com>.)

One motivation for the creation of this program by people like Dr. Malcolm Cox (then Dean of Medical Education at Harvard Medical School), Dr. David Bor, Dr. Barbara Ogur and Dr. David Hirsh was to reverse the well-documented moral erosion and decline of empathy among medical students during their third year of medical school (see, for example, Feudtner, Christakis, & Christakis, 1994; Hojat et al., 2009). There are many built-in, systemic reasons for this decline. In the hospital, students witnessed overworked and tired doctors focusing only on the disease process rather than the person experiencing the disease. These doctors had little time to mentor students. Students unfortunately often witnessed demeaning language that dehumanized the patients [“crocks” (a hospitalized complainer whose illness is largely imaginary), “beached whales,” (an obese patient unable to do much for himself), “gomers” (get out of my emergency room!)] (Lowenstein, 1997, p. 14). Students were encouraged to deliberate and reason quickly, but not to reflect; and worse, they were encouraged to get the answers right for the wrong reasons—to please or impress the resident or attending physician, and not because it really mattered for

the care of the patient. “They need the science,” explained one program director. “That’s critical. But if it’s only the science they learn, it’s a wash. They come in being idealistic and patient centered. But they leave burnt out and cynical” (Hojat et al., 2009).

Those who created the Cambridge program never said “we’re teaching good judgment” or “we’re teaching empathy” because, they explained, “you can’t teach judgment; the best you can do is cause it to be learned.” They created an environment—a set of experiences—that caused wisdom and character to be learned. The program relied heavily on creating a moral medical community with apprenticeship—medical and moral—at its core. It was designed so students learned the medical science, the clinical judgment, and the dedication, compassion and wisdom to stem ethical erosion. (The quotes and information below are based on interviews the authors did with faculty and students during an extended visit to the Cambridge Integrated Clerkship Program at the Cambridge Health Alliance in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in September 2009.)

At the heart of the program was a re-design of the relationships between the doctor-teachers and the students, between the students and the patients, and among the students. Instead of a training model based on immersion in hospital wards all day, the students spent every morning in four out-patient clinics (internal medicine on Monday, psychiatry on Tuesday and so on) working one-on-one with the same doctor for the whole year.

Their doctor-mentors in the clinic guided the students as they learned to do patient histories, then work up the patients prior to examination, then do diagnoses, and finally recommend treatments—all under the guidance of their doctor-mentors. Making the students responsible for actual patients in this environment taught them to care by caring, and taught them the “whys” and “hows” of good listening, empathy, and good communication because these dispositions and skills were important for patient outcomes.

This training was reinforced in “morning rounds,” when the 12–15 students in the program gathered from 7 until 8:30 to present their cases. The students each had 2-morning rounds to present their case. They learned to do differential diagnosis with the other students and

a faculty facilitator working along with them. The facilitator acted as a coach, scaffolding the process: “Here are the steps. Let’s do one. OK, now you try it.” And as the students tried—as they struggled through the process—there was a coach right there who was wise enough to know when to interrupt and when to let the process, warts and all, unfold. The doctor-coach balanced silent listening with pushing and nudging. “OK. What is missing? What’s the alternative?”

The students worked together and learned the skills of listening, empathy, cooperativeness, and collegiality necessary to work as a team. They left the first-morning rounds puzzled because the student presenter did not reveal the actual diagnosis. That was for the team—the class—to work out on the second day, when they also moved on to treatment and whether it worked or not. Practical issues were integral to their cases: “I know that my patient’s diabetes is going to get worse and that he will be back in a few weeks because he is at a men’s shelter and one of the major foods that is around all the time are the doughnuts.... what can I do, what should I do?” “Do I just give the patient the info and hope he will choose to eat foods that are not at the shelter?” And such practical issues raised ethical ones—for example, about whether to just inform the patient of facts and options and let him choose (“autonomy”) or tell the patient what he must do (“paternalism”). Such issues were seamlessly integrated into discussions of the medical aspects of each patient’s problems.

This procedure was premised on trial and error. When the third-year students explained their diagnosis to their doctor-mentors in front of their patients, it was expected they would make mistakes. The training was designed to allow for such trial-by-error-experiential-learning without putting the patients at risk. And it was not just a simulation lab with standardized patients. Students were learning to recognize actual mistakes with real consequences; they were gaining the courage and the know-how to admit these mistakes, to figure out why they made them, and to imagine what they might have done differently. Without an experiential process like this, it is difficult to “learn from experience.” And without this learning from experience, there is no way to nurture the development of practical wisdom.

Learning to be reflective was also built into the program. And such reflection was both cognitive and emotional. Students were encouraged to reflect about how they felt, about their ambivalence and conflicts. They were encouraged to think about why they felt the way they did, and about whether they did or did not control and guide their emotions. They learned to recognize how their emotions affected their understanding and their choices.

Learning how to balance empathy and detachment was built into this process and the students and their doctor-mentors could talk over each case after the patient left. One student who we interviewed at length explained how his clinical mentor would regularly arrange for a short afternoon walk on the day of his clinic to continue the discussion, reflection, and comparison of this patient to other cases and other such decisions. “I am not just talking about the importance of trial and error in learning the technical part of clinical wisdom,” the student explained, “but also the ethical part of clinical wisdom. And I am suggesting that the way you learn wisdom in both cases is the same: through the experience of getting it wrong and reflecting on why you got it wrong so you can learn from your mistakes. I’m talking about the many ways to get it wrong when it comes to counseling a patient, to figuring out how to get them to accept treatment, to allaying their fears, to giving them hope, to helping them make good choices—knowing when to choose for them, knowing when to let them choose, and helping them make those choices. These are the kinds of daily ethical questions so important for good doctoring.”

Students are learning the habit of being reflective and the skills of being reflective by practicing being reflective under the guidance of these coach mentors. The doctor-mentor-coaches encouraged this learning by getting students to ask the kinds of questions that helped them develop ethical sensitivity. “How do you think the patient felt when you gave the diagnosis?” “How did you feel?” “What kind of response did the patient make (in words or body language)?” The doctor-mentors also pushed the students to reflect on their ethical judgments. “What was the rule or principle operative here?” “Did ethical principles conflict?” “Was patient autonomy at odds with patient health because

you doubted the patient was capable of making good choices?” “Why should we make an exception in this case to the norms of best practice?” “How much of the truth should you tell this patient and when?” “Why did you nudge the patient this way (toward drugs and not diet; toward wait and see instead of surgery)?” Concomitantly, doctors encouraged students to ask them questions and told their own stories of wrestling with difficult ethical issues.

At the Cambridge Integrated Clerkship Program, students begin to learn the moral skills they will need in order to display real clinical wisdom at the very moment when they first start treating patients. They are doing this by immersing themselves in an apprenticeship-based moral community that teaches the technical and ethical skills needed to make good medical decisions. They are put in a practice situation where they learn through their mistakes, but with scaffolding that provides initial guidance in which they learn the moral rules before they learn how to bend and break them. The students get constant coaching, and the coaches provide safety nets. The students learn about loyalty and trust and the courage to admit mistakes and make tough calls because their mentors are living these virtues and demanding they live by them too. They learn the skills and disposition of empathy and compassion and detachment because this is what is modeled for them—and if it’s not, they get to talk about this in their Patient-Doctor class. And, critically, they learn how to reflect so that they can learn from experience.

What the Cambridge Integrated Clerkship program has done for the faculty and third-year students in its program is to create a moral community. Character and practical wisdom are built into the very fabric of the everyday experience of medical students.

Building Practical Wisdom into Hospital Care: The Palliative Care Service at DHMC

What does a wisdom-nurturing environment look like not in small clinic in Camden or Atlantic City and not in a medical school program, but in a department in a major regional hospital? One of us (K. S.) followed Dr. Max Vergo into the palliative care consulting room in the

outpatient clinic of Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. Vergo was meeting with a patient, Arnold, and his wife. Arnold had ALS—Lou Gehrig’s disease. He was not facing imminent death. In fact, his deterioration had slowed—but it would inevitably continue. Vergo has had Arnold check in every few months, in an effort to establish the kind of trust he would need to care for Arnold and his family as things got worse. There are good bonds between doctor and patient, which make for a nice mixture of easy-going banter and serious work. “How is your grandchild doing? How is she reacting to your illness? Can I help set up some sessions for your daughter with counselors—that might help her learn to talk about it with her child? You know, unanswered questions might be scarier than the truth.....and it’s tough to know what’s appropriate for her age.....[PAUSE]....How are you both doing with chores around the house?...Tell me more about the sensitivity you are feeling in your foot....I’ll talk to your doctor and see if it’s the medication and what we can do about it..... Are there other things that are on your mind? Worries about the future that are worth talking about?” Arnold’s wife says: “Just that this is not the way life is supposed to go.... but I try not to think too much about this.” Dr. Vergo replies: “do you think there is a bigger purpose to any of this that is happening? Do you guys have a spiritual faith, or belief in a higher power?” “No. We used to argue over little things but we don’t anymore.”

Dr. Vergo does not do this kind of work alone. He is part of a palliative care team and earlier that morning he was at a daily 8 A.M. “huddle,” something like the one in Special Care Center in Atlantic City. There were about 20 people crowded around the table including palliative care doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains, a massage therapist, residents, medical students, and medical fellows. After opening the meeting with a poetry reading—each participant takes a turn—the team turned to bereavements—a pause for a few words about the two patients who had died since yesterday’s meeting. One of the senior clinicians smiled through tears as she described “one of my three favorite patients of all time” and the final home visit she made just a day before her patient slipped into unresponsiveness. A medical fellow expressed his shock that a young man with sarcoma and what the fellow thought was treatment-induced delirium had died suddenly on the oncology

unit overnight. “He didn’t see it coming,” he says. “Why didn’t *I* see it coming?” As the group shared details of these patients’ deaths, assessing the quality of the death, and the patients’ and their families’ readiness for it, they were assessing the effectiveness of their interventions and the risk of complicated bereavement for those left behind. They were also honoring the lives of people they cared for, and their work with them. They, along with family and friends, grieved these losses.

The next hour was spent going through each of the 27 inpatients and outpatients they would see that day. What’s happened in the last 24 hours? Are the pain medications working? It’s her 9-year-old grandson that’s giving her something to live for. What can we do for this patient’s spouse who does not have enough money for a taxi, to get her to the hospital? What can we do for this patient who is stressed out at not being able to feed her kids? The huddle over, the clinical team headed for their work in the wards.

The work, explained one doctor, is about “closing gaps between their hopes and outcomes that are medically achievable. This bridging work facilitates the co-creation of shared goals and realistic, actionable plans that get patients closest to desired outcomes while protecting them from interventions that will not help. For teams, working toward shared goals promotes a sense of meaning and even of pride, which is elusive when goals are misaligned.” The work of the team is grounded in “narrative practice.” Team members explore their patients’ stories and help them “to coauthor the next chapters.” There is regular reflection on how members of the team respond to these narratives “often using the lenses of literature, art, music, and spirituality, deepens our self-awareness and empathy and is fundamental to our professional formation.”

And the work is truly team work, thoroughly grounded on a collaborative process in which the team functions as a learning community, each member teaching others and helping to sustain others. Once a week time is put aside for “Wisdom Wednesday,” half an hour set aside for someone to present in detail an on-going case. One of the doctors goes to the white board and takes the team through a series of steps and questions aimed at encouraging learning through a structured reflection

and deliberation about their ongoing experience. “In this case, who called you in? How was the patient’s situation initially presented? What did you expect before you walked into the room? What did you find?” Built into this diagnosis-of-the-case are exactly the kinds of skills and virtues that the team is trying to learn together: What did you notice or fail to notice, and what were the clues? What was the particular context and history of this patient and family? What was the understanding that the other doctors on the ward had of this case and were they working with you or in conflict? How did you feel when so and so said such and such? How did you deal with your frustration and anger?

