

In Pursuit of Practical Wisdom

Making Good Judgements in a Wicked World

By

Peter Lenney, Lisa Gunther and Mark Dawson

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**This book is dedicated to the memory of Peter Lenney's old friend
and doctoral supervisor Professor Geoff Easton**

*When Geoff first drew my attention to this poem, I had no idea of its power to
those in pursuit of practical wisdom.*

*Read it carefully – and maybe once again each time you complete a chapter of
this book. He would be delighted!*

In Broken Images

A poem by Robert Graves

*He is quick, thinking in clear images
I am slow, thinking in broken images.*

*He becomes dull, adjusting to his clear images;
I become sharp, mistrusting my broken images.*

*Trusting his images, he assumes their relevance;
mistrusting my images, I question the relevance.*

*Assuming their relevance, he assumes the fact;
questioning their relevance, I question the fact.*

*When the fact fails him, he questions his senses;
when the fact fails me, I approve my senses.*

*He continues quick and dull in his clear images;
I continue slow and sharp in my broken images.*

*He in a new confusion of his understanding;
I in a new understanding of my confusion.*

"Peter!"

"Yes Pauline?"

"You really must get on and write this book."

"Why's that?"

*"You are supremely well qualified to write it
– you were so very, very mindless for oh-so-long!"*

This book is about the pursuit of Practical Wisdom – the capacity that enables good judgements to be made.

It is a book that takes you well beyond the reach of the management and business books currently occupying the airport bookshelves – with their all so certain prescriptions and proscriptions about what to do and how to do it – to consider, properly, how you can deal better with the world in which we know you are engaged. A wicked world in which you can never be certain about anything, other than about your uncertainty.

It is a book that we believe will help you make better decisions about both work and the rest of your life, including, most crucially, the one hidden in plain sight within this sentence – what is 'better'?

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This book, its appendices and its associated website were engineered by John Besford. The authors wish to express their most profound gratitude to John for the huge amount of time, effort and skill that he has deployed over several years, and for his immense patience with the lead author.

The Cover

The amazing artwork of the cover is the work of Peter's old friend and colleague from industry Dr Tim Handyside.

The artwork was photographed by Dr Andrew Bayliff – another old friend and industry colleague. It is a source of real pride for Peter that, after decades, they remain such close friends—especially given how different they are in so many ways, and that, for some years, they both worked for Peter.

Sincere thanks to both.

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The Appendices

All the appendices to which the text refers are available on our website
– www.mindfulmanager.me.uk

Much of the content comprises exercises. Providing the materials in this way allows us to provide you with high utility interactive documents. All of them can be downloaded.

There are also many more resources and materials on the website which are pertinent to the pursuit of practical wisdom.

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Preface

“Knowledge is the treasure, but judgement is the treasurer of a wise man. He that has more knowledge than judgement is made for another man’s use more than his own”

[William Penn – 1693]

What This Book is About – What it Attempts to Achieve, and Why

This book is about the pursuit of *Practical Wisdom* – the capacity that enables good judgements to be made. It is a precious capacity that markedly improves our chances of making good decisions in the testing circumstances of managerial life – in all facets of our lives come to that! ‘Why the focus on judgement?’ you may ask. Well, because it is, as the US military say, a ‘V.U.C.A.’ world in which we operate, and it is, as you most probably already understand, a world that bears little resemblance to its caricature in the business/management textbooks.

The world in which we are asked to make decisions is *volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous*. It is a Wicked World, as the lead author characterises it – a ‘V.U.C.A.’ one, that is suffused with vested interests and clashing perspectives where, sadly, there is no science of choice to assist us, nor any firm ground of truth on which to stand.

