

Philosophical Foundations for the Study of Wisdom

Jason D. Swartwood

Chapter summary: A person with practical wisdom reliably grasps how to live and conduct themselves. But what is practical wisdom, how can we get it, and how can we study it? This chapter will introduce some prominent philosophical arguments and answers to these questions. After distinguishing practical wisdom from other types of wisdom, the chapter explains why studying wisdom requires combining both philosophy and empirical science. To illustrate the contribution of philosophy, the chapter describes a core philosophical conception of wisdom and invites the reader to think through some philosophical puzzles it gives rise to.

1. Introduction: Why Wisdom Matters

Tough decisions about how to live are an inescapable feature of our existence. We have to grapple, for instance, with situations in which it is unclear what is best for ourselves or others. (Should I take that dream job that pays more but would have a longer commute time?) We have to weigh values like truth-telling against things like loyalty, concern for others' well-being, or social justice. (What should I do if I learn a friend has been unfaithful to their partner or has cheated on an exam?) Sometimes, we don't even notice important questions when they are right in front of our faces. (Should I view my colleague's disability as something to pity or as a difference to be celebrated and accommodated?) Pressing questions about how one ought to live are as ubiquitous as they are varied and complex.

If identifying and grappling well with questions about how we ought to live is the problem, then what is the solution? In many philosophical traditions, the answer is: We need wisdom. But what is wisdom, and how can we get it? How should we study wisdom? Is doing so the province of science, philosophy, or what? This chapter will give you a taste of some prominent philosophical puzzles, ideas, and arguments about the nature and study of wisdom, along with references you can use to examine them in more depth.

2. Three Types of Wisdom

If we're going to study cats, it helps to specify whether we're interested in the common housecat (*felis catus*) or in all members of the family *Felidae* (which includes wild cats like lynx and tigers). Similarly, studying wisdom requires determining whether there are distinct types of wisdom that we might be interested in. Philosophers have distinguished between at least three.¹

The life of ancient Greek philosopher Socrates illustrates two senses in which a person can be wise. Socrates spent his time finding people who claimed to be wise and subjecting their views about the most important things – “wisdom or truth or the best possible state of your soul” (*Apology* 29e – 30a) – to intense scrutiny. Socrates was insistent that he didn't have a deep grasp of how one ought to live, so he wasn't wise in that sense. But, he believed that he did have a kind of “human wisdom,” because he was aware that he didn't know anything about these most important things (*Apology* 20d).

We could call the wisdom Socrates had **wisdom as epistemic humility**: an awareness of one's ignorance of the most important things, such as the nature of a good and virtuous life. (“Epistemic” comes from the Greek word for “knowledge,” so epistemic humility is humility about what you know.) Socrates thought this kind of wisdom was important insofar as it helped people pursue a further kind of wisdom, which, following Aristotle, we can call **practical wisdom** (Greek: *phronesis*): a deep and articulate grasp of how we ought to live. To illustrate, suppose Carmen knows the limits of her knowledge about how to respond well to tough decisions in her life. She is in a sense wiser than Donald, who is blissfully unaware of his own ignorance. Carmen has wisdom as epistemic humility while Donald does not. But if Carmen is content to wallow in her ignorance and abandon the search for a deep grasp of how we ought to live, then there is another sense in which she is not wise: she lacks practical wisdom (and the desire to achieve it).

Following Aristotle (1999, bk. VI, chapter 7), we should distinguish practical wisdom from theoretical wisdom. While **theoretical wisdom** (Greek: *sophia*) is a deep and comprehensive grasp of how things *are* (how the world and the creatures and things in it tend to be or behave), practical wisdom is a deep and comprehensive grasp of how things *ought* to be (how we ought to live, or what is good, bad, virtuous, vicious, right, or wrong). To illustrate, imagine Glenda is a polymath scientist who has a masterful grasp of chemistry, psychology, physics, biology, and mathematics. Nevertheless, she is clueless about how to cope with interpersonal conflicts, she is casually cruel and thoughtless, and she always values even the most minor academic achievements above all else. Glenda has a deep grasp of **descriptive truths** (truths about how the world *is* and the things in it actually *are* or tend to be) but does not have a deep grasp of **prescriptive reasons and truths** (truths about how we *ought* to

¹ Parts of sections 2 – 5 are adapted from Swartwood and Tiberius (2019).

conduct ourselves, truths about what *matters*, or reasons we *ought* to conduct ourselves in certain ways but not others).²

Glenda, we could say, has theoretical wisdom but lacks practical wisdom.

Although people sometimes use “wisdom” to refer to (among other things) theoretical wisdom or epistemic humility, the frequency with which wisdom is offered as a solution to challenging questions about how to live indicates that practical wisdom is of primary importance.³

3. Why Studying Practical Wisdom is an Interdisciplinary Project

Philosophers and wisdom scientists (such as psychologists and sociologists) are interested in examining some central questions about practical wisdom (hereafter simply “wisdom”), including:

- *What is wisdom, and who has it?* What attitudes, motivations, knowledge, dispositions, and decision-making processes (for instance) are part of being practically wise? How would a wise person think, feel, or conduct themselves? How is wisdom related (or not) to other important concepts, states, or traits, such as well-being, happiness, goodness, virtues, or right action?
- *How can we get wisdom?* Is it something some people are born with? If not, how can it be acquired – through reflection, experience, teaching, or what?

You might wonder why philosophers are even part of this project. Wisdom, after all, is a psychological concept – it deals with the mind and behavior of human beings. Psychologists get by just fine without philosophers when studying introversion and other personality traits. So why should philosophers be part of wisdom research?

To understand why philosophers need to be part of the picture, we need to look at how wisdom is different from other psychological constructs like introversion.

Wisdom is what philosophers call a **prescriptive ideal**: It is supposed to tell us how we *ought* to be, not simply to describe how anyone actually *is*. Imagine someone saying, “My mother is wise – she has a really great grasp of how she ought to conduct herself, even in tough situations – but I don’t think being wise like that is good or valuable or something anyone ought to aspire to.” If mother’s “wisdom” is not necessarily something that we ought to aspire to, then it’s unclear if we’re actually talking

² Philosophers usually use “normative” instead of “prescriptive.” But I’ve avoided that here because “normative” means something different in psychology and the sciences.

³ For more on Socrates’ view of wisdom, see Plato’s dialogues, starting with the *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. For more on the distinction between practical and theoretical wisdom, see Baehr (2012), Grimm (2015), and Ryan (1999).

about wisdom at all. If we describe a way of being and conducting oneself but it's *not* capturing how we *ought* to be or how we *ought* to conduct ourselves, then our account of wisdom has missed the mark. The *ought-to-be-done-ness*, we might say, is baked into the very idea of wisdom, which explains why we value it.

Many other psychological constructs, such as introversion, are different. "Introversion" is an idea we use to describe a general difference between some human beings. To put it simply, some people are energized by solitude (introverts), while others are energized by socializing (extroverts). To decide if this conception of introversion is plausible, we don't need to assume that people *ought* to be introverted – that it's desirable, valuable, and something we should aspire to. A good account of introversion is just describing how people are. We may or may not later find some reason to believe introversion is good or bad, but whether our account of introversion is plausible doesn't hinge on that. Unlike wisdom, introversion is not a prescriptive ideal.

