Cultivating Practical Wisdom

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Jason David Swartwood

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Dedication

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Abstract

Practical wisdom (hereafter simply "wisdom") is the intellectual virtue that enables a person to make reliably good decisions about how, all-things-considered, to live and conduct herself. Because wisdom is such an important and high-level achievement, we should wonder: what is the nature of wisdom? What kinds of skills, habits and capacities does it involve? Can real people actually develop it? If so, how? I argue that we can answer these questions by modeling wisdom on expert decision-making skill in complex areas like firefighting. I develop this *expert skill model of wisdom* using philosophical argument informed by relevant empirical research. I begin in Chapter 1 by examining the historical roots of analogies between wisdom and practical skills in order to motivate the expert skill model. In Chapter 2, I provide the core argument for the expert skill model. I then use the remaining chapters to pull out the implications of the expert skill model. In Chapter 3, I show that the expert skill model yields practical guidance about how to develop wisdom. In Chapter 4, I address the objection, due to Daniel Jacobson, that wisdom is not a skill that humans could actually develop, since skill development requires a kind of feedback in practice that is not available for all-things-considered decisions about how to live. Finally, in Chapter 5, I apply the expert skill model to the question, much discussed by virtue ethicists, of whether a wise person deliberates using a comprehensive and systematic conception of the good life.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRACTICAL WISDOM: CENTRAL QUESTIONS

There are various senses in which a person can be wise. Some are wise because they have a comprehensive and systematic understanding of the way the world and the creatures in it are and work. The learned sage on the mountain and the bespectacled scientist have this *theoretical wisdom*.[1] Others are wise because they understand how to make good choices about how to live and conduct themselves. The virtuous and trusted elder often sought for her good advice has this *practical wisdom*. While theoretical wisdom is primarily deep understanding of the way things are, practical wisdom is primarily deep understanding of how one ought to conduct oneself.[2]

The goal of this dissertation is to give a philosophically sensible, empirically plausible and practically useful account of practical wisdom (hereafter simply "wisdom"). Because wisdom is a normative notion – it describes an ideal we have good reason to aspire to – we need philosophical argument to give a rationally defensible account of it. But because an ideal is only worth aspiring to if it is in principle attainable to some degree by at least some real people, a good account of wisdom will also need to be grounded in a plausible picture of human psychology. Finally, because wisdom is so valuable, it is desirable for an account of wisdom to provide some practical guidance about how to achieve it.

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[1] For convenient reference, important terms are italicized and their definitions are provided in the appendix.
[2] The distinction between practical and theoretical wisdom is from Aristotle. See *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter *NE*) 1139b12 – 24. All quotations from this text will be from the translation by Terence Irwin (1999).

In addition to having these three features, a good account of wisdom will also help us answer some central questions about wisdom:

1. What kind of achievement is wisdom, and how does it manifest itself in real people?
2. Can real people develop wisdom?
3. How can real people develop wisdom, if indeed they can?

Consider the first question, about the nature of wisdom. Virtue ethicists argue that wisdom is the intellectual virtue that enables a person to make good decisions about what virtue requires, even in cases where individual virtues appear to conflict.[3] Anyone with a decent upbringing is committed to justice, honesty, compassion, and the like and can see what they require in some common and paradigm cases. Nevertheless, they often still get things wrong, especially in tough cases. They show concern for others in ways they should not, they give their unvarnished opinion when listening silently but attentively is best, they fail to see subtle but profound injustices, and so on. But wise people have the understanding that enables them to avoid these mistakes and achieve superior conduct. Virtue ethics thus tells us something interesting and important about wisdom: it is the intellectual virtue that perfects and completes virtues of character.[4]

This characterization, however, leaves some important questions about the nature of wisdom unanswered. For instance, we might wonder: is wisdom best characterized as

[3] The characterization of practical wisdom given in this paragraph is faithful to the one given by Hursthouse (1999; 2010).

[4] For Aristotle's account of the distinction between virtues of character and virtues of intellect, see, for example, *NE* I.13, II.1, and II.5-6. For a critical evaluation of attempts to distinguish intellectual virtues from character virtues, see Baehr (2011).

knowledge of comprehensive principles or rules of conduct that can be applied in deliberation? Or is it more akin to an intuitive ability to see what to? It is not hard to find examples from literature that illustrate these extremes. In Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, we find Levin's wisdom represented as intuitive and inarticulate, with reasoning and reflection being both unnecessary and even counterproductive to good decision-making:

> When Levin thought about what he was and what he was living for he found no answer and fell into despair; but when he stopped asking himself about it he seemed to know both what he was and what he was living for, since he acted and lived firmly and definitely. (Tolstoy 2012, 943)

On the other extreme, we have Plato's Socrates, who relentlessly scrutinized his own beliefs and who was "the kind of man who listen[ed] to nothing within [himself] but the argument that on reflection seem[ed] best to [him]" (*Crito* 46b). If he could not articulate and defend a comprehensive definition of virtue that could be applied to particular decisions, Socrates worried, he would be bound to act badly (*Hippias Major* 304c1 – e8). These are just two examples on a continuum of possible positions we could take about the role of intuition, deliberation, and reason-giving in wise decision making. Figuring out which position to take is important not just because it satisfies philosophical curiosity but also because it helps us understand the ideal we, as wisdom-seekers, aspire to.

Of course, virtue ethicists have not been silent about the parts intuition, deliberation and reason-giving play in wise decision-making. But their views are far from forming a consensus. In his seminal article "Virtue and Reason," John McDowell argues that a virtue, such as kindness, is

> a reliable sensitivity to a certain sort of requirement that situations impose on behavior. The deliverances of a reliable sensitivity are cases of knowledge; and there are idioms according to which the sensitivity itself can appropriately be described as knowledge: a kind person

> knows what it is like to be confronted with a requirement of kindness. The sensitivity is, we might say, a sort of perceptual capacity. (2001, 51)

McDowell's point is that virtue is an intuitive ability to identify reasons for action. Virtue is the ability to see, in some sense or other, what ought to be done. This is true not only for individual virtues but for the fully virtuous, practically wise person as well: virtue is a "single complex sensitivity" to recognize reasons for action (2001, 53). Martha Nussbaum also argues that wisdom involves a quasi-perceptual capacity to see what to do (2001, 300). While rules and principles of conduct are helpful for developing virtue, they are too inaccurate and inflexible to guide us well in all the situations we encounter (2001, 301, 304).

This skepticism about the possibility of codifying right action in principles that can be mechanically applied to particular situations is a common theme of virtue ethics. Moral life is simply too complex to capture in any set of rules that less than fully virtuous people could memorize and apply (Hursthouse 2010, 39 – 42). Nevertheless, accepting this does not preclude some role for principles or general characterizations of good conduct. Even if general principles cannot be used to deduce right actions in every situation, making wise decisions may sometimes require that we reason about how best to specify principles so they cover a situation we are confronted with (Richardson 1990). Indeed, philosophers disagree about the extent to which a wise person has a general conception of a good life that she uses to decide how to conduct herself in particular situations. While some think such a picture of wisdom is overly intellectual (Broadie 1993, chap. 4), others think it is the only way to explain how a wise person can successfully tackle the challenging decisions she faces in everyday life (Kraut 1993, 373; Kekes 1995).

Importantly, all of these philosophical positions about the nature of wisdom make empirical assumptions about human psychological capacities. Whether and when reliable intuition is possible for real people, and whether and what type of reflection actually contributes to good decisions is something that has to be discovered in part through observation. In fact, there is psychological research indicating that conscious reflection leads to bad decisions in certain situations (Hodges and Wilson 1993; Wilson, Kraft, and Dunn 1989; Wilson 2002; Wilson and Schooler 1991; Wilson and LaFleur 1995; Wilson et al. 1984)[5] and that sometimes our intuitions are systematically and deeply flawed (Kahneman 2011; Gilovich, Griffin, and Kahneman 2002). Thus, although we need philosophical argument to develop a rationally defensible ideal of wisdom, this ideal must be one that is compatible with plausible accounts of human capacities and limitations.[6]

These disagreements about the nature of wisdom are closely connected to disagreements about the second two central questions regarding whether and how wisdom can be developed. If wisdom indeed includes an intuitive ability to see what to do, immediately and without much effort or conscious reasoning, then how does one develop this ability? If wisdom is, on the other hand, less intuitive and more deliberative, then does this mean developing wisdom requires something like skill at moral philosophy? Does it mean experience is less necessary for developing wisdom? What kind of deliberation

[5] For a philosophical analysis of what this research does and does not tell us about the role of reflection in practical reasoning, see Tiberius (2009).

[6] Psychologists have recently begun to develop empirically measurable models of wisdom. These models are sometimes informed by psychological studies of folk conceptions of wisdom. The problem is that it is not clear that the resulting conceptions of wisdom are truly normative – that is, whether they are ideals that we really ought to aspire to. For an overview of some of this literature and a methodology for developing a normative account of wisdom informed by empirical research on the folk conception of wisdom, see Tiberius and Swartwood (2011).

produces good decisions?[7] If wisdom is such a high-level achievement, is it even possible for real people to acquire it?

Surprisingly, virtue ethicists have had relatively little to say about these questions, since they tend to spend a great deal of their effort arguing for their favored conception of virtue without saying much about how it can be developed.[8] Certainly, many philosophers have emphasized the importance of Aristotle's claim that "we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions" (*NE* 1103b1 - 2). But this lesson has minimal practical import for us if it merely yields the dictum "Do what the wise person would do" or "emulate the choices of the wise." Furthermore, what little is said about how to develop wisdom often fails to substantiate and make explicit empirical assumptions. For instance, the question whether wisdom can be developed by emulating wise people or whether it requires more self-directed and intentional reflection is an empirical one. It is also an empirical question whether and when it is possible for people to develop an accurate ability to see, intuitively, what should be done. Without more specific, empirically-grounded guidance about how to develop wisdom, we cannot fulfill the full promise of virtue ethical accounts of wisdom.[9]

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[7] It is important to remember that there may be reasons why an ability to articulate one's reasons for acting is valuable other than because it helps a person deliberate well. For example, being able to articulate reasons might be valuable because it enables a wise person to benefit others by giving good advice.

[8] This complaint is the stated motivation for Julia Annas's (2011, 22; 2004) account of virtue.

[9] Of course, I am not claiming that we need to build valid empirical models of wisdom that we can then use to test directly how wisdom is developed. There are other more feasible and equally helpful ways to ground claims about wisdom in a plausible psychology: for instance, we can show that and how the components of wisdom are humanly achievable. This is my strategy in the argument for the expert skill model (see §1.3 and §1.4 below for a preview of the argument, which is developed in Chapter 2).

1.2 THE PROMISE OF THE EXPERT SKILL MODEL OF WISDOM

What we need, then, is an empirically plausible, philosophically sensible, and practically useful account of what practical wisdom is and how we can develop it. The main conclusion of this dissertation is that we can get such an account by modeling wisdom on expert decision-making skills, such as expertise at firefighting. This *expert skill model of wisdom*, I will argue, tells us important things about how wisdom manifests itself in, and can be developed by, real people.

The idea that there are important similarities between wisdom or virtue and more mundane practical skills is not new: the analogy can be traced back to ancient philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Mengzi. Indeed, a few contemporary philosophers have begun to re-examine the skill analogy carefully, sometimes in light of empirical research on expert skill, in order to shed light on the nature of virtue. Here I'll give a brief overview of these ancient and contemporary treatments of the skill analogy to identify their strengths and weaknesses. This will show how the expert skill model builds on these strengths and removes some of the weaknesses in order to produce a promising account of wisdom.

Ancient Greek philosophers were much occupied with comparisons between theoretical wisdom (*sophia*), practical wisdom (*phronesis*), virtue (*arête*) and other types of knowledge, such as craft expertise (*techne*). In particular they focused on the analogy between virtue and craft expertise, which is practical skill at producing things such as ships (ship building skill) or good health (medical skill). Plato and Aristotle both explore this analogy, albeit drawing strikingly different conclusions about the nature of virtue.

The Platonic version of the skill analogy relies on a comparatively intellectual conception of craft expertise. Expertise at, for example, shipbuilding is a skill that is also a kind of knowledge involving a grasp of comprehensive general principles governing a field that can be articulated and taught to others (*NE* lines 1103b1 –2). The ship builder can build a great ship and can explain what she did at each step and why (*Gorgias* 463a - 466a; see Annas 2011, 20, n.4). She has this articulate grasp of what to do because her early training involved instruction from experts about what to do and why in particular situations, and her later training involved self-guided reflection that improved upon her early instruction by correcting errors and covering new situations. In the *Euthydemus*, Socrates draws the analogy to virtue: whereas practical skill (at, for example, medicine, shipbuilding, money-making, etc.) is an articulate and comprehensive grasp of principles about how to make things, virtue is an articulate and comprehensive grasp of principles governing how to use all these other practical skills. Similarly, virtue, like practical skill, is developed by reflectively improving upon the grasp of principles learned from virtuous people.

Julia Annas (1992; 2011; 2004; 1993; 1995) has made a sustained defense of the Platonic skill analogy, which she argues tells us important things about the nature of virtue and how it is developed. Virtue is importantly analogous, Annas argues, to practical skills such as piano playing and tennis (2011, 16). Both practical skills and virtue are marked by "the need to learn and the drive to aspire" (2011, 25). In both virtue and, for example, piano playing, attaining superior performance requires learning from experts who provide feedback on when and why we should go on in a certain way and not others. But this training alone cannot produce true proficiency in a practical skill or virtue: to achieve that, one needs to be driven to improve her grasp of the principles of her field through intelligent and self-guided

reflection (2011, 20, 25). By grounding her claims about virtue in what she sees as a psychologically plausible account of more run-of-the-mill practical skills, Annas hopes to vindicate the idea that virtue is comprehensive understanding of principles of good conduct acquired through motivated and intelligent conscious reflection.

A different version of the skill analogy, which emphasizes inarticulate intuition instead of the articulate and comprehensive grasp of principles of conduct, is derived from the Aristotelian tradition.[10] On Aristotle's view, answers to questions about how best to, for example, build ships are importantly similar to answers to questions about how to conduct oneself virtuously: they cannot be answered through the application of fixed principles but rather require an ability to perceive what is required in particular situations (*NE* 1104a1 – 4). This ability to see what to do in particular situations is acquired by habituating oneself to respond appropriately. Just as practice and repetition enable a doctor to see how to cure an illness without necessarily inferring the appropriate treatment from an application of principles of health, through experience a virtuous person learns to see what she ought to do. Although Aristotle is quick to point out that there are important differences between virtue, wisdom and craft expertise,[11] he does seem to think the analogy can tell us important things about virtue and, by extension, wisdom.

Matthew Stichter (2007) has recently argued that an Aristotelian skill analogy better accounts for the nature of practical skill and thus more accurately accounts for the nature and development of virtue. According to Stichter, Annas and Plato have an "intellectualist"

[10] A similar analogy is offered by the ancient Chinese philosopher Mengzi in the *Mengzi* 5B1.7. For more on Mengzi's analogy, see the beginning of Chapter 2. For in-depth commentary on Mengzi's accounts of virtue and wisdom, see Hutton (2002), Ivanhoe (2002), and Wong (2002).

[11] One difference Aristotle finds important is that wisdom concerns action and craft expertise concerns production (*NE* 1140b3). I argue in § 2.5 that neither this apparent difference nor any other undermines the expert skill model's claim that wisdom is an expert decision-making skill.

view of skills, according to which skills are deliberative, articulate, and developed by "grasping universal principles" (2007, 188). Aristotle, on the other hand, has an "empiricist" view of skills, according to which skills are primarily intuitive, inarticulate, and "gained by experience" (ibid). What is more, Stichter claims that empiricist views are more plausible than intellectualist views like Annas' (p. 191). Citing work by the philosopher and computer scientist sibling team Dreyfus and Dreyfus (H. L. Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991), Stichter suggests that research on the nature of expertise supports the empiricist model of skills. Dreyfus and Dreyfus suggest that Aristotle is correct to see "the immediate, intuitive response precisely as characteristic of an expert" (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991, 239; see Stichter 2007, 192). They suggest that a closer look at skill acquisition in areas like driving reveals that experts rely upon intuition rather than deliberation using principles or rules, that they develop this intuitive ability primarily through experience rather than reflection, and that they typically cannot give reasons why their intuitive response is the right one. Stichter suggests that virtue is profitably modeled on the empiricist view of skills: through experience, virtuous people learn to see intuitively what to do without being able to offer principled justifications of their actions.

Stichter and Annas' versions of the skill analogy give promising accounts of virtue, and, by extension, wisdom. The analogies offer accounts of the nature of virtue and how it is developed, and they ground these accounts in characterizations of more commonplace practical skills. On the most straightforward interpretation, these accounts are supposed to characterize the know-how of the person who has all of the virtues to some significant degree. Given that wisdom is the understanding required for this degree of virtue, it is reasonable to infer that Stichter and Annas' skill analogies provide answers to the three core

questions about wisdom. In addition, their accounts are philosophically sensible insofar as they rely upon the identification of relevant similarities between practical skills and the normative ideal of virtue. The accounts are empirically plausible insofar as they ground their claims about expertise in careful observation or research. Finally, the accounts promise some practical guidance about the ideal of wisdom we should aspire to and how to acquire it.

Despite the promise of Stichter and Annas' skill analogies, they have an obvious problem: they suggest fundamentally different answers to the core questions about wisdom. Unless there is a rationally defensible resolution to this disagreement, we might wonder if the skill analogy can help us give a good account of wisdom after all. Fortunately, the disagreement between Annas and Stichter derives from shortcomings in their respective arguments. Fixing these shortcomings produces a more defensible account of wisdom: namely, the expert skill model defended in the coming chapters.

One shortcoming of Stichter and Annas' analogies is that they do not utilize the most recent and rigorous empirical studies and models to ground their claims about expertise. Stichter (2007, 193) rightly criticizes Annas for neglecting to give empirical evidence for her claims about the nature of expertise.[12] But the research Stichter relies upon is not without its flaws; in particular, the work of Dreyfus and Dreyfus, while historically important in the psychological study of expertise, is neither the most rigorous and detailed nor the most current research available.[13]

[12] In her latest work on the skill analogy (Annas 2011), Annas considers some empirical research that bears on the analogy, though not the research on the Recognition-Primed Decision Model or the Heuristics and Biases research.

[13] In his more recent work, Stichter (2011) focuses on more recent research on expertise.

There are two lines of research that would provide the needed support for empirical claims about expertise.[14] The first aims to describe the nature of expertise in complex real-world decision-making tasks such as chess, firefighting, and military tactics (Zsambok and Klein 1997; Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004; Klein 2009; Salas and Klein 2001; Klein 2008; Lipshitz et al. 2001; Mosier and Fischer 2011; Schraagen 2008; Kahneman and Klein 2009). This Naturalized Decision-Making (NDM) research emerged in the 1980s in response to the perceived shortcomings of previous research methods, which focused on comparing how well decision-makers lived up to mathematical or statistical models of ideal choice strategies (Klein 2008, 456). In contrast, NDM researchers used rigorous field research (such as systematic observation and interviews of experts) in order to find out which strategies real experts use to make decisions in real-world situations.

One of the most prominent models of expert decision-making that has come out of the NDM research (and the one I will focus heavily on in this dissertation) is the Recognition-Primed Decision (RPD) model. According to the RPD model, experts make decisions using a combination of intuition and more conscious analysis of a situation (Klein 2008, 458). Gary Klein and colleagues initially developed the RPD model through in-depth interviews with expert firefighters (ibid). The goal was to discover how expert firefighters made decisions in challenging firefighting situations they had recently encountered. The results, which have been replicated in this and other areas of complex decision-making, were that the experts were often able to see, intuitively, what to do next (for example, when to get out of a room to avoid injury), but they also used conscious deliberation (such as mentally simulating a course of action) to make decisions. So while the RPD model vindicates the

[14] I do not mean to suggest that these are the only relevant lines of research; I'm merely suggesting that together they are sufficient to justify the empirical claims of the skill analogy.

possibility of expert intuition in these areas (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 304 – 305), it also suggests that, for example, experts have more general and abstract knowledge of their areas that they can apply to solve problems (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 301, 305; Feltovich, Prietula, and Ericsson 2006, 55 – 57), that experts are skilled at reflecting on problems and their own methods of solving them (Feltovich, Prietula, and Ericsson 2006, 57), and that mere experience does not lead to expertise (Ericsson et al. 2006; Ericsson and Lehmann 1996; Ericsson 2008).

The second line of research relevant to the skill analogy studies the heuristics and biases involved in decision-making (Kahneman 2011; Gilovich, Griffin, and Kahneman 2002; Kahneman and Klein 2009). This research suggests that some so-called experts' intuition is no more reliable than non-experts; that intuitive expertise cannot be developed in some areas, such as psychotherapy, stock trading, and historical forecasting, since intuitive expertise can only be developed in areas where there are humanly identifiable regularities governing good decisions and people can get clear and relatively immediate feedback in practice on the quality of their decisions (Kahneman and Klein 2009, 522).

By combining the insights of both of these lines of research, on naturalized decision-making and heuristics and biases, we can acquire a picture of the nature and limits of expertise. This in turn will provide a more solid empirical grounding for the analogy between wisdom and expert skill.