From Whom, and from Where, the Book Came

When I arrived at Lancaster University in 2001 to begin a Ph.D. I had spent more than twenty years in the business world, mostly in the industrial coatings industry, and had risen through the ranks of

research, technical management, and marketing to become the world-wide business director of a large division of a multinational corporation. Over the years I had become fascinated by the disparity between what was said in the management textbooks and business schools, and the 'real world' that had faced me every day. So, when I had the choice, I decided to do my Ph.D. on the realities of managerial work. I spent some three years in the field watching and listening to managers, and many years thenceforward writing and reflecting on this veritable mountain of empirical material, and on my more than 20 years in practice. This extended period of research and reflection – patiently facilitated by my co-authors – has led me to understand that, in my executive past, I had been remarkably well trained in very many technical and practical aspects of managing and leading, but was, in a strange way, seriously under-educated in many areas that now revealed themselves as extremely important in the exercising of quality judgement. Most crucially, philosophy. As Erica Benner once said

"... the best ancient philosophers are more alive and have more practical value than most contemporary writers ... what makes them great is that they pose and explore, with clarity mostly unmatched by their successors, the most perennial questions about how to go about organising our shared human life".

During this extended period of reflection, I have taught much of the material you will encounter in this book to many business school students – and for over 10 years to the Lancaster MBA class as their core module – *The Mindful Manager*. But, most crucially, my colleague Dr Martin Brigham –invited me to teach this stuff to the senior executives on the programme he leads – the world renowned 'International Masters in Practicing Management' [IMPM] of Henry Mintzberg origin.

As an executive I read a huge amount of the stuff on airport bookshelves that was purported to be of help in my commercial-manage-

rial endeavours and subjected my subordinates to much of it. I hereby publicly apologise for wasting so much of their time, and a lot of my own. I have also spent the last twenty years reading mountains of academic publications, as I fashioned a second career in academia. Again, I hereby apologise – this time for me and my colleagues in the profession wasting our time, and quite possibly your money, producing stuff of virtually zero utility to anyone.

Happily, my engagement with the senior executives on IMPM has given me great confidence that, by reading this, you are *definitely not* wasting your valuable time!

Why the Book Now – Why Not Before?

There are some simple answers to this question – all of them driven by the Coronavirus pandemic.

Being ‘locked down’ in a pandemic proved to be a great facilitator of focussed intellectual effort, but it was the daily observation of our leaders, in every arena, publicly struggling with choosing what to do in this truly wicked situation that provoked me, at last, to start to write this long-promised book. Long promised to the hundreds of students to whom, over many years, I have taught much of this material – many of whom have strongly chastised me for my reluctance to write.

It has, however, been a reluctance borne of the understanding that one might well be able to turn the ‘work’ of the practically wise one into ‘words’ but would the reader of ‘the words’ be able to turn those ‘words’ back into ‘work’ – *‘knowing that’* is very a very different thing from *‘knowing how’*. A philosophical topic to which we shall return when we discuss the concept of knowledge itself, and when we repeatedly engage with the ‘how’ of practical wisdom.

It was not only the manifest wrestling of our leaders with the making of what were judgements of enormous importance during the pandemic that provoked me, at last, to write. It was also because of the frequent use, particularly by politicians, of the phrase ‘it’s a judgment call’ as if it were the very last resort in deciding on things. Outside of the sterile world of mathematics, I see few choices that we face that are not ‘judgement calls’, even in normal times.

Another much related provocation during the pandemic has been the repeated use of the phrase ‘we are following the science’. It is ironic that our politicians deploy this phrase so readily, when the cause of the recent global Financial Crash, in which many of them were embroiled, was, at its core, our senior leaders in banking unquestioningly following the new ‘science’ of risk management that was promulgated by many academic institutions as a more rigorous and systematic substitute for the practised *judgement making* of the highly experienced, battle-hardened, old-hand risk managers within their firms – and of people like Warren Buffet come to that – “*it doesn’t matter how much you slice and dice s**t – it’s still s**t!*”. Good judgement call on consolidated debt portfolios Warren!

At this point you should know that I graduated as a Chemist and was for many years a professional physical scientist. Throughout the pandemic I have been appalled by the poor quality of scientific debate amongst scientists, and the poor level of scientific understanding manifest in most of our ruling elite and the commentariat. All of this being compounded by the astonishingly poor understanding of statistics in almost every sector of society, to say nothing of the reckless conflation of *correlation* and *causation* in their communication. I have not, however, been shocked by the minimal understanding most scientists have of the philosophy of science, as I was no different when I was a practising scientist. Ironically, I only woke up to this personal deficiency when I started a social ‘science’ Ph.D.

When politicians with little scientific understanding are listening to scientists with little understanding of science, we may have a problem.