This distinction matters because prescriptive ideals like wisdom are supposed to tell us how things ought to be, and science alone cannot imply or validate claims about how things ought to be.

Suppose you want to convince a friend that "you ought to recycle" (a prescriptive claim). You might think that you can show that this prescriptive claim is true just by noting some empirical findings: Recycling helps preserve natural resources for future generations (a descriptive claim). You might hope that your descriptive claim about the effects of recycling could serve as a premise that entails your prescriptive conclusion:

- 1) Recycling helps preserve natural resources for future generations.

Therefore, you ought to recycle.

The problem is that this argument is incomplete. Even if premise 1 (your descriptive claim about the effects of recycling) is true, that doesn't by itself entail that the conclusion is true. To complete the argument, we'd need to add a prescriptive premise, like this:

- 1) Recycling helps preserve natural resources for future generations.
- 2) You ought to help preserve natural resources for future generations.

Therefore, you ought to recycle.

Your argument now has the premises it needs – if the premises are true, that fact entails that the conclusion be true, too. But notice that your argument no longer relies on descriptive claims alone. It needed a prescriptive premise in order to establish its prescriptive conclusion. Importantly, this holds for all other similar arguments. To establish a prescriptive conclusion about how things ought to be, descriptive premises alone won't be enough; we need at least one prescriptive premise in the mix. Put simply, you'll never validly infer an *ought* from *is* alone.

Since science is focused on how the world *is*, the upshot is that science alone can't help us test and evaluate prescriptive ideals like wisdom. Science provides an excellent method for testing the descriptive assumptions that underlie our accounts of wisdom, but we need additional tools to develop and test the prescriptive components of those accounts. Fortunately, philosophy can help fill this gap.⁴

4. A Core Philosophical Conception of Practical Wisdom

Philosophers develop and test prescriptive ideals like wisdom by identifying the implications and puzzles that arise from our basic starting beliefs about wisdom and then subjecting them to rational scrutiny. To illustrate, the rest of this chapter describes a core philosophical conception of wisdom that systematizes some important beliefs about wisdom and then discusses various philosophical puzzles this conception gives rise to.⁵

Wisdom as a grasp of how one ought to live

On the definition we started with, practical wisdom is a *grasp* of how one *ought* to live and conduct oneself. Because it is a prescriptive ideal, wisdom does not involve merely grasping how we want to act, how people tend to act, or even how people think we should act. The mere fact that people want to cheat, or that they tend to cheat, or that they think cheating is justified, doesn't show that we actually ought to cheat. Wisdom is valuable and worth aspiring to because possessing it gives us a handle on how we *ought* to conduct ourselves.

Wisdom as an all-things-considered grasp

Suppose your friend in a college class tells you they cheated on a paper assignment – they bought theirs off the internet and handed it in as their own. Now that you have this information, what should you do? We could approach this question with a

⁴ For more on the argument that *is* doesn't imply *ought*, see David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Bk III, Pt. I, Section II. See also Tiberius (2015) for an accessible introduction to this argument and related issues.

⁵ Parts of this section are adapted from the account of the 'minimal philosophical conception' of wisdom discussed in Swartwood (2020, pp. 77–80).

particular goal in mind: What should you do *if you are to avoid making your friend mad*? Someone who grasped the answer to this question would not necessarily count as practically wise, because a wise person grasps how to evaluate and balance all the various (and sometimes competing) goals we might pursue in the situation. Is it really important to avoid making your friend mad here? How does that goal weigh against considerations of fairness, protecting your own well-being, or helping your friend be a good person? A wise person navigates these complexities because she has a grasp of what she should do not just given one specific goal but *all-things-considered*.

Wisdom as a grasp of what one ought to do in particular situations

Our interest in wisdom is not abstract. Our hope is that it can help us with concrete situations and choices. For instance:⁶

Gloria: Gloria, a 40-something Mexican mother, struggles to make enough money to provide food and shelter for her family, including her two young children. Local economic stagnation and government corruption have led to very few job opportunities; this situation, coupled with the threat of violence by organized crime, leaves her worried about her children's future. Several other women she knows have addressed this challenge by illegally entering the U.S. to work and send back money. Gloria wonders if she should pursue a similar solution, either leaving her kids with their grandparents or attempting to take them on the potentially perilous border-crossing. Which option would be best for the kids, or for her? Gloria struggles to decide what to do.

Maryam: Though she's not a psychologist, Maryam has grown familiar with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) through her work as a teacher. This familiarity has led to a difficult decision. Maryam's friend Jules has recently shared a number of challenges she's encountered with her three-year-old son. Jules' son is very rigid and has tantrums when things are not just so, he only eats four different foods, he does not seem interested in engaging with other people socially, and he is obsessively focused on airplanes. Jules is clearly distressed by her son's behavior, which is causing stress at home between herself and her husband. Maryam knows that Jules and her husband have expressed skepticism about psychologists, who they think are responsible for pathologizing kids. 'Why can't they just let kids be kids?' they often say. Jules has made it clear she's not interested in Maryam's views about what is happening with her son, even though she's very aware that Maryam has experience helping kids of all sorts. Maryam wonders if she should tell Jules to have her son assessed for ASD, just in case. Getting help early could lead to great gains for her son. But, she worries about how Jules will react if she mentions things. What should she do?

Raheem: Raheem is a student at a small liberal arts college in the Midwestern United States. Raheem and his friends have been frustrated by the lack of productive discussions about racism in the community, which is predominantly white but has a still sizable group of racial and ethnic minorities. A recent incident has inflamed the tensions but seems to be bringing the issue to the forefront

⁶ The last two of these cases are from Swartwood (2020). Raheem's case is adapted from a real-life incident (Brooks & Walsh, 2017). The first case is adapted from a real-life case described at <https://immigrationtalk.org/2012/09/28/immigrant-mothers-making-tough-choices-for-their-families/>

in a productive way. A racist note was found placed on someone's car in a college parking lot, and this has sparked an investigation by the college administration. Members of the college and the community at large are having more discussions about the problem of racism. Raheem has felt hopeful that these conversations, though challenging and painful, could lead to progress. To his surprise, Raheem has found out that one of his acquaintances at school, who also shares his frustration with the lack of progress, actually forged the racist note to try to start a conversation about racism. Raheem sees that this deceit may result in some good for the community, but there are also some potential downsides for individuals who are being investigated. Plus, the cause would potentially be harmed if the deceit is revealed. What should Raheem do with this information?

Even if you haven't faced any situations exactly like these, you've surely faced situations that require balancing competing values (honesty vs. compassion, loyalty vs. justice, etc.) or where it's unclear how to best achieve a particular value. If a wise person grasps anything, we'd hope it would be what to do in situations like these. Imagine someone who could reliably spout general platitudes that others often found inspiring or compelling to think about, but they were routinely blundering and befuddled when trying to figure out how to address situations in their own life. Perhaps this could be described as wisdom of a sort (advice-guru-wisdom). But in an important sense this person lacks wisdom – they lack practical wisdom, because their grasp of what they ought to do is not conducive to living a good human life. Just as a chess “expert” wouldn't warrant the title if they in fact never win any games, a person deserves the appellation “practically wise” only to the extent that they have a good grasp of how they ought to live, all-things-considered, in particular situations they face.