Another shortcoming of existing versions of the skill analogy is that they do not discriminate sufficiently between different types of skills. Different skills manifest themselves in people in different ways. Some skills, such as basic driving proficiency, may be predominantly intuitive and require little conscious thought; others, such as physics

problem-solving, require more conscious thought and the application of abstract knowledge. The most cogent and specific version of the expert skill model will have to specify what kind of skill wisdom is similar to. Is it like a skill at sport or physical performance, musical performance, game playing, complex decision-making in certain areas, or what? Stichter relies on a variety of skills, such as chess expertise (2007, 193) and nurses' expertise at assessing patients' conditions (2007, 192), to make his version of the skill analogy. By relying upon the work of Dreyfus and Dreyfus, he also implicitly relies upon an analogy to the skills they discuss, such as skill at driving. What is not clear is that these skills all manifest themselves in the same way: it would seem much easier to rely on the automaticity of intuition in basic driving situations than in other areas, such as firefighting. It is also not clear whether the skills Stichter focuses on are the skills we should be focusing on when making an analogy to virtue or wisdom.

Annas' version of the analogy is less vulnerable to this criticism, since she is careful to specify that virtue is analogous to skills, such as piano playing and tennis, that involve the need to learn and the drive to aspire. In these areas, experts cannot completely rely on routines and must continually and reflectively aspire to improve their performance. It is unclear, however, whether Annas gives us reason to think this categorization of skills is specific enough. After all, are there any expert skills that do not require the need to learn and the drive to aspire? Furthermore, we need some reason to think skills in these areas cannot become heavily intuitive in experts; this is precisely where an empirically-informed account of expert skills would be useful.

Existing versions of the skill analogy thus are either not specific enough about the type of skills they use in their analogy, or their account of those skills is inadequately

empirically-informed. Because of these deficiencies, they fail to deliver on their promise to provide empirically plausible and philosophically sensible answers to the core questions about wisdom.

The expert skill model of wisdom recovers the promise of the skill analogy by removing the above deficiencies. According to the expert skill model, wisdom is the same kind of understanding as expert decision-making skill in areas involving complex choices that are challenging to perform, such as firefighting and military tactical leadership. By focusing on decision-making skills in tasks with specific features, the expert skill model produces a more specific and cogent argument about the nature of wisdom. Furthermore, by relying upon an analysis of current empirical research on expert decision-making, the expert skill model tells us how the relevant understanding manifests itself in real people. In particular, it will turn out that wisdom involves not only an intuitive ability to identify good decisions but also deliberative and meta-cognitive abilities that correct and improve upon intuition when necessary, along with an ability to overcome internal obstacles to doing what needs to be done and an ability to cultivate and improve the other abilities further. Thus, the expert skill model resolves the disagreement between existing versions of the skill analogy while capitalizing on their promise.

1.3 THE ARGUMENT FOR THE EXPERT SKILL MODEL

The main argument for the expert skill model will be made in Chapter 2, with the following chapters elaborating on the model and pulling out its implications for the core

questions about wisdom. The argument relies upon some important assumptions that I will not discuss there, however, and that I should therefore now briefly mention.

The first assumption is that a good account of how wisdom will manifest itself in real people requires empirically-informed philosophical argument. Deciding what wisdom is like and how it can be cultivated cannot be answered with empirical investigation or philosophical inquiry alone; rather, we need both of these forms of inquiry to get good answers to our questions. Wisdom is an ideal we are supposed to have good reason to aspire to. There are many different ways people could and do characterize wisdom, and we need to find the one that is most worth striving for. Empirical research alone cannot tell us which characterization of wisdom is worth aspiring to, since empirical research can only tell us what notion of wisdom people tend to find worthwhile or what a particular model of wisdom, presumed to be worthwhile, looks like in people. Philosophical argument is thus required to give us a rationally defensible account of the ideal of wisdom. But philosophical argument is not sufficient, since claims about the way this ideal is manifested in people must be consistent with what we know about human psychological capacities, tendencies and limitations.[15] For this reason, philosophical argument must be informed by relevant empirical research on human psychology. The research on naturalized decision-making and heuristics and biases, mentioned above, will play a particularly important role in my argument for the expert skill model. My strategy will be first to use philosophical argument to show that wisdom is the same kind of epistemic achievement as expert decision-making skill in areas like firefighting, and, second, to use an analysis of the empirical literature on

[15] A similar assumption motivates the work of Josh Greene (J. D. Greene and Haidt 2002; J. D. Greene et al. 2008; J. D. Greene et al. 2001; J. D. Greene 2003; J. D. Greene 2005; J. Greene 2002), who has used neurological studies of moral judgment to draw normative and meta-ethical conclusions.

expert decision-making skills in these areas to show how wisdom is likely to manifest itself in real people. The way the expert skill model combines philosophical and empirical argument will become clearer in Chapter 2. For now, though, I just hope to have motivated my assumption, shared by a growing number of philosophers, that moral philosophy can and should be informed by relevant empirical research.[16]

I'll also be assuming a virtue ethical account of wisdom. Virtue ethics informs my account in at least two important ways. First, I assume that wisdom is the intellectual virtue that enables a person to make reliably good decisions, where good decisions are ones that correctly identify what virtue requires. Second, I assume that good choices cannot be boiled down to a set of principles that could be memorized and applied by a non-wise person to deduce the right action in the situations she encounters.[17] This claim, mentioned in §1.1 above, is a central and defining claim of virtue ethics (Annas 2004), since it distinguishes virtue ethical accounts of right action from accounts (like Utilitarian and Kantian ones) that define right action in terms of a definite principle or set of principles that can be memorized and applied correctly even by those without wisdom. Both of these assumptions are, I think, reasonable, but I have flagged them because they will play a role in my argument at various points.

[16] Some prominent and important examples of empirically-informed ethics include Doris (2002), Greene (2002), Harman (1999), Haybron (2008), Singer (2005), and Tiberius (2008).
[17] See McDowell (1979, 336), Nussbaum (2001, 299), Broadie (1993, 234) and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094b15 – 1095a1, and 1104a1 – 4.

1.4 OUTLINE OF COMING CHAPTERS

I'll develop the expert skill model over the following four chapters, the first of which makes the core argument for the expert skill model and the rest of which use the model to answer the core questions about the nature and development of wisdom.

In Chapter 2, I make the core argument for the expert skill model of wisdom. I argue that wisdom is the same kind of epistemic achievement as expert decision-making skills in areas like firefighting and that this tells us important things about how wisdom manifests itself in real people. There are two main components to the argument. First, philosophical argument shows that wisdom is understanding of how to conduct oneself in an area requiring complex choices that are challenging to carry out. Second, an analysis of the empirical literature on expert decision-making shows that expert decision-making skill is the same kind of understanding, and that in real people this understanding inevitably manifests itself as a specific set of abilities: intuitive ability, deliberative ability, meta-cognitive ability, self-regulative ability, and self-cultivation ability. One important implication is emphasized: whereas other proponents of the skill analogy tend to ascribe too central a role to either inarticulate intuition or a comprehensive and articulate grasp of rules of conduct, the expert skill model shows that *both* intuition *and* reflection and deliberation are important parts of wisdom.

In Chapter 3 I apply the expert skill model to the question of how wisdom can be developed. Empirical research reveals some general lessons about how expert decision-making skill can be developed. I apply these to the case of wisdom to outline some specific strategies for developing wisdom, focusing especially on the role of reflection.

In Chapter 4 I address an objection to the expert skill model. The objection, due to Daniel Jacobson, is that wisdom is "not a plausible human skill" (2005, 400). It is only possible to acquire intuitive expertise (expertise with an intuitive component) when a person can get sufficient feedback in practice on the quality of her decisions. While it is clear how a firefighter or chess player, for example, can get good feedback on their decisions, feedback on the virtue of our conduct comes from objectionably parochial sources such as our own guilt reactions and the dictates of our culture. I argue that Jacobson's critique fails to undermine the expert skill model because it overlooks a kind of feedback that can reform objectionably parochial intuitions. This result is important because it yields additional information about the type of reflection required to develop wisdom.

In Chapter 5 I apply the expert skill model to the question of what type of deliberation a wise person undertakes when making decisions. In particular, I consider the question, much discussed by virtue ethicists, of whether a wise person deliberates using a blueprint of the good life – a consciously accessible, comprehensive, and systematic conception of what makes a human life go well. The standard position is to deny that a wise person uses a blueprint to deliberate about what to do in particular situations but nevertheless to insist that a wise person needs to have a blueprint in order to deliberate about what character traits to have. I contend that the arguments for the standard position make unverified empirical assumptions about human psychology. I then show that we can test these assumptions using the expert skill model. This reveals that, contra the standard position, a wise person need not have a blueprint of the good life at all.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I conclude by briefly reviewing the argument and implications of the expert skill model. I also make a few suggestions about fruitful directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

WISDOM AS AN EXPERT SKILL

> *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, *Mengzi* 5B1.7

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Making good decisions about how to live is difficult.[18] To live virtuously, we have to be committed to the right things and express those commitments in the right ways. We have to, for instance, balance our concern for others' welfare with the maintenance of our own, decide what our commitments to honesty and loyalty require when our friend is mendacious, determine how best to show respect to an emotionally volatile co-worker, and so on. Even if we are generally well-adjusted, the complexity of decisions about how to conduct ourselves makes it difficult to do the right thing. The way to cope with this difficulty is to acquire wisdom, the intellectual virtue that enables a person to make reliably good decisions about how to live. Wisdom is the understanding that enables us to identify what should be done and how to pull it off: as Mengzi suggests, wisdom enables a person to shape and channel

[18] A version of this chapter was published as Swartwood (2012).

her commitments to produce right conduct, much as skill at archery enables a person to channel her strength into an amazing bullseye.

Wisdom is thus a valuable, though lofty, ideal. Because it is so important and elevated an ideal, we should wonder: what, more specifically, is wisdom? Can real people attain it? If so, how? I will argue that we can make headway answering these questions by modeling wisdom on expert skill. Presenting the main argument for this *expert skill model of wisdom* is the focus of this chapter. More specifically, I'll argue that wisdom is the same kind of epistemic achievement as expert decision-making skill in areas such as firefighting. Acknowledging this helps us see that, and how, real people can develop wisdom. It also helps to resolve philosophical debates about the nature of wisdom. For example, philosophers, including those who advocate modeling virtue on practical skills, disagree about the extent to which wise people make decisions using intuitions or principled deliberation.[19] The expert skill model resolves this debate by showing that wisdom includes substantial intuitive *and* deliberative and reflective abilities.

In making this argument, I'll deviate from Mengzi's simple skill analogy in important ways.[20] First, I'll be focusing on a specific type of skill: expert decision-making skill in domains requiring complex choices and challenging performance. By narrowing the range of skills used to model wisdom, I'll be able to make my argument for the expert skill model as cogent and specific as possible. Second, I'll be drawing on empirical psychological research to characterize expert skill. By starting with an account of expert skill that has been developed using rigorous empirical research on real experts, I'll be able to substantiate my

[19] I discuss this in more detail in §2.4 below.
[20] I should emphasize that I am not engaging in Mengzi interpretation. The quote from Mengzi is simply used to provide a vivid and historically important gesture at the expert skill model.

account of wisdom without reliance on an error-prone folk psychology or armchair speculation. As I'll argue, a careful examination of the research on the nature and limits of intuitive expertise provides the basis for including intuition as a component of wisdom, though only in concert with substantial deliberative and reflective abilities.

I'll begin by making the argument for the expert skill model in §§2.2 – 2.3. The argument has two components: a philosophical argument and an empirical argument. In §2.2 I use philosophical argument to show that wisdom is a specific kind of understanding. In §2.3 I analyze the relevant empirical literature to show that expert decision-making skill is the same kind of understanding. So wisdom is an expert skill: it is the same type of epistemic achievement as expert decision-making skill in areas like firefighting. In §2.4 I review the argument for the expert skill model in order to show how it tells us important things about the nature of wisdom. Finally, in §2.5, I address objections to the expert skill model.

2.2 WISDOM IS UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO CONDUCT ONESELF

Because wisdom is a normative ideal, we need philosophical argument to give an account of it.[21] Empirical research alone cannot tell us what this ideal looks like.[22] In this

[21] See Haybron (2008) for a similar claim about the study of happiness. Haybron argues that philosophy provides "reconstructive analysis" of our folk concepts of happiness. The purpose of this reconstructive analysis "is not to explicate but to reconstruct: reworking rough-and-ready folk concepts to get something better suited to thinking clearly about the matters that concern us" (2008, 47).

[22] But see Tiberius and Swartwood (2011) for an argument that empirical research on folk concepts of wisdom can play a role in constructing a normative account of wisdom.

section I'll argue that wisdom is a specific type of understanding because of the role it plays in the virtuous life.[23]

2.2.1 Real World Wisdom Vs. Perfect Wisdom

But before investigating further what sort of ideal wisdom is, we should be careful to distinguish two distinct types of wisdom that could be considered ideals worth aspiring to: perfect wisdom and real-world wisdom. *Perfect wisdom* is manifested by the person who always conducts herself as excellently as possible. *Real-world wisdom* is the approximation of perfect wisdom that (at least some) real people have a hope of attaining.

The expert skill model is intended to tell us about the nature of real-world wisdom. By analyzing the type of epistemic achievement wisdom (both perfect and real-world) is, we find the general shape of the ideal we aspire to when seeking wisdom. We can then shed light on how this ideal manifests itself in real people – for example, what specific abilities it is composed of – by examining how the same type of achievement manifests itself in decision-making domains, such as firefighting, that are more commonplace than but nevertheless relevantly similar to the domain of wisdom. Thus, by considering the general nature of wisdom, we can see what real world wisdom will look like and how it compares to the perfect wisdom to which we ultimately aspire.

[23] I will be assuming that the good life, or the well-lived life, is the life of virtue. The *locus classicus* for this claim is Aristotle's argument that the good life is the life of virtue. See *NE* I.7. For more contemporary defenses of the claim, see for example Hurka (2000), Hursthouse (1999), and Kraut (2009).

2.2.2 The Domain of Wisdom: Complex Choice and Challenging Performance

To begin giving an account of wisdom we should note some features of the area of choice – or domain – of wisdom that will be important to my argument. Wisdom is an excellence that enables a person to make good choices about how to live. More specifically, wisdom involves choices about how to live all-things-considered: not how to live *if* such-and-such is your goal, but how to live *period*. The domain involving the task of making these choices – in short, the domain of wisdom – has two essential features: it requires complex choices that are challenging to carry out.

Take the first feature. The domain of wisdom is what I will call a *domain of complex choice:* it is an area where the factors governing good decisions are many, varied and interact in complex ways, and a person needs to identify what to do with limited time and psychological resources. This is plainly an uncontroversial claim no matter what ethical theory you favor. Virtue ethicists commonly make the claim that decisions about how to live are so complex that there is no set of moral rules or principles that could be mechanically applied to a situation to determine how to live.[24] My claim here is similar but leaves out the talk of principles: making all-things-considered decisions is hard both because of the complexity of the subject matter and because of our cognitive limitations.[25]

Now take the second feature of the domain of wisdom. The domain of wisdom is a *domain of challenging performance*: it is an area where successfully carrying out what is to be done requires sustained coordination of behavior, affect, and motivation in a way that does not

[24] See McDowell (1979, 336), Nussbaum (2001, 299), and Broadie (1993, 234). These authors all take their inspiration from statements made by Aristotle. See the *NE* 1094b15 – 1095a1, 1104a1 – 4.

[25] It is worth noting that even Utilitarians and Kantians acknowledge that experience and judgment, rather than the mere memorization and application of principles, is required for making good moral decisions. For a Rule-Utilitarian example, see Hooker (2000, 131 – 134). For a Kantian example, see O'Neill (1986).

come naturally to people and requires significant practice to achieve. This is also an uncontroversial claim, since becoming virtuous, by all accounts, is not easy. Being virtuous requires having the right feelings, motivations, and attitudes at the right times. Clearly then it is challenging to learn to conduct oneself virtuously. That is not to say that a person with virtue has a tough time doing what she should. Nor is it to say that being motivated to carry out the virtuous action is unconnected from the task of figuring out what to do.[26] For now all I hope to have shown is that, when it comes to wisdom, identifying what to do and actually doing it are both challenging.

2.2.3 WISDOM IS UNDERSTANDING HOW TO CONDUCT ONESELF

Wisdom (in both its real-world and perfect forms) is thus an ideal worth aspiring to requiring choices that are complex and challenging to carry out. But how should we characterize this ideal? Hursthouse, for instance, states that wisdom is "the knowledge or understanding that enables its possessor" to do the right thing (2010). A look at wisdom's role in a virtuous life shows that wisdom is a particular kind of understanding: understanding of how, all-things-considered, to conduct oneself. Furthermore, this understanding is best described as an ability.[27]

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[26] For a thorough critical defense of this claim, see Little (1997).

[27] See Pritchard (2007) for a review of recent work in epistemology on the different types of understanding and their value. There are a variety of types of understanding: understanding that something is the case, understanding a phenomenon or topic, understanding why something is the case, etc. Epistemologists tend to characterize these different types of understanding in similar ways: they involve a grasp of things that can in turn be described as an ability. See for example Hyman (2003), Zagzebski (2001), Grimm (2006), and Hills (2009). Stephen Grimm, for example, suggests that, following James Woodward, we should characterize understanding as "an ability to answer 'what-if-things-had-been-different?' questions" (2006, 532). A person understands how a car engine works when she can tell you how (and if) it would run if it had no oil, was missing a belt, or whatever.

The understanding that is relevant for my purposes is *understanding how to conduct oneself*. A person understands how to conduct herself in a domain D when, for a broad range of situations in D, she grasps reasons for action relevant to responding successfully in those situations. The metaphor of grasping is supposed to pick out a cognitive accomplishment: grasping reasons is an ability to identify them accurately and non-accidentally across a wide range of situations in a domain.[28] A person who understands how, for example, to train dogs can identify what to do when she is tasked with altering Fido's (and Fifi's, and Rover's, etc.) behavior, and she does so not by accident or luck but by homing in on the relevant aspects of the situation and drawing the right conclusions about what actions they necessitate.[29]

There are two main types of reasons that can be grasped in situations. The first type is what I'll call *a success reason*. A success reason is a reason to perform an action because performing that action in that situation would achieve, or contribute to achieving, a goal (or goals) that constitute success in the domain in question. For instance, a person who understands how to train dogs grasps when to use positive reinforcement to shape a dog's behavior. This grasp can be described as an ability: the trainer is able to see that the dog's reticence to make eye contact with humans requires rewarding eye contact with treats so that the dog will be more responsive to its human companion. We can give a general characterization of the grasp of success reasons in a domain D: this grasp is an ability to

[28] I am indebted here to Alison Hills' (2009, 98–106) very insightful account of "moral understanding." According to Hills, moral understanding is understanding why a moral proposition is true. This understanding "involves a number of abilities," such as the ability to follow an explanation of why the claim is true, an ability to explain why it is true in your own words, and an ability to arrive at the claim from the relevant facts (2009, 102).

[29] On the epistemic importance of non-accidental belief, see Hills (2009, 102), Sosa (2007, 185 – 8), and Sayre-McCord (1996, 143).

identify what features of a situation in D require what response (where a response constitutes or directly contributes to achievement of domain-specific goals).

Understanding how to conduct oneself in a domain will always require this ability to identify success reasons, regardless of the domain. After all, understanding how to conduct oneself in a domain is a grasp of reasons for action relevant to successful performance in that domain. Understanding how to conduct oneself in a domain D is thus an ability to identify (accurately, non-accidentally, and in a wide range of situations in D) what features of a situation in D require what response.

However, understanding how to conduct oneself sometimes requires more than this. After all, grasping how to conduct oneself successfully often requires more than identifying what response to a situation constitutes or contributes to success. Often, we have *self-regulative reasons* for action: reasons to take some action in order to overcome internal obstacles to doing what needs to be done. For instance, an expert dog-trainer can see when her own fear and fatigue will be an issue and sees how to successfully manage them when training an especially testy canine. Importantly, this is not necessary in every domain. In chess, for example, once a good move is identified, it is not hard to reach out and make it. In other areas, the internal obstacles that challenge most people will not be present for all. An expert dog-trainer may be able, through practice, to train herself so that fear and fatigue do not ever get in the way of successfully training even the most fractious or frustrating dogs. But when there are internal obstacles to carrying out the successful response, understanding how to conduct oneself is not only an ability to identify success reasons but also self-regulative reasons.

These considerations yield the following account of understanding how to conduct oneself. Understanding how to conduct oneself in a domain D is (a) an ability to identify (accurately, non-accidentally, and in a wide range of situations in D) what features in a situation require what response in order to achieve the goals of D, and, when there are internal obstacles to carrying out that response, (b) an ability to identify how to overcome those internal obstacles.

Understanding how to conduct oneself can thus be described as an ability. What remains is to show that wisdom is understanding how to conduct oneself. Wisdom is understanding how to conduct oneself just in case it can be analyzed as the relevant kind of ability in the domain of all-things-considered decisions.

Wisdom has to be this kind of ability given the role it plays in a virtuous life. Recall that wisdom is required to turn the right general commitments into right conduct. A person who has the right general commitments cares about the right things, but she does not direct this care as she ought to when it comes to her thoughts, feelings, and actions in particular situations. What she needs to develop in order to live virtuously is an ability to identify correctly what matters and what she should do as a result. When Tamika's friend lies to her, Tamika, being wise, is able to recognize that maintaining honest communication is what matters and that gentle but straightforward confrontation is called for. She recognizes that confrontation is the thing to do, or perhaps, more specifically, the honest thing to do, in response to the relevant features of the situation. Indeed, Tamika is reliably able to identify what to do in response to situations, and she gets things right because of her ability rather than because of luck. So wisdom includes the ability to identify, reliably and accurately, what feature of the situation calls for what response in order to appropriately express the relevant

commitment. This ability is essential for living virtuously even if someone has the right general commitments, since in any particular situation there are numerous commitments one could pursue in numerous different ways, and the virtuous person has to figure out which commitment is most important in that situation and how best to pursue it.

