

The Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom

This is a comprehensive review of the psychological literature on wisdom by leading experts in the field. It covers the philosophical and sociocultural foundations of wisdom and showcases the measurement and teaching of wisdom. The connection of wisdom to intelligence and personality is explained alongside its relationship with morality and ethics. It also explores the neurobiology of wisdom, its significance in medical decision-making, and wise leadership.

How to develop wisdom is discussed and practical information is given about how to instill it in others. It is accessible to a wide readership and includes virtually all of the major theories of wisdom, as well as the full range of research on wisdom as it is understood today. It takes both a basic-science and applied focus, making it useful to those seeking to understand wisdom scientifically and to those who wish to apply their understanding of wisdom to their own work.

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The Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of the late Professor Paul B. Baltes, who, more than any other individual, originated the exploration of wisdom in psychological research.

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Preface

We live in a world that is in serious need of much greater wisdom than it now shows. It is a world of enormous economic inequality in the richest countries, with illiberal populists and autocrats coming into power throughout parts of Europe, Africa, South America, and North America, terrifying climate change that is being ignored by many governments, and nuclear weapons that could bring destruction to the planet and most, if not all, of its human population.

The study of wisdom should have something – perhaps a lot – to say about why the world is where it is and what could be done to change it. What is wisdom, how can we study it, and most importantly, how can we make humanity wiser? Increasingly, however, much of psychological research has tended to focus on narrow problems that can be investigated in great detail in elegant experiments with few real-world implications. The study of wisdom is close to the opposite. Wisdom is complex, rare, hard to define, and even harder to measure. Moreover, the situations in which it manifests itself do not easily lend themselves to tight experimental methodologies. Over the past 20 years, however, more and more researchers have taken up wisdom. When Robert J. Sternberg and Jennifer Jordan published the last edition of the *Handbook of Wisdom*, it had thirteen chapters.¹

Since 2005, research on wisdom has burgeoned. Now, in 2018, this new volume includes thirty-four chapters by twenty-three different research groups from different fields of psychology as well as philosophy, sociology, political science, economics, and medicine. These researchers have studied wisdom from various perspectives and in a broad range of contexts.

Perhaps there is hope – at least, more and more people seem to understand that we need to understand wisdom and, more importantly, to act wisely. While this volume will not perhaps have an immediate effect on the state of the world, it might provoke new ideas and spark new research both in academia and in real-life applied contexts. And perhaps, sooner or later, this volume and others like it will inspire people, especially policy-makers, to act more wisely. Maybe we, the editors and authors, can contribute a few small steps to the transitions that humanity needs to make if it wants to survive.

1 Sternberg, R. J., & Jordan, J. (Eds.). (2005). *A handbook of wisdom: Psychological perspectives*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Our handbook is written not only for students of wisdom and researchers in the field but also for anyone who seriously wants to understand wisdom and how it has the potential to change the world. We hope that, after reading this volume, you will want to contribute to those changes that make the world a better and more humane place.

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