These complementary failings in understanding have led to seriously uncritical listening in the policy debates that have taken place – the topics of criticality and listening are ones to which we will return with gusto! Note that I say ‘debate’ not ‘dialogue’ – a distinction on which we will also dwell later. There has been precious little dialogue to my mind.

Aristotle was pretty clear that, to be wise, one must seek a serious understanding of all the realms of knowledge pertinent to one’s specific endeavour. One does not have to be a master in all areas – simply reasonably educated in the basic language of each so you can listen ‘critically’. You must give yourself a decent chance of understanding what is being said by those ‘so-called experts’ with which you contend, purposefully or otherwise, because, as I say in my lectures, *‘to whom and what you listen is your choice and a choice of immense importance – it is one of the most important judgements you make’*.

Through this book I hope to provoke you to listen to Aristotle, to encourage the liberal arts educated amongst you to engage with science and statistics, and the scientists amongst you to engage with the liberal arts and statistics. And I want to encourage all of you to engage with philosophy. One of the numerous lessons of the pandemic is that many of those that lead us are far too ‘narrow’ to be wise!!!

Mindfulness Matters – Because it’s Only Conduct that Counts!

At this point I must stress that I am not a victim of the now currently cresting wave of ‘mindfulness’ in the popular management and psychology literature! I was introduced to this most profound of concepts more than thirty years ago when I was a practising manager – well before the current avalanche of what some term, quite rightly in my view, McMindfulness.

The currently burgeoning mindfulness movement now seems to offer us a method for helping us cope better with almost every aspect of our lives. Regularly now, we hear reports of studies that identify the many benefits to our well-being of mindfulness meditation. Mindfulness meditation has become mainstream, making its way into almost all aspects of our lives – corporations, hospitals, schools, prisons etc.

Millions of people are, it would appear, receiving manifest benefits from their mindfulness practice: less stress, better concentration, and maybe more empathy. This I very much welcome – and its success in the arena of cognitive behavioural therapy [C.B.T.] is great news. But these successes have a shadow – the ‘true’ meaning of Mindfulness is being lost.

The rush, largely of psychologists, to commodify mindfulness into a marketable product is leading to an unfortunate denaturing of this ancient practice which was intended to do far more than merely reduce our blood pressure and help executives cope with the executive life!

Meditating will not make you Mindful but being Mindful might make you meditate!

I am an attempting Theravada Buddhist, and an atheist – the two go together. At the very core of this way of living is the tenet that one must take responsibility for one’s choices of conduct – there is no paranormal being to which to pass the buck, nor any inviolable rules you have no choice but to follow. Your choices must be *your* choices.

Neither is Mindfulness a pursuit of peace through dis-engagement. It is, in fact, the absolute opposite – to be mindful is to be at peace with no peace! A wise manager does not dis-engage *from* but engages *with* ‘the world as it is’ and deals with ‘the world as it is’. A very useful attribute in the wicked world we face.

'Accept you must, that all is temporary, nothing is ever wholly satisfactory, and that there is no solid ground on which to stand'

Mindfulness is more usefully viewed as akin to the 'original' Mindfulness conception – *sati* (a Sanskrit word derived from the verb to remember) that has been translated as Mindfulness. But it is much more than 'memory', much more than simply recalling. It is an experiential learning that has become embedded in 'our way of being in the world' – our way of conducting ourselves. It is 'Right Remembering'. It is an ever-present understanding that influences every moment of our conduct.

The target of Mindfulness practice is Right Conduct – Right Thought, Right Talk, Right Action at Right Time – 'right' meaning appropriate. Appropriate cognitive, collaborative, and emotional conduct is the fundamental purpose of mindfulness practice. In the coming chapters we will spend much time talking about what is the 'appropriate' cognitive, collaborative, and emotional conduct of a wise one.

Judging what is appropriate conduct is a relentlessly important task. When Mindful, we choose the 'right' conduct almost without choosing. It is just how/who we are – we have developed powerfully productive habits, even the habit of questioning our habits! We have a certain 'way of being'. The ancient Greeks may have said we have a certain 'character' – that of a wise one!