This is sufficient to show that wisdom is an ability to identify success reasons and thus that wisdom is understanding how to conduct oneself in the domain of all-things-considered decisions. But we might wonder if wisdom also includes an ability to identify self-regulative reasons. In other words, wisdom is an ability to identify the virtuous thing to do, but is it also an ability to identify how to overcome internal obstacles to doing the virtuous thing?

When attempting to answer this question, we should be careful to specify whether we are concerned with perfect wisdom or real-world wisdom. We should be clear, in other words, whether we are asking if a perfectly virtuous person would have internal obstacles to acting virtuously, or whether we are asking if a person who has the degree of virtue possible for real people would have internal obstacles to acting virtuously.

For familiar reasons, I would answer the first question negatively: perfect wisdom does not include an ability to recognize self-regulative reasons. John McDowell argues that a fully virtuous person who has wisdom sees what to do without being tempted to do otherwise (1979, 334 – 5). Unlike the merely continent person, who does what she ought to after struggling with a desire to do otherwise, a virtuous person sees what to do in a way that "silences" less virtuous – or just plain vicious – alternatives (1979, 335). Someone who refrains from making a racist joke at a party only after suppressing a desire to tell it has worse character than someone who, because of her sense of justice and compassion, does

not even see racist joke-making as a tempting option. If this distinction between continence and virtue holds, then we have to conclude that a person with perfect wisdom will not have to overcome internal obstacles to doing what should be done.

Of course, this leaves it open that our answer to the second question, about real-world wisdom, is an affirmative. I will argue later (in §2.4) that there is in fact reason to conclude that the degree of wisdom possible for real people will include an ability to identify self-regulative reasons. But this argument is partly an empirical one, since it relies crucially on claims about the observable limitations and capacities of real people. As such, it cannot be undertaken until we move from the present philosophical analysis of wisdom to an analysis of the empirical research on expert decision-making skill. Conducting the latter analysis is the task of the next section.

2.3 EXPERT SKILL IS UNDERSTANDING OF HOW TO CONDUCT ONESELF

Expert skill in an area is skill that enables a person to perform reliably well and reliably better than non-experts. This is true regardless of whether we are talking about expert skill at chess, firefighting, jazz piano or anything else. But different domains present different challenges. I'll begin by examining the decades long program of empirical research on expert skills. I'll be focusing on domains that have both these features: they require complex choices[30] that are challenging to carry out.[31] I'll argue that expert decision-making

[30] See Zsambok (1997, 5) for a description of how the psychological study of expert decision-making in real-world situations ("naturalistic decision-making") seeks to explain how experts deal with a variety of factors influencing decisions: for example, "[i]ll-structured problems," "[u]ncertain, dynamic environments," "[s]hifting, ill-defined, or competing goals," "[a]ction/feedback loops," "[t]ime stress," "[h]igh stakes," "[m]ultiple players," "[o]rganizational goals and norms." My notion of domains of complex choice is intended

skill in these domains can be analyzed into a particular set of component abilities, just as biking ability can be analyzed into a number of component abilities, such as pedaling ability, balancing ability, etc. Furthermore, this specific set of skills is an epistemic achievement: it amounts to an understanding of how to conduct oneself in a domain. More importantly for my argument, in domains requiring complex choice and challenging performance, having this specific set of skills – as opposed to some other set – is the way an understanding of how to conduct oneself will inevitably manifest.[32]

2.3.1 Expert Skill is a Set of Abilities

Consider first domains of complex choice. The most prominent model of real-world expert decision-making skill is the Recognition-Primed Decision (RPD) model, and this model gives us a good idea of how expert decision-making skill manifests itself in domains of complex choice. The RPD model of expert decision-making was originally developed using expert firefighters as subjects, but it has since been validated across a variety of other domains, including (but not limited to) chess, military tactics, physics problem-solving, and grain inspection. The model was developed as part of an attempt to understand how real experts in tasks requiring complex choices reliably made good decisions under real world conditions.

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to pick out decision-making tasks of this kind, though I've simplified the list in a way that isolates the factors important for my argument. See also Klein (2009, 10–11).

[31] In his examination of the analogy between virtue and skills, Stalnaker (2010, 421) also identifies a variety of different types of skills, including skills of performance, skills of production, and skills of carrying out specific processes.

[32] As I note below, since the argument in this section is an empirical one, "will inevitably" here means something like "is really, really likely to."

According to the RPD model, experts reliably make good, albeit not always optimal, decisions that are routinely better than those made by non-experts (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 305). They are able to do so because they recognize patterns stored in memory (Kahneman and Klein 2009, 516; Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 304). Expert chess players, for example, have an ability to identify good moves immediately, effortlessly, and without having to consciously compare or assess possible options. They make this intuitive identification of what to do by recognizing how the current situation fits a pattern that they have encountered and successfully dealt with in the past. Although experts in domains of complex decision-making tend to rely heavily on intuition, there are two other mechanisms that play a significant role in their choices (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 305).[33] Experts use deliberation to evaluate and improve upon their intuitive decisions when necessary. For example, chess experts can and, time permitting, often do successfully test an intuitive move to see if it really would be the best one. Finally, experts can make a good decision using conscious deliberation when the situation is too novel to generate an intuitive choice. When a board configuration does not fit a pattern a chess expert has encountered before, she can use her previous experience to identify a good move.

This description of expert decision-making mechanisms implies that expert decision-making skill is comprised of three component abilities. The first is *intuitive ability*: experts can identify what ought to be done quickly, effortlessly, and without conscious deliberation.[34] The second component ability is *deliberative ability*: experts use effortful, consciously

[33] See also Ericsson and Lehman (1996, 283) for an explanation of how both "recognition-based retrieval" and "search" skills are important parts of expertise. See also Klein (2009, 36, 73, 89, 91). Klein (2009, 73) notes that expert chess players "rely more on their intuition than on deliberation," even though deliberation is still an important part of expertise.

[34] The definition of intuition used here is commonly used by psychologists who study human cognition. Examples include Jonathan Haidt (2001), Timothy Wilson (2002), and Daniel Kahneman (2011).

accessible processes to search for and evaluate choices when an intuitive identification is lacking or inadequate. Experts can search for and test a decision by, for instance, seeking out more information and drawing implications from it, examining a situation to compare it to others previously encountered, and evaluating a choice by reference to success-relevant goals and criteria. Research on experts in various domains, such as chess, medical diagnosis and physics problem-solving, shows that experts have a more accurate and more abstract representations of their domains, and they are adept at applying these representations to particular situations (Feltovich, Prietula, and Ericsson 2006, 55 – 7; Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 300). A third component ability implied by the RPD model is *meta-cognitive ability*: an expert is able to decide when and how to rely on intuition and deliberation.

Humans cannot develop expert decision-making skill in every domain. The RPD model indicates that people will only develop reliable intuitive ability when they undertake practice or experience that gives them clear and accurate feedback on the quality of their decisions.[35] Nevertheless, in many fields, it is possible to develop an ability to recognize a good decision quickly, effortlessly, and without conscious deliberation.

The benefit of the RPD model is that it explains how intuitive decision-making expertise is possible without having to posit mysterious or magical psychological processes. Like other animals, humans have quick processes for making judgments without conscious effort; these lower-order cognitive processes provide an evolutionary advantage by helping people make decisions without requiring that they consciously process the bewildering array of information they encounter in everyday decisions (Wilson 2002, 24). But humans also use

[35] In areas where sufficient feedback is not available, such as historical forecasting and stock brokering, a person cannot get better at intuitively recognizing good decisions (Kahneman and Klein 2009, 520, 522). In these areas, people using the right algorithms or rules of thumb usually outperform people's (even purported experts') unaided judgments (Kahneman and Klein 2009, 523).

more laborious conscious cognitive processes to make decisions; these higher-order processes, such as conscious reflection and inference, can (but do not always) help people correct their lower-level judgments. The RPD model builds on this plausible "dual-processing" model of cognition to explain how people can hone their use of higher- and lower-order decision-making processes to produce exceptional performance in a particular area.

According to the RPD model, then, expert decision-making skill in domains requiring complex choice is comprised of three abilities: intuitive ability, deliberative ability, and meta-cognitive ability. These abilities enable a person to identify reliably a good course of action in their areas of expertise.

But in some areas identifying what to do is not the only challenging part of decision-making. In some areas carrying out the identified course of action requires a challenging coordination of behavior, affect and motivation. To see what expert decision-making skill involves in these areas, it helps to go beyond the RPD model into the general research on expertise.

This research shows that in domains of challenging performance, experts have another decision-making ability: a *self-regulative ability* that enables a person to identify reliably how to affect the environment, her behavior, emotions and motivations so that she can successfully do what she has identified she ought to do.

For instance, expert volleyball players have an ability to effectively set goals for practice and performance, utilize and evaluate strategies for improving their play, and evaluate and adapt their mental and physical performance (Zimmerman 2006, 714). While the study of self-regulation in experts is in its relative infancy, there is evidence that self-

regulation plays an important role in expert performance in music, writing and sports (Zimmerman 2006, 706). The best explanation for the presence of self-regulative ability in these areas is, I would suggest, that they are domains of challenging performance. Activities like writing a novel, performing a piano concerto, and swimming in the Olympics require sustained coordination of a variety of physical, emotional and motivational processes and tendencies. For this reason, I think it is reasonable to make the general claim that expert decision-making skill in domains of challenging performance includes self-regulative ability. In these areas, experts often perform well automatically, but they also often have to engage in self-regulation to ensure that they perform at a consistently high level.

Finally, there is one more ability we can add to the previous four. Experts reliably make good decisions, but not always the best ones. In domains of complex choice, even experts can improve their decisions. Expert decision-making skill is not just a first-order ability to determine how to conduct oneself in particular situations; it also includes a second-order ability to decide how to cultivate the first-order abilities. For that reason, we should include *self-cultivation ability* as a component of decision-making expertise: an expert is able to tailor her practice, experience, and reflection over the long term in order to make her intuitive, deliberative and self-regulative abilities even more reliable (Feltovich, Prietula, and Ericsson 2006, 57). Indeed, this kind of self-cultivation ability is part of what helps a person develop and maintain expertise (Zimmerman 2006, 706 – 7; Anders Ericsson 2008; Ericsson and others 2006).

Thus, according to the empirical research, expert decision-making skill in domains of complex choice and challenging performance is actually a set of abilities:

- *Intuitive ability*: an expert is often able to identify what she ought to do quickly, effortlessly, and without conscious deliberation.
- *Deliberative ability*: an expert is able to use slow, effortful, consciously accessible processes to figure out what she ought to do when an intuitive identification is lacking or inadequate.
- *Meta-cognitive ability*: an expert is able to identify when and how to rely on intuition and deliberation.
- *Self-regulative ability*: an expert is able to identify how to influence her environment, behavior, affect and motivations so that she can successfully do what she has identified she ought to do.
- *Self-cultivation ability*: an expert is able to identify how to tailor her practice and experience in order to make her intuitive, deliberative and self-regulative abilities even more reliable over the long-run.

Just as biking ability can be analyzed into a set of different abilities – a pedal-pumping ability, balancing ability, endurance ability, etc. – expert decision-making skill in domains requiring complex choice and challenging performance is best analyzed as a set of abilities. In fact, I think it is fair to say that expert decision-making skill in these types of domains just is the possession of the above five abilities relative to that domain. The relative prominence of each of these abilities will likely vary according to the domain. Experts in some areas may rely more heavily on intuition, for example, than experts in other areas. At

this point, all I've endeavored to show is that expert decision making skill in domains of complex choice includes some significant degree of intuitive, deliberative, meta-cognitive, self-regulative and self-cultivation abilities.

2.3.2 This Set of Abilities is Understanding How to Conduct Oneself

This set of five abilities is a form of understanding. Experts understand how to conduct themselves in their domains, and this understanding reliably produces good decisions by helping a person adapt to the limitations facing human decision-making. This is significant because it shows that expert decision-making skill is the kind of epistemic achievement that, I argued above, makes someone wise.

An expert's intuitive, deliberative and meta-cognitive abilities enable her to identify what should be done in response to relevant features of the situation. Her self-regulative ability enables her to identify how to overcome internal obstacles to carrying out her identification of what should be done. Finally, her self-cultivation ability enables her to improve her identification of what should be done by making it more efficient and accurate. It might seem that this last ability is not part of understanding how to conduct oneself; at most, one might think, it is understanding how to develop understanding of how to conduct oneself. But if we see the task of conducting oneself in a domain as a long-term one, we can assimilate self-cultivation ability into understanding of how to conduct oneself. Over the long term, seeing how to improve one's intuitive, deliberative, meta-cognitive, and self-regulative abilities is part of what enables a person to identify what she ought to do and how

to do it. Thus, expert skill is understanding of how to conduct oneself in a domain.[36]

If this is right, then the abilities that expert decision-makers have amount to understanding of how to conduct oneself. Nevertheless, it could still be the case that the entailment does not hold the other way: not all instances of understanding of how to conduct oneself will manifest themselves as the particular complex of abilities I've described above. For instance, understanding how to conduct oneself could conceivably involve mainly deliberative abilities, or it could be solely intuitive. If this were true, it would undermine my attempt to show that since wisdom is understanding of how to conduct oneself, wisdom is an expert skill comprised of the five abilities outlined above.

It turns out that there is reason to think that understanding of how to conduct oneself in domains of complex choice and challenging performance will have to manifest itself as the complex of five skills listed above. As a matter of contingent fact, these skills are the ones humans need to overcome the challenges presented in these domains.

One piece of evidence for this claim is the robustness of the expertise results: the skills implicit in the RPD model and research on expert self-regulation and self-cultivation generalize across the many domains of complex choice that have been studied. This suggests that understanding of how to conduct oneself is likely (perhaps highly likely) to manifest itself in those specific abilities.

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[36] Reason-giving ability is part of the account of understanding given by Sosa (2007, 137), who describes understanding as the possession of explanations; cp. Alison Hills' (2009, 102 – 3) account of moral understanding, according to which a person understands why a moral proposition is true when she can, among other things, explain why it is true in her own words. Research on expert decision-making indicates that experts have deeper and more abstract knowledge that they can use to make choices about what to do (Feltovich, Prietula, and Ericsson 2006, 50; Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 301). Though this knowledge is often tacit and cannot be articulated (see Klein 2009, 26, 45), there is reason to think experts can articulate what they know to some degree. For one thing, expertise is often developed by making a person's mental models of a domain explicit so that they can be developed and refined (Ross, Lussier, and Klein 2005, 332).

Support for a stronger claim – that understanding is not just *likely* to manifest itself as these abilities but that in humans it is *really, really likely* – comes from the best explanation for the empirical results.

In domains of complex choice, identifying reasons for action requires decision-making skills that are automatic, corrective, and coordinating. Because the features of situations that are relevant to deciding what to do are many, varied, and interact in complex ways, a person needs a way to identify what to do in response to the situation automatically – that is, quickly and without the aid of ponderous higher-level cognition. In humans, the way to achieve this is to utilize the recognition-driven intuitive abilities that our species acquired relatively early on in its evolutionary development. Because intuitive abilities will not be able to achieve great accuracy without refinement from another source, a person needs a way to correct her intuition to achieve an accurate identification of what to do in response to a situation.[37] In humans, this is achieved through the higher-level cognitive abilities that enable deliberation about what to do as a supplement for, and correction to, intuition. Finally, because intuitive and deliberative abilities will need to be coordinated in order to utilize them efficiently and effectively, a person needs meta-cognitive ability. Sometimes intuition will lead us astray without more deliberation, and sometimes deliberation is an unnecessary or corrupting influence on an intuitive identification of what to do. An expert needs to be able to tell the difference in the situations she is faced with. Thus, barring some new evolutionary changes, a human ability to identify what to do in response to a situation in

[37] Of course, the degree to which intuition ("system 1" cognition) needs correction from reflection and deliberation ("system 2" cognition) will vary depending on the domain of choice. But in general the efficiency provided by intuition comes at a cost of accuracy (Wilson 2002, 50). I think this is especially true when it comes to the domain of wisdom, even after a person has attained a significant degree of wisdom. For another argument that untutored intuition systematically misleads us in moral judgment, see Singer (2005).

domains of complex choice will have to be composed of intuitive, deliberative, and meta-cognitive abilities.

In domains where choices are not only complex but, once made, challenging to carry out, an ability to identify how to carry out the prescribed response will require self-regulative abilities. Because carrying out decisions in domains of challenging performance is too complicated to become fully automatic even in experts, a grasp of how to carry out a decision will require self-regulative ability.

In domains of complex choice and challenging performance, then, understanding how to conduct oneself will have to manifest itself as a set of intuitive, deliberative, meta-cognitive, and self-regulative abilities. But self-cultivation abilities will very likely be part of the package, too. There is a simple reason for this. Self-cultivation ability is necessary to achieve high levels of expertise in these domains, so experts will have acquired this ability during their development. Since even experts' grasp of what to do is not perfect – research shows that experts in domains of complex choice make reliably good but not always optimal decisions – the ability to develop one's decision-making abilities will be very likely to be exercised and sustained.

For these reasons, it is reasonable to conclude that understanding of how to conduct oneself in domains of complex choice and challenging performance is really, really likely to manifest itself as the set of five abilities. The argument for this claim is of course an inductive one based upon empirical observation, though I think it is a very strong argument.

2.4 OVERVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT AND ITS IMPORTANCE

The previous sections have given us all the resources necessary to argue for the expert skill model of wisdom. What remains is to give an overview of the argument and pull out its implications.

2.4.1 OVERVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT

The argument for the expert skill model can be paraphrased rather simply: expert skill is understanding of how to conduct oneself in a domain, and wisdom is understanding of how to conduct oneself all-things-considered, so wisdom is an expert skill. This way of putting the argument emphasizes that wisdom is the same kind of epistemic achievement as expert skill, but it obscures the argument's more subtle structure and implications.

Consider, then, what I'll refer to as *the core argument for the expert skill model*:

1. In domains of complex choice and challenging performance, understanding of how to conduct oneself will very, very probably be composed (in real people) of a set of five skills: intuitive, deliberative, meta-cognitive, self-regulative, and self-cultivation.
2. Wisdom is understanding of how to conduct oneself in a domain of complex choice and challenging performance.
3. Expert decision-making skill just is the set of five skills: intuitive, deliberative, meta-cognitive, self-regulative, and self-cultivation.

Conclusion 1: Therefore, wisdom will very, very probably be composed (in real people) of the set of five skills [by 1 + 2].

Conclusion 2: Therefore, wisdom is an expert decision-making skill [by 3 + Conclusion 1].

I stated earlier that the argument for the expert skill model is partly an empirical one and partly a philosophical one. Premise 2 is justified by philosophical argument that gives a rationally defensible account of the normative ideal of wisdom. Premises 1 and 3 are the conclusions of the empirical argument, which is based on an analysis of the empirical research on expert decision-making.

Together, these premises imply two important conclusions. One is that wisdom is the same sort of epistemic achievement as expert decision-making skill (Conclusion 2). This tells us about the nature of perfect wisdom and real-world wisdom: it gives us an account of what wisdom is in our most perfect ideal and as it will manifest itself in the real world. But the argument also yields a more specific conclusion (Conclusion 1) about the form wisdom will take in real people: it will include intuition, deliberative ability, meta-cognitive ability, self-regulative ability, and self-cultivation ability. It is important to emphasize how this expands upon the notion of wisdom given in §2.2. Not only does it show us how a person with wisdom identifies what to do (she uses intuition, deliberation, and meta-cognition), but it also shows that a wise person in the real world will have an ability to overcome internal obstacles to doing what she should. Since expert decision-making skill in areas much less complex than the domain of wisdom (for instance, volleyball and dancing) require a self-regulative ability, we can conclude that wisdom, at least as it would manifest in real people, does as well.[38]

[38] This conclusion is further bolstered by research in psychology that shows that the situation often affects our behavior and cognition to a much greater degree than personality traits or character. Some philosophers have suggested that this research shows that virtue ethics relies upon an implausible account of character traits and their influence on conduct (Doris 2002; Harman 1999). Other philosophers (see for instance Merritt (2000)) have argued that virtue ethics can accommodate this research by acknowledging virtue's dependence on social and situational influence. I am suggesting that wisdom gives a person the understanding required to intelligently channel this situational influence. I thank Valerie Tiberius for pointing out the connection to this research.

2.4.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ARGUMENT

These conclusions are important for a number of reasons. For one thing, they tell us that wisdom is developed in the same way as expert skill: through deliberate practice that gives a person feedback on the quality of their decisions. More work is required to specify in detail what kind of deliberate practice helps a person develop wisdom. But by doing so, we would be able to show that, and how, people can develop wisdom. This will be the task of the next two chapters.

The expert skill model can also tell us important things about the role of intuition, deliberation and reflection in wise decision-making. Rosalind Hursthouse notes that interpreters of Aristotle disagree about whether Aristotelian practical wisdom is knowledge of a systematic set of moral principles that can be applied in deliberation or a quasi-perceptual capacity to see what should be done (2006, 284 – 5). This exegetical disagreement tracks more general philosophical disagreement about the nature of moral knowledge.[39] This disagreement even persists amongst philosophers, like Julia Annas (1998; 1995; 2011; 2004) and Matthew Stichter (2007), who have revived the ancient analogy between virtue and practical skills. Annas claims that modeling virtue on expert skills shows that the virtuous person engages in reflection informed by a "unified grasp of the general principles underlying her patterns of action and decision" (1993, 68). Stichter, on the other hand, objects that experts often rely mostly on intuitive processes and are thus often unable to articulate their reasons for acting as they do (2007, 191 – 2).[40]

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[39] This disagreement can be found, for example, in debates over moral particularism. For an overview of the issues in this literature, see Dancy (2001).