Novices and advanced beginners and experts are sitting around the same table. Those with more experience are modeling for those with less experience. There is a range of expertise in the room; not everyone is “equal” but they all have something to learn, and they all have something to contribute, and they are all respected for that. And the team has created a safe environment for these discussions: learning through social reflection, not through fear and evaluation. They have designed a work environment that encourages the development of character, purpose, and practical wisdom. Indeed, the fact that palliative care clinics even exist may be a sign of practical wisdom. As Gawande (2014) points out, until recently, the default assumption of medical practitioners was that one kept the patient alive, treating until the bitter end, no matter what the psychic or financial cost.

Conclusion: Designing for Practical Wisdom

If doctors are going to be educated—enabled—to have the practical wisdom that can help patients to be partners in treatment by changing their behavior, the medical institutions must be designed to encourage the development and exercise of that wisdom. Looking at each of the cases we have reviewed, one can see a pattern. There are certain design elements that are critical for encouraging practical wisdom to be developed and exercised:

1. In each of these cases there was ongoing, often daily, *coaching, mentoring, and modeling*. Community health care coaches, young doctors and nurses, and experienced medical providers learned the needed ethical skills and dispositions the same way that they learned other aspects of the medical craft: by repeatedly practicing under the guidance of skilled mentors and coaches, and by observing closely what the teachers, head nurses, residents, and attending physicians actually modeled in practice.
2. *In each of these cases, institutions were structured to encourage the virtuous circle—or perhaps a spiral of experiential learning*. A common pattern in these institutions was a learning cycle something like this: Doing/Practice→Reflection→Learning/Theory→Doing/Practicing again. Note that this is not a linear path but a circle. And note that in each case this deliberation and reflection was a social-team process, not simply an individual endeavor.
3. In each of these cases, the skills and dispositions demanded by reflection were encouraged. These included listening well, communicating effectively, learning what and how to “notice,” acknowledging and talking about emotions and feelings so as to learn how to exercise the right emotions, and learning how to hear and think in terms of *narratives* that explained why the medical practitioners or their patients did what they did and felt what they felt.
4. In each of these cases medical practitioners were learning through *trial and error*, making mistakes and learning from them. Learning to admit error, to notice it in others, and to talk about how to learn from it requires building an environment of trust and safety. A “gotcha environment” is not a learning environment.
5. Each of these institutions was designed to foster *teamwork and intra-professionalism*. The practical wisdom of modern medical practice is no longer a solo act: increasingly, wise decisions about the treatment of chronic illnesses or complex psycho-social problems depend on teams learning the virtues and skills needed to work as a team.

Wisdom in everyday life and work of medical practitioners is not some abstract body of knowledge open to only a few sages. And such practical wisdom is often under attack. As we have discussed elsewhere (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010), it is easy for policy makers and administrators to design medical institutions that discourage the practices that nurture the purpose, meaning, character, and moral skills needed to practice medicine well. But medical schools, clinics, and hospitals can also be designed to encourage the development of practical wisdom.

Wise leaders—statesmen and stateswomen of the medical profession—brought together coalitions that created the wisdom-inducing environments at the Special Care Center in Atlantic City, the Integrated Clerkship Program at the Cambridge Health Alliance, and the Palliative Care Service at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. Such statesmen and stateswomen had the practical wisdom to design for wisdom: the courage, the foresight, the perceptiveness, the patience, the political acuity and, above all, an understanding and passion for the purpose of medical practice. And it is worth noting, as Gawande (2011) pointed out, that such empathic, high-touch, individualized care can save money. Care like this is not out of reach, and it is worth aspiring to, not as a set of isolated examples, but as the new normal.

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15

Seeking Wisdom: A Physician's Journey in the Wake of "Charlottesville"

Margaret Plews-Ogan

On August 11th and 12th 2017, I watched in horror as hundreds of white supremacists assembled in our town, bearing torches, guns, and confederate flags, and my town became a literal battleground. Three people died, and 35 people were seriously physically injured in the events of those two excruciating days (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/us/charlottesville-protest-white-nationalist.html?mcubz=3>). Countless others, including friends and colleagues in the health system, recount the psychological and moral trauma of those events. In the ensuing year we have lived the struggle for accountability. Those who came to spread hate and violence were the starting place for accountability. And then there were police, the city and the state, caught flat footed and sorely underprepared to fulfill their obligation to protect and defend the rule of law. And finally, there were ALL of us who call Charlottesville home, left wondering—what role did we play in allowing this to occur? What did we do, or NOT do? What responsibility do we *all* bear for these tragic events and all that they represent?

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_15

Now one year out from those events, what inspires me is not the struggle about who is to blame, but rather the number of people who are stepping in, working to find a way forward that is creative rather than destructive. Countless people brainstormed and then executed legal responses to the violence of that day, including legal arguments focused on how to prevent the next “Charlottesville.” Spiritual coalitions sprang up to bring people of many faiths together to respond to this challenge in our community. Fathers, mothers, siblings, and close friends of the victims managed to find the wisdom and the courage to find their way through to the truth: that the true meaning of this tragic event will be defined by what we do, by how we change, by the changes we make in our own lives, and in the lives of our communities, our health systems, our country.

What do situations like the events of August 11th and 12th in Charlottesville have to teach us about wisdom, and what does wisdom have to teach us about Charlottesville? In this chapter I will focus on the experience of adversity, and its relationship to wisdom, on how people move through adversity in a positive, wisdom-generating way, and what that might tell us about how we, as a health system, community or a society, might begin to apply that understanding to the current complex circumstances represented by Charlottesville.

In particular, I will bring to the discussion of Charlottesville the lens of the healer. As a physician, that is the lens through which I see the Charlottesville events, and that is the context in which my research on wisdom is based. I believe that healers have a particular role to play in helping people cope with adversity, both individually and in society. For one thing, we are surrounded by trauma and suffering all the time—and much of the time we cannot take away the circumstance. Instead, we must focus on how best to help people cope, grow, and change in the face of those circumstances. We have a duty to tell the truth about the illness, even when the truth really hurts. We have a duty to restore the patient to health when possible, and to relieve suffering, so we have a strong motivation to understand what is causing the suffering, and to mitigate it if possible. We are trained to find whatever we can within a person to help them face these tough circumstances in a positive manner. We have a duty to care for all people, no matter what their beliefs.

Like family, we have to continue to find a way to work with patients whom we don't like, who hold beliefs that are offensive to us, or who disagree with or will not do what we suggest. And we are trained to solve problems with compassion, curiosity, and relationship as our tools for healing.

In this chapter I will examine the relationship between adversity and wisdom, and describe what is known about important elements in the wisdom-generating response to adversity. Using Charlottesville as a case study, I will examine what those elements looked like as one health system struggled to find a positive response to their current experience. I will argue that paying attention to the aftermath of critical events like Charlottesville gives us the opportunity for wisdom, and the responsibility to apply that wisdom gained to give meaning to those losses, and to shape a wiser world in the future. I will argue that the focus on accountability in the wake of adversity, though important, is insufficient for healing, and if our response ends there, can truncate our ability to grow in wisdom. Instead, fostering the essential elements of a wisdom response to challenging circumstances best enables us to learn and to grow in wisdom, as individuals and as a society, through the experiences that life presents.

What doesn't kill you...can it make you wiser?

The Positive Response to Adversity: A New Turn in Psychology

For many years, adversity, or stress, has been known only for its negative effects. Post-traumatic stress disorder has become a household term. Reducing or preventing stress has become a ubiquitous goal in society. More recently, however, there has been a refocusing on the potential positive effects of stress on biologic processes in general, and on human flourishing in particular. Tedeschi and Calhoun were some of the first researchers to explore and identify the positive transformation that can occur in the wake of trauma. Post-traumatic growth (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) is a model of the human

response to trauma that leads to positive psychological growth. In this model, Tedeschi and Calhoun describe how certain people who experience adversity move through a process of reflection, and with the right opportunities to tell the story and receive support, are able to experience positive growth. This growth is measured in five domains: increased personal strength, spiritual growth, greater appreciation of life, improved relationships, and the identification of new possibilities in one's life (Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The result of this growth is postulated to be wisdom. Further work in this area has begun to examine exactly how this growth occurs, what factors might pre-dispose individuals toward growth in the wake of trauma, and what factors might help individuals, in the moment or in the aftermath of trauma, to be more likely to take the path of growth and wisdom (Glück, Bluck, & Weststrate, 2018; Jayawickreme, Brocato, & Blackie, 2017; Plews-Ogan et al., 2016; Plews-Ogan, Owens, & Ardel, 2018; Weststrate & Glück, 2017).

Adversity and Wisdom: A Special, and Slightly Uncomfortable, Relationship?

Wisdom and adversity have always had a slightly uncomfortable relationship. As Linley put it, “although wisdom *can* be developed through the experience of trauma, it need not be so” (Linley, 2003). Ardel and Clayton and Birren have described wisdom as having three dimensions (Ardel, 2005). The cognitive dimension has to do with seeing the bigger picture, understanding the limits of knowing, seeing the deeper meaning of events and circumstances, and appreciation of complexity and ambiguity in life. The affective dimension is characterized by compassion. The reflective dimension is the capacity to rise above one's own perspective, to see things from many perspectives. Linley also describes three dimensions to wisdom: (1) recognition and management of uncertainty, (2) integration of affect and cognition, and (3) recognition and acceptance of human limitation (Linley, 2003). Given these descriptions of wisdom, it does not take much imagination to see how adversity may be a particularly powerful wisdom-generating experience. Pasqual-Leone (2000)

studied what he describes as “ultimate limit situations” and suggested that confronting these situations can result in growth and the emergence of the transcendent self. The literature on how wisdom is gained certainly suggests that *experience* is key, and that certain kinds of experience may be particularly important. It appears that wisdom is at play particularly in circumstances of uncertainty, or when coping with serious, challenging events (Ardelt, 2005; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000; Bluck & Glück, 2004, 2005; Glück, Bluck, Baron, & McAdams, 2005; Sternberg, 1998; Westrate & Glück, 2017). In short, although one can develop wisdom in other ways, adversity may be a particularly important opportunity for wisdom to be gained, and therefore the experience of adversity is one which should garner specific attention if we wish to foster wisdom.

BUT....It's not *just* the experience of adversity that counts—it's *how* we see that experience, and *what we do* with that experience that matters.

Not everyone who experiences adversity becomes wiser because of it. In fact, quite the opposite can occur. Post-traumatic stress disorder is real, and the negative response to trauma causes immeasurable suffering. Denial, bitterness, anger, and resentment can impede people's ability to move forward after trauma. As a physician I have witnessed this all too often. The damage this does to patients and families is wrenching. Gratefully, I have also witnessed the opposite—people able to move through the most challenging of circumstances and come out the other end with openness and grace, increased compassion for others, and an ability to see what is most important in their lives. The natural question to ask is, “what shapes the difference?” The answer to that question could provide the key to how we can help people to have the best possible chance of a positive response to adversity, of developing wisdom in the wake of life experience.

One fundamental question is really based in the old nature-nurture question: Is it what we bring to the table when adversity strikes (i.e., our personality traits, our “way of seeing the world,” our personal resources) that makes the difference, or is it how the event is handled either in the moment or in the aftermath (our support structure, our opportunities for debriefing and reflection)? Or is it some combination?