'Seek Mindfulness' is possibly the most sophisticated response to the question of how to pursue Practical Wisdom. 'Discipline yourself', as we will discover later, is quite possibly the most incisive and productive response.

The What, Why and How of Practical Wisdom

In this short preface we have already discussed some of 'the what', 'the why' and even some of 'the where and when' of Practical Wisdom,

and we will go on to talk about ‘the what’ and ‘the why’ much more. But here we must move to discuss ‘the how’ – a topic to which we will constantly return throughout the book.

It is easy to talk about the ‘whats, whys, wheres and whens’. It is not difficult to do this, especially for academics like me – that’s what we do almost all the time. Even, sadly, in management schools. We fill our students’ heads with ‘whats, whens and wheres’ and sometimes even ‘whys’, but rarely do we have the courage to engage substantively with the ‘the how’ of much of our outpourings. I assure you that in this book we have gained the stomach for an attack on ‘the how’ and for a very simple reason as you already know – we do not want to waste your valuable time. Without attacking ‘the how’ this would all be just so much talk!

The two strongly related practices of mindfulness and self-discipline that I touched upon above are, we believe, the foundation of ‘the how’ of Practical Wisdom – the wise manager is a disciplined manager.

As we will see, the wise one must be self-disciplined in many dimensions, not least in their persistent pursuit of Practical Wisdom. For it is that – a *pursuit*.

Practical Wisdom is not something one achieves. One does not at some point in time become wise. Being wise is something that one must constantly strive towards. Practical Wisdom is a *striving*, not a state achieved. To be wise is to *strive* to be wise – it is to be focussed on ‘the how’. And not some general ‘how’ – you must build your own ‘how’.

A Grammatical Apology, and a Warning for any Academic Readers

As you will have already seen, in writing I slip between using ‘I’ and ‘we’. That is because this is a joint venture where my co-authors and

I play, and have played, very different roles in the construction of the book. The switching of pronouns is accidentally symbolic of the flipping and fusion of roles. In my executive life, I almost always bought the beer – Lisa, and Mark sometimes go to the bar!

At the end of the viva voce examination of my Ph.D. thesis on the nature of managerial work I was astounded to hear my external examiner, Professor Colin Hales, announce that his intention was to award my doctoral degree '*forthwith – with immediate effect*' with no demand for any modifications, corrections, or amendments of any form. Needless to say, I was delighted, and, in retrospect, I think he knew why my delight in it being over was so very manifest. He had a caveat to this instant award of the title 'Dr'. It was that I would write, for him, a short concluding reflection, which would not form a formal component of my submission. I therefore need not write it in a scholarly, academically rigorous manner, nor need I festoon it with citations of the work of others. I could simply say what *I* thought. When he had read the requested addendum, he told me that it was the best part of the only thesis that had ever made him laugh. In writing this book, the academic reins are well and truly off, and, being off the leash, these three scholars are saying simply what they think, and are intent on, at times, bringing a smile to your face!

Chapter 1

Practical Wisdom – What it ‘is’, And Why We Need it

“You have your way, I have my way, as for the right and only way, it does not exist”

[Nietzsche]

The Wicked World of Choice

It was an MBA class that, on hearing my frank description of the business world that I had left and from which they, as students, were taking an educational break, came up with the politely modified language of the caption of the cartoon below. It sums up the managerial challenge of what we term our ‘*Wicked World*’. The use of the substitute word ‘*fog*’ is, as we shall see, very apposite!

W.T.F. – Twitter acronym – Managerial Reality



1.1 W.T.F. – Twitter acronym – Managerial Reality

Leaders/Managers are, in effect, licensed to make choices on behalf of others and for the collective good. These choices are real and have impact on others – managers/leaders have discretion and carry moral responsibility. The ‘W.T.F.’ choices we face as managers/leaders in what we term *‘the Wicked World’*, are intrinsically ethical as they are most frequently choices about what ends/goals/objectives we should pursue and what means/methods we should use to pursue them. We must decide *‘what’* should be and how that *‘what’* should be achieved, and these choices have *‘moral consequences’*.