Wisdom as a master virtue

Often, wisdom is listed as a **virtue** (an excellent character trait) alongside a variety of other virtues, such as compassion, generosity, self-respect, loyalty, justice, honesty, bravery, and so on. But how is wisdom related to these other virtues – is it just one desirable trait among many?

In many traditions, wisdom is characterized as a master virtue that controls or guides the other virtues. Viewing wisdom as a master virtue helps to make sense of how the **character virtues** fit together in a well-lived life.

Living well requires responding well to the many and varied valuable ends and goals that are part of human existence. We have to determine, for instance, when and how to tell the truth, be loyal, use humor in social situations, promote justice, and balance promoting others' well-being with protecting our own. In other words, we need to have character virtues such as honesty, loyalty, wittiness, justice, compassion, and self-respect.

But how should we describe character virtues like honesty? Some might think that honesty is a disposition always to tell the truth. But this can't be right (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2016). For one thing, there are times when you should *not* share what

you believe to be the truth, such as if an acquaintance is seeking gossip about a friend's private and painful secrets or if an angry mob seeks your assistance in finding a would-be victim. In addition, there are often good and bad ways to tell the truth as you see it, even when truth-telling is the thing to do. (Anyone who has read any comment forums on the internet can likely understand this point!) Being honest also requires having the right motivations. A teacher who tells a student the painful truth about the quality of their essay in order to help them learn to do better may be acting in accordance with the virtue of honesty; a teacher who does so to delight in their student's humiliation and misery is not. Finally, having the virtue of honesty requires responding well across a variety of situations. An inveterate liar who deals honestly only with one close confidant does not have the virtue of honesty.

Similar points hold for the other character virtues. Following Aristotle, we can say that each character virtue is a deep disposition to respond to an important value, end, or goal in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons (Aristotle, 1999, I. 1109a25; Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2016). Having the virtue of compassion requires being disposed to respond to threats to others' well-being in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons. Having the virtue of wittiness requires the disposition to use humor in social situations in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons. Having the virtue of loyalty requires being disposed to be partial to others' interests in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons. And so on.⁷

Being a **virtuous person** – someone with all the virtues – is thus a lofty achievement requiring a good grasp of how the many valuable commitments of a good human life fit together. This is why many philosophers – including Aristotle and the ancient Chinese philosopher Mengzi (also known as Mencius), among others – think wisdom is an intellectual virtue (a virtue of mind) that is necessary for being a virtuous person. A wise person's grasp of how she ought to conduct herself includes a grasp of what matters and how to achieve it across the variety of situations that make up a life. While a non-virtuous person facing Raheem's choice might feel that justice and honesty are pulling them in different directions, a wise person's grasp of what matters allows them to identify the course of action that resolves the apparent conflict. While a non-virtuous person facing Gloria's choice might be unsure what compassion requires doing for her kids, a wise person grasps how to best promote the kids' well-being. Wisdom is an essential part of a virtuous life because it is essential for possessing and integrating the other important traits required for living well.

⁷ For more on specific virtues and special questions about virtues, see Bell (2009), Cherry (2019), Blum (2007), Gambrel and Cafaro (2010), Gyeke (2011), Hursthouse (2007), and Tessman (2005).

5. Philosophical Puzzles about Practical Wisdom

On the core philosophical conception we've been examining, wisdom is a grasp of how one ought to conduct oneself all-things-considered in particular situations; it is an intellectual virtue that guides and controls the character virtues.⁸

This core philosophical conception of wisdom is certainly not the only conception on offer. Still, many philosophers think it provides an ideal worth aspiring to, because it systematizes many of the elements people associate with wisdom into a coherent and rationally-defensible whole. The philosophical work of continuing to test, develop, and apply this conception requires grappling with resulting puzzles about wisdom. This section will give brief overviews of some of those puzzles and the ideas and arguments they've given rise to.

What character virtues does wisdom guide or promote?

In the 1982 movie *Conan the Barbarian*, a warlord asks the eponymous hero, "what is best in life?" He replies: "to crush your enemies, see them driven before you, and hear the lamentations of their women." Conan, it seems, would have a very different idea than many of us about which character traits are virtues and so also a very different view about what goals, commitments, and values a wise person has. Indeed, real-world disagreements about virtue are easy to come by. Is it a virtue to be ruggedly self-reliant and individualistic, or would a person of good character subordinate their needs to those of their community? People disagree. So, how can we decide which character traits are virtues and which are not?

There are a variety of options here. For instance, some philosophers think we should start by finding people who are admirable (some have suggested Confucius or Jesus) and then identify what character traits they have (Olberding, 2008; Zagzebski, 2010). On this view, we can determine which traits are virtues by seeing which traits are part of what makes those admirable people admirable.

Other philosophers think we should work to specify the idea that the virtues are the traits that contribute to flourishing or living well (ancient Greek: *eudaimonia*). Some define virtues as traits that promote a specific list of goods. One influential account (Nussbaum, 1988, 2001) suggests goods like life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination, and thought; emotions; play; practical reason; and control over one's environment. Confucian philosophers such as Mengzi thought that the three cardinal virtues (compassion, righteousness, and propriety, all controlled by wisdom) are extensions of different aspects of an innately good human nature (Mengzi, 2008). Philosophers in some Southern African traditions define the virtues as the traits

⁸ For some different takes on the core philosophical conception of wisdom (and some views that deviate from it in interesting ways), see Annas (2011), Broadie (1993), Brouwer (2014), Grimm (2015), Marshall (2002), Mengzi (2008), Ryan (2016), and Tiberius (2008).

that contribute to *ubuntu* – “humanness” – a prescriptive ideal according to which flourishing is a matter of living engaged in community (Metz, 2012). Still others elaborate on the Aristotelian idea that flourishing means developing and exercising well the rational and social capacities characteristic of human beings (Kraut, 2009).

These are just a few of the options, briefly described. Exploring which account is most rationally-compelling will help us specify a wise person’s values and commitments and how she lives them out.

Is wisdom the same for everyone?

A related puzzle concerns whether wisdom would look the same in everyone who has it. In what ways (if any) would a wise 11th Century Persian’s grasp of what they ought to do be similar to or different from that of (for instance) a 17th Century Cherokee, an Ashanti in 20th Century Ghana, or a 21st Century Korean-American? Could individuals with different temperaments, abilities, or personal interests manifest the same level of wisdom in different ways?

Some might suggest that what’s actually wise for a person depends solely on their culture. This is implausible, because it would imply that whatever your culture views as wise is therefore actually wise, even if your culture endorses oppressively autocratic, theocratic, racist, misogynistic, or genocidal attitudes. Some might try instead to make wisdom relative to the individual: what’s wise for a person is living up to their own commitments and values. But this is not any more plausible – the vindictive authoritarian autocrat and the serial killer are not virtuous just because they live up to their own warped commitments.

