



TESS Newsletter

Accordance to Article 7
Section 3 of its Constitution

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Episode 123

“ Turning Possibilities into Realities ”

Building a Global Movement for Change [UNSG]: The Promise (part 55)



"Working Hard at Working Smart" (part LXXI)

2015: The Pinnacle of Excellence: Wisdom

"Who am I to judge"



“Before you tell your life what you intend to do with it, listen for what it intends to do with you. Before you tell your life what truths and values you have decided to live up to, let your life tell you what truths you embody, what values you represent.”

Parker J. Palmer – born 1939 – USA Author, Educator, and Activist

The future we want: The Promise: The Force Beyond

Knowledge vs. wisdom

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Many people mistake knowledge for wisdom because they are intimately related, and this is unfortunate because they are quite different in an important way. Knowledge is the accumulation of facts and information. Wisdom is the synthesis of knowledge and experiences into insights that deepen one's understanding of relationships and the meaning of life. **In other words, knowledge is a tool, and wisdom is the craft in which the tool is used.**

If one understands this difference, he or she will also appreciate why it is vital to properly distinguish between the two. With the Internet, it is now relatively easy for a reasonably diligent person to quickly become knowledgeable in virtually any field of his or her choosing. We are literally awash in a sea of information! **But having a hammer and knowing how to use it are two entirely different propositions.** A hammer is amoral. Whether it is used for good or ill depends entirely on the wielder. Sadly, history is a lengthy record of the harms wrought by knowledgeable, well-meaning people who lacked wisdom.

In contrast to knowledge, **wisdom is generally considered to be morally good.** Why is this the case? **Albert Einstein once said, 'Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it.'** Such a process is lengthy and arduous, which teaches the pursuer patience and humility. Seldom is a person unchanged by such a trial. When one finally uncovers a connection or insight that he or she believes to be universally applicable 'truth,' it often inspires awe akin to a spiritual experience.

'Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers,' wrote Alfred, Lord Tennyson. Truths stay with a person for the rest of his or her life, coloring all subsequent thoughts and actions. Wisdom requires no law or threat of punishment to

ensure compliance. The practitioner typically feels a strong compulsion to obey his or her own beliefs. The wise can still fall prey to indiscretions and questionable moral behavior—being flesh and blood like us all—however, if one tracks such statistics, the odds of such failings are likely to be very small compared to the general populace.

Society esteems the wise for their virtuosity and for their rarity. Subject matter experts number in the thousands, but the wise may only number in the tens or hundreds. And history records their names and achievements for posterity's sake.

"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well."

Ralph Waldo Emerson [Born: 25/05/1803 - Died: 27/04/1882 - American Essayist, Lecturer, and Poet.

Does Wisdom Matter?

David Blankenhorn

Wisdom doesn't get much respect. When did you last hear a U.S. leader being praised as wise? When did you last hear someone stress the social importance of wisdom or speak about our nation's need for more of it?

Yet across time and cultures, wisdom has been viewed as a primary human virtue — a key to the advancement and integration of knowledge, our most reliable guide to action, and a personal good linked to long-term fulfillment and well-being. **Wisdom is like a peak performance.** It's arguably the highest state of knowledge and its development. As a vital source of social capital, don't we undervalue it today at our peril?

Wisdom is hard to define succinctly, in part because it's not one trait so much as the blending of a number of traits. For me, wisdom might be best understood as the use of reason to make and encourage good decisions. The researchers Paul Baltes and Jacqui Smith describe everyday wisdom as “good judgment and advice about important but uncertain matters of life.”

Among the world's great philosophers, among the small but growing group of psychologists and neuroscientists who study wisdom, and within the wisdom proverbs and other sources of folk knowledge, there is considerable commonality of understanding and at least implicit agreement on the basic qualities that make a person wise. Let's look at six of them.

Richness of knowledge. A wise person tends to have what Baltes and Smith call “an extensive data base about life matters” analogous to a “cross-referenced encyclopedia.” She also likely has rich “procedural knowledge” — effective ways of thinking about problems and their possible solutions. At the same time, **being smart and being wise are not the same** — we're all familiar with the clever, well-educated person with a high I.Q. who is anything but wise.

Empathy. Self-centered people are far less likely to be wise. Wisdom is consistently associated with compassion and the ability sincerely to put oneself in the other person's shoes.

Equanimity and resilience in times of adversity. The wise person can regulate his emotions so as to meet sorrow and suffering calmly and to treat set-backs as puzzles to learn from and problems to try to solve.

Perspective. Nearly everyone agrees that the wise person is able to see the overall, the big picture. The wise person's point of view is broad and disinterested, not partisan. As importantly, and in some ways paradoxically, the wise person is likely able to see through complexities to fasten upon what Lincoln, arguably our wisest president, often call “the nub” of a topic — its foundation and essence.

Recognition of values pluralism. Some values (sometimes called natural laws) are so essential that they should be binding on everyone. But the wise person likely realizes that such values are few in number, do not come with operating instructions, and are often themselves subject to interpretation. She recognizes that “truth” is not a unity in which all the pieces fit together harmoniously; she therefore sees that there's no single grand narrative that explains everything. She recognizes that, as often as not, **the conflicts we face,**

in society and in ourselves, do not consist of good versus bad as much as two legitimate goods in tension with one another.

Acceptance of uncertainty. The wise person likely views doubt and ambiguity not as enemies to be resisted, but as acquaintances to be accommodated. Indeed, much of wisdom appears to be the capacity to accept realistically what's not known and what's not knowable.

Wisdom, at least for some, may increase with age. And more broadly, surely our politics and public conversation today could use a little more empathy, perspective, and conciliation and a little less certitude, aggression, and intransigence. Wisdom is not common in human affairs. It's typically in short supply. But it probably can be consciously cultivated, both individually and socially. The first step is wanting to do so.

Loving Our Seychelles

Make it a Priority

“Here is your country. Cherish these natural wonders, cherish the natural resources, cherish the history and romance as a sacred heritage, for your children and your children's children. Do not let selfish men or greedy interests skin your country of its beauty, its riches or its romance.”

Theodore "T.R." Roosevelt, Jr. [Born: 27/10/1858 – Died 06/01/1919] 26th President of the USA
American Politician, Author, Naturalist, Soldier, Explorer, Historian.

The Ecotourism Society of Seychelles [TESS]

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