As I sit here writing, N.A.S.A. have just succeeded in momentarily

landing a robotic craft on a specific 16m diameter spot on an asteroid, Bennu, some 334 million kilometres from earth, whilst this asteroid was moving at some 100,000 km/hour! The tiny spacecraft, OSIRIS-Rex, had left the earth over two years earlier. This extraordinary feat was possible because the natural laws of cause and effect that govern the behaviour of physical entities have shown themselves to be unchanging, and hence the interactions of those entities through time and space are wholly predictable. It was a difficult and very complicated task, but the entire venture was calculable – all of it was derived from not so many relatively simple mathematical equations. The mathematics works because the entities of our physical universe always follow the laws of nature – unlike people, these entities make no ‘choices’. Through our multifarious choices, we humans create and direct the Wicked World in which we must operate. Our Wicked World of choosing follows no universal and timeless laws. There can be no understandings of this Wicked World that can reliably predict the future from the present. The only thing that is certain is that we can never be certain – about anything. We cannot calculate – we must judge!

At times in lectures, I have possibly been a little too enthusiastic in my critique of the so-called ‘social science’ of the management schools and have elicited some strong push-back from my classes – understandably so given their educative endeavour in the topic. What I repeatedly failed to make clear on these occasions, was that I had no problem with science, nor with serious attempts to deploy the ‘scientific methods’ of empirical investigation in the arena of ‘the social’, but that I had problems with the pursuit, and the claiming of, the forms of theoretical knowledge to which the physical sciences aspire. At one time, under pressure, I resorted to my background in physical chemistry in response to this push-back, and pretty much said the following –

“Molecules do not interpret their circumstances; they do not have

intentions, interests or motives, and they do not make choices – their chaos, seemingly, has ‘order’. People make interpretations, and do have intentions, interests, and motives – and we make choices – our chaos is simply that – chaos.”

To make this Wicked World of choice even tougher to deal with, we human beings are also entities that are vulnerable to the ideas of our observers! The behaviour of the physical entities of our universe, even those strange ones in the domain of quantum physics, are not impacted by our ideas about them. Their conduct is immune to our ideas about their behaviour, and their ensuing publication and promulgation. Our ideas and theories might usefully explain the physical universe, but they have no traction in it. In the Wicked World of people, ideas and theories can drive our choices and hence change the world – for good or bad – and even the latter we must judge.

For all the reasons above, and more, the forms of knowledge that successfully enabled the navigation of OSIRIS-Rex to Bennu will never be available to support our navigation of our chaotic Wicked World of choice here on earth, no matter the persistent attempts of the economists to claim such knowledge and rid themselves of their ‘physics envy’. Behavioural economists, like Kahnemann and Tversky, are now even blaming us, the entities, for their failure to generate such knowledge – the entities, us, are apparently just too irrational and biased! Evolution might know better than these Nobel prize winners. This so-called irrationality and so-termed bias might be why we have survived as a species. It seems to have been just the ticket for survival in what was definitely an even more wicked pre-historic world – one just as complex, but with added sabre-toothed tigers!

The conduct, characteristics and proclivities of the human entities that constitute the *Wicked World* determine that it cannot, in any dimension, be reliably predictable, and that we will never have a stationary foundation of timeless and universal natural laws of cause and

effect on which we can lean in its navigation. Though philosophers have attempted to give us a science of ethical choice, none of these attempts survive serious scrutiny, and the attempts of management science in the area of decision science do not, to our mind, merit even cursory attention.

We have to make judgements in this Wicked World in which we are immersed – but fortunately, not about avoiding those tigers anymore.

What is it to Judge?

The scientists at NASA were not making *judgements* as to where and when in space-time OSIRIS-Rex had to be to arrive at that place on Bennu at the right time – they were doing *calculations*! They *were*, however, making judgements about just about everything else in their lives, including, most crucially to the mission, judgements about where they themselves should be in space-time, with whom and doing what, in order that the mission to Bennu might succeed.

The Sciences, Mathematics, the statistics of big data, A.I., operations research, and many other such endeavours may generate some putative answers to many of the questions we ask, and they may be very important questions to which we need some putative answers so that we can then make our choices. But there is no science that can make these choices for us, and no science that can predict our choices, or their impact. There will never be a decision science available that can make our Wicked World choices of ends and means, and the foundational choice of what we should take into account in our choosing of ends and means – what we might term the construction of our ‘beginnings’. More of these later. Our choices of beginnings, ends, and means are all judgements, and are themselves founded on other judgements.