This is why Aristotle distinguished between wisdom and mere **cleverness** (Aristotle, 1999, ll. 1144a9-10; 1144a25-36). The wise person and the merely clever person both grasp how to achieve their ends and successfully pursue their commitments, but, unlike the wise person, the merely clever person is committed to the wrong things. When it comes to the values and goals that are part of wisdom, not just anything goes.

Still, there’s reason to avoid going too far in the other direction. There has to be *some* variation in the ways wise lives can be lived, at least in certain details. Surely a person’s level of wisdom isn’t contingent solely on having a specific occupation or set of hobbies, for instance. There are likely also times where there are multiple equally virtuous ways to respond to a situation – the introvert’s more private consolation of a friend may do the trick just as well as the extrovert’s more socially ambitious one.

So how do we thread the needle between these extremes of total-variation and no-variation? One option would be to say that all wise people will live by the same general principles but conduct themselves differently due to their differences in circumstances. On this view, a commitment to avoiding causing unnecessary suffering to animals might lead a wise Lakota person to practice sustainable hunting, while the same principles might lead a person with abundant plant-based options to

swear off meat altogether. A related approach is to argue that there are general ends or values that are universally part of well-lived human lives but that allow for variation due to contingencies of culture and context (Kekes, 1995, p. 19; Nussbaum, 1988). Examining these options further will tell us more about the variety we can expect in wise lives.⁹

Does having one virtue require having them all?

Suppose that Jasmine has the virtue of honesty. Does she also therefore have the other virtues, or is it possible that she lacks compassion, justice, and the like? Aristotle (1999, ll. 1144b30-1145a1) argued that having one virtue requires having them all, and this argument for **the unity of the virtues** has important implications for our understanding of wisdom.

The argument can be quickly sketched. If Jasmine has the virtue of honesty, then she tells the truth at the right times, in the right ways, and for the right reasons. To do this, she must grasp when telling the truth is what matters and when, alternatively, it is less relevant than other commitments. For instance, she grasps what to do in situations like those described in section 4. Should Maryam tell Jules she should have her son assessed for ASD, or is it more important to avoid upsetting and distancing her? Should Raheem reveal that the incident is a fraud, or is it more important to preserve the community's focus on addressing the reality of racism? If a virtuous person grasps when and how to tell the truth, she'll also need to have a grasp of when and how to promote others' well-being (the virtue of compassion), how to give people what's fair or what they're due (the virtue of justice), and so on. Grasping the reasons relevant to one virtue requires grasping the reasons relevant to the others. Thus, having one character virtue requires having all the others, and wisdom (the cross-situational grasp of what virtue requires) is necessary for having the virtues.

Despite its apparent plausibility, some think the argument leads to a puzzle (Wolf, 2007). In our everyday life, it's tempting to say we come across people who have one virtue but lack others. A soldier might strike us as brave but lacking compassion, or a friend might strike us as loyal but lacking self-respect. Our everyday judgments seem to conflict with the unity of the virtues thesis. How should we respond to this apparent contradiction?

One response to the puzzle would be to reject the unity of the virtues thesis and say that having one virtue doesn't require having the others (Badhwar, 1996, pp. 306–307). This response rejects the idea that wisdom is a master virtue, because it implies that there is not one unified set of knowledge or understanding that ties all the virtues together. Responding to the puzzle this way will be reasonable if we have reason to be more confident in our everyday judgments (that people sometimes

⁹ For more sophisticated ways to argue that wisdom (and morality and virtue) are somewhat relative to culture or group, see Gowans (2016), Prinz (2007), and Wong (2002).

have one virtue but lack others) than we have to be confident in the reasoning that supports the unity of the virtues thesis. But *do* we have reason to be confident about that?

If the answer to that last question is ‘no,’ then that provides a different response to the puzzle. On this view, which some see as Aristotle’s (Pakaluk, 2005, p. 232), our everyday judgments do not actually show that people sometimes have one virtue but lack others. When we say, in our everyday judgments, that someone is brave, we’re not really ascribing to them the *virtue* of bravery – the disposition to respond to fear in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons. Perhaps we’re only saying they have the *psychological trait* of bravery – a tendency to do things despite fear. This response seeks to resolve the puzzle by showing that our everyday judgments are consistent with the prescriptive ideal embodied in the unity of the virtues thesis.

Many philosophers respond to the puzzle by modifying the unity of the virtues thesis so that it’s compatible with our everyday judgments. Some say that having one virtue requires having the rest to some degree but not necessarily fully (Hursthouse, 1999, p. 156). Others say that the unity of the virtues claim applies within each domain in our lives but not between those domains – a person can’t be an honest parent without being a compassionate parent, but being an honest parent doesn’t require being a compassionate coworker (Badhwar, 1996). Yet another response is to say that having one virtue requires having the knowledge of what all the other virtues require but not necessarily the motivation to act on it – an honest person knows, for example, what compassion requires but doesn’t always act accordingly (Wolf, 2007). Determining how best to respond to the puzzle about the unity of the virtues has important implications about the value and nature of wisdom.

Can you be wise without being virtuous?

Suppose Athena is wise and therefore has a good grasp of how she ought to conduct herself. But she finds herself facing a tough situation. She knows she should help her friend get to a doctor’s appointment, because her friend would prefer not to take a cab, the appointment is important and stressful, and Athena has promised. But Athena could easily beg off and complain of a tough week or unanticipated conflict, thereby ensuring a pleasant night of reading and relaxation. If Athena is indeed wise, is it possible that she could fail to do the virtuous thing?

If resolving the puzzle of the unity of the virtues requires saying that having one virtue implies having the knowledge of what all the virtues require but not necessarily the motivation to act on them, then perhaps Athena could be wise but fail to do the compassionate thing for her friend. Wisdom, on this view, would be necessary but not sufficient for being virtuous. Athena has succumbed to weakness of the will (Greek: *akrasia*) – she knows what she ought to do but lacks the motivation to actually do it.

Some philosophers think this is implausible. Being wise, on their view, guarantees that a person will conduct themselves virtuously. A distinction from Aristotle could help show why (McDowell, 1979; Peters, 2013). A virtuous person is different than a **continent** person – both end up doing the right thing but the latter only does so after struggling against the temptation to do otherwise. Athena would be admirable if she virtuously saw her friend’s need as a reason to help and wasn’t even tempted by the warm bed and the novel. But she’d be less admirable and lacking in virtue if she only got around to helping after struggling desperately with those temptations. After all, if she really saw it as the thing she ought to do, all-things-considered, then how could she even be tempted? On this view, a wise person’s grasp of what she ought to do includes the motivation to do it.

Determining which view is plausible will tell us important things about how wisdom is related to virtuous motivation and action.

Can we codify wise understanding?

On the core philosophical conception, a wise person’s reliably good grasp of what she ought to do is what distinguishes her from others. Those of us who’d like more wisdom might wonder: Is there a way to distill the wise person’s understanding into a set of principles that a less wise person could use to decide what they ought to do?

