

The Art of Wisdom

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Abstract

Wisdom falls under Dr. Mortimer J. Adler's 103 great ideas. This theorizes that wisdom is one of the most useful and important ideas to put into practice in life. Wisdom is defined as the use of knowledge isolated from the ideas of intelligence or smarts. Anointing someone as *wise* is contradictory and goes against wisdom itself. True wisdom highlights creative and critical thinking, using knowledge skillfully. This can be explored through history, religion, art, and media. It is a critical aspect of our entire world.

The Art of Wisdom

As firm as the definition of wisdom may seem, nothing in society can be completely black and white. We can write down and agree on a dictionary definition, say this is a fact, and agree, but context is vital. The context and connotation of everything can very quickly change its meaning.

Research

Defined in History

In the Christian Bible, one of the characters most known for wisdom is King Solomon. King Solomon is known for being a king who continuously asked God for wisdom, understanding that it was the most important virtue for a king to have. In 1 Kings chapter 3, an example is given of how wisdom is gifted to and used by Solomon. The story speaks of two women who come to the king. They both gave birth around the same time, in the same house, but one of the babies died. There was now one living child, and they both claimed him as their own. With no way of knowing who the living child actually belonged to, Solomon asked for a sword, “Then he said, ‘Cut the living child in two, and give half to one woman and half to the other!’” (1 Kings 3:25, n.d.). One woman was content with this, exclaiming that this was fair and happy to have half of the child. The other woman became distraught, asking the king not to kill the baby, even saying he could live with the other woman as long as the baby would not be killed. Solomon recognized the true love of a mother who wanted her son to live. “Then the king said, ‘Do not kill the child, but give him to the woman who wants him to live, for she is his mother!’” (1 Kings 3:27 NLT, n.d). In this example of wisdom, we see understanding, problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity. Wisdom is generally a mix of all of this.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.) defines wisdom as the “ability to discern inner qualities and relationships” or “a good sense of judgment”. Wisdom is not as simple as being “smart”. Being “smart” leaves much up to interpretation. Someone may be smart in terms of statistics but struggle with grammar. The idea of “smarts” refers to individual areas of overall intelligence in an individual. Wisdom is moreover in reference to an individual’s ability to interpret or use their intelligence. Anyone can have wisdom, regardless of IQ. Finding unique ways to interpret situations and problem-solving. In Miguel A. Suro’s (2019) words, “To be wise is to have knowledge, and be able to understand and apply it in an effective way”. In the story of King Solomon, he comes up with a solution that no one could expect. On a math test, one may find the answer through the elimination of the choices, having the wisdom to find an answer without the easy knowledge. Wisdom is the journey and flexibility of knowledge, rather than a static number score of intelligence.

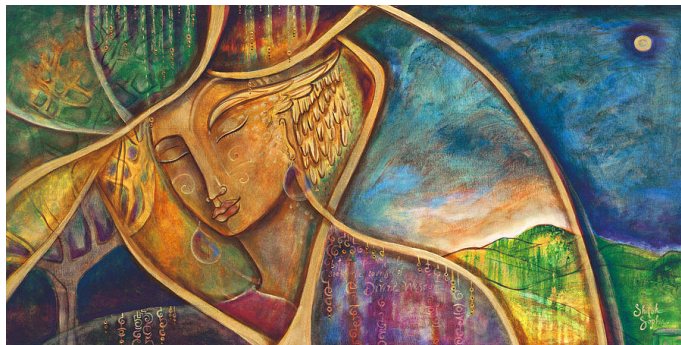
As Seen in Our World

In the media, wisdom is most commonly viewed in fictional stories. The topic is actually quite often explored in fictional or dystopian movies or books. A fictional story may have an oddball character known for their wisdom as a key element of the plot, a dystopian society may force its citizens to be categorized by their intellectual skills, or a mysterious adventure may require the protagonist to grow in their wisdom to solve a case. The concept of wisdom is less explored in the ‘real life’ media. Real people often go viral for their body shape, dance moves, or vocal talent. Yes, there are plenty of people who become famous because of creativity or ideas, but they simply provide humanity with a pre-illustrated idea, rather than sparking a yearning for knowledge. The wisest creators are the ones who inspire thinking and analysis rather than letting their audience get away with a simplistic view of their work.

The best kind of art is the one that requires wisdom from the audience themselves. It is not enough to simply display an intelligent idea, something with true depth, requires depth to comprehend. The image attached is a great example of a rich and wise piece of art (McCloud, n.d.). The painting does not have a clear purpose or title. It takes comprehension and analysis to piece all of the elements together. In terms of physical features, there is a woman with her eyes closed. As the art is examined further, there are more details that require the wisdom of the viewer to interpret. Her eyebrows are wings, her shoulder has writing, and little details make simple watercolors into land and elements. The painting includes many different colors and allows some of the art to be interpreted freely. It requires wisdom to interpret and understand.

Figure 1.

Divine Wisdom



The media of society chooses to idolize people for different achievements, and everyone has a mix of talents. Emma Watson is known as a celebrity who promotes and demonstrates wisdom. Her original rise to fame was an intelligent character. The Harry Potter franchise, created by author J.K. Rowling, was taken to screens in 2001. Emma Watson starred as Hermione Granger, the smart and nerdy friend of protagonist Harry Potter. Emma Watson did not end her fame after the movies were complete, she continued to act and perform, notably in the live-action *Beauty and the Beast* movie. Moreover, Watson continued to use her platform for

good. She would speak for causes that mattered deeply to her and strove to start getting the people around her to think. She encourages those around her to stay individuals, “Don’t feel stupid if you don’t like what everyone else pretends to love” (PA NewsAgency, 2015). Watson very clearly presents herself as a feminist, but she does not just blindly follow the actions of other feminists, she makes her own choices that she feels will support her beliefs. “I have realized that fighting for women’s rights has too often become synonymous with man-hating. If there is one thing I know for certain, it is that this has to stop” (PA News Agency, 2015). Her independent thought, refusing to blindly follow, is a core trait of wisdom.

The Necessity of Wisdom

Wisdom is not something only to be used by kings or artists. Wisdom is something that should be desired by all, but can it be truly obtained? If there is a spectrum to wisdom, what is the “required” amount to label oneself as wise? Imrich Ruisel (2008) suggests that maybe there is not one. “[W]isdom in its pure form may exist only in our minds”. Wisdom cannot be graphed or named exactly. There truly is no threshold of wise to unwise, but rather a mindset that should be continuously worked towards.

If there is not an achievable goal in gaining wisdom, then why? What reason is there to strive to be wise? Wisdom is essential to life in many different ways. To start, progress is not possible without creative thinkers and open minds. Without people doing their best to think critically, society would never move forward. It is one thing to survive, but another to thrive. As a community and as individuals, we can survive without wisdom, but may never truly thrive. Growth is what makes life meaningful. From an individual standpoint, wisdom keeps a certain quality of life. “Wisdom protects a person from falling into difficult problems and prevents him

from recklessness”(The Scientific World, 2021). The Scientific World analyzes wisdom and its importance to life. Having individual wisdom gives life quality.

Wisdom is something that should be sought after by all areas of the globe. Wise decisions lead to good outcomes and can help avoid tragedy. Wisdom takes time and is not simple to come by, this is even mentioned in an article by The Scientific World (2021). “Wisdom cannot be easily obtained”(The Scientific World, 2021). No one wants to lack wisdom, it is just that most do not want to put in the effort to truly strive for it.

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birthday. The Press. Retrieved May 11, 2022, from

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