Cultivating Practical Wisdom as Education

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Abstract
This paper argues, from a critical realist perspective, that it would be beneficial to extend thinking on how personal and social education could become more central to students learning. We explore how constructive-informed arrangements which emphasise cognitive skills and affective qualities could be realised through experiential learning. Our theorizing is informed by neo-Aristotelian and Deweyian thinking on the importance of identifying mutually acceptable value commitments which can cultivate practical wisdom as well as generally benefit society. Thereafter, we outline how the recent writings of Tiberius could inform thinking on how, epistemologically and ethically, a first person perspective on learning and personal growth could connect with normative decision-making on how to make good life choices. We conclude by briefly highlighting the methodological potential of using outdoor learning environments to help students make informed and wise judgements which show evidence of discernment, deliberation and effective decision-making.

Introduction
We write as educators who consider it beneficial, conceptually and methodologically, to extend thinking on how reframing personal and social education (PSE) from a virtue perspective (both ethically and epistemologically) can enhance student learning. Our holistic-inclined critical realist informed views are ones which encourage teachers to cultivate practical methods that can fulfil the requirements of model-based curriculum common to Western education systems. This view sits squarely within the pedagogy of experiential education and follows the practices espoused by thinkers such as John Dewey and Paulo Friere. Central to this perspective is an emphasis on PSE, which can help placate concerns experiential educators often have about the restrictive nature of content driven curriculum taught in traditional classrooms (Dewey, 1938; Friere, 1993). We are interested therefore in more constructive arrangements which emphasise how the development of cognitive skills and affective qualities can be realised in more experiential learning environments. In a neo-Aristotelian sense, discussions on the associated skills and qualities of practical wisdom are particularly evident in writing which reviews practices which typically take place outside traditional classrooms as, for example, with outdoor education programmes (Allison et. al., 2011; Seaman & Coppens, 2006).

Our aims therefore are to explore practical wisdom (in a neo-Aristotelian sense) as it speaks to 'living better' (ethics) and 'thinking better' (epistemology). Thus, the paper begins by reviewing the work of Dewey and Aristotle, from both a moral and epistemological perspective, with a view to bringing clarity to the cognitive and affective qualities that comprise our understanding of PSE (or growth in practical wisdom). For both Dewey and Aristotle, the goal of enhancing practical wisdom in learners through experience is ultimately the cultivation of good citizens. Having explored the ethics and epistemology informing aspects of practical wisdom, we briefly highlight areas where practical wisdom offers increased understanding and practical direction to education. The final focus of the paper is on how the pursuit of practical wisdom promotes a pedagogical call for educational practices which can enhance learning by contributing richly to wellbeing and effective citizenship**.**

Practical Wisdom: Moral and Epistemological Guidance
Aristotle (1985) identifies two categories of virtues, moral and intellectual, to govern the two parts of the soul (II.1). The moral virtues primarily regulate affections and volition and are developed through imitation and habit. For Aristotle (1985) moral virtues are complex states, exemplified situationally, which draw on an appropriate feeling and capacity to act in the right way, at the right time, for the right reasons. This requires an alignment of cognition, affection, and volition. Moral excellence references the perfect mean between two states: one deficient, and one excessive. Intellectual virtues regulate primarily cognition (*NE*; *EE*, II.1, 1219b27-36) and are acquired through teaching. Aristotle (1985) further divides the intellectual virtues into two categories: the speculative include *sophia* (speculative wisdom), *nous* (intuitive reason), and *episteme* (knowledge). These collectively attend to necessary truths, whereas the practical include *techne* (technical thinking) and *phronesis* (practical wisdom) and attend to contingent matters. Thus, the domain of necessary truths for Aristotle was much broader than in most contemporary conceptions (Zagzebski, 1996).