[40] The research Stichter relies on is the empirical model of expertise developed by Stuart and Herbert Dreyfus (H. L. Dreyfus 1997; S. E. Dreyfus 2004; H. L. Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991). The problem is that Dreyfus and Dreyfus' work, while historically important in the field of empirical research on expertise, is based upon

My argument for the expert skill model provides a resolution to the debate between Annas and Stichter. The expert skill model shows that wisdom has both a substantial intuitive *and* a substantial deliberative and meta-cognitive component, and it grounds this claim in a plausible philosophical argument informed by an accurate analysis of the empirical research.

While not all deliberation and meta-cognitive reflection proceed by applying principles,[41] the expert skill model gives us reason to think wise deliberation and reflection will utilize principles of action to some degree. For one thing, expert intuition is only developed when a person gets feedback on the *regularities* governing her area of expertise, and experts reflect often on their practice and others' performance in order to get feedback that refines their understanding. When it comes to the domain of wisdom, reflection on cases is an important way a person will get feedback on the quality of her decisions.[42] Without this kind of reflection, it is unclear how a person could get feedback on whether her decisions are part of a life that is well-lived on the whole. This reflection may yield *prima facie* principles describing the types of actions that are kind, just, or whatever. So even though a person will eventually develop an intuitive ability to identify what to do in many (especially common) situations, she will have a grasp of principles of action to some degree or other.[43] What is more, the RPD model shows that experts do not rely solely on intuition – they deliberate to test their intuitive choice and to produce a choice when the situation is too

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phenomenological investigation of skills like driving (H. L. Dreyfus 1997, 19) rather than naturalistic decision-making research on domains of complex choice and challenging performance.

[41] See Wong (2002) for a helpful examination of analogical reasoning that does not proceed using principles to deduce conclusions.

[42] See §3.4.5.

[43] For an empirically-informed defense of the claim that people reason (at least sometimes) by applying moral rules, see Mallon and Nichols (2010).

novel for intuition to be of help. It seems likely that this deliberation will utilize the principles acquired in reflection, though these principles, I'll later argue,[44] will not amount to a comprehensive or systematic conception of what to do. In any case, the expert skill model shows that both the intuitive ability emphasized by Stichter and the reflective and deliberative abilities emphasized by Annas will be part of real-world wisdom.

2.5 OBJECTIONS TO THE EXPERT SKILL MODEL

Despite its attractive features, the argument for the expert skill model is likely to provoke various objections. Here I'll address a few of the most pressing.

One objection is that wisdom is not a decision-making skill, since there are important differences between wisdom and skills. Making good on this objection, however, is not so simple. The objection undermines the expert skill model if, and only if, (i) the difference cited between wisdom and expert decision-making skill actually obtains *and* (ii) the difference either implies that wisdom is not the same type of epistemic achievement as expert decision-making skills in areas of complex choice and challenging performance or implies that wisdom is not composed of the same set of five abilities as those skills. After all, all that the expert skill model claims is that wisdom is the same *type* of epistemic achievement as expert decision-making skill (not the exact same achievement) and that wisdom involves the same generally-described set of abilities as expert decision-making skill.

Inspiration for this objection can be found in Aristotle, who argued that practical wisdom and *technê* (technical skill or craft expertise, such as boat-making skill) are distinct

[44] See Chapter 5.

intellectual virtues. We might wonder whether the differences Aristotle identified between wisdom and *technê* obtain between wisdom and expert decision-making skill and whether these differences undermine the expert skill model.

Consider the first major difference Aristotle identifies: craft expertise is "concerned with production, not action" (*NE* 1140a17 – 18), while practical wisdom is concerned with action. If the difference cited here is that *technê* aims at making things, while practical wisdom aims more broadly at doing things, then the objection fails to undermine the expert skill model. The expert skill model draws connections between wisdom and expertise at deciding what to do when, for instance, fighting fires. So there is no contrast between producing things and acting to be undermined.

Another interpretation of Aristotle's point, or perhaps an elaboration on it, draws a contrast between the type of reasoning involved in *technê* and the reasoning involved in wisdom. At the most general level, Aristotle suggests that practical reasoning does not involve deliberation about which ends to pursue but rather deliberation about how to achieve those ends (*NE* bk III.3, VI.12). This holds both for *technê* and wisdom: just as in boat-making the goal of making a good boat is given and the task is to figure out how to achieve this goal, in all-things-considered decisions about how to live the goal of flourishing (*eudaimonia*) is given and the task is to figure out how to achieve it. Nevertheless, some interpreters of Aristotle have suggested, plausibly, I think, that this does not mean Aristotle thought wise people do not deliberate about ends at all. Wise people not only deliberate about the means to flourishing but also deliberate in order to specify what *constitutes* flourishing, especially in particular circumstances (Richardson 1990). For instance, upon finding out that her dying brother's wife has been unfaithful, a wise person will have to

deliberate to specify what specific goal is kindest: sparing her brother the agony of the truth, or gently exposing the subterfuge she suspects her brother would not want to be ignorant of.

This might seem to provide a contrast between *technê* and expert decision-making skill, on the one hand, and practical wisdom, on the other: whereas *technê* and decision-making skill only require instrumental reasoning, wisdom also requires non-instrumental specificatory reasoning (Stalnaker 2010, 408). For instance, the goal of firefighting is to put out fires, and the function of expertise is simply to help a person figure out the best means to this goal. Since wisdom requires more than this merely instrumental reasoning, wisdom is importantly different from expert decision-making skills.

This version of the objection also fails, since it does not draw a genuine contrast between wisdom and expert-decision making skill. The RPD model describes expert decision-making in areas with "[s]hifting, ill-defined, or competing goals" (Zsambok 1997, 5). A good firefighter does not just aim at the goal of putting out fires but at various other goals as well: ensuring firefighter safety, ensuring the safety of citizens, protecting property, and so on. These are the goals that constitute the supreme end of firefighting, which we could say is to combat fires well or effectively. Some of these more specific goals compete with each other: a firefighter will sometimes have to decide, *qua* firefighter, between securing someone's safety and getting the fire under control. Thus expert decision makers in areas of complex choice and challenging performance (including both firefighting and all-things-considered decisions) will often have to specify which particular goal in a situation constitutes the supreme end of their domain.

Another version of the objection suggests, following Aristotle, that wisdom is not a skill but rather a disposition. Linda Zagzebski (1996; cp Stalnaker 2010, 408; Kekes 1995,

30; Van Norden 2008, xxxiii), for instance, argues that intellectual virtues are not skills, since a person can have a skill but fail to act on it, while one cannot have an intellectual virtue like wisdom and fail to act on it. If this is right, then motivation is a component of wisdom but not part of expert decision-making skills. Thus wisdom is not a skill at all.

I see three possible ways to respond to this objection, each of which would defuse the objection. One option is to accept a hybrid skill model of wisdom, according to which wisdom is expert decision-making skill plus the motivation to exercise this skill and act on its deliverances. Alternatively we could argue that wisdom *is* best described as a skill. One way to make this response would be to argue that the decision-making skill involved in wisdom is, unlike other skills, necessarily motivating: when a wise person identifies what to do, that identification is necessarily motivating.[45] Though both of these responses concede that there are differences between wisdom and expert skills, neither cites a difference that undermines the expert skill model in the fashion described in (ii) above.[46] Another way to argue that wisdom is a skill is to emphasize that the decision-making skills I'm concerned with involve shaping motivation to guide decision-making. This third response is the one I favor. A firefighter, for instance, is good at deciding what to do because her fear and concern responses have been shaped in ways that help her put out fires well (where "well" involves appropriately balancing issues of safety, damage to property, etc.).[47] But the inclusion of

[45] Thus, Margaret Little: [the knowledge a virtuous, i.e. practically wise, person has] is a skill in judging which situations fall under various rich moral classifications such as kind, cruel, obligatory, evil; and what it takes to count as having such a skill, it is claimed, cannot be understood independently of one's having a practical orientation to be identified, if you like, with its judgments. (1997, 74 – 75)

[46] I thank Valerie Tiberius for helpful discussion of this objection.

[47] A similar thing can thus be said about wisdom: through deliberate practice (including, for instance, feedback from the wise and appropriate reflection on her experiences), a person can shape her commitments to justice, compassion, and the like into a reliable understanding of how to conduct herself, all-things-considered. This helps us answer two puzzles about wisdom that occupied Aristotle: what is the relationship between virtue of character and wisdom, and what distinguishes mere cleverness from wisdom? In answer to the first puzzle,

motivation and affect does not preclude calling the firefighting expert's understanding (nor, by extension, the wise person's understanding) a skill.

Of course, some might press the objection further by noting that a person who is an expert at making firefighting decisions can use her ability for the wrong ends, while a wise person cannot (on pain of being unworthy of the appellation "wise") (cp. Stalnaker 2010, 408). An expert firefighter can use her understanding nefariously to set destructive fires, but a wise person cannot use her understanding to achieve the wrong ends.

This is a genuine difference between wisdom and other decision-making skills. But it's not a difference that undermines the expert skill model. After all, the difference comes down to the range of goals considered: wisdom involves deciding what to do all-things-considered, while other expert decision-making skills involve deciding what to do given some narrower set of goals that are either not sufficient or not necessary for living well. The expert skill model does not deny that this difference exists. It just claims that despite this difference, there are some essential similarities between wisdom and expert decision-making

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Aristotle states that "virtue [of character] makes the goal correct, and prudence [practical wisdom] makes the things promoting the goal [correct]" (*NE* 1144a9-10). The expert skill model yields a similar conclusion because it stresses that developing wisdom, just like developing expert firefighting skill, requires having the right general commitments that are then shaped through practice, experience, and reflection into a reliable understanding of how to conduct oneself. In the case of wisdom, a person brought up to care about honesty, justice, self-respect (and the like) has a concern for the right general goals, but she needs then to develop the reliable intuitive, deliberative, meta-cognitive, self-regulative, and self-cultivation abilities that channel this concern appropriately. This helps to answer the second puzzle about the distinction between wisdom and mere cleverness. According to Aristotle, although a wise person and a clever person share a similar skill at deliberation, wisdom and mere cleverness are distinct, since a person who is merely clever is able to figure out what promotes the goals she happens to have, while a wise person has an ability to figure out what promotes the right goals (*NE* 1144a25-36). The expert skill model yields a similar conclusion. A person who is committed to self-promotion and self-gratification, for instance, and who only practices pursuing these ends may develop decision-making abilities (i.e. intuitive, deliberative, meta-cognitive, self-regulative, and self-cultivation abilities) that help her achieve them. But such a person is merely clever and not wise, since her decisions aim at the wrong ends and thus do not track what really matters. On the other hand, a person who has the right general goals and learns (through appropriate experience and reflection) how to specify what these goals require in particular situations and to identify the effective means to achieving those goals is truly wise, though her abilities bear some general resemblance to the merely clever person's.

skills in general: they are instances of an understanding of how to conduct oneself, which is manifested as a set of five specific decision-making abilities.

2.6 CONCLUSION

I've argued for the expert skill model of wisdom: wisdom is the same type of understanding as that possessed by expert decision-makers in more mundane areas like firefighting. Acknowledging this, I've stressed, tells us important things about how wisdom will manifest itself and can be cultivated by real people. Of course, more work needs to be done to evaluate the expert skill model and to pull out its implications.[48] But I hope to have shown why that work, which I will continue in the following chapters, is worth doing.

[48] Daniel Jacobson (2005) identifies another objection to the expert skill model. Since the expert skill model shows that wisdom can be developed only if a person gets sufficient feedback on the quality of her decisions, developing wisdom is possible only if a person can get sufficient feedback on the quality of her all-things-considered decisions about what to do. But, Jacobson argues, no such feedback is available. While it is clear how we can get feedback on how our chess moves contribute to winning, it is much less clear how any of the (often objectionably parochial) sources of feedback we get on the wisdom of our decisions could help us develop a highly reliable understanding of what to do. If Jacobson is right, then wisdom is not "a plausible human skill" after all (2005, 400). I devote Chapter 4 to addressing this objection.

CHAPTER 3

DEVELOPING WISDOM

> *If people want to raise a mahogany tree from a sapling that could fit in your hands, they know how to care for it. But when it comes to their own selves, they do not know how to care for them. Could it be that they do not love their own selves as much as they love a mahogany tree? It is simply because they do not reflect upon it.*
>
> -Mengzi, *Mengzi* 6A13

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite its value, wisdom might seem too lofty to attain. Developing a robust and reliable understanding of how to conduct oneself all-things-considered is a tall order, and it is not surprising that people have a harder time cultivating this understanding than they have with more accessible tasks like horticulture. Indeed, it is scarcely surprising that people worry not only about *how* they can develop wisdom but also about *whether* they can. The apparent dearth of wise people only makes this worry more forceful. But it is worth wondering what best explains the rarity of wisdom. Is it that wisdom is practically impossible for people to cultivate or just really difficult? If it's the latter, what explains the difficulty: superior innate intellectual abilities, motivational tendencies inculcated from birth, time and effort available only to the socially privileged, or what?

The expert skill model of wisdom provides the resources to answer these questions. According to the expert skill model, wisdom is the same kind of epistemic achievement as expert decision-making skills and so can be developed in the same way as those skills. By examining the constraints on expertise acquisition and applying them to the case of wisdom, we can outline more specific strategies for developing wisdom. It turns out that these strategies direct wisdom-seekers to cultivate a sustained practice of guiding and reflecting on their decision-making.

The research on expert skill acquisition reveals some strategies for developing expertise that are effective in a variety of domains. But these strategies can be specified in more detail if we know something specific about the domain we are interested in: in particular, if we know the challenges confronting decision-makers in that domain and if we have some idea of what makes decisions in that domain good or bad. With that in mind, I'll begin by giving an account of the nature of wise decisions and the challenges that must be overcome to make them. Then, I'll examine the strategies for developing expertise and, finally, apply them to the case of wisdom. Importantly, the strategies I'll outline do not focus on teaching rules or heuristics for making good decisions; rather, they focus on teaching the strategies experts in complex domains use to *learn* how to make good decisions.

3.2 WISE DECISIONS

What makes decisions about how to live, all-things-considered, good or bad?[49] We might hope we could answer this question with a set of rules or principles that we can memorize and then use to figure out what to do. Sadly for us, this is not possible. While in some tasks algorithms may be all we need to achieve reliably good decisions, the factors governing good all-things-considered decisions are too complex to be grasped so mechanically.

Nevertheless, even though we cannot give a comprehensive and action-guiding set of principles for making good all-things-considered decisions (i.e. wise decisions),[50] we can still say something formal, yet informative, about what makes decisions wise. As we'll see, this is all we need to derive substantial conclusions about how wisdom can be developed.

A simple example will help to start. Suppose Xiong's wife comes home grumpy and cynical after a long day at work. Xiong needs to decide how to respond. A good decision is one that accurately tracks what really matters and how it can be achieved. In the scope of a whole life, lots of things matter, but in any particular situation some goals can be more or less important and some aspects of the situation more or less relevant. In Xiong's case, we can suppose, what is most important is helping his wife feel better. Upon seeing his wife's sour mood, he could, among other things, become offended and start an argument, ignore her and retreat to his study, or try to help her relax. Because he sees her bad mood as a reason to help her relax, his decision tracks what really matters. More specifically, his

[49] Conversations with Valerie Tiberius on this section and the next helped greatly improve my argument.
[50] It might be more accurate to say that wise decisions are not only good all-things-considered decisions but that they are the result of exercises of wisdom, i.e. a reliable understanding of how to conduct oneself all-things-considered. In what follows, I leave this qualification out for simplicity's sake.

decision tracks what really matters because it responds to the features of the situation that are really relevant because they highlight the ends that matter and are at stake, and because it treats these features as reasons for pursuing the end. But more is needed for a good decision: Xiong needs to identify what response will actually help his wife relax. Knowing his wife, he knows that what will really help her relax is listening to her frustrations while also creating a relaxing environment that helps her leave them behind. So he invites her in to the kitchen to talk while he pours her a glass of wine and makes her favorite dinner. What makes Xiong's decision a good one is that Xiong sees the relevant features of the situation as reasons for pursuing the ends that really matter, and he has accurately identified a way to achieve those ends.

This is of course merely one simple example. Life requires much more complex decisions. We need to make decisions not only about what to do in the situations in which we find ourselves, but also about what situations to put ourselves in and about how to shape our lives and ourselves over the long-term and as a whole. But the general point about such decisions is the same: good decisions are ones that involve responding to and pursuing what really matters in the way it could be best achieved.

3.3 IMPEDIMENTS TO WISE DECISIONS

Of course, making good decisions is difficult. There are many obstacles to identifying what matters and how it can be achieved. I'll review some here that are important and relevant to specifying strategies for developing wisdom.

A more complex example will be helpful. Suppose Xiong finds out that his dying brother's wife has been unfaithful, and Xiong needs to figure out what to do with this information. One difficulty is identifying what really matters. There are a variety of features of Xiong's predicament that might seem important: the pain his brother would feel upon finding out about the infidelity, the discord the truth would cause in an already hurting family, his brother's ignorance of the truth, and so on. Similarly, there are a variety of ends that seem to be worth Xiong's effort: helping his brother die peacefully and as painlessly as possible, giving his brother the dignity of knowing the truth, and helping his family grieve without unnecessary distraction. Sometimes the ends that matter may be identified but at a degree of generality that does not yield a decision about what to do. For instance, Xiong may see that treating his brother kindly is what matters but be unsure whether this necessitates keeping the painful truth hidden or gently and supportively alleviating his brother's ignorance. Part of the difficulty of a situation like this is thus determining what matters: in particular, responding to the relevant features of a situation, identifying the ends really worth pursuing, and specifying those ends sufficiently.

The account of wise decisions given above highlights yet another difficulty: even if we have identified what matters, it is often difficult to figure out how to achieve it. Even if Xiong accurately identifies that he should (we can suppose) ensure that his brother learns the truth without causing him or the family too much agony, it is fair to wonder how he can pull this off. Should he try to convince his brother's wife to own up? If not, how should he break the news to his brother, and how should he support him afterwards? The pressing nature of these questions indicates that another difficult part of making good decisions is determining how to achieve the things that really matter.

There is an ambiguity here that hides one final obstacle to good decisions. There are generally speaking two difficulties in determining how to achieve an end. One difficulty, just mentioned, is determining how to respond to the external situation to achieve the end. Xiong has to figure out how to deal with his brother and family's emotional states, with the existence of the hurtful information, and so on. But another difficulty is determining how to deal with the features of his inner life that affect how he conducts himself. Even if Xiong has determined that he should attempt to convince his brother's wife to reveal the truth herself, there may be various internal obstacles to doing so. In the heat of the moment he may, for instance, feel a strong desire to chide her, to tell his brother himself, or to gossip about the situation to the more loose-lipped members of his family. In these sorts of cases, part of the difficulty of deciding how to conduct oneself is determining how to overcome internal obstacles to doing what is required to achieve what matters.

So far, I have argued for the following account of wise decisions: a person makes a wise decision when she sees the relevant features of the situation as reasons for taking a course of action that has a good chance of actually achieving the ends that really matter. This account points to some important obstacles to making wise decisions: the difficulty of identifying the relevant features of a situation, of identifying and specifying the ends that matter, and of identifying how to overcome internal and external obstacles to achieving those ends. By combining this account of wise decisions with research on how people actually develop expert decision-making skills, we can derive specific strategies for developing the expert skill that is wisdom. I now turn to the relevant research on expertise.

3.4 STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING WISDOM

Wisdom, as I argued in Chapter 2, is the same kind of epistemic achievement as expert decision-making skill in areas requiring complex choices that are challenging to carry out. While research on how expertise can be developed in these areas is relatively new and ongoing, the research reveals some general strategies for developing expert decision-making skill. In this section I will outline these strategies and, using the account of wise decisions in the previous two sections, specify how these general strategies apply to the domain of wisdom.

3.4.1 Strategy 1: Deliberate Practice and Feedback Towards Wisdom

K. Anders Ericsson, a leading researcher in the field, notes that mere experience in a domain does not result in reliably superior performance. To develop expert skill a person needs to engage in deliberate practice, which is the motivated and effortful repetition of domain-related activities aimed at improved performance. Ericsson summarizes the components of deliberate practice as follows:

> Based on a review of research on skill acquisition, we identified a set of conditions where practice had been uniformly associated with improved performance. Significant improvements in performance were realized when individuals were 1) given a task with a well-defined goal, 2) motivated to improve, 3) provided with feedback, and 4) provided with ample opportunities for repetition and gradual refinements of their performance. Deliberate efforts to improve one's performance beyond its current level demands full concentration and often requires problem-solving and better methods of performing tasks. (2008, 991)

An aspiring expert firefighter does not become better merely by working as a firefighter. She develops expert skill by applying herself to the tasks firefighters have to deal with, such as extricating people and pets safely from blazes, keeping herself and her fellows out of danger, and extinguishing blazes. In the beginning, she undergoes training that helps her achieve some proficiency in the more common instances of these situations. Repeated experience enables her to develop an intuitive ability to identify what to do in these situations without much conscious effort. But to move from this more unremarkable level of skill to genuine expertise, she has to engage in effortful conscious reflection that guides her practice and helps her reap its benefits. As Ericsson puts it, "[t]he key challenge for aspiring expert performers is to avoid the arrested development associated with automaticity" (2008, 991; see also Ericsson 2006, 692).

