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Right and wrong, true and false, just and unjust, good and bad, lawful and illegal, profitable and unprofitable; there are many ways to dichotomize a decision, a course of action. Wisdom – wise and unwise – goes beyond all of these and straddles these dichotomies. Wisdom involves the ability to see things in the totality, to see what is desirable. A course of action may be right and lawful, but still may be unwise. Wisdom involves seeing things in the totality, and requires a synthetic ability.

People differ from one another in cognitive style, from analytic to synthetic. Western cultures tend to be analytic, whereas the traditional societies of the East holistic and synthetic.

A number of things may appear to be right but may still be unwise. Certain things may be just, but implausible. A legal action may give rise to complications in its wake. It may not be worth the cost. Wisdom involves a meta-approach to the problem at hand, to arrive at a course of action. Wisdom is inextricably linked with moral values and social mores. Values largely determine what should be done. However, at times, a course of action may be ignored or left undone, if although morally correct, may create problems.

The various aspects of wisdom will be discussed.