Many philosophers think such a project could not succeed, because the wise person’s grasp is **uncodifiable**: The factors governing good decisions are too many and complex to capture in a set of principles that a non-virtuous person could understand and use to derive good guidance in any particular situation (Aristotle, 1999, ll. 1094b15-1095a1; 1104a1-4; Hursthouse, 1999, pp. 39–40; McDowell, 1979). This does not mean that particular decisions cannot be justified with arguments, principles, or reasons. Julia Annas (Annas, 2004) makes the point this way: We can’t expect to model the wise person’s understanding on a computer manual in which you can just input a description of any situation you’re facing and it points you to the answer. Even once we find plausible principles (such as “You should sacrifice to promote others’ well-being if ...”), it will often take experience and reflection to decide which ones apply to a particular situation and what they imply we should do.

One reason to believe the wise person’s grasp is uncodifiable is straightforward. Although age doesn’t guarantee wisdom, experience and reflection seem necessary in order to fully grasp what matters and how you ought to live. That’s why we wouldn’t expect a really clever teenager to be fully virtuous if they lack life experience and haven’t engaged in useful reflection (Annas, 2004; Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2016).

But a more forceful argument for uncodifiability is simply that attempts to codify virtuous action in principles that could be applied by the non-virtuous have failed. Suppose someone offered this principle: An action is virtuous and right if it produces the most good for society. This principle gives obviously bad guidance in some situations: If you could help pass a new labor law that would help reduce income inequality by falsely accusing one of the law's opponents of a crime, wouldn't it still be wrong even if it benefited society overall? How might we revise the principle to avoid these problems? Moral philosophers have developed a variety of competing moral theories that do a much better job of capturing what's right and virtuous, but the most plausible are much more complicated than our pet example. More importantly, the most plausible theories could not be applied mechanically – it would take experience and reflection to determine what they say we ought to do.

Despite these arguments, some attempt to defend the idea that wisdom and virtue could be codified (Tsu, 2017). Determining who is right will tell us important things about the content of wise understanding and could have implications for how we should (or shouldn't) approach studying wisdom.

What kind of reflection helps us develop wisdom?

Developing wisdom requires refining the attitudes we've absorbed from our family, culture, and environment into a reliable grasp of what matters and how to achieve it. This is why many think reflection is necessary for wisdom. But what kind of reflection?

Aristotle thought reflection conducive to virtue will have to focus both on the universal and the particulars of situations (Aristotle, 1999, II. 1141b10-15; 1142a14). It will have to focus on the particulars because whether a particular act of truth-telling, for instance, is honest will depend on the details of when, how, and why it is told. It will have to focus on the universal because examining what shared features of actions make them virtuous is the way to ensure you're living out all your commitments in a coherent way.

Reasoning by analogy is one way to reflect on the particulars of the situation. Mengzi argued that we develop the virtues by "extending" the "sprouts" of good character that are part of our innately good human nature. The virtue of compassion, for instance, is developed by reflecting on the nearly universal feeling of concern for others' well-being. Even the most hard-hearted person will have situations where they feel concern for others. Mencius thought we could develop virtue by reflecting on whether other situations are similar in the ways that matter (Wong, 2002). To adapt an argument by Peter Singer (1972), suppose you come across a child drowning in a shallow pool, and you could save them at the mere cost of your time and the sully of your new shoes. Most of us will feel an obligation to help. But if standing by and letting the child drown would be lacking in compassion, then why is it any better to stand by while people (including children) starve or die of preventable

illnesses across the globe? If sullyng your shoes doesn't justify refusing to save the drowning child, then why would having to give up buying luxuries and entertainment justify refusing to donate to proven poverty relief efforts? By examining analogies such as this, we can develop our grasp of how to show concern for others in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons.

While analogies help us focus on the particulars, other forms of reasoning could help us reflect on the universals. Some philosophers think that by reflecting on particular cases (for example, particular compassionate acts), we can identify general principles that help us better grasp what virtue requires (Annas, 1995, 2011; Hursthouse, 1999, p. 37). Think of situations where someone is clearly exhibiting the virtue of compassion. Can you think of a general principle that explains these ("Conduct is compassionate when ...")? Perhaps this kind of reflection can help us develop a principled grasp of what we ought to do, albeit one that (due to uncodifiability) would often require additional experience and reflection to apply well.

Philosophers disagree about the extent to which either of these types of reflection is necessary, with those who reject most or all principled reasoning (**particularists**) on one end and those who emphasize the importance of grasping general principles on the other. Examining which view is most compelling could tell us more about how we can develop wisdom.

Can a wise person explain or justify what they do?

Suppose Raheem is wise and grasps what to do after finding out the racist note was a forgery. Will he be able to explain his reasons and justify his actions to others? Or, does being wise just require "seeing" what to do without necessarily being able to articulate one's wisdom?

Alison Hills (2015) notes that a variety of answers are possible, from **Intellectualism** (the view that a fully wise and virtuous person can always explicitly grasp and explain the reasons why her action is right) to **Naivety** (the view that a fully wise and virtuous person need not have this explicit grasp or ability to explain) and various things in between. Which view is most plausible?

Following Hills (2015, pp. 15–27), we can identify a variety of opposing arguments. One argument for Naivety is that grasping what you ought to do all-things-considered doesn't conceptually require an ability to explain oneself (Arpaly, 2002; McDowell, 1979, p. 332). The fully virtuous person's judgment that they ought to help the person stranded on the side of the road even though they're in a hurry just requires seeing the other person's need as a reason to stop and assist. Being able to explain why this course of action is virtuous, or why it is superior to the alternatives, seems superfluous. Julia Driver makes the point with an analogy to language mastery: Just as a native speaker can be fluent in a language without being able to justify herself with

rules of grammar, a wise and virtuous person need not be able to explain why her choice is the right one (Driver, 2013, p. 286).¹⁰

On the other hand, Intellectualism seems more plausible when we think of the nature of moral development. A person's intuition (their ability to see quickly, immediately, and without conscious deliberation what they ought to do) is likely to be reliable only if it has been formed and validated through experience and reflection (Swartwood, 2013a, Chapter 3+4). (Many people used to have the intuition that interracial relationships were "unnatural" and wrong, but these intuitions don't survive scrutiny. It's not hard to find cases like this where untutored intuitions lead people astray.) We need to do some reflection (of the sort previously described) to see if our intuitions are worth listening. If the wise person's understanding is honed through this kind of reflection, then perhaps we can expect that the wise will usually be able to justify and explain their intuitions.

Hills (2015, pp. 27–33) argues that more decisive evidence for Intellectualism comes from the fact that justifying oneself is often required for being virtuous. Being compassionate and just, for instance, often requires being able to justify oneself to others or to give advice. For Raheem to display the virtue of justice, he'd need to grasp not only how he should respond to his knowledge of the false accusation but also be able to justify that response to those parties he might upset. In general, being virtuous requires having all parts of our self – cognitive, affective, motivational, etc. – responding in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons. So, an ability to explain oneself is a component of the wise person's grasp of what they ought to do, not an unnecessary add-on.

Examining which of these alternatives – Intellectualism, Naivety, or something in between – is most defensible will give us a better sense of what the wisdom we strive for will look like.

Can we measure practical wisdom?