How we see and interpret events and circumstances: What we bring to the table of trauma probably matters. Jonathan Haidt (2006) talks about personality traits, and the differences between the “glass half full” and the “glass half empty” view of the world. It is possible, perhaps likely, that there are certain psychological pre-dispositions that make it more likely that an individual will approach the interpretation of events in a way that starts them down the path of growth in the wake of trauma. Glück and Bluck (2014) have proposed a model they call the MORE Life Experience Model, in which five key personal resources, when applied to significant life experience, can result in wisdom. The personal resources identified are: Mastery, Openness, Reflectivity, Emotion regulation, and Empathy. Recently they were able to show that these MORE resources are significantly correlated with measures of wisdom in a cross-sectional study (Glück et al., 2018). Jayawickreme et al. (2017) recently investigated the interplay between personality or dispositional factors and the process of meaning-making and gaining wisdom from traumatic life experiences. They found that Openness to Experience was associated with “the tendency to view stressful life events as turning points,” and both openness and extraversion with “the tendency to view stressful events as leading to wisdom, as well as with increased wellbeing” (Jayawickreme et al., p. 1179).

It Also Matters What We Do—In the Moment and in the Aftermath

Regardless of the resources we bring to the table, what we do in the moment of and in the aftermath of trauma is probably critical. Researchers are beginning to explore what might be key elements in helping people in the aftermath of trauma to have the best chance for wisdom. Ardel has noted that among the three main elements of wisdom, it is likely the reflective capacity that is most important in the further development of wisdom (Ardelt, 2004). Glück, Bluck, and Weststrate have examined the process of self-reflection in the context of life experience. They investigated both “why” people reflected and “how” they reflected, and the relationship with wisdom. Their findings demonstrate that

“wisdom was positively associated with exploratory processing of difficult life experience (meaning-making, personal growth), whereas redemptive processing (positive emotional reframing, event resolution) was positively associated with adjustment” (Glück et al., 2018, p. 810). In the Wisdom in Medicine study, Plews-Ogan et al. described important elements in how wisdom exemplars moved through difficult circumstance, and what helped or hindered this process (Plews-Ogan, Owens, & May, 2013; Plews-Ogan et al., 2016). Altogether, current research suggests that it is not only what we bring to the table when adversity strikes, but what we *do* in the moment and in the aftermath that can make a wisdom-gained outcome more likely.

The hopeful aspect of all of this research is that there may be leverage points along the way to help people. There may be ways to foster people's capacity for developing wisdom out of adversity by enhancing their “glass half full” outlook (enhancing optimism, gratitude), and growing their internal resources (e.g., for reflection, empathy, mastery, emotion regulation, openness). There also may be ways to help people in the moment and in the aftermath of adversity—by providing the right kinds of social support and opportunities for exploratory processing (Glück et al., 2018).

Becoming Better—The Positive Response to Adversity

The Wisdom in Medicine project (Owens, Mehard, Plews-Ogan, Calhoun, & Ardel, 2016; Plews-Ogan et al., 2013, 2016) was an in-depth interview study of physicians and patients designed to investigate how people cope positively with adversity and to examine in depth their experience, the process they described in moving through their experience, what helped and what hindered their positive change. The study looked at two populations, physicians coping with a serious medical error, and patients coping with chronic pain. The study was a mixed methods study including quantitative measures of wisdom as well as in-depth interviews. Interview narratives were scored by researchers and exemplars identified using Ardel's wisdom framework as a conceptual

model. Wisdom exemplars, as identified through their narratives, scored significantly higher on the 3-D wisdom scale quantitative measure.

Examination of the exemplar narratives identified five major elements in the process of coping positively with adversity, the wisdom-generating response to adversity. These elements included:

- acceptance
- “stepping in”
- integration
- new narrative
- wisdom.

These elements were not linear, and in fact were quite iterative and circular for many, moving in and out of various elements as they struggled to cope over the course of what was for many a very long period of time. Considering all of the elements together, a process emerged of moving from acceptance of this devastating circumstance to the development of wisdom. What follows is an exploration of these elements and a discussion of how each element might be seen in relation to the events and the aftermath of Charlottesville.

Acceptance

First off, I knew what I had done...I knew what I should have done and so then it became, well, how did you miss it in this case? (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

For the wisdom in medicine study exemplars, a clear-eyed acceptance of the truth of the situation they were facing was an essential element in the process. Physician exemplars described what it was like to really take in the true impact of having made a serious medical error, or a bad outcome, the emotional and psychological weight of what had happened. Rather than backing away from the experience, they stood squarely in it. It involved accepting responsibility, rather than seeking to shift responsibility to others. This taking responsibility did not necessarily mean that these physicians were solely responsible for the adverse

event, nor did it even mean that the events were actually preventable. They often sought out a colleague whom they could trust to give them a “clear-eyed” look at what had happened, and what, if anything, they could have done differently. They found it particularly un-helpful for colleagues to just re-assure them—rather they sought out people who took their responsibility seriously—who could be honest and help them face the truth of what had happened.

For the pain patients, acceptance meant a frank acknowledgment to themselves that no one else was going to “fix” the situation for them. For some, it meant accepting that they might never be completely pain free, and that they were going to have to learn to live “with” their pain rather than fight it. This clear-eyed look at the truth often involved accepting some very difficult and uncomfortable facts. This acceptance set them up for the next step—accepting responsibility for what happens next.

So, what does “acceptance” look like in relation to the events of Charlottesville 2017?

Acceptance in Charlottesville: The events of August 11th and 12th were long in the making.

Charlottesville is a complicated place. The City of Charlottesville has been lauded as one of the happiest places to live (*The Guardian*, 2014), and the University of Virginia is one of the best public universities in the country. This belies the undeniable, sordid history of both the city of Charlottesville and the University of Virginia in relation to racial equality and racial justice. One has only to reach back to the Jim Crow era to see the beginnings of this August 11th—and 12th 2017 tragedy. The more recent saga began in the spring of 2016, when Charlottesville High School student Zyhana Bryant petitioned her city council to remove the statue of Robert E. Lee from its place in Courthouse Square. That statue, like many across the nation, was erected in 1924. Just six years before, that same square had been the site of a “torch-bearing lynching mob” and it served as the center of Charlottesville’s political, legal, and civil authority (Nelson & Harold, 2018, p. 5). The statue’s dedication was accompanied by the grand parade of the KKK (Nelson & Harold, 2018, p. 7). The University’s history is no better. The University had multiple connections to white supremacist organizations

like the KKK and Anglo-Saxon Cubs of America (Nelson & Harold, 2018, p. 9). Among the more disturbing historical facts is the role that a prominent professor of physiology, Paul Barringer, played in promoting ideas of white racial superiority through the study of eugenics (Reynolds, 2018).

It is tempting to think that this was all in the past, that Charlottesville has moved on—and in many ways we have. Yet the events of 2017 revealed the undeniable truth that we, not unlike other communities, remain tethered, deeply so, to that past in ways that erode our present.

The events of August 11th and 12th: Willis Jenkins, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, writes about the lead-up to the events of those fateful two days: “By the time the torch-bearing white supremacists reached the Jefferson statue at the Rotunda on the night of August 11, the residents of Charlottesville had already lived through a year of intensifying pressure” (Jenkins, 2018). With a KKK rally, a candlelight march in response, and months of threats and anxiety about what might happen were this gathering to be allowed to occur, Charlottesville was on edge, and many of us were already in the midst of a moral conflict. The President of the University had sent an email to all students and staff imploring us to “stay home,” stating that “to approach the rally and to confront the activists would only satisfy their craving for spectacle” (Sullivan email, 2017). On the one hand, this seemed prudent, prioritizing safety and avoiding conflict. However, in reality, this left us with the uneasy choice of a) allowing the racist, white supremacist voice to be the only voice, allowing that message of hate to go unanswered, or b) to go against the state and the university, which (though we did not know it at the time) meant facing the possibility of confrontation without even the most basic of enforcement of the rule of law. On that night, I and hundreds of others had gathered in St. Paul’s Episcopal Church for an interfaith service. Willis Jenkins writes that he found himself in the most unlikely position of “standing guard” at the doors of the church, while hundreds of alt-right white supremacists carrying Tiki torches and shouting “Jews will not replace us” and “blood and soil” surrounded the small group of UVA

students who had gathered around the statue of Thomas Jefferson just across from the church. He writes, “as the torches came into view at the Rotunda, someone sprinted across the street with an urgent message: students were holding their ground at the Jefferson statue at the bottom of the Rotunda steps with no one to defend them. She pleaded with us to go assist them. The lead organizer (of the interfaith service) instructed us to remain at our posts, for there were hundreds of people in the church and no police in sight. Our duty was to protect the assembly. The messenger cursed us in frustration and ran back. As it turned out, of course, the torches stopped at the Jefferson statue and encircled students and staff, who were first threatened and then assaulted. Police interceded some long minutes later” (Jenkins, 2018, p. 165). This situation repeated itself throughout that long weekend, with police inexplicably standing by as violence erupted, chaos ensuing in the streets as though there were no laws. Underlying all of this was the explicit request, from the University, *not to engage* when this hatred and bigotry was on display on our campus. By requesting non-engagement, by “emphasizing that its members should prioritize safety and avoid incivility, the university followed the city in normalizing white terrorism as civic action deserving due respect” (Jenkins, 2018).

Acceptance for the community of Charlottesville means taking a clear-eyed look not only at the events that took place those two horrifying days, but at the history that formed the backdrop for those events, and the ways in which we continue to manifest that legacy in the present day. It means taking a good hard look at our collective and our individual responses to the events. What did we do well, and how did we fail in that critical and confusing set of events? If practical wisdom is discerning right action in situations where there are conflicting values, then those two days in Charlottesville were a true test of *phronesis*. Did we choose compassion when what we really needed to exert was courage? Did we respect authority when we really should have chosen civil disobedience? The choices we made in those moments reveal some truth about who we really are as a community, about the ways in which our past seeps into our present, and gives us a more truthful starting point for transformative, positive change.

What does acceptance look like to the *health care community* of Charlottesville?

Diversity and inclusion have been on the radar of medical schools and health professional training programs for a number of years. Our health system, like others, had been making some important strides: successfully increasing the diversity of the medical school from 6% underrepresented minority to 26%, expanding our office for diversity, putting a major focus on increasing the diversity of our GME programs and our faculty, re-naming buildings (the medical school version of taking down statues). But with the election of Donald Trump came a noticeable uptick in brazen discriminatory acts by patients and families directed toward our trainees and staff, and these more abstract notions of diversity and inclusion began to take on a very personal, very present-moment feel in our everyday delivery of care. As a health system, we were beginning to see, with clearer eyes, the reality of our present moment.

Here are the stories that helped to reveal the truth of the present moment and created the opportunity for ACCEPTANCE:

- An encounter in the elevator: A female resident wearing a hijab is asked by a visitor to get off the elevator so that they don't have to ride on an elevator with a "terrorist".
- "You're the ones we're supposed to shoot": A middle-eastern physician is asked where they are from by a patient they are meeting for the first time. When the physician responds that they are from a Middle Eastern country, the patient retorts: "oh, you're one of those ones we're supposed to shoot".
- The AA nurse at the bedside: an African-American nurse was attending to a white female patient when the patient ordered her out of the room, staying "I don't want no 'nigger' taking care of me."
- The medical student left outside the room: During rounds, an African-American male medical student was asked to wait outside the room of a patient who had exhibited racist behavior the day prior with another medical student. This request from his attending physician was made in an attempt to avoid conflict with the patient.
- A lesbian PhD student is surprised by her mentor: A PhD student who is lesbian was told by her supervising faculty member that it was "so great that, because the student was a lesbian, the supervisor didn't have to worry about the student getting pregnant".

