Afterword

The study of wisdom is of key importance in solving almost every present-day issue or problem. Unwise actions have led to many problems throughout history, and it is only through wise choices that these problems can be counteracted. We must learn how people become wise and seek ways to teach wisdom, so we will have wise leaders to guide humanity into the future and ensure our survival by choosing to live sustainably.

Wisdom has meant different things at different points in history and for different spheres of human experience and endeavor. It can be characterized as coming from various sources and existing at various levels (individual to civilizational, basic practicality to global and theoretical), but in brief, it is the ability to make good judgments and choices.

Wisdom comes from various sources. Social wisdom comes from religion, law, and medicine and is in essence about morality and prudence. Reflective wisdom comes from philosophers and other intellectuals and is rooted in reason. The choices made by people in different segments of society constitute the individual's wisdom. The methodical approach encompasses various ways of arriving at wisdom: skepticism and strict reasoning based on Descartes’ four steps of problem solving; decision science, an expansion of Descartes’ method involving statistical analysis and other math-based processes; psychology, employing intelligence and creativity; and semantics, a systematic way to arrive at wisdom through processing data, information, concepts, and knowledge.

Consequently, based on the empirical review of wisdom presented in Chapter 1, we cannot perceive that wisdom has only one definition unless we assume there is civilization wisdom. Its definition is as follows:

*Civilization wisdom is a combination of social, reflective, individual's, and methodical wisdoms which strategize societal and individuals' judgment and actions through the composition of morality, prudence, conceptualization, and balanced choices of interests in the context of civilization development, status, universality, pseudo-universality, and contingency (time-oriented).*

It is important to note that wisdom is different from knowledge, the mastery of facts and rules, or intelligence, the capacity to reason, plan, solve problems, think abstractly, comprehend ideas and language, and learn.

Wisdom is time- and context-specific. There are unique wisdoms for different categories or types of mind (Basic-BM, Whole-WM, Global-GM, and Universal-UM), and wisdom means different things at the individual, family, professional, and civilization levels.
The Basic mind is intuitive, communicative, practical, and moral, allowing humans to function in civilization. The Whole mind adds a theoretical component to the Basic mind, allowing for knowing through logical reasoning, leading to the development of advanced science and technology. The Global mind is a Whole mind that is connected and digital, and allows humans to think beyond their immediate experience and existence. The future of the human mind is the Universal mind, which will evolve if humans can use cooperation to try to save civilization. The integrative approach to connect all minds into one process for searching for wisdom is depicted in Figure 1 (Chapter 4, Figure 8).

APPLICATIONS OF WISDOM

There are applications for wisdom in all facets of human life. Wisdom is used by individuals in all manner of vocations and professions, from rural folk to artists to scientists to leaders in government and business. Traditional, rural people live in direct contact with nature and work directly for their own survival on a daily basis. Their knowledge is practical, and they practice conventional, “folk” wisdom, which is an awareness of a given situation and the probable repercussions.

The practitioners of every field range from great and wise to poor and unwise. We have the most to learn from the great ones, although the mistakes of the bad ones can be illustrative as well. Great writers are a source of a particular, moral wisdom. Writers such as William Shakespeare, Leo Tolstoy, Victor Hugo, Bernard Shaw, and Mark Twain are concerned with characters and their choices; they teach readers how to live and how to learn from life.

Great leaders such as politicians and generals, have big-picture vision, which is a key part of their wisdom. For example, politicians like Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and
Mikhail Gorbachev each have their own particular brand of wisdom, but in general it is revealed in their will to implement changes for a better world in a moral manner. Wise generals, such as Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Sherman, Mao, and MacArthur, use deception and unpredictability to play on the opponent’s mind and attain victory. Civilization is driven by business, and so pioneering business leaders, from Andrew Carnegie and Henry Ford to Sam Walton and Bill Gates, have a profound impact on their times. They are hard-working people and excellent problem solvers, and they have a profound understanding of market needs gain competitive advantage.

Scientists by definition are in search of the truth, new discoveries, and answers to old problems. The wisdom of great scientists like Copernicus, Newton, Darwin, and Einstein lies in critical thinking, experimentation, and curiosity. Engineers have also contributed, through their originality and insight, to the advancement of civilization from the invention of irrigation systems to the Information Age.