Importantly, Ericsson argues, there is ample evidence that experts across various domains avoid this arrested development by acting as their own teacher or coach (ibid). In this role, they monitor their practice to make sure it will give them good feedback on their performance, and they reflect on their decisions and how they were made so that they can adjust and improve their performance on future tasks (2008, 991 – 992; Klein 1997, 348 – 349). This does not mean all practice is solitary – some chess players, for example, achieve expertise in part by studying and trying to anticipate the moves of expert chess players – but it does mean that expert skill is achieved by an individual's effortful and intelligent guidance of her own practice. This is especially true of expert skill in the sort of domains I'm concerned with: domains where choices are complex and performance is challenging.[51]

[51] Ericsson notes: "After years of daily practice, the aspiring expert performers become able to monitor their performance so they can start taking over the evaluative activity of the teacher and coach. They acquire and refine mechanisms that permit increased control, which allow them to monitor performance in representative

We can summarize the point by saying that expert skill is achieved by motivated, effortful, reflective and self-guided practice that provides good feedback on domain-related performance. This *deliberate practice* helps a person develop the set of intuitive, deliberative, meta-cognitive, self-regulative, and self-cultivation abilities that is expert skill.

It is important to point out, however, that there are constraints governing the development of the intuitive component of expertise. In their review of the empirical literature, Kahneman and Klein, two prominent psychologists who study expertise and decision-making, conclude that intuitive expertise (expertise with an intuitive component) in a domain can be developed only when there are regularities governing good and bad decisions in that domain and a person gets sufficient feedback in practice that helps her identify these regularities (Kahneman and Klein 2009, 520). For instance, during practice chess players see which moves tend to contribute to winning and which ones do not, and repeated feedback like this helps them learn to recognize, intuitively, patterns they have dealt with before. Indeed, people tend to learn best when feedback is clear and relatively immediate and when they get feedback not only on the outcome of their decision but also on the quality of their decision-making process (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 308).

In some areas, it is not possible to get the feedback necessary for developing intuitive expertise. In stock trading and historical forecasting, for instance, the features governing good and bad decisions are such that it is not possible for a person to get clear, immediate, and accurate feedback on the quality of her decision. This is not to say that intuitive expertise is impossible in complex tasks: people can develop reliable intuition in areas like

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situations to identify errors as well as improvable aspects. […] When expert performers are working on appropriately challenging tasks, there is compelling evidence that their actions are cognitively mediated" (2008, 991).

chess, firefighting, and the like. But in these areas it is possible, despite the complexity of factors governing good decisions, for humans to get feedback that tells them clearly, specifically and accurately how their decisions went well or badly.

By way of summary, we can say that feedback is sufficient when it is both *success-conducive* and *efficient*. Feedback is success-conducive when it provides a reliable indication of the quality of a decision. Feedback is efficient when it is relatively clear, immediate, and capable of altering a person's cognition and affect in a way that improves her decisions.

The first strategy for developing wisdom, then, is deliberate practice: to develop wisdom, people should engage in motivated, effortful, reflective and self-guided repetition of all-things-considered decisions in a way that provides them with success-conducive and efficient feedback on the quality of those decisions. This might seem a strange recommendation, since we have to make these decisions every day whether we want to or not. While we can avoid practicing making firefighting decisions by not being a firefighter and chess decisions by not playing chess, we cannot avoid making decisions about how, all-things-considered, to live. But the strategy is not merely to practice making these decisions. It is to engage in *deliberate* practice. To engage in deliberate practice, a person needs to guide her own practice by, among other things, setting appropriately challenging and specific performance goals and reflecting on how her performance lives up to them. This requires conscious effort and motivation that cannot be maintained except for short periods. An expert chess player can play games of chess without engaging in deliberate practice: she just plays the games without the requisite effortful guidance of and reflection on her practice. Similarly, a person can make all-things-considered decisions without engaging in deliberate practice by just making her daily decisions without setting goals for improving and evaluating

them or without reflecting on how she has met those goals. It is true that, unlike other skills, the contrast between practice and performance is hard to account for with wisdom. But still there is a contrast between engaging in deliberate practice towards wisdom and not engaging in this practice. So suggesting that we can develop wisdom by engaging in deliberate practice is not as strange a recommendation as it would seem.

Though not strange, we might hope that the suggestion to engage in deliberate practice towards wisdom could be more specific. What does this practice look like? Fortunately, our account of wise decisions can be of some help here. One part of deliberate practice is setting goals aimed at improving your decisions. Given that wise decisions are ones that respond to and pursue what really matters and how it can be achieved, a good goal will target a specific deficiency in one's identification of what matters or how it can be achieved.

For instance, suppose that, on reflection, Millie knows that she does a fairly inadequate job of being respectful to her partner's parents, who have taken to treating their relationship with passive-aggressive scorn. During future interactions with the parents, Millie might set various different goals that she could focus on in succession. First, she might spend some time reflecting on what really matters in such a situation. Should she be respectful, or should she boldly and assertively protect her own and her partner's dignity? Are these ends mutually exclusive? What, specifically, does being appropriately assertive or respectful amount to in this situation? One good way to reflect on this, I would suggest, is to engage in analogical reasoning about cases: by reflecting on how what matters in other cases one is more confident about is relevantly similar to the current situation, a person can

get success-conducive feedback on the quality of her decisions about what to do.[52] Analogical reasoning does this by ensuring that our reasons for acting are consistent across situations: if action A is the wrong thing to do, and action B is relevantly similar to action A, then action B is the wrong thing to do, too.[53] One goal Millie might have is to keep her eye out for relevantly similar situations and to reflect on what she would do in them and why.[54]

Once she has acquired some level of confidence about what matters in situations like the one with her partner's parents, she can set a goal of seeing which means of achieving what matters are most successful. For instance, if she decides that she should attempt to help her partner's parents understand that a relationship with them is desirable but not at the expense of being treated disrespectfully, Millie will have to decide how best to convey this message. The tricky part is often to determine when and how to practice making decisions about such things. Just as you can play low-stakes games of chess to practice for high-stakes tournaments, there may be low-stakes analogues to Millie's situation that she should try her hand at before grappling with the real thing. By role-playing with a friend she can try to determine what will be most successful without risking important relationships. But sometimes we just have to do our best and try what has gone well in other, relevantly similar, situations.

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[52] For a philosophically sophisticated description and defense of this kind of reasoning, see Wong (2002). For a helpful and accessible guide to practicing this kind of reasoning, see Weston (2007, chap. 12). For a contrary view, see Kagan (1988; 2001).

[53] It is often objected that achieving consistent beliefs (and coherence) is not sufficient for achieving accurate ones, since if our starting beliefs are mistaken enough we will just end up with coherent falsehoods at the end. I address something like this concern in Chapter 4.

[54] A different type of analogical argument compares a person (or her character or conduct) to an object or thing. Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* provides an example: in Act III, Sc. I Coriolanus is compared to, among other things, a diseased limb. I thank Ian Stoner for alerting me to this example. An interesting project would be to give an empirically-informed account of the epistemic benefits of analogies of these different types.

A similar goal Millie might have is to determine how to best regulate her emotions so that she can do what she thinks she should. Millie knows that her partner's parents' scorn makes her blood boil, and this makes it hard to maintain her focus on being calm yet assertive. So she sets a goal for herself: in this situation and other similar ones, she'll try out different ways of maintaining perspective (affirmations, deep breathing, reminding herself why being respectful matters, etc.) to see what works for her.

Of course, a person cannot set too many of these goals at once, since they require significant effort and reflection to work on. Nevertheless, getting into the habit of reflecting on weaknesses in one's decisions and setting and pursuing specific goals that target these weaknesses will help a person improve their ability to figure out what matters and how to achieve it. In that way, it will help a person, over the long run, develop wisdom.[55]

Of course, a person needs to be sure to seek out success-conducive and efficient feedback on her performance in order to improve her decisions. One way to do this, I have suggested, is to engage in reflection utilizing analogical reasoning. There are other ways reflection can provide feedback. A person can do a better or worse job of analogical reasoning: she can, for instance, delve just deep enough to reinforce what she already thinks she should do without seeing why she might be wrong. By reflecting on how well one has reflected, a person can get more indirect feedback on the quality of her decisions.[56] In

[55] I suspect that one way to engage in this reflective practice effectively is to set up a journaling practice. There is a variety of research that suggests that journaling can be an effective aid to personal, academic and professional development. For example, Milner (2003) argues that journaling is one way for teachers to develop competence dealing with racial issues. This provides an interesting connection to wisdom because racial issues, like many issues that must be mastered to develop wisdom, elicit complex and often affect-laden attitudes.

[56] I talk in more depth about the importance of this kind of reflection in Chapter 4, where I'll argue that feedback on all-things-considered decisions is success-conducive when it helps a person identify decisions that would survive appropriate reflection on her conduct. This includes feedback that identifies patterns that hold

addition to reflection, there are other sources of feedback: sometimes it is obvious that what we tried didn't work, and sometimes other people, such as friends or wise mentors, can help us see where we have gone wrong or could improve.

3.4.2 Strategy 2: Seek Wisdom-relevant Experiences

The main strategy in developing expertise is to engage in deliberate practice. But there are various other strategies a person can use to increase the effectiveness of her practice. One such strategy is to seek out a variety of experiences in the domain. While mere experience is not enough to produce expertise, seeking out a wide variety of domain-related experiences is an important part of developing expertise (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 307; Klein 1997, 348). The experiences should ideally be representative of the tasks decision-makers need to perform in the domain. For instance, aspiring expert firefighters should seek out fires of different levels of severity, with a variety of causes, and in various locations and conditions. These experiences do not all need to be first hand; undergoing simulations and hearing about others' experiences can also be helpful (Klein 1997, 348).

This suggests another strategy for developing wisdom: seek out broad and representative experiences relevant to wisdom. So what sorts of experiences are relevant for wisdom? One obvious thing experience can do is help us see how to achieve what matters. Here are some examples. Seeking out a variety of experiences that challenge us physically, emotionally and intellectually can tell us what we are capable of and how we tend to respond to different situations. This information can help us determine when and how we'll need to self-regulate in order to ensure that we do what we think we ought to. Seeking out a variety

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between features of good ways of conducting oneself and feedback that identifies patterns of good and bad decision-making processes.

of experiences with people of different backgrounds can help us understand how they will feel and respond when treated in certain ways. This information can help us determine, for instance, how our conduct will affect others' well-being. By reflecting on the kinds of experiences that might enrich our understanding of the way the world works, we can thus identify how to improve our grasp of how to achieve what matters.

Another thing experiences can do is help us see what really matters (Tiberius 2008, 65 – 88). Experience building relationships and undertaking projects can help us understand their role and importance in a well-lived life. For instance, experiencing what close family relationships are like can help Millie understand why reconciling with her partner's parents might be worth a try despite the challenges.

Just as with other expert skills, the relevant experiences for wisdom can come in various forms: for instance, literature, movies, and discussions can provide vivid vicarious experiences of relationships, projects and situations that are otherwise inaccessible to us (Carroll 2002; Nussbaum 1998). Importantly, they can help us understand what things are like for others and this can alter our perspective of what is important.

For these reasons, the second strategy for developing wisdom is to identify and seek out the experiences that would improve one's understanding of what matters and how to achieve it.

3.4.3 Strategy 3: Try New Solutions and Methods

Another strategy for improving practice is to try new strategies for achieving domain-related goals (Klein 1997, 348). For instance, trying different ways to put out fires ensures that a firefighter will not settle into habits that are not as successful as others. By

building a catalogue of different strategies for dealing with fires and trying them in a variety of situations, a firefighter will be able to develop her meta-cognitive skills and improve the overall quality of her decisions (ibid).

This suggests a third strategy that can help make deliberate practice towards wisdom more efficient: cultivating a habit of trying out new ways to achieve what matters. This is important because it prevents a person from sticking to familiar solutions when better ones are available. For instance, if Millie gets in the habit of seeking out and trying a variety of methods for regulating her emotions, she will avoid getting stuck using methods that are only minimally successful. She will also get better at deciding which methods to use in different situations, such as the one with her partner's parents. Similarly, getting into the habit of trying out new methods of decision-making (such as sleeping on it, asking advice, journaling, etc.) and new means of achieving what matters will help ensure that her decisions keep improving.

3.4.4 Strategy 4: Practice Attentional Control

Another strategy is to practice focusing attention on different aspects of situations (Klein 1997, 348). By getting good at changing the aspects of a situation she is focused on, a person can develop a flexible awareness of her situation that facilitates good decision-making. For instance, by practicing noting the temperature, smell, structural features, and smoke in a room, firefighters can become good at acquiring decision-relevant information about how to approach a fire.

This suggests a fourth strategy for developing wisdom: practice attending to different relevant features of situations. It is easy to get into the habit of focusing on obvious or

familiar aspects of situations even when they are not the most salient. To overcome this, it helps to acquire the ability to scan a situation by shifting attention between its various potentially relevant features. Acquiring this ability can prevent us from overlooking the features of a situation that really matter and also the features that indicate how best to achieve what matters. It can thus help a person develop what Valerie Tiberius calls "the virtue of attentional flexibility": the virtue a person has when she "grasps the right reasons and values at the appropriate time and changes her perspective accordingly" (2008, 79).

One way to practice this kind of attentional control is to engage in reflection on the different aspects of situations we have dealt with or are currently dealing with. For instance, Millie might take time to reflect on what she found most salient in her last encounter with her partner's parents. Suppose she saw their cold reception of her at the family picnic as a reason to respond in kind with stiff formality. She can find other potentially relevant aspects of the situation by examining what commitment her response was aimed at achieving and searching for other ways to make good on this commitment or other commitments that might be at stake. Millie realizes, suppose, that her chilly response was an attempt to preserve her self-respect. But on reflection she can think of other features of this situation that might be relevant to this commitment (such as the tough spot her cold shoulder puts her partner in, or the fact that she gave up on making her feelings and expectations of others clear). She can also think of other ends that are at stake in the situation, such as preserving important relationships and being kind and respectful to others. While no one has the time to reflect on all of her experiences this way, getting in the habit of scanning the different potentially relevant features of situations and ends that could be at stake can help a person improve her ability to focus on what really matters and how best to achieve it.

3.4.5 Strategy 5: Practice Critical Reflection

Another strategy utilizes the reflective component of deliberate practice: reflection enables a person to develop and refine her "mental models" of situations in order to enhance future performance (Klein 1997, 349; Ross, Lussier, and Klein 2005, 332; Klein 2009, 272–282). A mental model is a cognitive representation of a domain that aids in decision-making (Klein 2009, 44). These models are often tacit and unarticulated. Mental models help a person explain what has happened, help predict what will happen, and help test the quality of a potential course of action (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 301 – 302). Expert firefighters, for instance, know how environmental conditions affect fires, and they can use this general knowledge to predict how a particular fire will develop (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 301). By reflecting on their experiences and decisions, experts make their mental models of domain-related tasks explicit so that they can be refined and developed (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 301; Ross, Lussier, and Klein 2005, 332). This is how they shed their old, unreliable novice models and replace them with the more reliable models that are characteristic of expertise (Klein 2009, 277). Building mental models is important because it is often not possible to spend time engaging in deliberate practice in all the different types of challenging situations one will face in a domain (Klein 2009, 166–7; Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004). Thus another way to develop expertise is to engage in what I will call critical reflection: reflection strategies that refine a person's (often implicit) views of what to do by making them explicit so that they can be reorganized or revised.

This suggests that a fifth strategy for developing wisdom is to engage in critical reflection on our views of the way the world is and what matters. This strategy is important because it helps to reform one's understanding of what to do more efficiently than merely

acquiring feedback on the success of particular decisions. While feedback on the quality of our decisions in particular situations is important, it is impractical to seek out efficient and success-conducive feedback on the wide range of decisions we face in our lives. One way to deal with this is to draw general lessons during reflection on particular cases. The strategy is also important because it acknowledges that reflection will only improve performance if it critically engages with a person's current understanding of how to conduct herself. Reflection on what to do will not improve decision-making unless it is focused on engaging with a person's actual responses to situations.[57]

Gary Klein, one of the leading psychologists studying expert decision-making, suggests, based upon his study of experts, nine critical reflection strategies (2009, 277–81). Although a great deal could be said about how to apply these strategies to the case of wisdom, I will focus on a few that seem particularly apt.

The first is to overcome old, unreliable ways of thinking by getting in the habit of asking yourself a simple question: "What evidence would it take to change your mind?" (2009, 277–8). By doing this, we can learn to spot places where our understanding of the way the world is or what matters could be improved. This could be helpful in some fairly obvious ways. For one thing, if Bruce, contemplating how to care for his child, cannot think of any evidence that would undermine his belief that spanking is necessary for successful child-rearing, then he is prematurely closing himself off to other, possibly better, ways to discipline children. By thinking about what evidence it might take to change his mind, he

[57] This, I think, provides a lesson for teachers of moral philosophy. If studying moral philosophy has any chance of impacting real-world ethical decision-making, it needs to encourage students to reflect on their own beliefs and feelings about what is good, right, etc. This means having discussions about decisions that are more mundane than the high-controversy issues usually discussed (such as abortion). But it also probably means using the other strategies described in this chapter: for example, providing plenty of practice and feedback making decisions, making plenty of time for critical reflection activities, and not shying away from processing emotional reactions to discussions of moral issues.

makes his views of child development explicit so that they can be tested. A similar strategy could work to improve a person's view of what matters: if a person thinks sterile heterosexual couples should be able to marry but homosexual couples should not, then she should expect to be able to come up with a relevant difference between the two types of relationships. Absent such a difference, she should probably reconsider her beliefs on the subject.

Here's another strategy: keep an eye out for discrepancies and contradictions in your beliefs, since these might indicate where you've got things wrong (2009, 278). This strategy could help improve a person's beliefs about the way the world works and what matters. If certain of your beliefs about how things are or about what is important continually seem hard to reconcile with the rest of what you believe, this is a good indication you might need to reorganize or revise your understanding (perhaps after doing some investigating or reflecting). Indeed, we might even go farther and say that people who want to become wise should seek out contradictions in their beliefs in order to reveal the limits of their current understanding (2009, 278–9).

Another strategy, which Klein calls "the crystal ball method," requires more imagination: the idea "is to have someone explain what he or she thinks is happening, then say that a crystal ball shows that the explanation is wrong, even though the facts are correct" (2009, 280). This strategy could also help dislodge old, unreliable views of the way the world is and what matters. By getting in the habit of trying to come up with alternative explanations for why things are as they are (for example, supposing spanking has particular effects, why it has them), a person will be more adept at seeing errors or mistaken assumptions in her understanding of the world. This could be particularly helpful when the

critical reflection strategies above indicate that we may be fixated on an implausible way of looking at a certain decision.

A similar activity could help refine a person's general conception of what matters. There are various ways this could play out: one could imagine that the crystal ball shows that the general goal (for example, being kind) we have is right but that we have incorrectly specified what it requires in a situation, or that the specific action is right but the stated justification for it is wrong. Suppose Millie believes children should be spanked because it makes them obedient to authority. The crystal ball method could help reorient Millie's decisions about how to treat children. For instance, she could assume that the crystal ball showed that children should be spanked but that the (purported) fact that spanking children makes them obedient to authority is not what makes this so. By taking this challenge seriously, Millie will be forced to re-examine the general reasons for treating children in certain ways and not others. She will have to ask herself: what are the goals of successful child-rearing? This will open up the possibility for a different, and potentially better, perspective on child-rearing, such as one where the goal is not mere obedience but the development of autonomy. This perspective could have broad implications for the way she conducts herself.[58]

A final critical reflection strategy is "to use analogies and metaphors" (Klein 2009, 279). Using analogies helps overcome the rigidity preventing improved understanding by drawing a connection between a situation we are less sure about and one we are more confident about. I've already emphasized that analogical reasoning can provide success-

[58] Of course, practicing this strategy (or any other) does not guarantee a person will change her mind when she should. The point is that these strategies together tend make a person more likely to develop a reliable understanding of what to do.

conducive feedback on the accuracy of our beliefs about what we ought to do.[59] But the point here is that the feedback provided by analogical reasoning is also efficient: it is capable of altering the way a person intuitively responds to a situation by altering her cognition and affect. That is, not only does analogical reasoning make a person's understanding more accurate; it also does so in a way that changes the way she sees a situation – how she views it, feels about it, and is motivated to approach it.

Klein illustrates the power of analogies with an example (Klein 2009, 279–80). High school physics teachers can use analogies to help students understand the claim that when a book is resting on a table, the table is pushing up on the book. By comparing the book on the table to the book on a spring and then to the book on a piece of springy wood, the teacher can help students see that the first claim (the table pushes up on the book) is not as strange or unbelievable as it once seemed. While the students might already have accepted that the table pushes up on the book, the analogy helps make this claim more intuitively plausible.

For the same kind of reason, I suspect, analogical reasoning could help us avoid rigidity in our understanding of what, all-things-considered, to do. It can be hard to take competing views about what should be done seriously: though coherent, they might seem foreign and implausible because unconnected to the way we currently think and feel about things. Sometimes, though, these competing views are superior to our own. Getting in the habit of identifying these competing views[60] and seeking analogies from them to cases we find more intuitively compelling can help us take these competing views seriously. A father

[59] See §3.4.1.

[60] This connects up with Klein's seventh strategy, which is getting in the habit of considering "logical competitor sets" even when they seem implausible (Klein 2009, 280).

whose adult son dissipates in his basement instead of looking for a job and a way to move out may find it hard to see anything but unfaltering financial support of his son as kind. But he can surely identify the competing opinions about what he should do and work to construct plausible analogies to those positions. He can consider, for instance, whether continuing to support his son is like teaching a child to ride a bike without ever letting him try to balance it for himself, or whether it is like continually giving an addict drugs. These analogies can help him take competing views about what he should do about his son seriously by vividly connecting those views to other cases he feels confident about.