Accepting the truth that the experience of bigotry and prejudice is a present reality in our hospitals and clinics was only half the battle. The second half was accepting the truth that *we have not been successful in responding to these incidents* (Acosta & Ackerman-Barger, 2017; Paul-Emile, Smith, Lo, & Fernandez, 2016; Singh, Sivasubramaniam, Shuman, & Mir, 2015; Young, Anderson, & Stewar, 2015) The culture of medicine has been one which has prioritized the duty to care for all, regardless of their beliefs or even their actions. This is a critical and admirable commitment, and it is one of the things which distinguishes our profession as an honorable one. However, like the call to not engage with the violent confrontational approach of the white supremacists, it leaves health professionals in the uneasy moral dilemma of not responding when a patient exhibits bigoted, prejudiced, hateful behavior toward a health professional. Not responding cedes the moral ground to this bigoted stance, not to mention the violence and negative effects on wellbeing it allows, toward the target person (Sanchez, Himmelstein, Young, Albuja, & Garcia, 2016). Standing up and responding in this circumstance, had been previously seen as a form of the “incivility” that Jenkins writes about (2018). Thus, the profession has tacitly enabled bigoted verbal attacks on its health professionals for years (Paul-Emile et al., 2016). Seeing the truth of this circumstance is the first step toward fixing it.

Stepping in

So it was just this overwhelming feeling and yet I was the captain of the ship, so had to maintain order and stability because this was a tragedy for everybody. So I very quickly mobilized the players who were involved, my team and the MICU team together and said “Guys, we have had a tragedy here. We’re not sure what happened but let’s process it.” (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

I (apologized) right at the start, I blew it, I am sorry, you have nobody to blame but me on this one. (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

It took all the courage I could muster to go back and see him again, because I thought he was just going to lash out at me again, but I felt such a strong need to ask him to forgive me and to check on him and to let him know that I care about him and that I would never mean him any harm. (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

Another key element in the positive response to adversity we call “stepping in.” Essentially, “stepping in” represents a courageous move to take ownership of the story—to take responsibility for what was to follow, for the response to their circumstance. For the physicians in the Wisdom in Medicine study, this involved an honest, and often very difficult, discussion with the patient/family about the adverse event. These were wrenching, emotional situations, rightly filled with expressions of grief, frustration, and anger. “I felt like the right thing to do was to go talk to them and tell them (exactly what had happened) and if they felt like they needed to sue me then you know we would just have to deal with that...” (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study). It meant bringing together the treatment team to talk openly about what happened, to acknowledge the grief, and to help team members face the circumstance honestly and openly. It meant diving in to try to discern how and why the error occurred, a process of looking failure squarely in the face. For the patients with chronic pain, it meant a challenging process of letting go of expectations that others will fix things for them and stepping into take ahold of their treatment. For some that meant getting a second opinion. For most, it meant exploring therapies that called on their own commitment and capabilities, therapies like yoga or mindfulness or relaxation. It meant beginning to “work with” their pain, exploring therapies and activities that might help them to manage the pain more successfully, to have the pain be less bothersome, less invasive in their life.

Stepping in-Charlottesville

On August 11 and 12, the UVA health system did what health care providers do—our leadership, trauma, and emergency services were prepared, organized, and effective. In a twist of irony, the team of trauma surgeons who received patients that day and who continued to care for these patients in the ensuing weeks, was made up entirely of the racial, ethnic, and religious identities targeted by the white supremacists. Each entity had planned how and when they would call in the necessary extra staff, and when called, people responded. Staging areas sprang into action to triage patients, the emergency room was emptied out

and ready to receive patients who were most seriously injured, hospital beds were opened to receive patients, and operating rooms stood ready to receive the trauma patients who needed urgent surgical intervention. Medical students, residents, staff, and faculty volunteers waited (literally waited in the cafeteria) to stage in as needed. Social workers, chaplains, and counselors mobilized to help families and staff alike. Local restaurants and university students delivered pizza and bagels. There was an outpouring of help—it was what health care providers could do, and UVA did it well.

During the events of August 11 and 12, our multi-ethnic, multi-racial team of health professionals and support staff had done a certain kind of stepping in—caring for people from all walks of life in a situation of moral conflict. We did what we were trained to do in that moment, to care for all regardless of their beliefs, or even their actions.

The aftermath was a now a different moment, and required a different kind of stepping in. In the early aftermath, we continued to do what health professionals do—we cared for the injured and their families without regard to their beliefs or even their actions. But it was harder. With the dust cleared and the emergency passed, the confederate flags in the waiting areas and the white supremacist tattoos became a daily moral challenge, an “in your face” reminder of the racist origins of the injuries. In that early aftermath, we also did what humans who are suffering do—we sat together in town hall meetings, trying to make sense of what happened, giving voice to our anger and our grief, and supporting each other. We marched and sang together in a candlelight march re-tracing the steps that the white supremacists had taken the night of August 11, in an attempt to re-claim that ground in the name of love. <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/17/544081108/glow-from-candlelight-vigil-in-charlottesville-lights-up-uva-campus>.

The town hall meetings were our first step toward coming to terms, as a health care institution, with how we respond when bigotry and prejudice are on display in our health system. In those town hall meetings, there was grief, anger, and frustration. There were those who were angry about Charlottesville being invaded by outsiders who brought hate and violence to our town. There were others who voiced anger that these issues of bigotry and racism have actually existed here for

hundreds of years and that talking about it as an invasion was to miss the point. We began the process of collecting stories, of confronting the reality in our own sphere of influence of how we contribute to a culture which tacitly permits racism and bigotry.

Integration

I never thought I was perfect, but boy this brought it up you know big time. And trying to slowly work through the fact... how you can just quietly own that. (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

Well, the humility I gained was not just in the professional domain. That was, that was deep down to my core. I used to try to separate them (the professional from the personal), I don't try to do that anymore. (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

Exemplars in the Wisdom in Medicine study engaged in an element we called *integration*. In this integration process, exemplars were exploring the meaning of the event, how it changes their self-understanding and their understanding of the world. They were questioning assumptions, confronting beliefs, trying to integrate the reality of what is with their prior constructs of how things are supposed to be. For the physicians, the most wrenching question was whether it is possible to be a good, but imperfect, doctor. In medicine we tend to forget that our functioning is not unlike any other human being—our brains have the same vulnerability to error as any other brain. Cognitive psychologists have helped us to understand the brain's vulnerability to errors in perception and cognition (see selective attention test <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJG698U2Mvo>). Human factors engineers have helped us to design systems in medicine that guard against these errors. But *really* understanding that vulnerability and integrating it into how we function every day is a seismic shift for most doctors. It's akin to any human being living with the understanding of their mortality, not in a superficial way, but in a deep way that informs their actions and their decisions each day. It's not easy. But it is where wisdom is found—that space

between paralyzing doubt and over-confident knowing. For chronic pain patients the integration process involved the exploration of what it means to live *with* the pain. Integrating these negative life events into their understanding of themselves and the world was key to the next element, writing a new narrative for themselves.

The kind of integration process that the wisdom in medicine study participants described is akin to Weststrate and Glück's (2017) "exploratory processing" and Linley's "dialectical integration" (Linley, 2003). Linley describes two processes as key to wisdom development. One, dialectical integration, is a synthesis of regular life with trauma in which a person is able to "simultaneously hold in mind two opposite positions on the basis that they are but part of a wider picture in which the opposition is subsumed" (Linley, 2003, p. 607). Weststrate and Glück describe "exploratory processing" as a "wisdom-fostering self-reflection" in which individuals "explore their own role in the occurrence of negative life events, confront and examine negative feelings, and do the effortful work of finding meaning in the difficult experience." As they remark, "***This type of self-reflection is rare, probably because it is less pleasant than other processing modes***" (Weststrate & Glück, 2017, p. 810).

Integration in the Aftermath of Charlottesville

In the weeks after the events, we began a collective self-reflection, this integration process. What had led to this place in which we find ourselves? What do these events say about who we are? What will be our next steps, because these next steps really matter. What comes after the town halls and the candlelight marches?

Both the city and the university began a painful reflection process that included appointing independent investigations of how each had handled the event, with the intent of better understanding what things needed to be changed in order to address deficits, and what needed to be put in place to prevent such an event from ever happening again (see Hunton & Williams, 2017, independent investigation). Some failures were logistical or tactical and could be addressed in a straightforward manner. What was more complex to address was whether (and if

so, what) underlying assumptions, or bias, led us to make these logistical or tactical errors? Wrestling with that question as a community requires opening ourselves up to the idea that we are not exactly who we thought we were, that perhaps we have biases and blind spots that colored our assessment of the situation or influenced our judgment without our awareness. And then there were clear conflicts underlying some of our inaction, or confusion about how to act. Rita Goluboff writes about the legal double bind for universities: There is “an increasingly apparent conflict between two different legal regimes: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the First Amendment. On the one hand, Title VI requires that universities ensure that their campuses are free from hostile racial environments. On the other hand, the First Amendment to the US constitution requires government actors, which include public universities, not to restrict free speech” (Goluboff, 2018, p. 88). This begs the question “even if hate speech is protected by the First Amendment, can its unchecked expression lead to sanctions under Title VI?” “If universities protect hate speech to comply with the first amendment, they might run afoul of Title VI. But if they curtail hate speech to comply with Title VI, they might run afoul of the first amendment” (Goluboff, 2018, p. 88). She then goes on to foreshadow: “One way through, or perhaps around, this dilemma might actually be beyond the law.” And further, “We live under the law, but just as often we live under social norms that operate in relation to the law. In other words, what the law allows and what a community expects from its members are often different things” (Goluboff, 2018, pp. 88–89).

Integration in Our Health Care System

Health care has its own conflict of values uncovered in our reflection after the events of August 11 and 12. In the wake of the KKK rally earlier in 2017, we noted an uptick in brazen discriminatory acts by patients and families directed toward our trainees and staff, and these stories of prejudice, discrimination, and bigotry in our health system prompted a process of self-exploration by a health-system wide group tasked with answering the question: how can we make our health system a place of welcome for people of all skin colors, faiths and

nationalities, a place where all are treated with respect, and where acts which are contrary to those values are reliably denounced? We talked about everything from the signs at the entrance to and around our health system, to the ways that we do or do not confront overt expressions of racism, sexism and other “-isms” in our clinics, our hospital, and our classrooms. Vigorous discussion ensued that centered around the inherent tension between two deeply held commitments—the commitment to care for all persons no matter what their beliefs, what they say, or even what they do, and the commitment to foster an environment of respect for all persons, a care system in which our patients, our trainees, our faculty and our staff are treated with respect. This meant wrestling with how to integrate caring for all regardless of their beliefs with being a community of respect for all persons. It meant coming to terms with the fact that we have not been successful in this endeavor up until now and figuring out what it will take to do that. There was a heightened awareness of the ways in which we have been silent in the face of bigotry and discrimination, and a heightened desire to be a part of a meaningful, positive solution. We wrestled with the complexity of how to step in effectively and compassionately when a patient exhibits discriminatory behavior, given our dual commitment to giving compassionate care to all persons no matter what their beliefs, and to creating an environment of respect for all persons (Paul-Emile et al., 2016; Whitgob, Blankenburg, & Bogetz, 2016). We talked about policies, the value, and the limitations, of having a policy that explicitly required respectful behavior of all patients (the presumed option being transfer to another institution were this policy violated).