Given the relationship Aristotle suggests between cognition and affection, the moral virtues are largely educated by the intellectual virtues. Practical wisdom is the intellectual virtue uniquely responsible for guiding a person's ability to be virtuous in particular circumstances. It is a 'truth attaining intellectual quality concerned with doing and with the things that are good for human beings' (Aristotle, 1985, VI.5, 1140b21) and is an essential constituent of human flourishing or wellbeing on Aristotle's account. As such, practical wisdom coordinates the appropriate virtuous state for particular situations. Traditionally, such an interpretation has been entrusted only to moral excellences. Within virtue epistemology, however, some have identified practical wisdom as a guiding virtue for contingent intellectual matters as well e.g. one's ability to think excellently, including cultivating a love for knowledge, understanding and right belief (see Zagzebski, 1996; Roberts & Wood, 2007). On this basis, practical wisdom represents an essential component of Aristotle's flourishing life, and straddles his division of intellectual and moral faculties. The acquisition and praxis of virtue depends on four preconditions: wish or desire, deliberation, decision, and action (Aristotle, 1985). These preconditions shed light on the active and passive constituents of practical wisdom and show how rational reflections and non-reflective experiences work together toward a common end. Following Aristotle therefore, the generous person both deliberates about how to help those in need and unreflectively recognizes and desires to aid those in need. Both constituents aim at the same goal and both lead to action.

Moral education has had a rising interest in Aristotle's practical wisdom for some time. Three facets of practical wisdom have been explored in particular: the deliberative or rational perspective, the perceptual or situational insight perspective and the collaborative or moral character perspective (Noel, 1999). These facets are necessarily interconnected, and tracing them briefly helps elaborate further on practical wisdom's nature. The deliberative or rational perspective highlights the role of reasoning in practical wisdom. As a practical, intellectual virtue, *phronesis* is both cognitive and action guiding. Functionally, it enables the moral agent to deliberate over a choice, challenge or situation by encouraging a cognitive chain which reflects the rationality of the agent's course of action. The interplay between cognitive activity, belief acquisition, and overt action sheds light on the complexity of practical wisdom and also of the difficulty of identifying it as a distinctively intellectual virtue. This is where the benefits of

deliberation in educating the emotions and desires are highlighted as helpful in choosing appropriate actions. As such, what the deliberative or rational perspective emphasizes is the resulting sequence of reasoning and its accessibility to the moral agent.

The perceptual or situational insight perspective highlights the situated nature of moral action when guided by practical wisdom. Taking the whole situation into account, practical wisdom allows the moral agent to simultaneously perceive all the relevant features, and interpret them through a developed sense of discernment. As situations present moral choices, discernment (through containing an element of imagination) allows the moral agent to see multiple courses of action permitted by their choice. A developed sense of discernment implies a discriminating eye and leads to wise choice and action. Reviewing Aristotle's use of krisis (discernment) and phantasia (imagination), Sherman (1989) and Nussbaum (1978) reflect Noel's (1999, p. 280) view that 'discernment brings attention to how things 'appear' to people'. Thus, the interpretive power of practical wisdom helps the moral agent see the situation as it is (e.g. recognizing circumstantial patterns, layers, etc.), so that right action can be identified and implemented in situated contexts.

The collaborative or moral character perspective highlights the circular relationship between practical wisdom and the moral virtues. Aristotle noted that practical wisdom without goodness was mere cleverness. The connection between practical wisdom and moral virtue is not incidental. Sherman (1989, p. 50) notes, an 'agent is praised not merely for possession of virtue, but for its exercise and exemplification in concrete circumstances'. Virtues are therefore only exercised via practical wisdom and the mediating role it plays. Thus, an agent's developing sense of practical wisdom is intrinsically tied to their character and to their perceptions, experiences, habits and favored dispositions. Experience is therefore critical to shaping both our moral virtues and our ability to exercise them through practical wisdom. For example, without experiences that demand bravery, we are hard-pressed to develop discernment that will encourage bravery in future situations. Therefore, a lack of experience impacts the agent's ability to exercise those particular virtues. Conversely, experiences help develop practical wisdom as they provide opportunity to review choices, practice moral action and develop habits.

The collaborative or moral character perspective also emphasizes practical wisdom's social dimension. The practically wise person cultivates virtuous friendships to create an environment conducive for continued growth. Friendships provide a social context for processing perception and discernment. Group experiences and deliberation help develop the awareness and discernment characteristic of practical wisdom. Additionally, the practically wise person is concerned with both individual and societal flourishing, so discernment involves social awareness. Aristotle (1999) noted bravery as a possible case where the right action aims at both individual and societal flourishing (e.g. a soldier going to war) even though it may lead to an undesired end (cost of life). Concern for societal flourishing in turn cultivates keen emotional vision and sensitivity (Sherman, 1989).