As with the products of any endeavor, inventions that are unwise do not help society. Artificial intelligence is one such innovation which must be implemented wisely. Computer scientists now have the ability to build robots, or “thinking machines,” which are mostly programmed to make specific decisions in specific situations but can also be designed to learn and make new decisions. As computer technology becomes faster and cheaper, scientists are working on ways to make robots “think” and work more effectively, with the goal to someday make robots that can do almost anything a human can and more. While this is mainly intended to assist humans accomplish routine or tedious tasks, robots may someday be able to operate as well as their human designers and even to be able to program their own behavior.

This has serious moral implications, as science fiction writer Isaac Asimov saw when he defined a set of ethical laws for robots in his book *I, Robot*. His rules were designed to prevent robots from injuring or working against humans, but these laws have not been put into practice in the real-life design of artificial intelligence. Without such ethical guidelines or a good understanding of how humans’ intelligence and wisdom work, we cannot design robots that are truly wise, and therefore, there is the possibility for robots to be unwise and even dangerous.

**WISDOM OF INDIVIDUALS AND CIVILIZATIONS**

Wisdom at the individual, human level, as well as at the civilization level, can be affected by many different factors and is measurable according to a number of criteria. The wisdom potential of an individual human or an entire civilization is the deciding indicator of the probability of making wise decisions and wisely solving problems. This is calculated on the individual or civilization’s wisdom capacity potential and wisdom activity potential, each of which is based on a variety of specific criteria.

A civilization’s potential capacity for wisdom is based on the quality of the four types of mind wisdom: Basic (measured by the civilization’s poverty level); Whole (educational level); Global (degree of globalization, including economic integration and technological connectivity); and Universal (the civilization’s political engagement on a global level). Wisdom capacity potential for a civilization is also dependent on its level of development.

The wisdom activity potential is about a civilization’s mind effectiveness, performance, quality, and reliability. Intelligence, creativity, emotional character, and mental health, all contribute to the civilization’s wisdom activity potential. The emotional character is based on civilization dynamics, which can range from endo-dynamic, or accelerated development, to exo-dynamic, or slow downward development.
A human’s potential capacity for wisdom depends on how many types of mind (Basic, Whole, Global, and Universal) apply to the individual, as well as the corresponding mind indexes for the civilization of which the individual is a member; on one’s level of mental ability (on a scale of seven levels ranging from poor to exceptional); and on one’s level of human development. The capacity potential is also contextual, and may differ for the family, professional, and civilizational contexts.

A human’s wisdom activity potential is about the individual’s mind effectiveness, performance, quality, and reliability. This is measured by innate intelligence (IQ), mental creativity (determined by one’s imaginative ability as well as one’s acquired knowledge), and emotional character (comparable to the range of dynamics for a civilization). This measure is also dependent on the context (family, profession, civilization) in which the individual is operating.

Their relationship is illustrated in the model in Figure 2 (Chapter 5, Figure 1).

Knowing the wisdom potential of civilizations and individuals has many applications. For example, civilization wisdom potential indicates the level of cooperation within a population. It can be used to predict outcomes in cross-cultural communication and international conflict resolutions, in planning national development programs, and in educating members of the civilization to be wise. Human wisdom potential can be used in planning and implementing education/training programs, including self-evaluation, and in evaluating candidates for public and military offices, as well as for senior management positions in business.

As a result of investigating the wisdom of current major civilizations (Chapter 5) the following conclusions are drawn (Table 14 in Chapter 5):

1. The Japanese and Western-West civilizations have the highest Wisdom Potential of Civilizations (WPC), which is indicated by the highest level of living and security in these civilizations.
2. The Western-Central civilization has the third highest WPC and, in comparison to the remaining low-end civilizations, has a relatively good level of living and security.
3. The Chinese, Western-Jewish, Eastern, and Western-Latin civilizations are in transition and struggle either with their inhabitants’ level of living or with security.
4. The Buddhist, Hindu, African, and Islamic civilizations have the lowest WPC due to many complex factors, such as religious/political policies, slow development, overly stratified societies, and many internal and inter-civilization disagreements.