Practical wisdom often involves balancing of two important values (Plews-Ogan & Sharpe, 2017). Clinicians caring for patients in the stories described above, have two important responsibilities to balance: the responsibility to care compassionately for all people no matter what their views, and the responsibility to stand up and counter disrespectful, bigoted, hateful acts. But we have an advantage as healers: we are primed to empathy and compassion. Add to that a true desire to understand what might be behind the bigoted act, and you may have the ingredients for what Goluboff is trying to describe, and potentially a more effective response than any clear-cut legal or policy process would produce.

New Narrative

Well, it's kind of like what I was talking about when I say icon versus what's real. It's like...to be a good doctor is not to be made out of...crystal or something, you know, this sort of flawless whatever. It's, it's all the flaws and all the whatever. It isn't, it's not about perfection in some other sense,... it's just a different vision of what it means to, to be excellent, I guess, and a more real vision of that. (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

i had never really appreciated up until now how we really all can, if we work together and work together well, then we can help fix each-other's failings little bits at a time. (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

...so I really changed the way I work. I said I'm not going to do this multi-tasking, I'm going to spend time on things and I'm going to see patients at a slower pace. And I'm not good at negotiating things for myself, but that I was really firm on. And because of that I've had some incredible encounters with patients... that never could have happened. It's a really good thing to have come from this. (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

There is a literature on meaning-making in response to trauma (Neimeyer, 2006; Weststrate & Glück, 2017) Recall Weststrate and Glück's study on reflection and processing in the wake of trauma, which clarifies an essential distinction between redemptive processing and exploratory processing. Redemptive processing has to do with how an individual interprets the emotional impact of an event and its resolution. Exploratory processing involves meaning-making and personal growth. As noted by Weststrate and Glück, "redemptive processing may represent a pathway to adjustment to trauma, and exploratory processing a pathway to wisdom" (Weststrate & Glück, p. 810).

In the Wisdom in Medicine study, exemplar patients and physicians eventually found a way to integrate these negative events into their lives in a way that resulted in a new story—one that included the negative event but most importantly created a positive outcome and personal change, giving meaning and purpose to their suffering.

Creating a new narrative was not just about how the exemplars *thought* about the situation, it was what they *did*. It was not so much about adjusting to the event as it is about finding a new way of being. These

exemplars changed not just the way they thought about things, but the way they did things. For example, physicians talked about how they changed the way they practiced because of their experience—working in teams where members were encouraged to speak up—creating systems to catch errors in progress—insisting on having more time with patients and standing up to forces in medicine that push for more patients in less time. Patients took up yoga and exercise, learned meditation and mended relationships, learned to work with their pain in a way that moved it from a battle to a more productive, less combative, or fearful stance.

Creating a New Narrative in the Health System

In the aftermath of August 11th and 12th, we took the next steps that we could take to create positive change with the health system. We were prepared to handle the medical consequences of August 12th. Now we want to have our health system prepared in a different way: prepared to respond to bigotry clearly, compassionately, and effectively. We figured out, to the best of our ability, how to signal our values to the community we serve. We compiled resources to help people who witness such events. And we made explicit our policy, which enables us to offer transfer to a patient who refuses to be cared for by certain members of our team based on race or ethnicity. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we designed training workshops for faculty and staff, clinicians, and educators in all domains, grounded in videos depicting stories from our own health system of bigotry and prejudice, and utilizing the evidence-based understanding of interpersonal interaction (Horowitz et al., 2006), and approaches to difficult conversations in the health care setting.

Our training approach has been straightforward.

- **Prepare for the Conversation:** Take a mindful moment to check on your own emotions and thoughts, decide who needs to be in the room, and how you will approach the conversation.
- **Adopt a Stance of Curiosity Rather Than Judgment:** This will defend against a powerfully destructive force in these situations—the tendency to ascribe mal-intent and flawed character to those who do something we don't agree with.

- Start with Compassion: “I can imagine how hard it is to be in the hospital.”
- State Your Concern: “Here at UVA we work as a team and DR. X is an integral part of that team.”
- Ask a Curious Question: “So help me understand a little bit more about your worries.”
- Focus on the Care: “So let’s talk about how I might allay your concerns so that we can all get to work on some of the health issues you came here to resolve.”

Our approach emphasizes two key principles:

- curiosity rather than judgment
- compassion.

It is our hope that these two principles will open the door, in at least some encounters, to positive change.

Knowing what to do is different than being able to do it. It takes practice to handle these emotion-laden situations well. Working with the theatre department we created training sessions that are as challenging and real as possible. Participants are asked to engage in real scenarios gathered from our own health system experience. Our goal is to have our whole health system prepared in a different way: prepared to respond to bigotry clearly, compassionately, and effectively.

Wisdom

And I certainly am absolutely more understanding and forgiving of the frailties of others, whether my coworkers or the nurses. (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

I think a sense of my own strength is the one of those that stands out...I am willing and able to tolerate the discomfort of the disagreement when it is the right thing to do. (Physician Wisdom in Medicine study)

So I do think I am a lot more tolerant of uncertainty... because you realize that you can't fix it all... (Physician, Wisdom in Medicine study)

In the Wisdom in Medicine study, the fifth element in the exemplary narratives was consistent with wisdom gained and often applied to the next experience. Participants talked about what they had learned and how they had changed for the better. They used the language of wisdom to talk about these transformative changes.

Six themes that emerged from the narratives in this element—themes of wisdom gained:

- The first was an increased sense of **strength**, a sense that in the future they would be able to handle difficult experiences in a positive way.
- The second was an increased ability to deal with **ambiguity** and to accept the complexity of events and circumstances.
- The third was **humility**—an awareness of their limitations and an increased willingness to acknowledge their vulnerability to mistakes or imperfection.
- The fourth was **compassion**, an increased capacity for forgiveness and compassion for others.
- The fifth was a new degree of **openness**—to other's support, to other's ideas, to new ways of doing things.
- And finally, they described a deeper sense of **meaning** in their lives and in the world, and an ability to focus on those things that mattered.

Wisdom Manifest in the Wake of Charlottesville—One Health System's Experience

An Increased Sense of Strength: We Can Do This!

There is a new resolve within the Health System that not only *must* we do something to change our culture in the health system for the better, but we *can* do something. We have put a stake in the ground that the status quo is not an option, and we must, and we can, respond to bigotry in a principled and effective way. We have committed to raising awareness of the existence of bigotry and prejudice in our health system, and for the need for all people in our health system to respond. We have committed to training *all* people who supervise trainees or other team

members in how to respond to these situations, giving them the skills, and the practice, to respond with skill and integrity. And we have committed to measuring whether or not we are actually acting differently over the course of the next year.

An Increased Ability to Accept Complexity and to Deal with Ambiguity

What we know so far from leading these workshops is that there is no play by play rule book that will anticipate every turn and twist in this complex set of interactions. There is no if-then, fail-safe response in these situations where clinicians have to face bigotry and prejudice in the clinical environment. It takes skill, courage, self-awareness, curiosity, emotion regulation, forgiveness, willingness to fail, support of others, compassion for self and other. In short, it takes practical wisdom. The best part of the workshops is the dialogue, the wrestling with how hard this can be, the trial and error and forgiveness and hope that the workshops generate.

The other thing we know: Policies aren't adequate for dealing with complex situations. The ambiguity and complexity of these circumstances mean that rules, or policies, though important in setting the floor, are not sufficient to clear the barrier, and are not likely to be practically useful in most circumstances. They are important, critical even, for setting the floor. But they are not a substitute for the harder work of establishing expectations, norms, and relationships that change the culture.

For one thing, a policy that states,

if you are unwilling to accept care from our health care team for racial, gender or ethnic reasons, then we will offer you a transfer to another health care facility.

may sound useful, but in practicality it is nearly impossible to transfer a patient under such circumstances. What other hospital system would accept that patient? The policy then is useful insofar as it stands as concrete evidence of our value of respect for all persons. It can help people to have the courage to stand squarely in that value. But it is not a substitute for the harder work of establishing the norms in a culture.

Second, rules can have unintentional consequences, limiting wise judgment. Do we really want to create a red line about patients requesting consideration of who is assigned to their care based on gender, or ethnic background? Consider the following:

- A woman requests to be treated only by a woman because she has a history of sexual abuse by men.
- A Muslim woman requests to be treated only by a woman based on religious beliefs.
- A white 90-year-old woman requests to have the male African American nurse removed from her care because, for many years growing up, she was taught to fear African American men.
- A veteran of the Iraq war, suffering from PTSD, who lost most of his unit in an ambush, requests a change of physician because the resident assigned to him is from Iraq.

Recall Risa Goluboff's reflections on August 11th and 12th about the inherent conflict between the first amendment and Title VI and Title XI, putting the University in a double bind. She notes that the law, with its limitations, may not be able to provide a way out of this bind. "One way through, or perhaps around, this dilemma might actually be beyond the law." She goes on to say "We live under the law, but just as often we live under social norms that operate in relation to the law. In other words, what the law allows and what a community expects from its members are often different things" (Goluboff, 2018, pp. 88–89). In the health system, policies are not likely to provide the answers to the dilemmas in which we find ourselves in the day-to-day delivery of health care. It is much more likely that the norms we create and live out, and the skill with which we apply those norms and expectations to difficult circumstances, will be our way through.

The complexity of these situations also means that managing these situations wisely takes more than just knowing what to do and having a policy to set the bottom line. Acting wisely in these charged, challenging interpersonal situations requires skills and practice.

Humility, Self-Awareness and Self-Management: “Between Stimulus and Response There Is a Space” (Covey)—

Moral action is most likely the result of a complex interplay between emotion and cognition, and this interplay is both automatic and controlled (Helion & Oschner, 2018; Ochsner & Gross, 2008; Otto, Misra, Prasad, & McRae, 2014). Much of the time when we act unwisely in the moment, there is a degree of unawareness of our own emotions and their control over our actions if unchecked. The first step in interrupting this otherwise automatic response in a conflict situation is awareness—of our own thoughts and emotions. In the context of Charlottesville, those emotions can lead to either avoidance or an aggressive response, neither of which achieve our stated goals. We are now actively training our faculty, residents, and students in mindfulness, the non-judgmental moment-to-moment awareness that can give people in stressful circumstances a leg up in managing difficult situations of any kind. We will *all* be triggered by certain situations. We cannot prevent that initial emotional response—fear, anger—but with awareness we can interrupt the reflexive response that is often not the most-wise response, giving ourselves half a chance for acting wisely. Choice is found in that space created between stimulus and response. When we open up that space, we can see that there are choices in between avoidance and aggression. Practical wisdom lies in that in-between. Helping people to open up that space is really about giving them tools to take a split second to stop, take a breath, ask themselves “what am I feeling? What am I thinking? What are my goals? What are my choices in this moment?”

Humility and self-reflection in community: I recall a meeting in which we were discussing respect, and our policy for treating all whom we encounter with respect, asking that our patients do the same. There were many in the room who were focused on the disrespect that some patients show to our staff who are different from them. We were feeling strongly about how these patients should recognize how damaging their behavior is, and how we will no longer tolerate it. I could not help but think about how often we, as a health system, unintentionally treat

our patients in a way that can feel disrespectful—two and three hour waits to see a physician, failure to accommodate special needs, failure to greet, welcome and assist patients in a way that recognizes the suffering that most are experiencing when they encounter a health system—since not many come to our doorstep when they are “at their best.” Not to mention our other failures—our mistakes and our inefficiencies that are, at times, enough to challenge the patience of a saint. Recall Weststrate and Glück’s (2017) research suggests that “Wisdom-fostering forms of self-reflection require that individuals” (and I would add communities) “explore their own role in the occurrence of negative life events, confront and examine negative feelings, and do the effortful work of finding meaning in the difficult experience. This type of self-reflection is rare, probably because it is less pleasant than other processing modes” (Weststrate & Glück, 2017, p. 810).