Psychologists have developed ways to measure cognitive capacities like intelligence and personality traits like introversion. Can we find a way to measure wisdom, too? If so, that would help us not only identify who has it but also what wisdom is like and how we can get it.

Wisdom scientists have proposed a variety of measures of wisdom, described in Chapter 6 of this book, that rely upon a variety of different definitions of wisdom and means for operationalizing them. Jason Swartwood (2020) argues that none succeed in measuring wisdom, at least as it is defined on the core philosophical conception, because they don't distinguish those who

¹⁰ For empirically-informed philosophical discussions of the role of intuition in wisdom and virtue, see Annas (2011), Hills (2015), Stichter (2007), and Swartwood (2013b, 2013a, Chapters 2–4).

reliably succeed in making good all-things-considered decisions about how to conduct oneself in particular situations from those who do not.

Suppose you wanted to measure expert performance (or the capacity for it) at some complex task, such as chess playing, crossword-solving, or medical diagnosis. To measure if someone is an expert – if they reliably and successfully grasp how to do the task well – you need to be able to define what would count as success at the task. We can do that with things like chess, crossword-solving, and medical diagnosis, because we have clear enough ways to tell if someone wins a chess game, correctly fills in the crossword, or accurately identifies the cause of an illness. And to measure expertise, it won't do just to tell if someone *sometimes* succeeds. You'd need to be able to tell if they reliably succeed across a variety of situations, including challenging ones.

The problem with measuring wisdom is that we don't have clear success conditions like we do for other areas. Succeeding at wisdom means making reliably good decisions about how one ought to live, all-things-considered, especially in challenging cases that befuddle those of us who comparatively lack wisdom. Swartwood argues, however, that existing attempts to operationalize wisdom are not informed by an account of these kinds of success conditions.

For instance, on one prominent view (Ardelt, 2003, 2004), wisdom is a personality trait we can measure by asking people to rate how much they agree with 39 general statements, such as "Things often go wrong for me by no fault of my own" or "I often have not comforted another when he or she needed it." These kinds of questions may tell us whether people care about the right general things, but we don't have reason to believe they will tell us whether a person reliably makes good decisions about what virtue requires, all-things-considered, across particular situations (for example, those faced by Gloria, Maryam, and Raheem).

Another prominent approach (Oakes et al., 2018) attempts to measure wise reasoning by having participants recall a challenging interpersonal conflict and then answer questions that elicit their understanding of the situation and their reasoning about how to address it. Their responses are then rated according to the degree that they exhibit an awareness of the limits of one's own knowledge, examination of other perspectives, acknowledgement of the likelihood of change, predictions about what will happen given various contingencies, and the search for conflict resolution and compromise. But it is easy to imagine people using these same general reasoning strategies to the same degree while coming to different – and not necessarily equally good – conclusions about what they ought to do, all-things-considered, in particular situations. Imagine two people considering whether to have an abortion, both of whom use the same general reasoning strategies. If both come to opposing

conclusions (one that the abortion is wrong, the other that it is all-things-considered for the best), surely the fact that they were both considering other perspectives and searching for compromise (etc.) doesn't show that they are both equally wise.

These are just a few examples, briefly described, but Swartwood argues that other existing attempts to measure wisdom fail for similar reasons. Just as a measure of chess expertise wouldn't be useful if we didn't know whether it distinguished those who reliably win games from those who don't, measures of wisdom won't be useful unless we have reason to believe they distinguish those who make reliably good all-things-considered decisions about how they ought to approach particular situations from those who don't. There are a variety of other empirical frameworks and models of wisdom (Darnell et al., 2019; Glück, 2020; Grossmann et al., 2020; Sternberg & Glück, 2018; Sternberg & Karami, 2021). Could any be used to develop a measure that avoids this obstacle?

Conclusion: The Need for More Interdisciplinary Wisdom Research

By critically examining different responses to these puzzles, philosophers aim to develop a plausible prescriptive ideal of wisdom. But these prescriptive ideals sometimes make empirical assumptions about what people are capable of, and determining how they would manifest in real people often can't be determined from the armchair. How can we more plausibly combine the philosophical and empirical methods into a productive, interdisciplinary research program?

Perhaps philosophers and psychologists can develop an account of wisdom that both survives philosophical scrutiny and can be operationalized. Another alternative approach is to compare wisdom to more familiar and easily studied achievements that are similar in the ways that matter. A number of philosophers have argued that we can learn important things about the nature and development of wisdom and virtue by comparing them to expert skill at things like tennis, piano playing, chess, or firefighting (Annas, 2011; Stichter, 2018; Swartwood, 2013b). If it could be shown through reliable empirical study that certain characteristics (such as principled reflection, inarticulate intuition, etc.) are part of the relevant type of expert skill, and through philosophical argument that wisdom is similar in the ways that matter to that type of skill, then this would provide us with a useful interdisciplinary method for studying wisdom even if wisdom isn't directly measurable. Do any of these analogies survive scrutiny? Philosophers continue to discuss this question.

As this chapter has demonstrated, there are a variety of important philosophical works on what wisdom is like, how we can get it, and how we can study it. Engaging with philosophical conceptions of wisdom and the puzzles they give rise to is an essential

part of the interdisciplinary study of this important concept. But engaging in philosophical reflection about wisdom is not just for researchers – it will also help the rest of us better grasp an ideal that we have good reason to aspire to.¹¹

Comprehension Questions

1. Suppose that Chelsea is an expert coder – she understands how to achieve whatever computer programming task you put in front of her. She can tell quickly after looking at some code what it will do or why it’s not doing what someone wants. Using the definition of theoretical wisdom given in the chapter, explain why Chelsea does not necessarily have theoretical wisdom.
2. Some psychologists study “need for cognition,” which could be described as the inclination or desire to engage in challenging cognitive tasks (such a doing philosophy!). Is need for cognition a prescriptive ideal? Why or why not?
3. Suppose someone offers the following descriptive claim as evidence for a prescriptive conclusion. Like this:

Driving drunk puts you and others at increased risk of injury (descriptive premise)

Therefore, you shouldn’t drive drunk (prescriptive conclusion)

What prescriptive premise would you have to add to this argument to make it complete – to make it so that if the premises are true the conclusion has to be true, too?

4. According to the account described in the chapter, a virtue is a stable and admirable disposition to respond in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons in some important area of human choice. Compassion, for instance, can be described as the disposition to respond to threats to others’ well-being in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons. Identify two other character virtues you think are important and define them by filling in the blanks: *__ [name of the virtue] __ is a disposition to _____ at the right times, in the right ways, and for the right reasons.* Then, for each virtue, give specific (real or hypothetical) examples where you think someone is clearly exhibiting this virtue and cases where they are not.
5. Suppose someone defines the virtue of loyalty as the tendency to be partial to people, groups, or causes one cares about. Using what you’ve learned in this chapter, give examples that help explain why this is NOT a good definition of the *virtue* of loyalty.

¹¹ I’m grateful to Judith Glück, Robert Sternberg, Ian Stoner, and Ruth Swartwood for feedback on drafts of this chapter.