The Wisdom Potential Index of Humans living in particular civilizations (Chapter 6) can be understood as the probability of making wise (prudent) judgments and choices in decisions, solving problems, and so forth. For example, in the Japanese civilization, at the level of BASIC MIND, an average human will make a wise choice in 8 cases out of 10, while using the WHOLE MIND one will make a wise choice in 6 out of 10 cases. The latter illustrates the decline of wisdom along with higher levels of minds. Why? Perhaps it is a case of a so-called embarrassment of richness, or too many ideas. The wisdom of the minds of average people in some civilizations is not impressive, according to the results reported in Table 6-14. Perhaps it is a general perception that wisdom is not widely available to all of us.

Another thought is that average people need professional and political leaders with higher wisdom to lead them. For example, in the present-day Hindu civilization one can notice a good level of computer scientists who provide outsourcing services for developed countries, which need very good minds. On the other hand, the number of such minds is limited in India, where the number of people living below the poverty level is high, which also means that the BASIC MIND responsible for practical solutions needs improvement.
Therefore, all “average” assessments as they concern humans can be misleading if they are taken without analyzing a situational context. This kind of assessment’s value is mostly in planning and implementing education/training programs. Thus, further comments comparing human wisdom of particular civilizations will not be continued.

In consequence, based on the presented empiric review of human wisdom (Chapter 6), we can perceive it in the following manner:

Human wisdom is a combination of individual, family, profession, and civilization wisdoms applying, according to the needs: BASIC, WHOLE, GLOBAL, and UNIVERSAL MINDS in order to provide practical, moral, theoretical, and method-oriented worldliness and universality, proceeding to prudent judgments and choices of concepts. They are supported by data, information, and knowledge – leading to conclusions, positions, solutions, decisions, actions, and so forth, which are understandable, competent, and sensitive.

Needless to say, human wisdom incorporates family, profession, and civilization wisdoms. Of course one may add more environmental components which can impact an individual’s wisdom. For example, neighborhood wisdom (or “smartness”) is perceived in this study of civilization wisdom as the most aggregative unit of cultural experiences. (Figure 3 illustrates how contexts can impact an individual’s wisdom leading towards wise behavior which is understandable, competent, and sensitive).
To be consistent, we should also define family and profession wisdoms. Perhaps the following definitions can be offered (Chapter 8):

**Family wisdom is a combination of social, reflectional, individual's, and methodical wisdoms which strategize family judgment and actions through the composition of morality, prudence, conceptualization, and balanced choices of interests among family members in the context of family development, status, and contingency (time-oriented).**

**Professional wisdom is a combination of social, reflectional, individual's, and methodical wisdoms which strategize professional judgment and actions through the composition of morality/ethics, prudence, conceptualization, and balanced choices of interests among professional stakeholders in the context of civilization development, status, universality, pseudo-universality, and contingency (time-oriented).**

In general, one can perceive wisdom as the last stage of cognitive processes which include reflecting, decision making, problem solving, and just thinking. It applies evolving intelligence-oriented tools and skills in a broad context and is driven by creativity, emotions, intentions, and motivation. Wisdom is neither knowledge, information, nor data. Rather, it is the intelligent ability (skillfully controlled by intentions, motivation, and emotions) to choose an appropriate (right/meaningful) concept and do something with it in the right time, space, and group.

In a short, practical definition one can describe wisdom as *skillful judgment and choice driven by the art of life*. For many, *the art of life* still can be a puzzle. The key to this puzzle is in understanding and learning how to cope with the components of wisdom illustrated in the following graphic model (Figure 3 [Chapter 8, Figure 2]). It may take time to do so, but there is no better alternative to practice Wise Civilization.

**TEACHING WISDOM**

It was long thought by philosophers that wisdom was the province of God. Over time, humans have come to realize that they have the potential to be wise, but it has been generally assumed that wisdom is only gained through many years of life experience. However, waiting to acquire wisdom is not sufficient to solve today’s problems. Scientific and technological progress has increased our power to act, and in the absence of wisdom, this has beneficial consequences as well as harmful ones. The ability for humans to acquire wisdom at an early age is crucial to the survival of civilization. If civilization is to succeed, it must first be wise, and for civilization to be wise, its members must be wise.