The inspiring, and at the same time often “unpleasant”, result of thinking about wisdom is that it makes one think, regularly, about the wisdom of one’s own thoughts and actions. It generates humility and prompts action to correct one’s own failings.

Compassion and Forgiveness

Research suggests that the association between forgiveness and wisdom is positive and moderately strong (Taylor, Bates, & Webster, 2011). In the Wisdom in Medicine study, forgiveness (of self or other) played a substantial role in helping exemplars to move through adversity in a positive, wisdom-generating way (Becker, May, & Plews-Ogan, 2012; Plews-Ogan et al., 2013, 2016). It did not come easily, however. The physicians in the study universally found it very difficult to accept forgiveness (or to forgive themselves) for fear that they were “letting themselves off the hook” (to use their words), or for fear that forgiveness would somehow imply that they were lowering the standards to which they felt so committed. Similarly, responding to bigoted or discriminatory behavior brings up issues justice, acknowledgment of harm, and the desire to hold to a higher standard of behavior. And

at the same time, forgiveness *may* be key in helping both victim and perpetrator to move through their experience with a positive outcome. Forgiveness, whether of self or other, enables human beings to move on from trauma, to let go of things that cannot be changed, and to begin to see the events from a different perspective. Forgiveness can also re-establish relationships, with another or with the self, thereby enabling the healing and growth that occurs in relationships. Justice and forgiveness have a complex relationship. There may be approaches to justice which are more likely to be associated with forgiveness and the restoration of relationship. Restorative justice (as opposed to retributive justice) is an approach which “seeks to elevate the role of crime victims and community members, hold offenders directly accountable to the people they have violated, and restore the emotional and material losses of victims by providing a range of opportunities for dialogue, negotiation, and problem solving that can lead to a greater sense of community safety, conflict resolution, and healing for all involved” (Armour & Umbreit, 2005, p. 491). Recent research on the relationship between justice and forgiveness suggests that “while a restored sense of justice is overall positively related to forgiveness, forgiveness is highly dependent on the means of justice restoration being retributive (punitive) versus restorative (consensus-seeking) in nature. The findings showed that, overall, restorative but not retributive responses led to greater forgiveness” (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2014, p. 463).

As Acosta suggests, “We are in desperate need of new forums of interaction so that we can achieve more positive learning and workplace environments. Restorative justice practices can help a group identify and gain mutual understanding of the personal and collective harm that has occurred, create the conditions that incentivize offenders to admit responsibility rather than deny or minimize the harm, and explore and define a set of problem-solving steps to address the harm and rebuild community trust” (Acosta & Karp, 2018, p. 356). In the health system, the early town hall meetings were filled with both grief and anger. A year later, at a similar meeting, there was talk instead of how much we need each other—and how over the past year, we have begun to learn how to reach out to each other. The workshops can be a place for

experiences of forgiveness. A place where people can try out responses, fail, talk it through, and try again. But health care remains a fairly harsh, unforgiving environment, probably because the consequences of our mistakes are high, and the professions are full of perfectionist types, so we have a long way to go.

Practicing suspending judgment and asking the curious question: another example of humility.

Rachel Wahl, in her essay “Dialogue in Bad Times,” writes of her research in dialogue between people on opposite sides of a conflict, “Even in the hardest of settings, in dialogues I observed between police and communities, it was during similar moments in which suspicion was suspended that shifts seemed possible. One white police officer remarked of an African American woman who was present at the dialogue, ‘She says ‘I understand’. Do you know how disarming that is?’. This woman’s willingness to acknowledge his experience ‘disarmed’ this officer.” Wahl adds “it creates an opening in which the attempt at understanding might be reciprocated” (Wahl, 2018, p. 186). Asking the curious question (help me understand...) can bring out information that can be helpful in changing behaviors. The curious question helps us to gain enough information to begin to build a different, more positive narrative about the other person (or ourselves), and opens the door to behavior change. For example, Gill et al. noted that social explanations (i.e. low socioeconomic status of Blacks stems from historical maltreatment) is important in initiating a self regulatory cycle that can foster prejudice-reduction (Gill & Andreychik, 2007). Suspending judgment and practicing curiosity is a fundamental pillar of our approach to these challenging conversations.

Openness and Seeing Things from Many Perspectives

“To be wise is to know, *and* to doubt” (Meacham, 1990, p. 181). The need for debate, disagreement, challenge, and the ability to see things from multiple perspectives is a sign of a healthy wisdom-focused society/community. “One’s confidence in knowing can be increased, and

wisdom lost, through immersion in an intellectual climate that forces a too early defense of one's views, a premature foreclosure of possible conceptual positions. In the course of defending such positions, we adopt a more extreme and hardened stance, moving further from the moderation of wisdom" (Meacham, 1990, p. 205). This balancing happens not within one individual, but in between persons, in community. Again, Meacham writes, "The maintenance of wisdom throughout the life course and its restoration if it has been lost depend upon the continued immersion of the individual within a 'wisdom atmosphere' that assists the individual in avoiding the extremes of too confident knowing and of paralyzing doubt. In a wisdom atmosphere, there is a supportive network of interpersonal relations in which doubts, uncertainties, and questions can be openly expressed, in which ambiguities and contradictions can be tolerated, so that the individuals are not forced to adopt the defensive position of too confident knowing. Furthermore, the recognition through expressing one's doubts that others share similar doubts and yet have found a basis for confident action can keep individuals from being forced into the position of paralyzing skepticism" (Meacham, 1990, p. 208). What keeps this debate on point, however, is the willingness to see and acknowledge the truth, where it can be discerned, and the commitment to the common good (Sternberg, 2005).

Embracing Failure and Accepting Truth

The recognition of failure and truth is a sign of wisdom—something to be recognized and admired. If a community is truly interested in wisdom-generation, then it is critical to attend to how the community responds to failure. There must be a place for truth and the responsibility to responding to the truth—no matter how inconvenient, uncomfortable, or difficult. If failures are treated as character flaws, with shame and blame as the dominant response, then the community will suppress the wisdom-generating response to adversity. Acknowledging failure openly, in a clear-eyed way, is the first step in a wisdom-generating response. Within a culture that acknowledges failure as a human experience and that embraces justice and truth, compassion and forgiveness are not far behind.

The Oxygen of Positive Emotion

Openness, gratitude, optimism, curiosity, may help the individuals in the community act wisely in difficult, potentially divisive circumstance in part because they are naturally pre-disposed to understanding the “other” as a good, decent person. This sets us up for success when dealing with difficult, divisive situations, or even situations that require creativity to solve. There is emerging evidence that openness to experience is one personality trait that may pre-dispose to seeing and experiencing stressful events as leading to wisdom (Jayawickreme et al., 2017). Research on interpersonal dynamics suggests that in situations of conflict assuming that the *person is a good person who did a bad thing rather than assuming they are a bad person* (Rusconi, Sacchi, Capellini, Brambilla, & Cherubini, 2017) pre-disposes to more expansive expectations of behavior, and can open the door to more effective interpersonal problem-solving. Evidence suggests that positive emotion within teams leads to higher team function. König and Glück (2014) found a positive relationship between wisdom and gratitude in both qualitative and quantitative measures, and other longitudinal studies have found a positive relationship between gratitude and post-traumatic growth (Tsai et al., 2016; Zhou & Wu, 2015). It is therefore likely to be in the interest of wisdom to intentionally foster positive emotions within a community, a way of creating a healthy atmosphere in which to face the inevitable crises.

Wisdom in Action: A Wisdom Story from Charlottesville

The experience of tragedy, of loss, of injustice, such as transpired in Charlottesville August 11th and 12th, has the potential to lead to further loss, loss of relationships, of trust, of optimism. Each further experience of bias or prejudice could trigger emotion that leads to even more destructive interactions. But it also has the potential to make us better, more “real,” even wiser, when facing such situations, and this wise

action can lead to some surprising results. Consider the following example of a physician who stepped in with curiosity and compassion to respond to a patient with a swastika tattoo.

A patient known to the physician comes into the clinic two weeks after the rally. She notices a swastika on his forearm. She asks “Did you go to the rally”? He says “Nah”. She says “I noticed your tattoo. I know a lot of people are upset about what happened. Do you feel safe?”. He says: Yeah, I’m just keeping to myself. I feel terrible about what happened to that girl. I got this in prison a long time ago. I had to.” The doctor says “I get it, you had to join a gang to feel safe”. Later, while getting an EKG from an African American nurse, he says “Yea, I’d get this covered if I could afford it”. The doctor overhears this, comes in and says: “Do you want us to help you get this covered?” He says: “Yea, I do.”. And with that, before he’d left, the clinic had reached out to a tattoo parlor, a photo was sent over, and a free tattoo covering was arranged.

Such is the surprising end to what this physician thought would be a difficult conversation. It was unexpected but it was not the result of luck. It was the result of both skillful and deliberate action. That action opened up a space between persons in which wisdom could emerge for both individuals. The story and the action have been restorative to many people beyond those two. The whole clinic was restored to a belief in the possibility of openness and love with hope for a positive outcome. The health system has embraced this story as a symbol of what can happen when judgment is suspended for just a moment, when curiosity and compassion bridge the divide between two human beings, and when a healing action emerges from an atmosphere of wisdom.

I believe there is plenty of evidence to suggest that experience of adversity is a particularly powerful, if not necessary, opportunity for wisdom development. What we bring to that experience, what we do in the moment and in the aftermath, and the community in which we process that experience, has everything to do with whether we emerge with greater wisdom, or not. In his book “the Happiness Hypothesis” Jonathan Haidt gave the reader a hypothetical opportunity: if you were a parent, and were given the opportunity to erase all of the adversity that your child might face in their lifetime, would you do it? (Haidt,

2006, p. 135). Charlottesville is not an experience I would wish on anyone. Yet as we move through the response to those events, we can begin to see wisdom emerge, and, depending on what we do in the years ahead, we may see that we have become better because of it. Becoming better honors the sacrifice of so many who suffered because of the events that August weekend. Bigotry, prejudice, and discrimination have no place in a health system, and it is up to us to make that clear through our words and our actions. Curiosity and compassion can lead the way through to not just healing, but to being better than we were before. If grit is what it takes to get up after you've been knocked down, then wisdom can be found in the next steps you take.

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16

Not Today, and Probably Not Tomorrow Either: Obstacles to Wisdom and How We May Overcome Them

Judith Glück, Robert J. Sternberg
and Howard C. Nusbaum

One hundred percent. That is the percentage of authors of this volume who believe that the world would be a better place if people more frequently applied wisdom to their interactions with other people and with the world in general.

Zero percent. That is the percentage scaled likelihood that people will apply such wisdom, on a regular basis, any time soon.

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R. J. Sternberg et al. (eds.), *Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20287-3_16

To apply wisdom to contemporary world problems, or even to one's own problems, requires one to learn how to be wise and to transfer this wisdom to interactions with others. There is little sign that schools are about to teach for wisdom (Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg & Hagen, 2019), and one certainly does not learn to be wise from observing many of today's leaders (Sternberg, 2018). What are the obstacles to wisdom, and what can be done to alleviate them? In this final chapter, we first discuss obstacles to wisdom in two domains—teaching for wisdom and acting wisely in today's political climate. Without teaching for wisdom, it is unclear what path will be available to future citizens of the world to improve the world we live in. But we also need to get on that path right now, by acting wisely in our online and offline lives, in private and in public. The purpose of this book was not just to describe our perilous situation, but also to show how wisdom might show us a way out of it. Therefore, we end this chapter by reviewing the suggestions made by the chapter authors for using wisdom to deal with contemporary world problems.