3.4.6 STRATEGY 6: CONSULT THE WISE

A final strategy for enhancing deliberate practice is to utilize coaches. While people tend to develop expertise only when they are motivated to guide their own practice intelligently and reflectively, obtaining coaching can make their practice even more effective (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 309; Klein 1997, 349). Good coaches can aid practice in a variety of helpful ways. For instance, they can give feedback on performance, guide reflection to help build mental models, help identify areas needing improvement, help define practice goals, help maintain motivation, and so on (ibid). In addition to direct coaching, people can learn from experts in more indirect ways. For instance, chess experts often develop their skills by examining transcripts of games between chess masters and trying to anticipate and understand their moves and strategies.

This yields a final strategy for developing wisdom: seek out guidance from the wise (or the wiser). A wise person can directly guide our practice in various ways: she can help us set goals for practice by identifying our strengths and weaknesses in decision-making, she

can give us feedback on our decisions, she can help us decide what experiences would improve our understanding, she can suggest new ways to address familiar problems and challenges, she can point out relevant features of situations that we have overlooked, and she can help assess our view of the world and what matters. Wise people can also guide our practice in more indirect ways. By observing and reflecting on why wise people do what they do, we can get many of the same benefits we would get from more direct guidance. Of course, as we improve our understanding of what matters and how to achieve it, we will improve our ability to pick out people who possess genuine wisdom, or at least people who are skilled or insightful in the specific task or decision we are interested in improving.[61] So while the strategy of seeking out the wise cannot take the place of deliberate practice, it can be a helpful addition to it.[62]

3.4.7 Overview of the Strategies and Their Importance

I have argued that the expert skill model can be used to derive some specific and practically useful strategies for developing wisdom. By examining the strategies that enable people to develop expert decision-making skill across a variety of domains and developing them in light of the nature of, and obstacles to, wise decisions, we can show how wisdom can be developed. Using this method, I've outlined the following strategies:

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[61] In Chapter 4 I will address the objection that we have no reliable way to differentiate people who are really wise from people who just seem to be wise, since our judgments about who is wise are inevitably and objectionably parochial. The solution to this objection is, I will suggest, to identify wise people not by how plausible their particular decisions are but by the reflective practices they have used to develop understanding. See especially §4.7.

[62] Though there is no space to show why here, I think the account of developing wisdom offered here could provide a framework for evaluating the value (epistemic and otherwise) of relying on moral testimony. For some prominent treatments of the topic of moral testimony, see Hills (2009), Hopkins (2007), Lackey (2006a; 2006b), Nickel (2001), Pritchard (2004), and Anscombe (1981).

- *Engage in deliberate (i.e. effortful, motivated, reflective, and self-directed) practice towards wisdom.* This includes setting specific goals designed to improve our ability to identify what matters and how to achieve it, reflecting on how well we have achieved these goals, and acquiring efficient and success-conducive feedback (for example, through analogical reasoning) on our decisions.
- *Seek out broad and representative experiences relevant to understanding what matters and how to achieve it.*
- *Get in the habit of trying new ways of achieving what matters.*
- *Practice shifting attention between various aspects of situations.*
- *Practice critical reflection.*
- *Consult and observe the wise for feedback on decisions and guidance in practice.*

Interestingly, the account of wisdom development offered here is importantly similar to one defended recently by Julia Annas. Annas argues that virtue is similar in important ways to practical skills such as piano playing and tennis (2011, 16). Annas focuses on two features she finds in both practical skills and virtue: "the need to learn and the drive to aspire" (2011, 25). In both piano and virtue, a person starts out by learning from others who impart the fundamental tools required for developing into superior performers. Tennis teachers guide learners by setting goals and providing feedback on performance, and this is how future tennis experts develop the basic skills they need. In the same way, children and adolescents are taught to internalize a particular view of virtue and vice – they are taught to see this as kind, that as unjust, and so on. This produces the basic attitudes and

commitments that can later be developed into full virtue. Piano skill and virtue thus are both marked by the need to learn from others in "particular embedded contexts" (ibid).

Practical skills and virtue are also characterized by "the drive to aspire." Achieving virtue, Annas argues, is only possible when a person undertakes self-directed reflection on what virtue requires and why, applies herself to act as reflection counsels, and intelligently pursues further improvements in her understanding and conduct (2011, 20). Reflecting on the reasons for and against certain behavior "enables the learner to come to be able to assess and criticize what he has been taught, and to be able to correct the teacher and the context and culture in which he has been taught" (2011, 25; cp. McDowell 1998b, 31 – 2).

Annas' account of developing virtue thus highlights some of the same features that I have emphasized: motivated, effortful, reflective, and self-guided practice. This is precisely the sort of deliberate practice that empirical research shows is required to develop expert skill. As Annas notes, these features are not always acknowledged in philosophical accounts of virtue, some of which focus too much on developing automatic responses by mimicking teachers (2011, 22). While Annas' goal is to show that her account of expert skill development emphasizing deliberate practice is intuitively plausible, I hope to have shown that it is also grounded in substantial empirical research. Expert decision-making skills in areas of complex choice and challenging performance require this sort of deliberate practice to develop, and, since wisdom is an expert decision-making skill in this kind of area,[63] developing wisdom requires the same sort of practice. Furthermore, I hope to have shown that such an account can be used to outline some more specific and practically useful strategies for developing wisdom.

[63] See Chapter 2. See also Annas (2004).

3.5 FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

The above list of strategies may, however, seem a bit disappointing. It contains, after all, no substantial account of what matters and how to achieve it. It does not even provide any rough-and-ready rules of thumb for determining what is just or kind. Nor does it provide an account of the way wise people assess situations and decide what to do. Without providing such an account to aspire to, or rules or theories to learn and apply, we might worry that we still do not have any useful guidance about how to achieve wisdom.

None of this should worry us, though. For one thing, the features of good all-things-considered decisions are too complex to capture in rules that can memorized and successfully applied by those lacking wisdom.[64] What is more, the strategies developed here for wisdom are similar to ones that have been used to teach other decision-making skills (Klein 1997, 347 – 349). Klein identifies four distinct approaches to teaching expert decision-making skills: identifying and *teaching normative theories* of good decisions in a domain, identifying and *teaching heuristics* that produce decisions in line with these theories, identifying and *teaching the decision-making habits and skills* of experts, and identifying and *teaching the strategies experts use to learn* (1997, 350). While each approach has its benefits and weaknesses, I have taken the last approach here.

There are various reasons for this. Most importantly, the other three strategies seem less likely to pay off in the domain of wisdom. Philosophers have offered plenty of theories of virtue, but it is unclear whether learning these translates into a better understanding of how to conduct oneself. Heuristics for wise decisions seem unhelpful because even if we

[64] See §1.3.

could identify some helpful ones, they would fail to capture the complex understanding of what matters possessed by the truly wise without further refinement in practice and experience. Directly identifying and attempting to teach the intellectual habits and skills of the wise is difficult in part because it is unclear how we should go about identifying the wise and their characteristic ways of thinking in any one particular situation, let alone all of the situations a person needs to deal with successfully to be wise. Teaching people to learn like the wise is more profitable than these other approaches partly because the learning strategies can be outlined with a merely formal account of wise decisions, such as the one offered above in §3.2.

Of course, the real test of this approach is whether it produces the results we are looking for. Current research does not decisively identify which of the above methods for developing expert decision-making skill is most effective in general (Klein 1997, 349 – 350). At the very least, though, there is evidence that the effectiveness of the first two methods is limited to domains that are, unlike the domain of wisdom, well-ordered and predictable rather than complex and unpredictable (Klein 2009, 10–11, 15–32). Furthermore, the strategies offered here are promising because they are grounded in plausible models of expert skill development specified using philosophical argument about the nature of wise decisions.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have demonstrated how the expert skill model can be used to generate some effective and practically useful strategies for developing wisdom. I have

emphasized that developing wisdom requires deliberate practice involving reflection on one's experiences and decisions. Since engaging in this practice requires great investments of time, effort, and motivation, it is no wonder that wise people are hard to come by. Nevertheless, while developing wisdom is difficult, I hope to have shown how it is possible.

In the next chapter I will take up a pressing objection that threatens to undermine this result. The objection, due to Daniel Jacobson, is that wisdom is "not a plausible human skill" (2005, 400), since there is no way to get success-conducive feedback on our all-things-considered decisions about wisdom. If Jacobson is right, then the strategies outlined in this chapter will not actually help a person develop genuine wisdom. I now turn to this objection.

CHAPTER 4

DEVELOPING WISDOM: AN OBJECTION

> *Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are not welded to us externally. We inherently have them. It is simply that we do not reflect upon them. Hence, it is said, 'Seek it and you will get it. Abandon it and you will lose it.'*
>
> -Mengzi, *Mengzi* 6A6.5

4.1 INTRODUCTION

According to the expert skill model, a wise person has an ability to identify good reasons for action immediately, effortlessly and without conscious deliberation. She develops this intuitive ability in the same way experts in fields like firefighting do: through deliberate practice that provides feedback that reforms her intuitive responses, enabling her to see how the current situation fits a pattern she has dealt with before. The expert skill model thus vindicates the claim that the wise have a reliable intuition about what to do, and it shows how this intuition can be developed.

This might give us hope that wisdom is, to some degree at least, within our grasp. But this hope may dwindle as we ponder the criteria for developing expert decision-making skill. Developing this skill requires feedback that can help reform one's intuitions about how to proceed, and it is relatively clear how a person can get sufficient feedback on, for

example, the quality of her chess moves or firefighting tactics. But when it comes to making wise choices, the only sources of feedback capable of changing our perspective are overly parochial: our idiosyncratic pride and guilt reactions and the praise or shame from our culture or group are unlikely to show us how we really ought to conduct ourselves. Contra Mengzi, reflection on our conduct will not inevitably produce wisdom, since our reflections are irreparably infected by the errors of our upbringing. For these reasons, Daniel Jacobson has argued that wisdom "is not a plausible human skill" (2005, 400). Barring a good response to this critique, we'll have to admit that, instead of vindicating the idea that wisdom is an ideal worth pursuing, the expert skill model implies that it is humanly unattainable.

The task of this chapter is to rebut Jacobson's objection by showing that wisdom is a plausible human skill after all. The expert skill model can account for the type of feedback that Jacobson says is unavailable: namely, feedback that provides a corrective to our overly parochial responses to conduct. Seeing this will enable us to specify in more detail the kind of reflection one must engage in to become wise.

4.2 THE PAROCHIAL FEEDBACK OBJECTION

Jacobson believes the individual virtues (such as kindness) can be plausibly modeled on expert skill. A person can learn to develop an ability to see what kindness requires in the situations she encounters. But seeing this is not the same as seeing what one should do all-things-considered. Jacobson is more skeptical of the idea that wisdom, the understanding that unifies and resolves apparent conflicts between the virtues, can be similarly modeled on skills:

> Such a robust conception of practical wisdom seems to be the sine qua non of moral knowledge. The trouble is that the ability described is not a plausible human skill. Recall that the skill model depends crucially on the identification of non-contentious success conditions and the availability of feedback. Without feedback from success and failure, practice at an activity will not tend to make one better at it. Habituation into virtue works because emotional rewards and sanctions gradually alter a person's affective responses and motivational tendencies, in ways that can correct them. Yet people regret decisions that turn out badly according to their own criteria and triumph in success judged by their own lights – not to concordance with some independent "space of reasons." Granted, some forms of feedback can arise from other sources, most notably the culture in which we live. Shame and guilt in response to the contempt or anger of others, for instance, along with pride in response to positive social recognition, help condition our responses so as to accord better with the expectations of peers and authorities. But social feedback cannot inculcate such robust practical wisdom either, since the socially accepted consideration may not be the truly salient one. (D. Jacobson 2005, 400)

I interpret Jacobson's objection, which I'll call *the Parochial Feedback Objection*, as the following *modus tollens* argument:

1. Wisdom is an expert skill only if at least some people have a significant chance of developing it through practice and experience.
2. At least some people have a significant chance of developing wisdom through practice and experience only if there is a way a person can obtain sufficient feedback on the quality of her decisions about what, all-things-considered, she should do.
3. There is no way a person can obtain sufficient feedback on the quality of her decisions about what, all-things-considered, she should do.

Thus, wisdom is not an expert skill.

The argument is intuitively compelling. Start with premise 1. By supposing that wisdom is an expert skill, we commit ourselves to the idea that wisdom is something people can achieve through practice and experience. An expert skill does not have to be something everyone can achieve, but it is something that people are not born with but that at least some can acquire with work.

Premise 2 is equally plausible. Jacobson claims that a person will develop expert skill only if she receives the right kind of feedback that can reform her intuitive responses to situations. Although Jacobson does not mention it, we have already seen that empirical research shows that intuitive expertise in a domain can be developed only when there are regularities governing good and bad decisions in that domain and a person gets success-conducive and efficient feedback in practice.[65]

Premise 3 is also easy to motivate. In chess, for example, the standards governing good moves are conventional and agreed upon: there are accepted rules for how to move the pieces, and a good move is one that will lead to checkmate the quickest using those rules. This means that chess players have a clear and reliable standard for evaluating the quality of a move. This does not mean the standard is simple to ascertain or apply; the complexity of chess is part of its appeal. By studying chess experts' games and playing games against opponents, chess players receive feedback that helps them develop an ability to recognize good moves without always having to consciously search for them.[66]

It is much harder to see how a person could get sufficient feedback on the quality of her decisions about how, all-things-considered, she ought to conduct herself. She might get

[65] See §3.4.1.

[66] Research supports the general rule that expertise in many domains takes on average about 10 years or 10,000 hours of practice to develop (Ericsson and Lehmann 1996, 278).

feedback that helps her refine her intuitive reactions to be better in line with others' expectations, or to be more consistent with the other intuitive reactions she already has. She might feel guilty or happy about her decision, or others might scold, shame or praise her for what she has done. The problem is that these forms of feedback are, though efficient, not success-conducive.[67] The evaluation provided by a person's culture, group, or individual sensibility is often a bad indicator of what should be done; this is especially true in the tricky situations in which the wise person's reliably good conduct distinguishes her from the rest of us.[68] So, feedback grounded in the learner's own (as yet underdeveloped) reactions or in the dictates of her culture or group are unlikely to track reliably what a person really ought to do. This is especially true when we consider that a wise person's understanding is supposed to yield good decisions about what to do in cases that would befuddle the rest of us. We sometimes find ourselves in situations where the virtues seem to pull us in incompatible directions: for instance, we have to choose between keeping silent about a friend's transgression at work or speaking up and putting her job in jeopardy. But how can we get feedback that tracks what we really ought to do in such situations?

The difficulty pinpointed by premise 3, then, is that it is unclear how a person could achieve feedback on her decisions that is success-conducive enough to yield reliably good decisions, especially in situations (for example, those involving apparent conflicts of the

[67] When Jacobson refers to a "robust" notion of wisdom, he has in mind John McDowell's claim that a virtuous person sees what to do in a way that "silences" competing alternatives. I've chosen not to focus on this because it is not relevant to assessing the more general thrust of Jacobson's argument. I argued in Chapter 2 that wisdom in real people is not be robust in this way, since a person with real-world wisdom will sometimes have to regulate herself to avoid being tempted by irrelevant alternatives.

[68] It is important to note that Jacobson's argument is slightly different than the objection that virtue ethics leads to moral relativism. His claim is that there is no way for a person to develop wisdom even if there is a plausible non-relativistic account of wisdom and virtue. For such an account, see for example Nussbaum (2008).

virtues) where decent but non-wise people would do the wrong thing or would only get things right through luck.

Given that there is no other effective form of feedback that could help us decide how we ought to conduct ourselves, we'll have to conclude that wisdom is not an expert skill we have a reasonable hope of developing. Attempting to develop wisdom is like trying to become a chess expert only by listening to the shouted feedback of the audience watching your games.[69] If that is the case, then the expert skill model fails to vindicate the idea that wisdom is a psychologically plausible ideal worth aspiring to.

4.3 FAILED RESPONSES TO THE OBJECTION

Jacobson's objection poses a significant hurdle for the expert skill model, though not a hurdle that is insurmountable. In order to see why, it helps to survey some less adequate responses to the objection.

One response is to deny that, in order to vindicate the expert skill model, we need to identify the sources of feedback that help a person develop wisdom. We do not need to say how it is possible for people to become wise through feedback in order to know that there are wise people. We know directly that there are wise people – perhaps we know them personally or know of them through books or stories or others' testimony – and this gives us good reason to conclude that wisdom is an expert skill that can be cultivated. We might cite examples to make our point: we know people can be adept jazz musicians, though we might

[69] I owe this way of putting the analogy to Ian Stoner (personal communication).

not know what feedback helps them become so expert. So Jacobson's skepticism is unwarranted.

The problem with this response is that it pays insufficient attention to the difference between identifying people who seem to be experts and identifying people who really are experts. After all, in areas where insufficient feedback is available, such as stock trading, psychotherapy, and historical forecasting, empirical research finds that people considered experts are no better at making decisions than non-experts (Kahneman 2011, 209 – 221). Thus, in areas where it is hard to directly assess the reliability of a person's decisions, the identification of sufficient feedback on decisions in practice is the only way to vindicate the possibility of expertise.

This is surely where we are with wisdom: we cannot measure the quality of people's decisions directly, so we need to explain what sort of feedback could help people develop genuine wisdom rather than mere pseudo-wisdom.[70] This is not to say that we cannot sometimes identify when people have made wise decisions. Certainly we can do that. But in order to say that there are wise *people*, we need to be able to say that we can directly identify people who make reliably good decisions that set them apart from the rest of us. Furthermore, we need to be able to do this without mistaking pseudo-wisdom for the genuine article: we need to be able to identify people whose decisions track what really matters and how it can be achieved. But doing this requires more than observation of discrete decisions. It requires making sure that a person's decisions cohere together in a way that tracks a plausible conception of the good life. This is arguably something that we currently have no reliable way of doing.

[70] I thank Steve Nelson, Ian Stoner and Valerie Tiberius for helpful discussion of this response and my reply to it.

Another response is to deny premise 3 by identifying a form of feedback that is success-conducive. I'll survey three of the most tempting sources of feedback that might seem to do the trick. These sources all fail in the end to vindicate the expert skill model, but seeing why shows the way to another, more successful, reply to Jacobson's objection.

Perhaps the most obvious source of feedback we might point to is guidance from the wise. We could even bolster this with empirical research: deliberate practice guided by an expert has been shown to help a person acquire expertise (Ericsson and Lehmann 1996, 279). The same could be said for wisdom: by having a wise person tell you how and why your actions fall short of virtue, or by studying the decisions of wise people, you can develop wisdom.

There are two major problems with this response. The first problem is that the response assumes what it sets out to prove: that wisdom is a psychologically plausible ideal that people can attain. A defender of the expert skill model aims to show that the expert skill model is the best way to vindicate the idea that wisdom is something real people can acquire. But Jacobson has given us reason to think people cannot acquire wisdom if it is an expert skill. Attempting to reject his reason by assuming the existence of wise people thus assumes Jacobson is wrong in order to show that he is wrong. As noted earlier, the empirical literature on expertise shows that people cannot acquire expertise in an area unless they get sufficient feedback on the regularities governing good decisions. If Jacobson is right, the domain of wisdom is one of these areas: there is no way to get sufficient feedback

to develop wisdom. So there is no way for someone to be wise so they can help train others to be wise.[71]

The second problem with pointing to feedback from the wise is that it faces a dilemma even if we assume that there are wise people who can provide feedback. Either a learner can accurately identify wise people to train her, or she cannot. Either way, premise 3 is unscathed.

If a learner cannot accurately identify wise people, then she will only develop wisdom if she is really lucky. Wisdom is, on all accounts, not common or easily won, so it will take a big stroke of luck to find a genuinely wise person. But if that is the case, we'll have to give up on the idea that wisdom is an ideal worth intentionally striving for. This is a significant cost: it would be like admitting that only sheer luck could help you identify a genuine chess expert to give you the training you need.

On the other hand, if a learner can accurately identify wise people to train her, then she would have to have the type of feedback Jacobson has argued we do not have. After all, if Jacobson is right that our own and others' incipient reactions to conduct are the only forms of feedback we have, then our identification of wise people is not likely to be accurate. Whereas in chess and other areas it is relatively uncontroversial who the experts are – they're the ones who win games a lot – the same cannot be said for virtue and wisdom. If the only standard by which to identify wise people is our own significantly flawed set of responses to situations, then we have no independent standard we can use to identify the wise. Reliance on expert feedback, then, leaves us with no more significant chances of developing wisdom.

[71] Someone could, of course, just suggest that people achieved wisdom some other way – perhaps through luck or divine intervention. While this is logically possible, it seems to me too unlikely to warrant much consideration.

Unless we have feedback that is independent of our own or our group's reactions to conduct, we will not be at all likely to find the training we need to develop wisdom. For this same reason, we cannot get sufficient feedback from people who, though not wise, are skilled in the type of decisions we need help with. Johnny may give good advice about what is kind, and Joanie might give good financial advice, but this alone does not tell us what we ought to do all-things-considered. (I'll argue later that once we identify a source of independent feedback it is possible to accurately identify people who can help us develop wisdom more efficiently.)