Because there are no timeless and universal rules of the Wicked World,

we need to make judgements, not do calculations. Judgements about, well, simply everything – judgements about what and who to believe, about what someone means by what they say, about what is appropriate conduct in a particular circumstance, about what knowledge is pertinent to the judgement to hand, about who to consult, about who one should tell something, about what rules we should break or bend and which we should follow etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc. etc..

Continually, we must judge – we *'weigh things up'* and choose. But it is a strange sort of *'weighing'* in which we must engage, as the *'things'* that we are weighing up are, almost invariably, what is termed incommensurable. They are not able to be judged by the same standards – they lack a basis for comparison – they have no common standard of measurement – there is no singular qualitative or quantitative standard to deploy. The things we are weighing up cannot be *'weighed'* on the same sort of scales. You cannot compare colour with weight, or length with smell etc. – and, largely, when sober, we would not even try. But the agony of making comparisons and choices between incommensurable things is the everyday stuff of the Wicked World of choice.

In a sense, therefore, all judgements in the Wicked World of choice are value judgements, as our choices between, and comparison of, incommensurables we do via the value we judge them to hold in multiple dimensions. Through an extraordinary weighing up of value we judge what is more relevant – what is more important – what matters most – what is more appropriate.

The Wicked World is not one we choose but it is one built of our *'choosing'*, and it is judgements of value all the way down!

And to judge properly, is, even in and of itself, a choice. Because to *truly judge is to choose to choose and not to act in habit, by rule or on principle – even if one's choice is then to act in habit, by rule or on principle*. To choose to choose – to truly judge – is to take responsibil-

ity for the choice one makes as to what is ‘right’ in a circumstance. All judgements are choices, but not all choices are judgements. To truly judge is to ‘own’ the choice as to what is ‘right’.

‘Wicked’?

Our use of the word ‘*wicked*’ does not imply our world of choice is fundamentally evil or immoral. Nor is the word used for its more modern meaning of wonderful/excellent. Though, of course, there is much that is immoral and wonderful in our Wicked World – a lot of it relating to our choices. We use the word ‘*wicked*’ as we wish to pay due homage to the work of, believe it or not, some scholars of town planning – Rittel & Weber. They came up with the term to describe the forms of problems that planners mostly faced. These were very rarely puzzles that were simply solvable by the application of logic, nor problems that were simply resolvable through the application of mathematics/science – Rittel & Weber called these latter forms of problem ‘*tame*’. The optimisation of a train timetable around an established demand cycle could be said to be a tame problem – as well as the navigation of OSIRIS-Rex to Bennu – but a decision as to whether to *build a new railway line*, or to *spend money on flying a space craft to Bennu* is wicked.

For us, outside of mathematics and other contexts of fully fixed rules and boundaries, there are few if any truly tame problems. Super-computers have now proved that winning at chess and Go are tame problems (because they are now always winning) but even with all their statistical calculative might they have shown winning at poker not to be a tame problem – super-computers do not always win. The game of poker is more like life. Many factors that have a great bearing on our choices are *calculable* in this card game and there are many things of which one can be *absolutely certain* in poker – there is only one Queen of Hearts. There are also many things to which we can assign *precise*

probabilities – the chances of being dealt an ace out of a shuffled full deck is 7.6923%. But many factors in the game are not stable, certain, nor statistically analysable. The chances are, given the cards that are on the table, the hand I hold, how Mark has played before, that he is not bluffing, maybe, just maybe, he is smarter than he looks, and he knows I would think he's just not a bluffer, but then again...?! The world which our choosing creates, and in which we have to choose, is fundamentally wicked and much more so than poker. There is very little, if anything, of which we can be certain, and not very much to which we can usefully assign probabilities.

In the Wicked World, *the only thing that is certain is that you can never be certain*. This uncertainty is not due to our ignorance – one that can be resolved through research and investigation – but a fundamental uncertainty due to the inherent indeterminacy of our circumstance. It is an uncertainty that is not resolvable. As Karl Weick says – our circumstances are better described as '*equivocal*' – we are confused, not ignorant. In life, as in poker, our only option is to judge – and to judge well we need practical wisdom.