6. Below is a quote from the ancient Chinese philosopher Mengzi. Read the quote and explain: how does Mengzi's archery analogy illustrate the ways in which wisdom is a master virtue? (Hint: suppose that by 'sagacity' Mengzi means having the character virtues.)

Wisdom may be compared to skillfulness. Sagacity may be compared to strength. It is like shooting an arrow from beyond a hundred paces: its making it there is due to your strength, but its hitting the bull's-eye is not due to your strength. (*Mengzi* 5B1.7)

7. The chapter describes at least two reasons wisdom is necessary for virtue. First, wisdom helps a person grasp what a particular virtue (such as compassion) requires in situations where a person with less wisdom would be befuddled (for example, the case of Maria at the beginning of the chapter). Second, wisdom helps a person grasp what to do when virtues appear to conflict (for example, when honesty seems to require telling dad you think his haircut is ugly but compassion seems to require a white lie). Give your own example to illustrate each of these two types of cases focusing on different virtues. How do they illustrate why having wisdom is necessary for being a virtuous person?

Discussion Questions

1. Is theoretical wisdom a prescriptive ideal in the same sense that practical wisdom is? Why or why not?
2. Section 2 of this chapter uses the case of Glenda to illustrate why having theoretical wisdom is not sufficient for having practical wisdom – you can be theoretically wise without being practically wise. But is having theoretical wisdom necessary for having practical wisdom? In other words, can you be practically wise without being theoretically wise? Discuss and try to support your answer with specific examples.
3. Some wisdom scientists study people's conceptions of wisdom (sometimes called implicit theories of wisdom) – they study non-scientists' views about who is wise and what wisdom is like (Weststrate et al., 2019). See Chapter 3 of this book for an overview of that research. Given what you've learned from this chapter, do you think studying people's conceptions of wisdom could be useful for figuring out what practical wisdom is actually like? Why or why not?
4. Think about someone you believe is wise. Explain some specific reasons you think they are wise. Does the core philosophical conception described in section 4 of this chapter do a good job of explaining the sense in which they are wise? Why or why not?
5. Section 5 of this chapter describes a puzzle about how to tell which character traits are virtues and which are not. Suppose someone offered this answer: virtues are the character traits that would contribute to a human being reproducing and passing on their genetic material. Would that be a plausible way to sort virtues from vices? Why or why not?

6. Pick one of the puzzles described in section 5 of this chapter. Write down (clearly, precisely, and in your own words) the question the puzzle gives rise to. If you have others to discuss with, divide into debate groups, each of which defends a different answer to the puzzle. (If you're by yourself, identify what you think is the best answer to the puzzle. What objections might someone raise to that answer? Is there a way to defend your answer against the objections?)

Glossary

character virtue: a deep disposition to respond well in a particular area of human choice. For example, compassion is the disposition to show concern for others well-being in the right ways, at the right times, and for the right reasons.

cleverness: according to Aristotle, a merely clever person is someone who reliably grasps how to achieve their goals, though, unlike a person with practical wisdom, they're aiming at the wrong goals or commitments.

continence: a continent person is someone who does the right thing for the right reasons but, unlike the fully virtuous person, only after struggling against the desire to do otherwise.

descriptive truths: truths about how the world *is* and the things in it actually *are* or tend to be.

epistemic humility account of wisdom: an awareness of one's ignorance of the most important things, such as the nature of a good and virtuous life.

eudaimonia: a Greek word that could be translated as "flourishing," or "living well."

intellectualism: the claim that a wise and virtuous person could, to some significant degree, explain or justify her decisions to others.

master virtue: a virtue (like practical wisdom) that controls or guides other virtues.

naivety: the claim that being able to explain or justify one's decisions to others is not necessary for being fully wise or virtuous.

particularism: the view that moral reflection and decision-making should focus (solely, or to a significant extent) on examining the particulars of a situation rather than applying general moral principles.

practical wisdom (Greek: *phronesis*): a deep and articulate grasp of how we ought to live.

prescriptive ideal: a construct, concept, or account that is supposed to tell us how we *ought* to be, not simply to describe how anyone actually *is*.

prescriptive reasons and truths: truths about how we *ought* to conduct ourselves, truths about what *matters*, or reasons we *ought* to conduct ourselves in certain ways but not others. In philosophy, these are often called “normative” reasons.

theoretical wisdom (Greek: *sophia*): a deep and comprehensive grasp of how things *are* (how the world and the creatures and things in it tend to be or behave).

uncodifiability thesis: the claim that what’s virtuous and wise cannot be captured in a set of principles that could be used by a non-virtuous person to reliably identify the right action in any situation they face.

unity of the virtues thesis: the claim that having one of the character virtues requires having them all.

virtue: an excellent character trait.

virtuous person: a person with all the virtues.

well-being: what a person has when their life goes well for them.

Investigations

I’m interested in combining the methods of philosophy and findings from empirical psychology to learn more about what wisdom is like and how we can get it. I ask questions like: are wisdom scientists measuring the kind of wisdom philosophers are interested in? Exploring this question led me to conclude that wisdom scientists are not measuring wisdom as it is conceived on the core philosophical account described in section 4 of this chapter (Swartwood, 2020). By discussing this argument, I hope we can better understand the prospects for measuring the sort of wisdom we have good reason to care about. Since I’m skeptical about the possibility of directly measuring wisdom, I’ve looked for other ways we can combine philosophy and empirical science to learn more about what wisdom will look like in real people and how we can get it. For instance, my mentor Valerie Tiberius and I have outlined a method for using philosophical reflection to refine people’s conceptions of wisdom (Tiberius & Swartwood, 2011), and in my own work I have argued that we can learn more about wisdom by examining the ways it is analogous to expert skill in areas like firefighting (Swartwood, 2013b, 2013a).

Practical Applications

If my argument (Swartwood, 2013b, 2013a) for the expert skill model of wisdom is correct, then developing wisdom takes deliberate practice, in the same way that expertise in other complex decision-making skills does. Firefighters develop expert skill at figuring out how to fight fires by getting feedback on their decisions through experience and reflection. But while firefighters can often get feedback on the quality of their decisions just through repeated observation (for example, seeing if the roof caves in after spraying here instead of there), we can't feedback on our decisions about how we *ought* to conduct ourselves all-things-considered through observation alone (for reasons discussed in section 3 of this chapter). For that reason, we can expect that developing wisdom requires doing reflection that could help us get feedback on our decisions and judgments. I've co-authored a textbook (Stoner & Swartwood, 2021) that helps people develop some of the reasoning skills – thinking about analogies, identifying and applying principles -- I think would help us do that.

