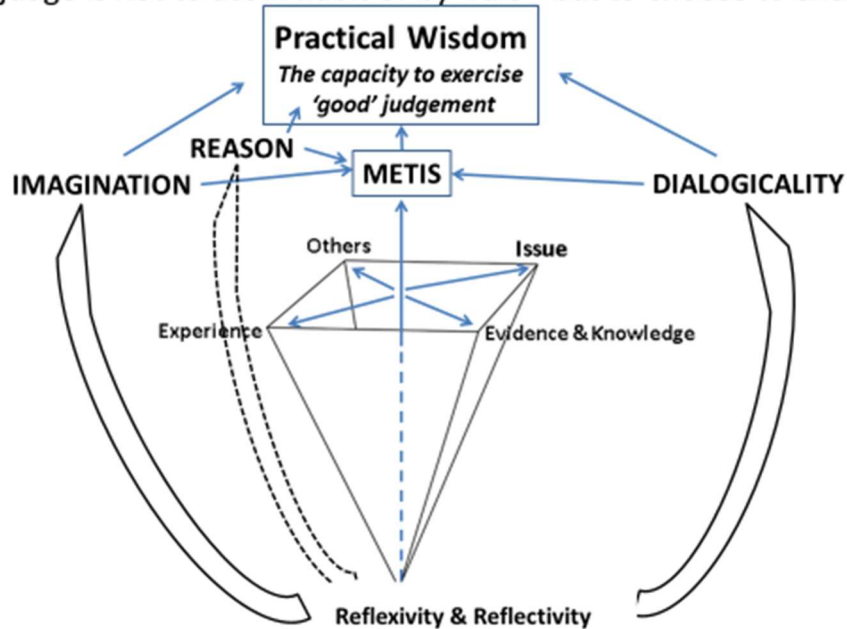


The Capability of Reasoning - 1

The capabilities are the cognitive and collaborative skills that are required for the development and exercise of practical wisdom, and the making of good judgements – they are Reflectivity, Reasoning, Dialogue and Imagination. Here we talk about reasoning.

To judge is not to act in habit or by 'rule'- but to choose to choose!



Reasoning

“Prejudices are what fools use for reason” - Voltaire

Reasoning is part of what the Ancient Greeks termed *Rhetoric*. It has its roots in Pre-Socratic times and the practice of the Sophists – teachers of how to make a case in court – people such as Protagoras & Gorgias.

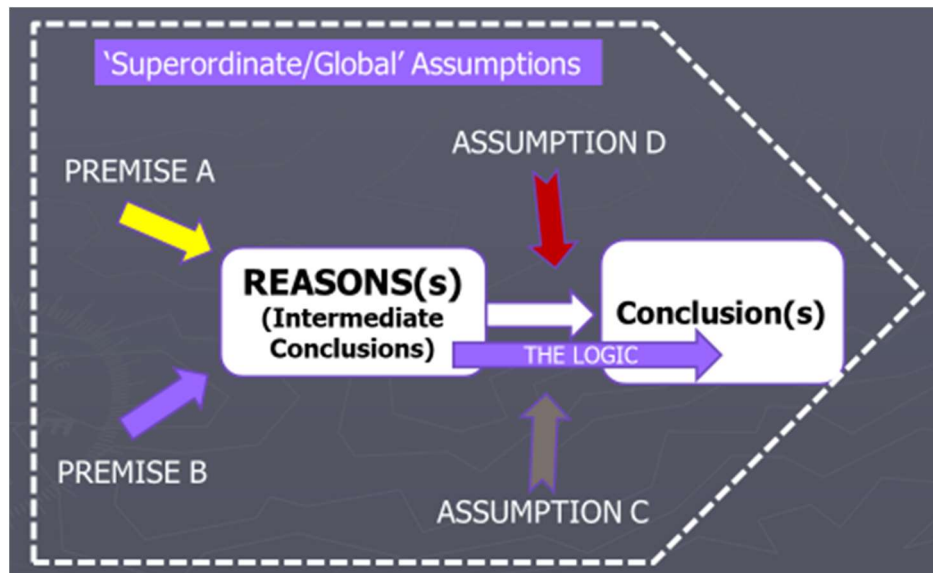
Often reasoning is called Critical Thinking, Analytical Thinking and Argumentation. The latter is the label usually given to the study of effective reasoning.

Reasoning is at the heart of making choices, and is an essential component of productive dialogue

Reasoning is the crafting and evaluating of reasons for and against things – *you should buy our product not theirs because..., we should invest in this country because..., we should not hire this guy because...., we should pay attention to this because... ..* Most business presentations you give or watch are giving reasons of some form or other. In presentations, reports and in meetings you are mostly reasoning with people.

Reasoning is all about constructing and de-constructing arguments - It is about building strong arguments, evaluating them and identifying weaknesses.

When reasoning well one is discerning of the founding premises, assumptions & evidence that underpin an argument, and of the quality of the logic that brings these elements together in the drawing of conclusions.



Through reasoning we **judge** if the conclusions drawn by arguments are warranted.

Managers spend the vast majority of their time talking with each other and much of that time is spent arguing about things from the seemingly trivial of car parking spaces to the immense about strategy. The quality of argument in these interactions, whether in HQ boardrooms or at warehouse coffee machines, is determinant of the quality of the judgements that are made and hence the performance & sustainability of the organisation.

In productive dialogue at whatever level we reason together – if we are to reason well we should be questioning of premises & logic, and strive to surface unstated assumptions in our deliberations. Creating an environment that enables and champions such penetrative deliberation is vital.

When talking about reflexivity and the pursuit of objectivity we saw Nietzsche's contention that there can be no facts, only interpretations. Given the character of the Wicked-VUCA world in which we are embedded, and with which we must contend in these dialogues, I would contend that **'there are no facts only better or worse arguments'**. This is just as much the case when we constructing our 'beginnings', as it indisputably is when we are choosing means & ends. When evaluating evidence in support of beginnings, means and ends the wise one is mindful that the only place where there are indisputable 'facts/truths' not vulnerable to Nietzsche's edict is in the abstract world of mathematics!

In this wicked world context, where powerful reasoning is key, the wise one understands that attempting reflexivity is vital. Just as we must turn ourselves critically to the coherence and foundations of the arguments of others, we must turn an eye onto the soundness of our own arguments – particularly towards our **judgements as to what to take account of in our arguments** – the place where our prejudices may have the most important but most elusive effect.

The wise one is reflexive and reasoned.

Sadly reasoning is a fundamental capability that does not receive appropriate focussed attention in our education. Also, sadly, the words argument & arguing have become words mostly used to describe a verbal conflict between people. This is very inappropriate. You must leave those meanings behind if you are to become practically wise!

Take the plunge! Dramatically enhance your skills in this vital area. Do the online Critical Reasoning course to which there is a link on this website