Obstacles to Teaching for Wisdom

Why hasn't wisdom long ago become a school subject like math or languages, and why do schools still mostly teach for nothing but knowledge?

Entrenchment

Teachers are used to teaching in certain ways. Many have been teaching in these ways for ten, twenty, or more years. If the teachers have lasted that long in teaching—and, of course, many don't—then they probably consider themselves seasoned teachers. They do not necessarily want to be told that there are new ways in which they could be teaching that might help their students learn knowledge and acquire skills that could help them better adapt to the challenges of the world in beneficial ways, outside of school as well as inside the school. In some of our own work

(Sternberg et al., 2014), we found that without close supervision and consistent monitoring and encouragement, teachers tend to revert to their traditional ways of teaching, even in an experiment where they have received specific instruction to teach otherwise. This reversion is understandable. Teachers have many demands on their time and switching modes of teaching is not only time-consuming but also uncomfortable and attention-demanding at a time when they have many other challenges and demands on attention. Moreover, because there are few if any textbooks that teach wise thinking, teachers have little support for developing a lesson plan or curriculum for teaching wise reasoning and may find themselves lacking resources to use even if they do want to teach for wisdom.

We consider teaching for wisdom as a very rewarding activity, but it is not easy to do and it requires, to some extent, that teachers become models of wisdom—that they listen more than they speak, for example, or that they accept others’ perspectives even if those others are teenagers. We believe that, at present, the only way teachers are likely to switch to a wisdom-based mode of teaching is if they are thoroughly trained and given the requisite support and resources, then monitored (with their cooperation, of course) and encouraged, and perhaps most importantly, adequately compensated in some way. Without incentives, it just is very hard to get teachers to change the way they teach. Some guidelines for teaching for wisdom can be found in Sternberg and Hagen (2019), Ferrari and Kim (2019), Sternberg (2013), and Sternberg, Jarvin, and Grigorenko (2009).

Difficulty for Students

Teaching for wisdom is difficult for teachers but learning for wisdom is at least as difficult and probably more difficult for students. Many students have never been taught to learn for wisdom and so they do not gravitate to it naturally. An attempt to build an American-history curriculum for middle school (roughly grades 5–8) foundered on the difficulty students had of understanding concepts such as dialogical thinking—seeing things from others’ points of view—and dialectical

thinking—seeing how what is viewed as true changes over time (Reznitskaya & Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg, Jarvin, & Reznitskaya, 2008). Even in our universities, we find that many students simply want to be told what to learn and how they will be tested on it (preferably, for rote memory) rather than engage in perspective taking, reflection, deliberation, empathic understanding, and engaging in intellectual struggle.

Thinking wisely *is* hard. People, at least today, do not seem to naturally gravitate toward understanding diverse points of view and how they might apply to people's lives. If one looks at the political polarization in the United States and in much of Europe, one finds people sorting themselves into ideological tribes, with little flexibility in their thinking (Chua, 2018). In a word, many people have become “dogmatic”—fixed in their views and unwilling to listen to diverse points of view (Ambrose & Sternberg, 2012; see the chapters by Ambrose, Glück, Grossmann, Nusbaum, and Weststrate in this volume). Such thinking makes it hard to be wise, because wisdom requires one to be flexible in one's thinking and especially to be open to different and sometimes novel points of view that may not fit well with one's presuppositions.

When students are taught to develop the skills of wise thinking, it traditionally has been through programs of separated instruction (e.g., Lipman & Sharp, 1974; Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1980; Paul, 1984a, 1984b, 1985). The problem with such programs is that wise ways of learning and thinking may not generalize outside the classroom (Baron & Sternberg, 1987). That is, students may learn to think wisely in the particular classroom that encourages wise thinking but drop any effort at wise thinking outside this classroom (much as people may go to Church and think ethically for just as long as they are in the Church pew).

Our suggestion, then, is that wisdom is better taught infused into normal classroom activities rather than as a separate course—whether on wise thinking, critical thinking, philosophical thinking, or something else. This means that teachers in a variety of disciplines would need to learn to teach for wisdom, using one of the available training manuals (e.g., Lipman & Sharp, 1974; Sternberg et al., 2009). We recognize that teacher-education programs are unlikely any time soon to start teaching teachers how to teach for wisdom, for a variety of reasons,

including a lack of trained instructors. But if others beside the authors and many readers of this book become convinced that, in a chaotic world, our future depends on wise thinking, perhaps there is some chance that future perspectives will change and that educators will recognize that, for the salvation of the world, teaching for wisdom is not merely an option but a necessity.

Teacher Training

The above discussion points out a further obstacle to teaching for wisdom, namely, that teachers are not trained to do so. In the absence of such training, the concept of teaching for wisdom will seem to most teachers like some kind of ideal that they are not likely to reach during the span of their careers.

How would teachers be trained? We believe that the quickest entry to teaching for wisdom is through encouraging teachers to ask questions that encourage dialogical thinking—seeing things from others' points of view—perspective taking, empathic concern, reflection, and deliberation. In literature, for example, with regard to *Les Misérables*, how did Jean Valjean perceive Inspector Javert, and conversely, how did Inspector Javert perceive Jean Valjean? Why was Javert so unwilling to see things from Valjean's point of view that he committed suicide? In U.S. history, one might ask how Southern whites and many others justified slavery, and why many Northern whites could not tolerate it, leading to the Civil War? Why could the two sides not find any kind of compromise, and might they somehow have averted war by finding common ground through an appreciation of the humanity of all people, black, white, or anything else? In biology, one might ask what the costs are of huge numbers of species that are going extinct in the modern day, and why it is that so many humans do not recognize the value of biodiversity beyond, and sometimes even seemingly within, their own species? In mathematics, one might ask why only the United States, Liberia, and Myanmar still use the English rather than the metric system of measurement. What purpose does the English system of measurement serve—or fail to serve—for society?

Standardized Testing

Standardized testing has become increasingly prevalent in the United States and in many countries throughout the world. The positive effect of such testing is that it holds schools accountable for teaching students the knowledge they presumptively need to succeed in their endeavors in the world. But there are many negative effects as well (see, e.g., Kamenez, 2015; Nichols & Berliner, 2007; Sternberg, in press-a). From our point of view, the greatest problem is that the tests not only do not measure wisdom-related thinking but probably actively discourage it. Typical test items are highly structured, require convergent thinking, and deal with small problems. One is not going to improve a score on a multiple-choice test by thinking wisely about whether the “correct” answer option is A, B, C, D, or E.

The tests are extremely narrow in what they measure (Gardner, 2011; Sternberg, 1997), mostly focusing on knowledge and skills related to so-called general intelligence (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). Broader conceptions of intelligence are totally discounted (Sternberg, 1985; Sternberg & Smith, 1985). But as schools so often teach to tests, the result is that testing for wisdom is missing and hence teaching for wisdom is missing. Standardized tests tend to drive any teaching for wisdom out of the curriculum, because were teachers to do so, they ultimately would be penalized as such teaching would not help their students achieve better test scores. There would be an opportunity cost for time lost from preparing students to take tests of knowledge and skills that often matter only relatively little for their later lives.

Difficulty of Assessing Wisdom

We believe that one reason teaching for wisdom is scarce is that wisdom is difficult to assess, especially in a school setting where assessors are more used to assessing whether students have learned something or not learned it—period. Assessing wisdom requires subjective judgment, and while there is a growing literature on how to best measure wisdom, no consensus has yet been found (Glück, 2018; Glück et al., 2013;

Kunzmann, 2019). Obviously, wisdom is much harder to assess than is simple factual recall of material, making it more labor intensive to score and also more subject to multiple views regarding what is “wise.”

Zeitgeist

The greatest obstacle to teaching for wisdom, we believe, is a *Zeitgeist*—a world view—that has focused more on the value of being smart and clever rather than wise and that is becoming increasingly unwise. More and more countries are electing populist leaders who campaign for their jobs not based on statesmanship or wise counsel, but rather on emotional appeals, sometimes appeals that single out racial, ethnic, or religious minorities, or that promise things that no leader could ever deliver on. Multilateral alliances around the world are fraying and illiberal governments call themselves “democratic” by virtue of having rigged votes (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). Racial tension in some countries, including the United States, is increasing, often stoked by national leaders who ought instead to be helping people rise above racism, nationalism, and xenophobia (Fukuyama, 2018). What place is there for teaching for wisdom in such a world, especially when leaders such as these not only fail to role-model wisdom, but if anything, role-model foolishness or even toxicity in leadership (Sternberg, in press-b)? Because such leaders may actively devalue wisdom, special effort will be required on the part of educators to ensure that the next generation of leaders shows more wisdom than many leaders of the current generation do.

Obstacles to Wisdom in Today’s World

It is crucial that we reflect critically on what our schools are teaching and that we learn to integrate wisdom into everything that they teach. However, waiting for future, wiser generations may take too long for some of our current problems. Climate change, for example, is progressing fast while some world leaders deny its existence and significance. In addition to teaching wisdom to future generations, we

need to find ways to foster wisdom now. Fortunately, recent wisdom research has clearly demonstrated that wisdom is not just a rare trait that a few select individuals have and most of us don't have—wisdom is also a state, and most of us (with the potential exception of the current U.S. president) sometimes act wisely (Grossmann, 2017; see also the chapter by Grossmann & Dorfman). In other words, wisdom is, in part, a mindset. People in the wisdom mindset are aware of but not overwhelmed by their current emotions, able to see the perspectives and needs of others, aware of the complexity and uncertainty of problems and the need for common-good solutions, and able to at least imagine ways to move toward fair, balanced solutions. Someone looking at, for example, the problem of climate change with a wisdom mindset would acknowledge how dangerous the current situation is without being overwhelmed by anxiety. They would acknowledge that this is a global problem, involving nations at different stages of economic development—e.g., China as compared to the United States—and that in each country, a number of factors contribute to the problem including, for example, widespread poverty, the need for jobs in regions that rely on coal mining, or the need for cheap cars in regions with insufficient public transportation. In other words, people in a wisdom mindset would be aware of the complexity of the problem and the fact that simple solutions are likely to create big winners and big losers instead of a fair balance of gains and losses. They would also have ideas about how a balanced solution can, perhaps, be found—for example, by taking the voices of experts seriously. The knowledge required for finding a wise solution to climate change is probably out there, and in the times of the Internet it isn't even hard to find—the question is why people are unwilling to listen. And it isn't just the “ordinary people” who aren't listening, it's world leaders. How did we get to a point where the president of the United States, when asked why he completely ignores clear scientific evidence, simply says, “I just do. I've had these views for 30 years” (Woodward, 2018, p. 138)? Why aren't more people out in the streets, rallying for wisdom in the White House? Some situational obstacles to the wisdom mindset are widespread nowadays.