A wise person has some life experience; is open-minded; has evolved from instinct to intuition and knowledge; and is engaged, communicative, and informed. This leads to a better sense of direction and awareness of a given situation within a broad context, allowing a person to make better choices. The best practitioners of many fields, including science, medicine, art, and athletics, know that learning from failure is an excellent way to acquire wisdom. Observing one’s mistakes helps one improve and do better in future endeavors. In actuality, there are many ways humans can acquire wisdom. Investigating these ways may help us determine how wisdom can be learned, and therefore how it can be taught, so that it can be incorporated into academic curricula. Students who learn how to be wise can later, as parents,
professionals, and community leaders, make wise decisions which have a positive impact on others and on the entire society.

However, the goal of today’s academic inquiry is to develop knowledge, through which students acquire awareness about data, information, and concepts. It does not teach them how to make wise decisions based on their knowledge. Because the current educational system does not attempt to help students learn how to make progress toward a wise world, it needs to change so that problems of living become more fundamental than problems of knowledge. The primary task of academic inquiry must be to help humanity solve its problems in increasingly rational, cooperative, and enlightened ways, or in other words, to promote the growth of wisdom among people and society.

A NEW IDEOLOGY AND MONITORING OF WISE CIVILIZATIONS

World civilizations are on a course for destruction in the 21st century, as populations increase rapidly and natural resources are being depleted. For a long time, the Earth’s resources seemed to be abundant and infinite; sustainability was not the focus of humans’ concern. As civilization and technology progress, humans have continually developed more and more complex systems and life styles which put more

Figure 3. The five dimensional model of human comprehensive wisdom in the 21st century (Chapter 8, Figure 2)
and more pressure on limited resources. This is especially a problem in Western civilization, where the current model of turbo capitalism is entirely profit-driven and shortsighted, with no regard for its negative long-term social and environmental consequences.

The universal goal of current civilizations should be their sustainability. This will require theoretical, global, and universal wisdom on the part of governments, businesses, scientists, and individual citizens to focus on the important issues that shape civilizations: economic systems, science and technology, and spirituality and civility.

A new political system, ecoism, is needed to lead all nations and cultures to a sustainable and wise civilization. Ecoism (or eco-superiority) places the ecosystem’s long-term sustainability ahead of humans’ short-term well-being. It is based on the values of eco-justice, eco-freedom, and eco-democracy, meaning that limits to ensure the well-being of the ecosystem take priority over traditionally perceived definitions justice, freedom, and democracy. For example: crimes must be evaluated from the point of view of the ecosystem as well as the justice system; humans are free in their choices and movements as long as they do not destroy the ecosystem; and the balance of power must be preserved through free elections and free press, but politicians and press cannot act against the ecosystem. In an eco-economy, the full economic cost cannot be limited only to business cost but must include environmental and social costs as well.

In effect, ecoism as a new political system satisfies all laws and rules of civilizations and adds new ones to expand human knowledge and wisdom to work for the good of humanity and its environment. Components of ecoism include complementary spirituality, in which each civilization contributes its best values to a set of common universal complementary values to be shared globally by all civilizations; an integrated society; a deep economy based on the values of an eco-economy; deep communications; and an eco-infrastructure.

Because wisdom is such a vital resource, the key to a wise and sustainable civilization is to set up and integrate intelligence systems on national and civilizational levels to monitor civilization wisdom and predict civilization’s sustainability.

The knowledge system of a wise civilization should be expanded a step beyond conventional knowledge systems into wisdom systems, which support the good judgment and choice processes, while knowledge systems support the rules and laws defining subordinate systems.

There are about 20 different indexes which measure the dynamics of civilization, such as population and resources, but there is no one aggregated index which could easily monitor and predict the planet’s status and the impact of human behavior. Therefore civilization monitoring and predicting systems would have to track all these indexes.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion one must note that:

- The study of wisdom has not reached the saturation point and deserves further investigation; it may have applications as perhaps the best prescription for action and thinking, if the survival of human civilization is at stake in the near future.
- The study of wisdom is a worthy project, perhaps the most important project for the success of Wise Civilization.