Sadly, Mark won the hand – I folded and he *was* bluffing!

Practical Wisdom

If we judge the judgements someone makes as being 'good', we characterise the judging person as being practically wise. Practical Wisdom is the capacity we ascribe to those we judge to have made good judgements. In Chapter 2 we will discuss this contention more when we deal, as promised, with the 'how' of practical wisdom.

Practical Wisdom first clearly emerged back in Ancient Greece in the writings of Aristotle. He saw practical wisdom as the master virtue – the excellence in judgement that governs the other cardinal virtues that he identified – justice, temperance, and courage.

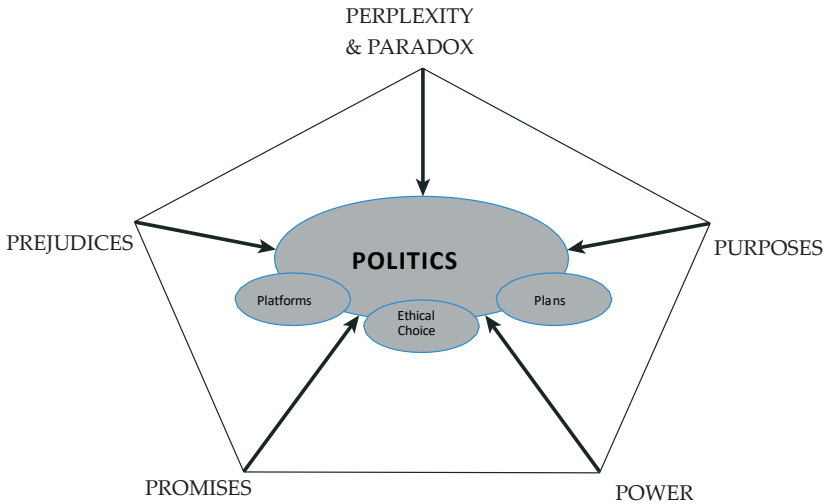
His book *‘The Nicomachean Ethics’*, in which practical wisdom [Phronesis] was first elaborated, was very much the prequel to his book *‘The Politics’*. Aristotle saw phronesis clearly manifest in the judgements of the General of Athens, Pericles, and identified the fundamental importance of cultivating this capacity for good judgement in the *‘governing citizens’* of the ancient city – the Polis. If managers and leaders in our modern world can be simply characterised as one thing, it is that they are *‘governing citizens’*.

In the 21st Century one can manage/lead *without* practical wisdom but no one manages/leads *well* without it – Phronesis is still the master virtue.

The Wicked World of Governing – a Pandemic of Ps

As you may have noted, both my early industrial and academic careers were spent in marketing. I have wasted some considerable time, both as a practitioner and as an academic, engaging with the outpourings of a certain Philip Kotler, his collaborators, and his disciples in marketing management education. They have dominated the area with their 4Ps of marketing. Extraordinarily, there are a plethora of Ps powerful to the description of the Wicked World of governing, and this veritable army of alliteration will now be mobilised in pursuit of your easy recall and some sweet revenge on Kotler!

The diagram below is an attempted visualisation of how interconnected factors of varying kinds come together to determine the inherently political character of the work of leading/managing, and hence the need for the practical wisdom of its practitioners.



1.2 Perplexity & Paradox - the **'P's** of the Wicked World of choice we will **p**onder more deeply as we **p**rogress on our **p**ath to **p**ractical wisdom, but, for now, just a **p**reliminary **p**recis.

All of the **'P's** of the Wicked World of choice we will **p**onder more deeply as we **p**rogress on our **p**ath to **p**ractical wisdom, but, for now, just a **p**reliminary **p**recis. Sorry, I couldn't resist it!

Plans and Platforms – Making History and Writing History

Commonly, the issues with which managers deal are reasonably termed *'problems'* – circumstances where the situation that pertains is not one that they wish to be sustained. Even an opportunity can be characterised in such a way. The challenge is thence seen as one requiring the identification and selection of methods to change the unsatisfactory status quo.

The determination of a circumstance as being *'problematic'* clearly requires the scoping of an alternate potential circumstance – an