Due to these problems, we might instead try to point to feedback from universal human responses that are not overly parochial. Failing to note and develop these basic human responses leads to a lack of wisdom, while noting and cultivating them leads to wisdom. In other words, deep down we all are born with the right basic motivations, and becoming wise just means paying attention to them. The Chinese philosopher Mengzi could be interpreted as endorsing this response: most humans have basic affective responses – such as a feeling of compassion for a child falling into a well – and becoming virtuous just involves getting better at noting and following these incipient inclinations so that they are not overtaken by the more parochial inclinations we get from our culture or upbringing.[72]

There are two big problems with this response. The first is that these incipient responses do not provide success-conducive feedback even if they exist. Developing wisdom requires shaping reactions so that they track what we truly ought to do more reliably than the reactions of those who lack wisdom. But even if we start out with the same types

[72] See *Mengzi* 4A27 (Van Norden 2008, 101). I take the talk of "incipient" responses from Van Norden. It might also be possible to interpret David Hume (Hume 1751) as endorsing something like the Inherent Goodness Response.

of responses, such as concern for others' welfare, we do not start out with the same understanding of how these responses apply to particular situations, and we will not extend and develop our responses in the same way. So without a way to differentiate between good and bad extensions of our basic responses, those responses cannot provide success-conducive feedback. The second problem is that it is unclear how a person can differentiate inherently good incipient responses from the more parochial responses she has developed at the knees of her family, culture, or group.[73] A person will not be able to differentiate these responses from the parochial view she has inherited from her upbringing without reference to some independent standard. So feedback from incipient human responses is as inadequate as feedback from the wise for providing an independent check that can reform our parochial understanding of what to do.

A third suggestion is that people can get sufficient feedback to develop wisdom if they engage in coherentist reasoning about cases after being habituated into the right set of commitments about what to do.[74] By engaging in this reasoning, a person can learn to see what I'll call *content-based regularities*. When we identify content-based regularities, we recognize patterns in the content of our judgments about what to do. More specifically, we recognize shared good and bad-making features of conduct. For instance, by reflecting on the features of drunk driving that make it wrong or irresponsible (it puts oneself and others at unnecessary risk), a person might come to see other activities with relevantly similar features (such as texting while driving) as similarly wrong or irresponsible. In this way, feedback from content-based regularities can reform our parochial responses to conduct.

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[73] I thank Valerie Tiberius for suggesting to me this problem.

[74] As Iakovos Vasiliou notes, the requirement that a person needs to be properly brought up in order to be capable of developing virtue is not "a very stringent one" (1996, 794).

It turns out that feedback from content-based regularities alone cannot help a person avoid the errors that even a well-brought up person is prone to make. That is, feedback from content-based regularities alone is not sufficiently success-conducive to produce wisdom.

Consider James, a well-raised young man who feels conflicted about how to respond to panhandlers' requests for money. Although he wants to spend money on himself and his family, he feels great sympathy for the panhandlers when faced with their pleas. Now suppose that over the years James' experiences with other people make him less sympathetic to the panhandlers. Perhaps he works in the service industry and has gradually come to view people in general as insufficiently self-reliant. It is not that James has learned any new facts about the characteristics or needs of panhandlers; nor is it that his change in view is the result of any explicit reasoning he could recount. Rather, as a result of his experience he has just come to view the requests of panhandlers as less worthy of concern.

Now here's the problem. James' views in old age are perhaps more coherent. After all, his views of properly responsible conduct have changed in such a way that they eliminate the conflict he felt about giving to panhandlers. But this does not necessarily mean that his new viewpoint is better – more correct – than his previous one. Nevertheless, if seeking coherence among one's responses to conduct is the only way to get feedback, then James might think his new viewpoint *is* better. Given that at least sometimes experiences like James' can change our views for the worse, a person seeking wisdom will want to be able to tell what experiences enrich rather than corrupt their view of what to do. But feedback on content-based regularities alone gives us no such resources, since the only feedback it provides is based upon a person's responses to conduct irrespective of the experiences that

inform these responses. Indeed, a similar point could be made about reflection of various sorts: focusing on a situation, examining it imaginatively, or engaging in other ways of reflecting on a situation can alter a person's view.[75] Without feedback on when these changes from experience and reflection improve or corrupt a person's view – feedback whose force is not derived solely from a person's responses to conduct – wisdom will not be attainable.

4.4 THE LESSON OF THE FAILED RESPONSES

There is a lesson to be learned from the failure of these responses. Taking that lesson to heart can help us see a way to defuse the Parochial Feedback Objection.

The objection argues that wisdom is not an expert skill, since feedback in the domain of wisdom is too parochial to be success-conducive. The only efficient feedback we can receive on how we ought, all-things-considered, to conduct ourselves is our own incipient responses to conduct or others' responses to conduct. But these two forms of feedback do not reliably track what we really ought to do, at least not to the extent required to develop wisdom. Though the responses I've considered attempt to show that these two forms of feedback are sufficient, they all, I've argued, fail at this attempt.

The lesson from these failed responses is that the only way to rebut the Parochial Feedback Objection is to identify success-conducive feedback that is independent of our own and others' responses to conduct. Jacobson emphasizes this lesson in a footnote: "The

[75] For more on the epistemic importance of becoming absorbed in experience at the right times and the right ways, see Valerie Tiberius' (2008, 65 – 88) discussion of the virtue of "attentional flexibility." See also DePaul (1993), who argues that even wide coherence reasoning needs to be supplemented to accommodate the idea that experience can be epistemically enlightening or corrupting.

idea of a source of feedback that can lead us to realize that we ought to take satisfaction in fundamentally different ways [of living] is much harder to understand and defend" (2005, 400, n. 12). The challenge for the advocate of the expert skill model is to identify a form of feedback that can substantially reform a person's intuitive responses to produce the highly reliable understanding that is wisdom. For the reasons covered above, feedback derived solely from our own responses to conduct or others' responses to conduct will not do the trick. Nor can this feedback be derived from these responses indirectly: the feedback cannot be composed only of standards that, though different in content from our responses to conduct, are compelling for us only because they justify or are entailed by those responses to conduct.

For instance, suppose we reflect on our views about how others should be treated, and derive from this some standards governing when and how to engage in empathic thinking when deliberating. Using these empathic standards will yield the decisions about how to treat people that we already had confidence in, and we have confidence in the empathic standards for precisely this reason. Because our confidence in these empathic standards is not independent of our confidence in the decisions the standards provide a perspective on, the empathic standards will not provide sufficiently corrective feedback. Applying these standards may make our responses to conduct more consistent with one another, but it will not help us correct major instances of misplaced confidence in the reasonableness of those responses.

Jacobson's Parochial Feedback Objection thus shows that people will only be able to develop wisdom if they receive feedback that provides an independent check on their responses to conduct. The feedback thus has to be independent of our (and others')

responses to conduct in a specific sense: our confidence in the feedback must not be wholly contingent upon its vindicating those responses.[76] Call the thesis that we need this independent feedback to develop wisdom *the Independent Feedback Thesis*.

There is an important qualification to be made about the Independent Feedback Thesis: this feedback should not be expected, even when honestly and vigorously sought, to enable everyone to develop wisdom. Part of what is required for wisdom is good training in early age that gives us, to some significant degree, the right commitments. I think Rosalind Hursthouse is correct to argue that "given the emotions' non-rational face, it may be that reason cannot entirely unseat bad training in childhood, and that relationships of love and trust formed in adulthood cannot entirely undo a kind of unconscious expectancy of evil which still manifests itself in [for instance] racist emotional reactions" (1999, 116).[77] To satisfy the Independent Feedback Thesis, we do not need to identify feedback that could make anyone wise regardless of her upbringing. All that is required is to identify some sources of independent feedback that could enable at least some well-raised people to become wise.

4.5 DEFUSING THE PAROCHIAL FEEDBACK OBJECTION

The feedback that satisfies the Independent Feedback Thesis is feedback on whether our decisions would survive an appropriate course of reflective scrutiny. Jacobson's argument appears to show that feedback from this kind of reflection is insufficient to

[76] My point here can be seen as a variation on the notion of independence defended in a different context (justification in moral theorizing) by Daniels (1979).
[77] Support for this claim is ubiquitous in psychology. See for example Wilson (2002), Haidt (2001), and Dovidio and Gaertner (2005).

produce wisdom. But that is only because he has overlooked an important type of feedback this reflection can provide.[78]

One type of feedback, which Jacobson acknowledges, is feedback on content-based regularities, which are regularities among the features of conduct that make it good or bad (right or wrong, etc). When we identify content-based regularities, we recognize regularities in the content of our judgments about what should be done in such-and-such circumstances. We identify content-based regularities by engaging in narrowly coherentist reasoning about cases: for instance, when we decide that because Joanie and Johnny's inability to procreate is not a good reason to condemn their relationship, it is not a good reason to condemn Joe and Jim's either.[79]

For the reasons mentioned above,[80] however, feedback on content-based regularities alone is not sufficient to produce wisdom. Engaging in coherentist reasoning about cases is a necessary part of acquiring wisdom. But it is not sufficient to produce wisdom, since it does not account for other factors that can affect the quality of our decisions, such as experience and imaginative reflection.

Fortunately, there is another kind of regularity governing good decisions that we can get feedback on. *Procedural regularities* are the ones we recognize when we identify the features of decision-making processes that tend to lead to good or bad decisions. When we ask ourselves if our decisions would survive the appropriate course of reflective scrutiny, we get feedback on procedural regularities governing good decisions. This effectiveness of this feedback is demonstrated by empirical research: according to the RPD model, people

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[78] I thank Steve Swartzer and the audience at the 2011 Minnesota Philosophical Society annual meeting for helpful discussion of my response to Jacobson.
[79] See Corvino (2010; 2005).
[80] See §4.3

develop expertise most efficiently when they get feedback on the effectiveness of their decision-making processes (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 308).

Procedural regularities are many, varied and can be specified at different levels of detail. To illustrate, here is a brief, non-exhaustive list of some such regularities. One procedural regularity is causal felicity: good decisions would survive acknowledgement of the (conscious and unconscious) factors causally influencing one's decision. If our decision was influenced by confirmation bias, framing effects, or a desire to protect a belief merely because we want it to be true, then it is worth reconsidering. Consider a point Bertrand Russell makes about dogmatism and religious belief: "a certain kind of scientific candor is a very important quality, and it is one which can hardly exist in a man who imagines that there are things which it is his duty to believe" (1957, 31). Russell's point is that believing something merely because others expect or require you to believe it, irrespective of any inquiry you might undertake, is bad intellectual practice. A similar point holds about our decisions about how to conduct ourselves. Realizing that we have arrived at and accepted a decision merely because of its social currency gives us feedback on the probable quality of the decision.

Another procedural regularity is good motivational input: a good decision will need to be informed by concern for one's own and others' welfare. Recognizing that you are incapable of imagining or taking into account effects on others' wellbeing can lead to changes of decisions by moving you to cultivate empathy. Attention to other regularities (both procedural and content-based) will certainly be required to determine when and how empathy is relevant. But determining this will produce valuable changes to our understanding of how to conduct ourselves. A similar type of regularity governs good and

bad input from experience. As the above example of James suggests, experiences can change our views of what to do for the better or the worse. Experiencing loving relationships, for example, can give us new perspective on our own and other people's value. Once we have identified the features that make experiences enriching or corrupting, we can use this to evaluate our changes in view or decide if we need to seek out experiences that may effect a change.

In reality, a person will need to identify and integrate both procedural and content-based regularities in order to develop wisdom. While this will be difficult, it is certainly possible. More importantly, it provides a way to get feedback that could substantially improve one's understanding of what to do. Feedback on procedural regularities has the ability to motivate significant changes in view because it appeals to epistemic commitments that have force independent of the force of our judgments about cases. For someone who is committed to figuring out what she really ought to do, pointing out that she has come about her views in the wrong way can result in a major re-evaluation. Of course, plenty of reflection is required to identify, specify, and apply these regularities, and people can do a better or worse job at it. Just as someone can fail to become a chess expert because they do not care enough about figuring out how to identify good moves, a person can fail to become wise because they do not care enough about making good decisions about what, all-things-considered, to do. Nevertheless, the lesson is the same: we can get a great deal of feedback on how good our decisions are by reflecting upon how good decisions are formed.

If the argument in this section is right, then Jacobson hasn't acknowledged an important form of feedback that can help us develop the expert skill that is wisdom. Through reflection on the ways good judgments are formed, a person can learn to see what

she really ought to do rather than what merely accords with her idiosyncratic sensibility or the dictates of her culture or group. Thus, noting the possibility of feedback from procedural regularities satisfies the Independent Feedback Thesis and successfully rebuts the Parochial Feedback Objection.

Feedback on the procedural regularities governing good decisions thus serves as a check on the objectionable parochialism that stands in the way of our becoming wise. But one might worry that this feedback is, when taken in concert with feedback on content-based regularities, incapable of producing the highly reliable understanding characteristic of the wise.[81] I argued in Chapter 2 that real people will not likely be able to develop perfect wisdom, since all-things-considered decisions are too complex for a person to always make the absolute best decision. But even if we accept this result, it might also seem impossible to develop real-world wisdom. Feedback on procedural regularities, after all, can surely tell us that we have made mistakes at various points. But can it help us decide what we should do in the tough cases in which the wise distinguish themselves? For example, can feedback on procedural regularities help us accurately decide what to do when loyalty and honesty seem to pull us in conflicting directions?

We can defuse this worry by emphasizing an important point: I have not claimed that feedback from procedural regularities (or any particular procedural regularity) by itself produces the highly reliable understanding of the wise. Feedback from procedural regularities can have significant direct and indirect effects on the quality of particular decisions. Noting good and bad ways of arriving at decisions can lead us to reconsider particular decisions or it can change our intuitive and deliberative abilities in a way that leads

[81] I thank Steve Swartzer for pointing this worry out to me.

to better decisions in the future. But a person will also need feedback on the regularities that hold among instances of good and bad conduct (i.e. feedback on content-based regularities) in order to develop an understanding of what to do to that reliably guides her well in specific situations. Nevertheless, highlighting the role of procedural regularities is important because it shows how a person developing this understanding learns to respond to standards governing genuinely good decisions rather than the less reliable viewpoint provided by one's upbringing, culture or group.

4.6 THE OBJECTION REAPPEARS: WHICH PROCEDURAL REGULARITIES?

There is room for wondering if this response really meets Jacobson's Objection head on. After all, the parochialism that infects our own and others' responses to conduct may seem also to affect our responses to ways of reflecting on conduct. Feedback from our own and others' responses to conduct is not success-conducive, since our initial untutored identifications of what matters and what to do are precisely what need to be corrected and refined by an independent standard. But why not think feedback from procedural regularities is also in need of correction by an independent standard? Why not think our impressions of what makes reflection good and bad are unreliable? An analogy can make this worry clearer: are we like people who think the best way to figure out truths about the world (such as who we should marry, what our personality is like, etc.) is through astrology and augury? If they try to reform their beliefs by more consistently applying the procedures they think are best, they'll end up with worse – or at least no better – beliefs. If a similar

thing is true of our views of how to reflect well on all-things-considered decisions, feedback from procedural regularities will not help us develop wisdom.

What is needed, then, is some indication of how a learner will identify genuine procedural regularities. It is here where the contrast between wisdom and other expert skills seems most striking. Recall Jacobson's statement of what is needed to vindicate the expert skill model: "the skill model depends crucially on the identification of *non-contentious* success conditions and the availability of feedback" (my emphasis). Whereas the standards governing good decisions in chess are conventional and clear, the standards governing how we ought to conduct ourselves all-things-considered appear much less clear, and, given the problems with moral relativism, not similarly grounded in convention. As a result, while we can identify content-based and procedural regularities in chess by reference to a non-contentious standard, we cannot do the same thing when trying to be wise. The problems with relying on feedback from procedural regularities thus seem to stem from deeper problems with identifying what makes decisions themselves good or bad.

We can see how to respond to this worry by first elaborating the augury analogy. Consider a person who, as is common in her culture, takes augury and astrology to be good ways to decide whether a couple's marriage will succeed. She has a number of beliefs about how particular couples will fare, and she has arrived at these from an inconsistent application of the accepted techniques for reading the stars and the flight patterns of birds. One way she can correct her beliefs about the prospects of particular marriages would be to see if they would be endorsed after a more rigorous application of her accepted augury and astrology practices. Surely most of us would agree that this is not the way to go. But should we expect our inquirer to agree?

We can imagine why she might. Suppose our inquirer seeks out a way to validate her beliefs about couples' prospects and the methods she uses to arrive at those beliefs. Reflecting on the goal of correct belief, she decides that what is really important is using methods of belief-formation that yield specific predictions and explanations that hold up to repeated observation. Using these thoughts as a guide, she finds and starts using methods of inquiry that do a better job of predicting when marriages will succeed or fail. Her beliefs about particular marriages are then corrected when she adopts these new methods. Of course, we can also imagine that she will not reach these conclusions and will end up deciding to use augury (or some similar practice). But that does not show that a person cannot learn to make better decisions about when marriages will succeed or fail.

I submit that a similar (though not identical) type of process can enable a person to develop wisdom. By thinking about what sort of reflection leads to good decisions in abstraction from the way we see our commitments playing out in particular situations, we can identify the regularities that differentiate good and bad decision-making processes. Feedback from these regularities can then supplement and correct the more direct scrutiny we bring to bear on particular instances and types of conduct.

Many procedural regularities will be obvious and uncontroversial. For instance, errors in deductive reasoning and patently ineffective forms of fact-finding are clearly not success-conducive. Various biases, such as confirmation bias, are similarly flawed. Whether we exhibit it in our fact-finding practices or in our coherentist reasoning about cases, a disposition to seek out only information that supports our existing decision or judgment is surely not success-conducive. The trick with regularities like this is not in identifying them as good as much as recognizing when and how they influence our decisions. Still, we can

identify these regularities without having to appeal to our commitments about particular instances or types of conduct.

Other regularities will be more controversial and require more work to identify and specify. For instance, engaging in empathy – imagining what things are like from someone else's perspective – is undoubtedly good reflective practice in some situations but not others. Nevertheless, figuring out when empathy is relevant and how extensive its role should be takes significant reflection. Of course, we cannot identify the role of empathy just by reference to whether it validates our existing verdicts about what to do in particular cases. Concluding that empathy is (for example) irrelevant simply because our conduct would not survive empathic scrutiny will prevent empathy from being a substantial reforming force on our decisions. But surely this is not the only way to decide when empathy is valuable and when it is not. It may be enough to say that when others' well-being is at stake, and especially when those others are significantly different from us, we need a good reason to discount the importance of being empathic.[82]

Now it is certainly true that people will not always agree on what procedural regularities there are or how they are best specified. This is not so much a problem as a reality of reasoning in general. The idea that we can reason using standards grasped independently of our particular histories or contexts is, in McDowell's words, the result of a "philosophical misconception of the achievements of modern science" (2001, 119). All reflection and reasoning presupposes some standards acquired from our particular history and context; this is true of scientific reflection as much as practical reflection. Appropriate reflection thus looks like (to use McDowell's favored analogy) Theseus' project of rebuilding

[82] So specifying and identifying content-based and procedural regularities need not require possession of a consciously accessible, comprehensive and systematic conception of a good human life. See Chapter 5.

his boat at sea: our improved understanding is achieved through seeking coherence among the standards we start out with.[83] I've suggested that the standards we start out with include not only standards governing what conduct is good or bad (right or wrong, etc.) but also independently attractive standards governing appropriate reflection about conduct.

4.7 IMPLICATIONS

I have argued that Jacobson's Parochial Feedback Objection can be answered. The objection suggests that if wisdom is an expert skill, then it is an expert skill humans have no hope of developing. After all, skills are developed through feedback in practice, and it is hard to see what practice could help a person transcend the overly parochial standards provided by her own upbringing and culture. I have suggested that this objection has force only if we confine ourselves to feedback from our own and others' responses to conduct. Feedback from these sources is insufficient to produce wisdom. But fortunately there is another source of feedback: reflection on how best to reflect on how to conduct ourselves. By extending our reflective practice to scrutinize not only our responses to particular situations or types of conduct but also to ways of reflecting on conduct, we can transcend and correct our inevitably parochial views of what to do.

One important implication of this response to the objection is that it vindicates the idea that wisdom is a humanly achievable expert skill. Of course, not everyone will be able

[83] See also McDowell (1996). Valerie Tiberius makes a similar point: "the process we use to construct our conception of a good life is … not a procedure that can be articulated without reference to norms" (2008, 171). This point is particularly important for Tiberius, whose account of "Reflective Wisdom" is aimed at explaining how a person can make decisions that are good from her own point of view. But I think the point can be extended to accounts of practical wisdom in general.

to achieve it. Just as some people lack the basic skills to develop chess expertise, even the best feedback will not be able to help some people develop wisdom. But many people could, with the right assistance and effort, achieve at least some degree of wisdom. The expert skill model thus preserves the idea that wisdom is a plausible human skill.

Another important implication of the foregoing argument is that it shows why wisdom includes a significant meta-cognitive ability. Wisdom requires not only the ability to make good decisions about what conduct is best but also the ability to think well about how good decisions are made. Chapter 2 provided us with good reason to conclude that wisdom involves this kind of meta-cognitive ability: wisdom is an expert skill in an area of complex choice and challenging performance, and expert skills in these areas inevitably include meta-cognitive ability. The argument in the current chapter has provided more domain-specific reasons why meta-cognition is important for wisdom: without it, we will not be able to transcend the parochial views we learn at our mother's (or father's, or culture's) knee.

Focusing on meta-cognition might seem to make developing wisdom too intellectual of a task. There are two main forms this worry might take. The first is that developing wisdom does not require this much explicit thinking and reflecting; indeed, my view might seem to require (apparently absurdly) that wise people reflect a lot about how to reflect.[84] The popular imagination bolsters this with images of wise peasants who learn to be virtuous without any significant explicit reflection on what makes for good decisions. Fortunately, we need not put much stock in this form of the worry. After they develop the minimal competence in a task provided by rote training, people only become experts in domains of complex choice and challenging performance through deliberate practice and reflection

[84] I thank Steve Swartzer for helpful discussion of this objection.

