

Disposition towards Evidence & Knowledge

To become Practically Wise one must develop a certain 'Disposition towards Knowledge & Evidence' – you must become **C**ritical.

You must become **C**ritical with a 'big **C**'

The wise one understands that knowledge, reality and truth are not simple conceptions, and that objectivity is a pursuit not a possibility. S/he is critical with a big C.

The philosophical position of one who aspires to be practically wise is appropriately the one that has come to be termed pragmatism. For pragmatists there are no truths; there only beliefs for which people may, or may not, give justifications. Justifications are, of course, always relative to an audience – we justify our beliefs to others – we give grounds for our beliefs. Truth is simply the label given to what is seen by some, for their reasons, as a justifiable belief. An audience judges the quality of the 'grounds for our beliefs' using their 'grounds for justification'.

For pragmatists therefore, there are no facts, only beliefs with better or worse supporting arguments - with the strength of those arguments being judged by others against their own standards. Truth, what can be said to be known/true, and why it can said to be known/true, are both social constructions.

For the wise one truth & knowledge are, as John Dewey says, simply things that *"in the long run, and on the whole, we find expedient [useful] to be believe"*. Pragmatists like Dewey have no truck with the notion that something works because it is true, in that it corresponds with some 'reality' that we have discovered. In his terms we simply term something 'known'/'as knowledge'/'true' when we have justified our beliefs to a particular audience. It is clear for the pragmatists, and to the aspiring Mindful Manager, that we term something as true when we can justify it to others by showing that it works!

Once one accepts that truth & knowledge are socially constructed one understands that there is not, and will never be, some permanent, a-historical/a-cultural framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining knowledge, truth & reality - there is no Archimedean point of leverage. There is no solid ground on which we can stand when judging justifications – again, as Nagel says – *"there is no such thing as a view from nowhere!"*

The quality of the belief justifications demanded in many arenas improved immeasurably with the Enlightenment, the advent of empirical science & the scientific method. Before then religions/the church/the aristocracy etc. just told 'us' what was to be believed, usually beliefs that benefitted them – there was little attempted justification, only violent coercion. A Mindful Manager is happy to admit that things have moved on from then. A wise one understands that fundamental beliefs are now far more likely to carry with them serious justifications; but s/he also understands that there are many new 'aristocracies & religions' wielding power over what should be believed and what can be termed as 'known'/'true'. Many of them as powerful but much more sophisticated in their coercion, and most far less visible than those of old.

Some of these new heavily guarded, and stridently promulgated belief systems are virtually invisible to us as their fundamental premises are embedded within the global/super-ordinate assumptions that frame many of our arguments – these pervasive assumptions found the ideologies that dominate thinking in the domain of business – Economics, Money, Markets & Capitalism. All of these are themselves also largely framed and suffused by the idolatry of ‘science & mathematics’.

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