In light of these three complementary facets, practical wisdom maintains an elevated status among the virtues. As an intellectual virtue it serves the moral virtues by mediating particular situations, and coordinating action. This process leaves the moral agent with a clear rational sense of why they acted in a particular way that has accounted for the particular situation by

perceptively identifying the relevant features of the situation, and discerning the appropriate way forward. The entire process is shaped by the agent's experiences and social relationships and is intimately connected to the developing character of the agent.

For Aristotle, practical wisdom served the moral virtues exclusively. Citing theoretical and functional needs, however, Zagzebski (1996) argues that practical wisdom ought to serve the intellectual virtues as well. She notes that a significant set of cognitive virtues appears to have been overlooked. While Aristotle assigns the speculative intellectual virtues to necessary matters, and the practical intellectual virtues to making and doing within contingent matters, he appears to overlook, at least from a contemporary perspective, an account of intellectual virtues directed toward 'grasping the contingent' (Zagzebski, 1996, p. 214). In building her argument for a single virtue category, Zagzebski reviews the function, acquisition, and operation of moral and intellectual virtues in order to exploit their similarities. Moving beyond the obvious notion that thinking and feeling are different things, Zagzebski highlights the messy influences of cognition, affection, and volition e.g. while we consider beliefs formed without reason to be irrational, beliefs are rarely acquired without the influence of emotion and desire. Thus, if moral virtues regulate overt acts in the same way that intellectual virtues regulate cognitive activity and the acquisition of beliefs, then emotion and desire impact on the shape of both moral and intellectual virtues. Conversely, moral and intellectual virtues influence emotion and desire through appropriate encouragement and restraint. Bravery, for instance, manages emotions like fear and self-confidence, encouraging and restraining them to the situationally appropriate mean. Likewise academics must encourage their desire for truth and restrain their desire to be right when practicing virtues like intellectual honesty and epistemic responsibility. Additionally, both moral and intellectual virtues are voluntary in that the agent is capable of the appropriate encouragement or restraint and failure to do so is viewed as a lack of self-control. Thus, while some involve stronger affections than others, emotion and desire appear to impact on both moral and intellectual virtues. Regarding Aristotle's clear distinction between cognitive and affective states, Zagzebski (1996, p. 149) identifies numerous states e.g. curiosity, doubt, wonder, awe which involves both and claims that 'almost all moral virtues include an aspect of proper perceptual and cognitive activity'. The implication here is that the cognitive overlap goes beyond the role of guidance and mediation offered by practical wisdom.

Although Zagzebski (1996) identifies a number of intellectual virtues which benefit from teaching e.g. open-mindedness and the ability to recognize a reliable authority as evidence, she argues contra Aristotle that all virtues are cultivated primarily through imitation, practice, and habituation citing the logical and causal operational connections which exist between moral and intellectual virtues. For instance, an honest person both tells the truth and is careful with the truth. While the former requires the moral virtue of honesty, the latter requires various intellectual virtues like epistemic responsibility in terms of being justified, and the ability to properly weigh evidence. In addition to these logical and causal connections, Zagzebski (1996) identifies a number of moral virtues which have intellectual corollaries like perseverance, courage, humility, autonomy and discretion. If intellectual and moral virtues function and operate like moral virtues, then it seems reasonable to suggest that practical wisdom, or something like good judgement impacts on belief formation. While some resist Zagzebski's collapse of the distinction between moral and intellectual virtues (e.g. see MacAllister, 2012 and his account of Annas), there exists general agreement that the nature of practical wisdom

engages intellectual and moral strains.