Fear and Anger

Issues like climate change or global inequality are scary—they make us fear for our own and our children’s future. The pictures we get to see, of floods and hurricanes or refugees drowned in the Mediterranean Sea, exacerbate these fears. Unfortunately, fear is a natural antagonist of the wisdom mindset. When people are frightened, they are more likely to feel protective of their “ingroup”—their friends and family, the people they consider as similar to themselves—and to devalue and dehumanize “outgroups”—people who look different or think differently than they do (e.g., Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006). Thus, when we are faced with dangers, we tend to go for foolishness and simple, bold, and unfair solutions instead of seeking wisdom, balanced solutions, and a common good. Fear makes people think unwisely. So does anger, which often goes hand in hand with fear. The events in Charlottesville in 2018, for example (see the chapter by Plews-Ogan), showed how hate leads to hate and how difficult it is to maintain a wisdom mindset in the face of aggression (see also the chapter by Weststrate). Ideological and political polarization is increasing in our Western democracies: people on the left despise people on the right and vice versa, which leaves both sides unlikely to search for, much less find, a middle ground that enables constructive dialogue. Why are so many people so scared and angry? Modern media play a role in this development (see the chapter by Glück).

Modern Media: Generating and Feeding Foolishness

With the increasing availability of online information, it has become possible to evaluate single news articles in terms of how often they have been clicked on. Increasingly, success is measured by number of clicks rather than by amount of information, quality of presentation, or balance of perspectives. And given the growing competition among media, clicks are getting more and more important. One way to generate clicks is by playing to people’s emotions—the more outrageous or fear-inducing a headline sounds, the more successful is it going to be

(e.g., Combs & Slovic, 1979; Van Belle, 2000). While emotional content is more and more important, veracity does not seem to be considered as a crucial characteristic of news anymore. Many people believe that the media are biased anyway and that “fake news” are ubiquitous. Unfortunately, they may not be completely wrong. As we are writing this, the renowned German “Der Spiegel” journalist Claas Relotius has admitted to have made up important parts of his prize-winning stories over the years (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/claas-relotius-reporter-forgery-scandal-a-1244755.html>). Notably, actual research might have made for more balanced and less simplistic stories even in a quality newspaper like the “Spiegel” (see, e.g., <https://medium.com/@micheleanderson/der-spiegel-journalist-messed-with-the-wrong-small-town-d92f3e0e01a7>).

In addition to creating simple and emotional messages by forging information, clicks are generated by adding discussion boards to news articles. Discussion boards enable users to share their views and to give and receive positive or negative feedback. Especially when it comes to ideological issues, interactions in discussion boards tend to become highly polarized and emotional, with users taking sides and “downvoting” the other side (see the chapters by Glück, Grossmann & Dorfman, and Weststrate). Such interactions increase polarization and decrease wisdom.

All these developments—the need for sensational news to generate clicks, the decline of quality journalism, and the rise of polarized online discussions—may have considerably reduced our access to balanced and correct information. These developments contribute to political polarization.

Populist Leaders Instead of Wise Leaders

Almost around the world, we see a rise of populist politicians winning elections with bold and simple messages and then proceeding to demolish democratic institutions (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; see the chapter by Ambrose). Do people inevitably fall for populists because they are just more appealing than politicians with more balanced, less polarizing

views (Sternberg, in press-a)? Simple, strong (and often slightly stupid) messages certainly attract people who are scared and angry about the growing insecurity and instability around them. However, in 2008, with a global financial crisis evolving, Barack Obama campaigned with messages that seem incomparably wise from today's perspective—“[The] issues are never simple. One thing I'm proud of is that very rarely will you hear me simplify the issues.” “I don't want to pit Red America against Blue America. I want to be President of the United States of America.” (Quotes are from http://www.notable-quotes.com/o/obama_barack.html). Obama emphasized the importance of empathy and perspective-taking across political boundaries, the possibility of hope even in times of crisis, the potential of collaborating with experts to solve complex world problems. In spite of implicit and explicit racism (Stephens-Davidowitz, 2017), millions of people were attracted to the wisdom mindset he was proposing. Wisdom can win elections—but winning elections by wisdom may be much harder than winning them by playing to people's fear and anger. It seems unlikely that wise politicians are going to save us anytime soon—even if they were available and willing, they might have difficulty getting elected in today's heated-up political climate. And even Obama's actual successes were quite limited.

The Need for Global Solutions

One factor that exacerbates the current world problems is that many of them are global in scale—they require collaboration across nations, and they may require a certain amount of compensation. The richest countries of the Earth are so much richer than the poorest ones that it would seem both fair and entirely doable for them to share a small portion of their wealth with those afflicted by poverty, illness, and starvation. However, current political movements are going in the opposite direction.

After the two large World Wars of the twentieth century, people wanted to ensure that no such fate should befall future generations. They founded institutions like the United Nations, whose founding charter says its purpose is:

1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;
2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;
3. To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and
4. To be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.

(<http://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/chapter-i/index.html>).

In September 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump addressed the General Assembly of the United Nations. He informed the attendees that “America is governed by Americans. We reject the ideology of globalism and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism” (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-73rd-session-united-nations-general-assembly-new-york-ny/>). Many people in the United States and other countries of the world share this sentiment: why care about children starving or people being killed in other parts of the world? Of course, this way of thinking runs counter to the wisdom mindset. Not only is it devoid of any empathy with people who were born into less fortunate circumstances, it also creates a clear ingroup/outgroup boundary and completely denies the complexity of our modern world with its closely interrelated economies.

We think this is scary. Populist leaders and modern media are profiting from igniting a non-wisdom mindset—from triggering people’s fear and hatred through simple, distorted messages about the state of the world. How can we use wisdom to counter these developments? As mentioned earlier, people do value wisdom—they recognize it

when they see it, and they appreciate wise advice (Weststrate, Bluck, & Glück, 2019). Many people are worried by the current developments and highly motivated to counteract them. How can we reward and nourish manifestations of wisdom wherever they can be found? The chapters in this book have outlined many ways in which wisdom can contribute to solving the problems our world is facing.

What Can We Do? Applying Wisdom to Contemporary World Problems

Empathy and Openness vs. Ingroup/Outgroup Thinking

Two major factors that characterize humanity are our ability to fundamentally empathize with others, to take their perspective in a way that affects our own well-being, and its counterpart, our ability to turn our compassion off, to depersonalize, hurt, and even kill others whom we consider as fundamentally different from ourselves. Compassion and concern for others, moderated by the ability to regulate emotions so as not to be overwhelmed by others' suffering, are central components of wisdom (Ardelt, 2003; Glück & Bluck, 2013; Webster, 2007). Wise individuals do not restrict their concern to those whom they perceive as similar to themselves—they feel connected to all of humanity (see the chapter by Aldwin and Levenson). In other words, at the core of wisdom is a concern for the common good (Sternberg, 1998, 2019).

One powerful way to overcome the dehumanization of outgroups is by humanization—by getting people to relate personally to those on the other side, learning to see them as fellow humans who are like us in many ways. Both online and in real life, we need to find ways to make people cross boundaries, be it between ethnic groups or between political parties. Weststrate's chapter suggests storytelling as one fundamental mechanism of human psychology that helps us connect with one another across differences in cultural and societal backgrounds. The chapters by Plews-Ogan and by Schwartz and Sharpe show how health

care improves when patients are perceived and treated as individuals rather than as failed organ systems. The chapter by Woerner-Powell and Edmondson gives an example of how we can overcome prejudice if we learn more about the actual teachings and practices of another religion. Tahora, Shah, and Rooney show how ideas from Buddhism can help us deal with challenges in our modern lives.

Civility and Respect vs. Blaming and Shaming

Incivility in public discourse is increasing for many reasons, one of them being a U.S. president who cannot keep himself from insulting people on Twitter. Language matters, as Nusbaum shows in his chapter, and incivil language causes self-reinforcing cycles of incivility. Treating even ideological adversaries with respect and actually listening to them is likely to de-escalate conflicts and lead to better solutions to problems. Several chapters in this book deal with the polarizing effect of social media on interpersonal discourse. The fact that we do not see or hear the people whom we blame and shame on Facebook, Twitter, etc., is one factor that leads to polarization and hate (see chapters by Glück, Grossmann & Dorfman, Nusbaum, and Weststrate). Ways to foster civility and wisdom in online interactions may make an important contribution to public discourse, even if they are unlikely to reach President Trump.

Wise Leaders vs. Inflated Egos

If we asked people whether they would like a wise person to lead their country or the organization they work for, most would probably say yes. And yet people vote for populist politicians whose only goal is to maximize their own profit and to demolish democratic institutions (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Lewis, 2018). It is an important question why people fall for these figures (see Ambrose's chapter), but another important question is why there aren't more wise candidates for political office or for executive jobs. Would a wise person want to run for office or become CEO of Amazon? Maybe not. Maybe highest-level success

in today's world requires a big ego—a willingness to insist on being right instead of listening to others, an orientation toward personal profit instead of a common good, a dose of foolishness rather than wisdom. Again and again, we see highly successful and intelligent people lose their jobs, families, and existences because they did something incredibly stupid. Sternberg (2005) argued that their foolishness is based on ego-driven fallacies such as considering oneself omniscient, omnipotent, and invulnerable.

Wise individuals are self-reflective and epistemically humble (Grossmann, 2017; Staudinger, 2001; Weststrate & Glück, 2017). They are aware of the uncertainty and unpredictability of human life (Baltes & Staudinger, 2000) and they care about finding solutions to complex problems that balance all interests involved for the sake of a common good, not their own profit (Sternberg, 1998, 2019). They are self-transcendent, feeling connected to humanity and the world at large (see the chapter by Aldwin and Levenson). How can we get wiser leaders into our governments and corporations? Staudinger's chapter argues that we need to create societal roles for wise individuals. The chapters by Weststrate and by Mischinski and Jayawickreme discuss what we can learn from wise and moral exemplars. Zacher and Kunzmann describe how wisdom can be implemented on all levels of modern workplaces. Other chapters discuss how organizational and political contexts hinder or foster wisdom. Ambrose's chapter shows how democracies can turn into totalitarian states as important institutions such as free media or independent justice systems get corrupted. Glück's and Grossmann and Dorfman's chapters discuss how social contexts (online and offline) influence wisdom. Organizational cultures that value diversity of knowledge and opinion can make an organization as a whole a lot wiser (Surowiecki, 2005). The chapters by Plews-Ogan and Schwartz and Sharpe show how medical organizations have been able to improve both patient care and employee well-being by implementing elements of wise organizations.

Maxwell's chapter discusses the context of universities and research organizations, which, he argues, are oriented at "learning about the nature of the universe and about ourselves and other living things as a part of the universe," but should, given today's state of the world, be more oriented at "learning how to become civilized," that is,

at acquiring wisdom. As academic wisdom researchers, we feel that these two orientations may not necessarily be in opposition. The scientific study of wisdom can produce important insights into better ways of living. Perhaps this book can be an example.

Teaching Wisdom

At the end of this chapter, we want to return to its beginning—the issue of teaching for wisdom. As Sternberg’s chapter shows, wisdom has all but disappeared from children’s reading materials. Other goals—such as the ability of seven-year-olds to analyze texts—seem to have become more important. It is a crucial question what the fundamental goals of education should be in a time where knowledge is quite readily available to everyone. We believe that wisdom-related capacities such as critical thinking (see Staudinger’s chapter), ethical thinking (see the chapters by Mischinski and Jayawickreme and by Schwartz and Sharpe), or democratic values (see Ambrose’s chapter) may be more important than knowledge for its own sake. The ability to learn from experiences, individually or institutionally (see Plews-Ogan’s chapter), to critically reflect on one’s intuitions (see Glück’s chapter), or to resolve conflicts at work (see Zacher and Kunzmann’s chapter) may be quite teachable capacities as well.

None of these changes are likely to happen on a large scale anytime soon. But while some current developments are deeply scary, we also see a strong counter-movement. Many people want a better world for themselves and especially for their children—a world of equality, freedom, and healthy environments. Let’s try to make it a wiser world as well.

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