References:

- Annas, J. (1995). Virtue as a Skill. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 3(2), 227–243.
- Annas, J. (2011). *Intelligent virtue*. Oxford University Press.
- Annas, J. (2004). Being virtuous and doing the right thing. *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 78, 61–75.
- Ardelt, M. (2003). Empirical assessment of a three-dimensional wisdom scale. *Research on Aging*, 25(3), 275–324.
- Ardelt, M. (2004). Wisdom as expert knowledge system: A critical review of a contemporary operationalization of an ancient concept. *Human Development*, 47(5), 257–285.
- Aristotle. (1999). *Nicomachean Ethics* (T. Irwin, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company.
- Arpaly, N. (2002). *Unprincipled virtue: An inquiry into moral agency*. Oxford University Press.
- Badhwar, N. (1996). The Limited Unity of the Virtues. *Nous*, 30(3), 306–329.
- Baehr, J. (2012). "Two Types of Wisdom." *Acta Analytica*, 27(2), 81–97.
- Bell, M. (2009). Anger, Virtue, and Oppression. In *Feminist Ethics and Social and Political Philosophy: Theorizing the Non-Ideal* (pp. 165–183). Springer.
- Blum, L. (2007). Racial Virtues. In R. L. Walker & P. J. Ivanhoe (Eds.), *Working Virtues* (pp. 225–250). Oxford University Press.
- Broadie, S. (1993). *Ethics with Aristotle*. Oxford University Press.

- Brooks, J., & Walsh, P. (2017, May 11). *St. Olaf: Report of racist note on black student's windshield was "fabricated."* StarTribune. <http://www.startribune.com/st-olaf-report-of-racist-note-on-black-student-s-windshield-was-fabricated/421912763/>
- Brouwer, R. (2014). *The Stoic Sage: The Early Stoics on Wisdom, Sagehood and Socrates*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cherry, M. (2019). Love, anger, and racial injustice. In A. M. Martin (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Love in Philosophy*.
- Darnell, C., Gulliford, L., Kristjánsson, K., & Paris, P. (2019). Phronesis and the Knowledge-Action Gap in Moral Psychology and Moral Education: A New Synthesis? *Human Development*, 1–29.
- Driver, J. (2013). Moral expertise: Judgment, practice, and analysis. *Social Philosophy & Policy*, 30(1–2), 280.
- Gambrel, J. C., & Cafaro, P. (2010). The virtue of simplicity. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 23(1–2), 85.
- Glück, J. (2020). The Important Difference Between Psychologists' Labs and Real Life: Evaluating the Validity of Models of Wisdom. *Psychological Inquiry*, 31(2), 144–150.
- Gowans, C. (2016). Moral Relativism. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/moral-relativism/>
- Grimm, S. R. (2015). Wisdom. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 93(1), 139–154.
- Grossmann, I., Weststrate, N. M., Ardelt, M., Brienza, J. P., Dong, M., Ferrari, M., Fournier, M. A., Hu, C. S., Nusbaum, H. C., & Vervaeke, J. (2020). The science of wisdom in a polarized world: Knowns and unknowns. *Psychological Inquiry*, 31(2), 103–133.
- Gyekye, K. (2011). African ethics. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Hills, A. (2015). The intellectuals and the virtues. *Ethics*, 126(1), 7–36.
- Hursthouse, R. (1999). *On virtue ethics*. Oxford University Press.
- Hursthouse, R. (2007). Environmental virtue ethics. *Working Virtue: Virtue Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems*, 155–171.
- Hursthouse, R., & Pettigrove, G. (2016). Virtue Ethics. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2016). <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/>
- Kekes, J. (1995). *Moral wisdom and good lives*. Cornell University Press.
- Kraut, R. (2009). *What is good and why: The ethics of well-being*. Harvard University Press.
- Marshall, J. (2002). *The Lakota way: Stories and lessons for living*. Penguin.
- McDowell, J. (1979). Virtue and reason. *Monist*, 62(3), 331–350.
- Mengzi. (2008). *Mengzi: With selections from traditional commentaries* (B. W. Van Norden, Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company.

- Metz, T. (2012). Ethics in Africa and in Aristotle: Some points of contrast: special theme articles. *Phronimon*, 13(2), 99–117.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1988). Non-relative virtues: An Aristotelian approach. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 13(1), 32–53.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2001). *Women and human development: The capabilities approach* (Vol. 3). Cambridge University Press.
- Oakes, H., Brienza, J., Elnakouri, A., & Grossmann, I. (2018). *Wise reasoning: Converging evidence for the psychology of sound judgment*.
- Olberding, A. (2008). Dreaming of the Duke of Zhou: Exemplarism and the Analects. *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 35(4), 625–639.
- Pakaluk, M. (2005). *Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Peters, J. (2013). Virtue, Personal Good, and the Silencing of Reasons. *Aristotelian Ethics in Contemporary Perspective*, 21, 69.
- Prinz, J. (2007). *The emotional construction of morals*. Oxford University Press.
- Ryan, S. (1999). What is wisdom? *Philosophical Studies*, 93(2), 119–139.
- Ryan, S. (2016). Wisdom: Understanding and the good life. *Acta Analytica*, 31(3), 235–251.
- Singer, P. (1972). Famine, affluence, and morality. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 229–243.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Glück, J. (2018). *The Cambridge handbook of wisdom*. Cambridge University Press Cambridge.
- Sternberg, R. J., & Karami, S. (2021). What Is Wisdom? A Unified 6P Framework. *Review of General Psychology*, 1089268020985509.
- Stichter, M. (2007). Ethical Expertise: The Skill Model of Virtue. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 10(2), 183–194.
- Stichter, M. (2018). *The skillfulness of virtue: Improving our moral and epistemic lives*. Cambridge University Press.
- Stoner, I., & Swartwood, J. (2021). *Doing Practical Ethics*. Oxford University Press.
- Swartwood, J. (2013a). *Cultivating Practical Wisdom* [Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota].
http://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/154543/1/Swartwood_umn_0130E_13707.pdf
- Swartwood, J. (2013b). Wisdom as an Expert Skill. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 16(3), 511–528.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-012-9367-2>
- Swartwood, J. (2020). Can we measure practical wisdom? *Journal of Moral Education*, 49(1), 71–97.
- Swartwood, J., & Tiberius, V. (2019). Philosophical Foundations of Wisdom. In R. J. Sternberg & J. Glück (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom* (pp. 10–39). Cambridge University Press.
- Tessman, L. (2005). *Burdened virtues: Virtue ethics for liberatory struggles*. Oxford University Press.
- Tiberius, V. (2008). *The reflective life: Living wisely with our limits*. Oxford University Press.
- Tiberius, V. (2015). *Moral Psychology: A Contemporary Introduction*. Routledge.

Tiberius, V., & Swartwood, J. (2011). Wisdom revisited: A case study in normative theorizing. *Philosophical Explorations*, 14(3), 277–295.

Tsu, P. S.-H. (2017). Can Virtue Be Codified? *Virtue's Reasons: New Essays on Virtue, Character, and Reasons*, 37, 65.

Weststrate, N. M., Bluck, S., & Glück, J. (2019). Wisdom of the crowd: Exploring people's conceptions of wisdom. *The Cambridge Handbook of Wisdom*, 97–121.

Wolf, S. (2007). Moral Psychology and the Unity of the Virtues. *Ratio*, XX(2), 145–167.

Wong, D. (2002). Reasons and Analogical Reasoning in Mengzi. In X. Liu & P. J. Ivanhoe (Eds.), *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi* (pp. 187–220).

Zagzebski, L. T. (2010). Exemplarist Virtue Theory. *Metaphilosophy*, 41(1), 41–57.