Given the above the question remains how can this mix of intellectual and moral virtues best be integrated together and taken forward in educational contexts. Roberts and Wood (2007) make initial progress here by shifting the epistemic conversation away from traditional debates toward a regulative epistemological approach. Their approach creates space for perspectival reflections wherein growth in practical wisdom itself constitutes thinking better. Kristjansson (2010) aims to close the gap between moral cognition and action by combining contemporary rational, existential and emotion conditioning approaches. We view these as promising for cultivating practical wisdom as from our perspective students would be required to think through situations and would attempt to coherently bring together emotions, beliefs, and actions. Further, we would expect students to be able to articulate the rational line of perception that led to action (Noel, 1999). On this basis, if practical wisdom mediates belief acquisition through virtues like epistemic responsibility, intellectual honesty and integrity, then students have an added tool to help them wrestle with metaphysical questions which impact on their ability to develop existential frameworks (Kristjansson, 2010). This is not accomplished however without the integration of the student's emotional life. Aristotle argues that we have at least some control over our emotional reactions and managing them virtuously (Noel, 1999). If this is true then practical wisdom guides emotional education and conditioning (through habit and practice) as well.

One of the critiques against such modern approaches to moral education has been the reliance solely on rational approaches that can artificially separate the cognitive from the affective (Kristjansson, 2010). As Carr (2003, p. 44) notes, 'effective moral judgments cannot be made in the absence of the right kind of sentiments, sensitivities and sensibilities'. Instead, educators should recognize the reciprocity shared by reason and emotion in informing one another. On this basis, the rational part of the soul consisting of deciding, choosing, discriminating, judging and planning, (NE, 1139a12, 1170b10ff) can account for and be properly informed by the non-rational part of the soul (Homiak, 1999). This mutual combination brings balance to concern for justice and compassion in ways which reflect Aristotelian interest in how both reason and feeling play a part in moral judgment (Carr, 2003). At a practical level, Noddings (2010) advises that educators should seek out the balance between justice and compassion in relation to practical wisdom. For instance, if learners' experiences are designed around competition rather than cooperation, then compassion and care are more difficult to practice. Similarly, maintaining discipline needs to uphold justice and compassion for both the offended and the offender in ways which show sympathy for others feelings and the intention to do something about it (Carr, 2003).

In summary, we consider that practical wisdom functions as a valuable cognitive habit for educators to practice and teach, especially through experiential approaches. The educator who aims to cultivate practical wisdom attempts to holistically and experientially engage student beliefs, emotions, and behavior. When successful, this practice mirrors the aims of emotional education and care approaches to ethics.

Practical Wisdom and Experiential Learning: Connecting Wellbeing and Education
It comes as no surprise, then, that neo-Aristotelians identify experiences as the catalyst for virtue development. Experiences offer particular, situated opportunities to practice good deliberation and virtue. Thoughtful attention to experience and the practice of deliberation tends to lead to good decisions and living well. However, Aristotle (1985) notes that young people are mostly

poor learners when it comes to practical wisdom as they lack the experience required to deliberate well. As such, experiential education literature challenges educators to engage students with practicing reflection and deliberation in order to develop the cognitive skills and affective qualities necessary for practical wisdom (Bessant, 2009; Brinkmann, 2007). When successful, these practices are guided by educators who exemplify practical wisdom and assist cognitive development through strategic questioning and through facilitating discussion. Consequently, as learners begin to critically engage experiences, recognize available choices, and discern the 'best' way forward, their critical reflection, practical reasoning, evaluation and judgement improve. Both experiential education literature and Aristotle agree that PSE grows when learners have opportunities to practice making reflective, discerning and often value laden choices (Carr, 2006; Pring, 2000).

Theoretically, numerous connections exist between Aristotle's situated and holistic approach to the development of practical wisdom and more experiential pedagogical approaches which attempt to cultivate personal and social growth through meaningful, guided experiences. The emphasis on active and engaged learners encourages curriculum that highlight how deliberation, discussion, decision, action, and reflection can inform decision-making (Brinkmann, 2007). Expressed this way, PSE runs parallel to Aristotelian practical wisdom. Aristotle (1985) identifies these aforementioned practices (i.e. reflection, deliberation, decision, and action) as preconditions for practical wisdom and virtuous living. If correct, then experiential approaches encourage this growth naturally regardless of students' previous learning experiences. On this basis PSE can be nurtured from a young age and become a central aim of experiential education from both a Deweyian and neo-Aristotelian perspective providing experiences can be developed that intersect with students' internal conditions i.e. those mental maps of the world that students bring to the experience (Allison et. al., 2011). Properly developed experiences of this type can entice and perplex learners, as each student's internal conditions are invariably a complex and tangled web of intellectual, emotional, ethical, and spiritual representations (Bassey, 2010; Dewey, 1938). Thus, meaningful learning experiences will engage students holistically and require cognitive resources to help them construct coherent meanings and reflect critically. Essentially, students are invited into a practice that develops practical wisdom.

However, what are missing are framework-related ideas on how such theorizing might be most coherently taken forward (Thorburn & Allison, 2012). In this respect, the work of Tiberius (2008; 2012) is of interest as it contains a mix of moral philosophy and positive psychology influences when reviewing how to make good choices in order to live well and wisely. Key to this quest is progressing with a first person process-based perspective on learning, which is informed by experience and which connects with normative decision-making on how to make good choices about our lives. Pivotal to the self-directed account of living a life which you value is consistency between reflections and life satisfaction values (Tiberius, 2008). The concept of wellbeing established by Tiberius is one which includes more than the hedonic pursuit of pleasure and is based instead on more profuse notions such as human flourishing or wellbeing. Aristotle's eudaimonism (human flourishing) contains objective and subjective components; an objective component, as there is a societal interest with what individuals want e.g. positive psychological functioning, self-realization, personal growth and good relations with others and a subjective component which recognises what individuals desire e.g. the feeling of being engrossed in experiences which engage our skills, interests and capacities fully. This mix

contains influences which reflect the changing influences on society (e.g. expectations of social justice agendas) as well as recognition of the virtues people continue to endorse as being fulfilling.

How to balance a focus on individual (subjective and intrinsic) wellbeing as well as instrumental concerns e.g. objective measurements of knowledge and achievement is a key concern, especially with regard to where paradigmatically to draw the line between the two. Tiberius (2012) considers that 'right in the middle' would be the best place to develop a value fulfilment theory. We return to elaborate on the possibilities of such an enterprise later, however, for the present, the focus is on teasing out the respective arguments which inform subjective (intrinsic) theories of wellbeing with those from a more idealized (instrumental) perspective. Such debates matter as they reveal conflicting conceptions of how values are formed and knowledge is acquired (Pritchard, 2005). The main test for subjective theories of wellbeing is to review how beliefs and enjoyment can provide a more substantive account of values and worthwhileness than that which is typically associated with merely satisfying individual needs and preferences. Dewey (1929) highlighted these types of challenge many years ago, when advising that it needs to be possible to discriminate between the more modest subject states of enjoyment and desire with reflections which can generate caring, stable and evaluative judgements. Sumner (1996) considers that informed autonomy provides the authentic endorsement necessary for connecting with life satisfaction theories. Likewise, Tiberius (2008) considers that when reflection is added to subjective informed accounts of wellbeing, authenticity can be achieved. As such, reflection provides normativity, and as values become increasingly stable (as cognition and emotion develop in conjunction with each other), it is possible to progressively endorse and justify reason-giving decisions as sympathy and empathy for others develops. Accordingly, reflective wisdom can help ensure thoughts are accurate and authentic with unnecessary illusions or excessively severe self‐assessment being avoided.

By contrast the main challenge of more idealized theories such as rational desire satisfaction theories is that there could be too wide a breach between a person's internal values and those they aspire towards or which are set for them as objectives. The concern is that if values require a human evaluation component for explanatory purposes then they cannot be objective as in some instances knowledge acquisition can be 'a completely unreflective matter' (Pritchard, 2005, p. 239). The essence of the problem as Tiberius (2012, p. 2) states is that 'simple subjectivism captures internalism but loses normativity; idealized subjectivism captures normativity, but loses internalism.' Given these dilemmas, Raibley (2010) proposes that individual agency can surpass the limitations of more subjective self-assessed theories where there is often lack perspective in judgements reached. However, it would not necessarily overtake concerns that subjectivist accounts of values lack the cognitive basis required to make them objective and measurable. Raibley (2010) considers that his emphasis on recognizing more the fine line there often is between activities being of value and being of harm is crucial in making stable judgements as it involves learners in reviewing non-actual as well as actual situations. In Raibley's (2010) view his theorizing overtakes the limitations of self-assessment theories of the type advocated by Sumner (1996) where the person is considered the final authority on their own wellbeing. Therefore, as learners begin to critically engage with experiences, recognize available choices, and discern the 'best' way forward, the process of critical reflection and practical reasoning improves.

The final task is to review Tiberius's (2012) aforementioned 'right in the middle' critique. This involves reviewing key considerations on values claims, capacity for reflection and authenticity as well as considering the adequacy criteria which might inform thinking on normativity measures. Such a focus might ameliorate aforementioned Aristotelian concerns that the cultivation on practical wisdom is something which can only be measured over a full life and not over a relatively short space of time. Tiberius (2008) believes that values should contain substantive reason-giving character traits (attentional flexibility, perspective, optimism and self-awareness). These traits reinforce the importance of reflection and confirm values we should care about and be able to realistically achieve. According to Tiberius (2012), three norms of appropriateness inform whether values meet the necessary criteria for achieving subjective and objective coherence. These are whether values are sufficiently informed by information and experience, whether values suit us emotionally (as engagement with longer term goals requires motivation) and whether values are attuned with our personal ideals. Importantly, normative measures should not be so hyper-idealized that they limit motivational engagement or to detached for most people to effectively consider. By aiming for a theory which is right in the middle, Tiberius's (2012) intention is that her thinking can inform a regulative framework which can help people to make coherent and effective decisions about their lives, but which are not so ideal as to be off-putting. Such notions chime with Raibley's (2010) thoughts on wellbeing as a regulative ideal.

In taking our ideas further the main features we consider necessary are that reflections on wellbeing strive for a first person perspective on learning which is informed by increasingly stable values. On this basis, values can connect feasibly with normative measures such as pleasure, life satisfaction, relationship satisfaction, meaningfulness, so that reflections can be authentic, relevant and accurate. Thereafter, reason-giving decision-making needs to measure up against the adequacy criteria of being autonomous and carefully regulated and not so hyper-idealized that the reflection process becomes overly daunting. This leaves the challenge of how the essence of personal explorations can be captured, assessed and measured. We see coherent points of articulation between Brinkmann's (2007) advocacy of increasing practical reasoning in learning and an assessment approach which emphasizes a certain self-detachment and reshaping of ideas. Such an approach could help students make informed and wise judgements which show evidence of discernment, deliberation and effective decision-making with multiple outcomes being assessed holistically and thereafter separated out for curriculum outcome measurement purposes if necessary. Thorburn and Marshall (2011) provide some theoretical examples of how such judgements (and related assessment criteria) might be cultivated in outdoor learning environments. The focus in these examples is predominantly on the integrated challenges of wellbeing and on educating students to become more informed decision makers. As Thorburn and Allison (2012) have described specific school examples where the greater flexibility available under new curriculum arrangements is being used to try and cultivate PSE, there seems merit in trying to understand more fully developments in these key schools from a variety of conceptual, pedagogical and learners' perspectives.

However, in the meantime, we take the opportunity to present two examples that we consider highlight how classroom practices can be utilized to encourage growth in PSE and practical wisdom. Identifying PSE through a neo-Aristotelian lens reveals several simple spaces where the

cultivation of intellectual and moral virtue intersect; specifically in ways that meet Aristotle's preconditions for virtue: desire, deliberation, decision and action. Process-oriented practices such as individual reflection through journaling or group deliberation in a problem-solving context generate space for skilled facilitators to ask questions that engage students' affective and cognitive states in tandem. For instance, consider a secondary school history lesson (for students of ages 14–16 years) whose objective is to understand the motives and conditions that led to the onset of World War I following the assassination of Austria's Archduke Ferdinand. Rather than lecturing through a narrative of events or outlining perceived cause and effect, the educator could provide students (or a subset of students) with historical identities (or even more optimistically, students could arrive having researched a particular personality, either assigned or chosen). Students taking on a historical character would engage in a round-table discussion of the issues surrounding the war - as if the conversation were taking place just after war had been declared on all sides - with remaining students observing from an outer circle. This outer group of students would then initiate a reflective discussion about the round table. The educator facilitating both discussions could intentionally aim at engagement with several layers of objectives wherein each layer captures a varying aspect of practical wisdom as a holistic measure. First, at the affective level, are students engaging the affective cues (both verbal and non-verbal) to reflectively make sense of the round table? Secondly, at the cognitive level, are students able to connect relationships and make sense of the way in which social and causal relationships impact on the discussion? Thirdly, are students able to engage in the experience and then reflectively disengage in order to make sense of and evaluate their experience? Finally, is the reflective discussion a safe one that invites students to engage with realistic optimism on the value of social relationships in a political arena? Following Aristotle's preconditions for virtue, students ought also to have space to make meaningful decisions that they can act on. It is the educator's imperative to identify the appropriate next step that activates the practice of virtue. Student assessment in this context would include more than understanding the particular historical relationships and their outcome. Students would be accountable for making further connections with their own political, social and familial contexts, in order to identify and relate their cognitive and affective insights with their lives today. Such learning highlights Dewey's hope for continuity and interaction. It also brings life to Aristotelian virtue cultivation by inviting students to practise deliberation and individual reflection. A classroom built around such practices inculcates in students the habits characteristic of practical wisdom.

Equally, a more experiential context could encourage the same cultivation of practical wisdom. Consider a class of elementary students (ages 8–10 years) taking a stroll through a local open space. Prior to the stroll, students read a mythological passage about the spirits of dryads and naiads. Students are then instructed to observe the open space without talking, writing observations. Halfway through the open space, the educator could gather students into a circle to discuss their observation. Following this discussion, students walk some more. Upon their return to the classroom, students could form a second discussion circle. This time, the student processing could integrate observation with associated emotive and affective responses. In addition, students could be pressed to make connections between the two expressions. Among the discussion objectives could be the identification of various species observed, increased understanding of self in nature, increased sense of myth as it relates to making sense of our environments and the acquisition of language associated with practical reasoning. A lesson built in this way could be adjusted to nearly any discipline—history, art, literature, science or

mathematics—depending on the observation focus and the preview reading. In this case, students increase their reflective skills through practice and language acquisition while meeting grade-level standards regarding local biology and literature. Furthermore, these standards are practised in a context that is familiar with a view towards self-reflection. Personal and social connections are made between nature, humanity's perception over time and the self. As in the previous example, a classroom built around such practices inculcates in students the habits characteristic of practical wisdom. In either case, students are encouraged to make richer sense of their world from a first person perspective that is process oriented and intentional in surfacing values with a view towards cultivating practical wisdom in a neo-Aristotelian sense.

Conclusion

We share concerns about the espoused epistemology often circulating in educational philosophy where there is an over emphasis on knowledge acquisition and restrictive pedagogy approaches. As critical realists, we consider that ontologically a real world exists that is at least partially accessible to us. We therefore advocate something like our virtue perspective as a viable alternative which admits access to reality and encourages a constructive capacity to cultivate comprehension, understanding and ultimately practical wisdom. We consider that this virtue orientation elevates the educational concern – in epistemological grounding, ethical understanding and pedagogical practice – toward wellbeing, life skills and personal and social development. We further recognise that first-person perception is constantly modified in light of how we understand other people's perceptions. As such, it follows that a 'better' way of knowing exists, and is exhibited by those whom we recognize as wise. We understand these people to have habitually cultivated intellectual virtues such as a love of knowledge, intellectual courage, and intellectual generosity. Such people exhibit practical wisdom through excellent deliberation and perception. Summarily then, if there is a world we can know (albeit imperfectly) and there are practices that increase our accuracy in knowing (intellectual virtues), then ethically there exists a 'better' way to live which is based on what we know about the world - one which Aristotle describes as flourishing. Toward this end, we have found the theorizing of Tiberius helpful in identifying values which are stable and widely shared and which could inform curriculum-modelling arrangements. Specifically, we consider Tiberius' 'right in the middle' critique offers the opportunity of reducing past subjective (internalist) and objective (externalist) concerns which might otherwise have rendered curriculum developments as either lacking in authenticity or of being too unachievable.

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