(Ericsson 2008, 992). This is after all how experts develop not only their intuitive ability to see what to do but also their deliberative and meta-cognitive abilities. Of course, being reflective is not necessarily the same thing as engaging in theorizing; depending on the domain, there may be a difference between what experts do and what academics do. But since it is reasonable to saddle expert decision-makers with significant reflective practices and abilities, it is equally reasonable to identify reflection as a necessary part of developing wisdom.

The worry about over-intellectualizing the process of developing wisdom can take another form. Instead of worrying that developing wisdom does not really require much explicit reflection and thought, we might worry that reflection and thought are not capable of effecting the requisite changes in understanding. We might worry, that is, that feedback from reflection is not efficient even if it is success-conducive. Part of what needs to be changed, after all, is our intuitive grasp of what to do, and it might seem that this intuitive grasp can be altered by experience and not mere reflection. In other words, getting feedback while performing a task is going to change our grasp of what to do, but merely thinking about what to do or about how to decide what to do will not have a similar effect.

Like the last form of the worry, we can dispel this one by looking at how people actually become expert decision-makers. Psychologist Daniel Kahneman (2011, 238) notes that reflection can alter intuitions backed by emotions such as fear:

> Fear can also be learned – quite easily, in fact – by words rather than by experience. The fireman who had the "sixth sense" of danger had certainly many occasions to discuss and think about types of fires he was not involved in, and to rehearse in his mind what the cues might be and how he should react. As I remember from experience, a young platoon commander with no experience of combat will tense up while leading troops through a narrowing ravine, because he was taught to identify the terrain as favoring an ambush.

If experts develop their understanding of what to do through reflection, then wise people undoubtedly do, too. Where the firefighter's fear and concern-based intuitions are shaped by reflection, the wise person's intuitions, driven as they are by the right emotional commitments (such as compassion), are similarly shaped by reflection.

A third important implication of the argument of this chapter is that, once we acknowledge feedback on procedural regularities, we can revisit the role of expert training in developing wisdom. Earlier I suggested that feedback from experts cannot help us develop wisdom because, for one thing, we cannot accurately identify experts simply by seeing how their responses to good and bad conduct conform to our own. But once we recognize the importance of procedural regularities, we regain the hope of identifying truly wise people who can help us develop wisdom. By identifying people who have taken the time to engage in what I'll call *comprehensive reflection* – coherence-seeking reflection giving extensive feedback not only on content-based regularities but on procedural regularities as well – we can identify people whose guidance we would benefit from. Thus, we can accurately identify wise people and seek their guidance to help us develop wisdom more efficiently. Even if we cannot get direct guidance from the wise, we can study their decisions and try to predict and understand what they will do and why.

4.8 CONCLUSION

The Parochial Feedback Objection threatens to show that wisdom, conceived as an expert skill, cannot be developed by real people. I have argued that the objection fails

because it overlooks a kind of feedback on decisions that enables people to reform their overly parochial understanding of what to do. This not only shows that real people can become wise but also shows what kind of reflection is required for doing so. Achieving wisdom requires not just reflection on how to conduct oneself but also on how to reflect well on how to conduct oneself.

CHAPTER 5

WISDOM AND DELIBERATION

So whenever I go home to my own house, and he hears me saying these things, he asks me if I am not ashamed that I have the face to talk about fine practices, when it is so plainly shown, to my confusion, that I do not even know what the fine itself is. "And yet how are you to know," he will say, "either who produced a discourse, or anything else whatsoever, finely, or not, when you are ignorant of the fine?"

- Socrates in Plato's *Hippias Major*

5.1 INTRODUCTION

So far I have argued for the expert skill model (Chapter 2) and applied it to questions about the nature (§2.4) and development of (Chapters 3 and 4) wisdom. Wisdom is a complex of abilities, including an intuitive ability to see what to do and an ability to deliberate when intuition is silent or can be improved upon, that can be developed through deliberate practice. In this chapter I will explore the nature of wise deliberation further by applying the expert skill model to a question that has recently occupied virtue ethicists: will a wise person have a sort of consciously-accessible blueprint of the good life that guides her deliberation?

To see how this issue arises, it helps to consider the role of blueprints more generally. Blueprints can help us do complex things well. Working from a blueprint can, for example, help us succeed at building a robot by providing a general picture of the way the parts fit together and how they contribute to the robot's functioning as it is supposed to. This picture is helpful because it guides our decisions about where to put each component (and where to connect it to others, and so on) so that in the end we get a robot that walks, talks, mixes drinks, or whatever. And if we expand our conception of blueprints, we can see that they may be useful for doing things other than building and constructing.[85] We can imagine that having a blueprint – a comprehensive and systematic conception of successful performance at a task – could help us do things like manage a sports team or fight a forest fire. Now, your blueprint might be in your head rather than on paper, and it might not be so detailed that it always tells you precisely what to do. Still, we can see why one might think having a blueprint would be helpful, perhaps even necessary, for making reliably good decisions about how to perform a task.

Recently, virtue ethicists have wondered if a practically wise person, someone who reliably makes good decisions about how, all-things-considered, to conduct herself, has to have a blueprint to make good decisions about what to do.[86] A wise person's decisions are good because they jointly contribute to living a good life, a life that is well-lived as a whole.[87] But the factors that contribute to one's life going well are (like the parts of a robot) many, varied, and interact in complex ways. So it is natural to wonder if what separates a wise

[85] This is presumably the thought behind idioms like "a blueprint for success."
[86] Important treatments of this question include Broadie (1993), Kraut (1993), and Tiberius (2005; 2008). See also Russell (2009, 27–8) for a more complete list of references.
[87] See, for example, *Nichomachean Ethics* I.9-10 and VI. 5 for Aristotle's discussion of similar claims about virtue and *eudaimonia*.

person from the rest of us is her possession of a blueprint of the good life[88] – a comprehensive and systematic conception of what matters and how to achieve it – that helps her navigate the decisions she faces. This seems to be Socrates' thought: if we do not have a general pattern of fineness, we'll be bound to make mistakes about which things are fine and which are not.[89] The standard, and more nuanced, position among contemporary virtue ethicists is to deny that wise people apply a blueprint directly to particular situations in order to decide what to do, but to insist that blueprints still play the more indirect role of helping a person decide what character traits to cultivate so that she'll make good decisions.[90]

I have two goals in this chapter. The first is to show that the arguments for the standard position are unconvincing because they make unverified assumptions about human psychological capacities. As John Doris has forcefully argued, "talk of character often carries descriptive baggage that looks to be the appropriate object of empirical assessment" (2002, 5). This is no less true of attributions of intellectual virtues, such as practical wisdom (hereafter simply "wisdom"): asking what roles (if any) blueprints play in wise decision-making is partly an empirical question. Existing arguments tend to give this empirical question inadequate treatment, and my second goal is to rectify this. I do so by applying the expert skill model. By examining the empirical psychological literature on expert decision-

[88] Following Daniel Russell (2009, 27), I'll call a consciously accessible, comprehensive and systematic conception of the good life a 'blueprint.' This use of 'blueprint' can also be found in McDowell (1996, 25).
[89] It is reasonable to suspect that Socrates wanted more than a general account of the fine that could be useful in making decisions about particular situations. The *Hippias Major* seems to suggest he was looking for a definition of the fine that gives necessary, sufficient and constitutive conditions for something being fine. Even if we reject the search for this kind of definition as misguided (as I do), we can still be gripped by his general worry that a general conception of the good life is required to make good decisions even if it does not amount to a decision procedure.
[90] As Russell (2009, 27, n. 46) notes, commentators do not always clearly distinguish between these two ways of using blueprints to improve deliberation. But it is plausible to attribute what I am calling the standard position to, for example, Kekes (1995), Kraut (1993), and Tiberius (2008). Ultimately, it is not important for my argument how standard this position is, since my goal is to argue that all of the existing arguments for and against the various possible blueprint views make unverified empirical assumptions. See §5.3 below.

making skills in areas like firefighting, we can see that a wise person, contra the standard position, need not have a blueprint at all.

5.2 TYPES OF BLUEPRINT VIEWS: DIRECT AND INDIRECT

There are a number of senses in which a wise person could have a conception of the good life and a number of possible ways we can imagine her putting this conception to use. So before deciding whether a wise person uses a blueprint to deliberate we should decide which sort of blueprint and uses of it we are concerned with.

For instance, there is a big difference between having a conception of a good life[91] that is consciously accessible and having one that is not. This latter sense of having a blueprint is not the sense I am interested in. A wise person reliably grasps what should be done because she grasps what matters and how to achieve it: for instance, she sees her friend's sadness as a reason to lend her an ear. It is true that because a wise person reliably does the right things for the right reasons she must have a grasp of what to do across the situations she may encounter, even if her grasp cannot be articulated or consciously entertained in a comprehensive or systematic sort of way.[92] But possession of a blueprint is not the possession of an inarticulate, unconscious grasp of reasons for action. Rather, it is the possession of a comprehensive and systematic view of what matters and how to achieve it that a person can consciously access and consider. Perhaps she does this by visualizing a

[91] I'll sometimes say "the" good life and sometimes "a" good life. The choice of the definite or indefinite article does not matter for my purposes because the question about blueprints can be asked and answered without deciding whether to endorse a pluralistic, relativistic, or thoroughly universal and objective account of good human lives. I thank Doug Lewis for bringing this issue to my attention.

[92] See §2.2.3 for my discussion of grasping what to do and how this relates to wisdom and understanding how to conduct oneself. See also Russell (2009, 29) for an overview of how this sense of having a blueprint fits with prominent Aristotelian virtue theorists' accounts of wisdom.

person of ideal character or by considering weighted general principles describing the conduct that comprises a good life (D. C. Russell 2009, 27). Or perhaps she can merely describe, in general terms, the values constitutive of a good life and the justificatory relationships that obtain between them (Tiberius 2008, 65). However it manifests itself, a blueprint will have to be some sort of consciously accessible and comprehensive picture of the content and structure of a good life.[93]

There are two main roles that blueprints can play in decision-making about particular situations and so two main ways they could be seen to improve decisions about such situations. Following Daniel Russell (2009, 27–30, esp. n.46), we should distinguish between the view that blueprints improve decision-making without being consciously applied to particular situations and the view that blueprints improve decision-making by being so applied.

According to the latter view, which I'll call *the Direct Blueprint View*, a wise person deliberates about what to do when, for example, her partner lies to her by asking what response is required or implied by her conception of the good life. By considering what her ideally wise self would do, or by locating the situation within the broader system of values or principles making up the good life, the wise person could determine what to do in her current circumstances. In its most plausible formulation, the Direct Blueprint View does not hold that wise people always use their blueprint to decide what to do in particular

[93] Although not all commentators describe this kind of comprehensive and systematic view as a blueprint, they all agree that what is at issue is precisely whether a wise person has such a view. What Broadie calls the "Grand End theory" (1993, 200) is an example: according to this theory, "practical wisdom entails possession of a true, comprehensive articulate picture of the human good" (1993, 201).

situations.[94] Nor does the Direct Blueprint View imply that a wise person's general conception of the good life could be mechanically applied to generate guidance. Applying the blueprint well requires judgment borne of experience and practice. A non-wise person could not just memorize and follow the blueprint to achieve reliably virtuous conduct.[95] Nevertheless, if the wise person at least some of the time deliberates about what to do by directly applying her blueprint to particular situations, then the Direct Blueprint View is true.

Some clarification is in order to distinguish the reasoning ascribed by the Direct Blueprint View from reasoning that does not directly utilize a blueprint. Just as some parts of a roadmap are more useful in planning some trips rather than others, some parts of a blueprint will be more helpful in a particular situation while others will be less relevant. As I intend it, the Direct Blueprint View only claims that the wise person calls to mind the parts of her blueprint that are relevant to her particular decision. For instance, if a person's decision concerns the connections between concern for one's own and others' welfare, using her general understanding of the relative importance of these values to decide what to do in the particular circumstances counts as directly applying a blueprint. As long as a wise person has a comprehensive and systematic set of values to refer to when necessary, she counts as using a blueprint.

The other role a blueprint can play in deliberation about particular situations is more indirect. According to this other view, *the Indirect Blueprint View*, a wise person has a blueprint that indirectly improves her decisions about particular situations by helping her see

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[94] As I'll later argue, there is good reason to think that a wise person has a robust intuitive ability that often enables her to see what to do without consciously deliberating. So the idea that a wise person always (or even often) deliberates by consciously applying her blueprint to the particular circumstances she finds herself in would be very implausible.

[95] See §1.3 and §2.2.2.

which character traits she should possess. Valerie Tiberius (2008, 85) gives an especially clear description of this kind of view:

> Judgments about the character traits or value commitments that are manifested in occupying a particular perspective, insofar as they are justified, must at some point be grounded in a reflective conception of the good life. Nevertheless, making the judgment that in some particular circumstances one is being self-absorbed or uncompassionate does not require taking up a reflective point of view from which one understands the justification for thinking that these are vices. Given these facts about normative judgments … we can see that recognizing reasons to shift perspectives does not require any explicit attention to one's reflective conception of a good life. Rather, we make judgments about such reasons automatically, without the aid of critical reflection. Granted, these "automatic" or impressionistic judgments about reasons would not have much force if they were entirely divorced from reflection and justification, however, this is not the case. Intuitive judgments about reasons are tied to reflection and justification, albeit indirectly.

According to Tiberius, part of what makes a person wise is her ability to shift back and forth between different perspectives at the right times. In order to figure out what really matters, a wise person will sometimes have to let herself become immersed in a particular practical perspective, such as when she is focused on enjoying time with her family (2008, 71–7). But she will have to be able to switch to other perspectives (such as the perspective where she is focused on her work) at the right times. Although there will be times when she engages in critical reflection about which perspectives (and the commitments they entail, and their comparative importance) are consistent with her conception of a good life, she does not decide when to shift perspectives by direct appeal to this conception. The impact of a wise person's blueprint on her decisions about what to do in particular circumstances is thus indirect: reflection on her blueprint helps her decide what she is committed to in a way that determines how she conducts herself in particular circumstances even though she does not

necessarily explicitly apply her blueprint to particular circumstances to determine what to do.[96]

5.3 THE INSUFFICIENCY OF THE STANDARD ARGUMENTS

There are various positions you could take on the Direct and Indirect Blueprint Views. The views are not incompatible: it is not inconsistent to affirm that blueprints play both direct and indirect roles in improving a wise person's decisions. The standard position among virtue ethicists, however, seems to be to reject the Direct Blueprint View but accept the Indirect Blueprint View. A closer look, however, shows that the arguments for this standard position are insufficient, in part because they make unverified assumptions about human psychology. As I'll now argue, without more justification of these assumptions we are not warranted in drawing conclusions about whether we should endorse one, both, or neither blueprint view. Examining the existing arguments for the standard position thus uncovers empirical assumptions that must be tested before we can decide which position on the blueprint views – whether the standard position or any other – is actually warranted.

Daniel Russell identifies what I take to be the three most plausible arguments against the Direct Blueprint View: it ascribes a totally unfamiliar type of practical reasoning to the wise, its depiction of deliberation is mysterious, and it implies an overly intellectual and elitist view of wisdom (2009, 27–9; Broadie 1993, chap. 4).[97] To the extent that these arguments

[96] As Russell (2009, 27, n.46) notes, Richard Kraut also seems to endorse this kind of indirect view, though he does not explicitly distinguish between direct and indirect views. See especially Kraut (1993, 374).

[97] Russell is concerned to take seriously Aristotle's views of wisdom: for example "that Aristotle assumes that the basic structure of ethical deliberation is already familiar from everyday practical reasoning" (p. 28). I will leave out the appeal to Aristotle and focus more on the general form of the objection.

are plausible, however, they make empirical assumptions that are in need of more justification.

The first argument has its roots in ancient Greek discussions of the difference between practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and craft expertise (*techne*). The argument compares the wise person's deliberation to other more ordinary forms of practical reasoning, such as the reasoning operative in practical skills like carpentry or medicine (D. C. Russell 2009, 29). We might suspect, following Russell, that "the deliberations that lead the carpenter to put a wall just here" do not involve fitting the situation within a grander picture of good carpentry.[98] Unless the advocate of the Direct Blueprint View can show that this picture of practical reasoning in everyday skills is false or show that the deliberation required for wisdom is different, she will have to admit that the evidence belies her conception of wise deliberation.

There are two main problems with this argument. The first is that it does not discriminate sufficiently between different types of skills. Different skills manifest themselves in people in different ways. Some skills, such as basic driving proficiency or carpentry, may be predominantly intuitive and require little conscious thought. Others, such as physics problem-solving, require more conscious thought and the application of abstract knowledge (Chi, Feltovich, and Glaser 1981). In some areas, such as long-term historical forecasting and stock market prediction, it is practically impossible for people to develop reliable intuitions, and relying on algorithms and heuristics is the only way to achieve the superior performance characteristic of expertise (Kahneman and Klein 2009, 523). To come to a justified conclusion about the nature of wise deliberation using an analogy to skills, we will have to specify what kind of skill wisdom is similar to. Is it like a skill at craft, sport,

[98] Compare Broadie (1993, 199 – 201).

physical performance, musical performance, game playing, complex decision-making of some kind, or what? As I argued in Chapter 2, the expert-skill model provides an argument that helps us answer this question. For now the point is merely that the standard arguments regarding the Blueprint Views provide no such argument.

The first argument against the Direct Blueprint View also has another problem: it relies upon pre-theoretical and anecdotal ideas about the nature of practical skills. Since there is a rigorous program of research on the psychology of decision-making, we should consult this research to see if it confirms or undermines our pre-theoretical views. It could be that we are correct in thinking that the people we consider experts do not make their decisions using a blueprint of their field. But it is equally possible that these people are not actually experts, since empirical research has revealed various domains where people considered experts are, despite appearances, no more reliable than other people at making good decisions (Kahneman and Klein 2009). In other areas, experts may differ greatly in how they make decisions: some might rely primarily on intuition and others on consciously accessible rules or guidelines.[99] It could also be that the people we identify as experts usually do not make decisions using a blueprint but do need to use one for certain rare or complex choices. The point is that we cannot just rely on folk psychology to give us a justified and accurate account of the nature of practical skills.

[99] The task of identifying the sex of baby chickens may be an example. Although the similarity of male and female chicks' external genitalia makes it difficult for the untrained eye to distinguish them, people can, through extensive practice involving immediate feedback from experts on the accuracy of their sorting, develop a highly reliable ability to intuitively sort them. But there is also evidence that people can achieve a similar level of reliability in much less time by learning to consciously apply a relatively simple set of guidelines (Biederman and Shiffrar 1987). As Biederman and Shiffrar note, experts can achieve an accuracy rate of 98% when sexing 1000 chicks in an hour and spending no more than half a second looking at the cloaca of the birds. While it seemed previously that it was not possible to achieve this level of reliability except through intuition honed in extensive feedback and practice, Biederman and Shiffrar's study provides evidence that it is possible to achieve a similar level of reliability by learning to apply a simple set of instructions.

So an analogy to other practical skills will only undermine or support the Direct Blueprint View if it both explains which skills are relevantly similar to wisdom and gives an empirically-informed account of how people with those skills actually deliberate. As I'll show in the next section, the expert skill model can advance the argument because it does both of these things.

The second standard argument against the Direct Blueprint View objects that it is a mystery how a blueprint could helpfully figure in deliberation about particular situations given the fact that the conduct contributing to a good life cannot be codified in a set of principles that can be mechanically applied to generate guidance in particular situations.[100] This argument is unconvincing because it seems relatively clear how a blueprint could be helpful even if it is not a codified and mechanically applied set of principles. Even a picture of what is valuable that only picks out good conduct at a level too general to deduce guidance for particular situations can guide our choices by keeping our eyes on the big picture. Of course, it takes experience and practice to be able to specify what this picture requires of us in particular situations. But still, the blueprint could helpfully guide decision-making about particular situations by framing our deliberations about the situation within a broader picture of what matters.[101]

Consider an analogy. When deciding how to get from one place in town to another, a person may consult her mental map of the town: she first figures out where her position is on the map, and then she uses the map to figure out where to go. There will be obstacles to

[100] Hursthouse echoes this worry when she gives the impression that attributing a conception of the good life to the wise amounts to endorsing a "deductivist model of practical reasoning" (1999, 139).
[101] John Kekes appears to endorse this idea: he states that moral wisdom requires, among other things, a general conception of the good life and the judgment required to apply this conception well to one's particular circumstances (1995, 24–7).

deal with that her map does not account for: sidewalks, curbs, or roadblocks. But she gets where she needs to go using her map as a guide. A wise person might do the same thing: she might figure out where the particular decision fits with respect to the values comprising the good life and then use those values as a guide in deliberating more about what to do. Perhaps we still might worry that this sounds like an ineffective way to reason; if so, we have switched from the charge that the Direct Blueprint View is mysterious back to the claim, considered above, that it is unfamiliar in a way that makes it psychologically implausible. But, as we have seen, this is a claim requiring more empirical justification.

For similar reasons, the third argument against the Direct Blueprint View, that it is objectionably elitist, fairs no better. If the Direct Blueprint View seems pre-theoretically elitist or overly intellectual,[102] that may provide some reason to investigate its credentials further. (We should perhaps worry that advocates of the Direct Blueprint View are ascribing to the wise the philosophical abilities that they themselves are likely to have.) But the worry about elitism cannot take the place of a more rigorous investigation, informed when appropriate by relevant empirical research, of the merits of the Direct Blueprint View.

The standard arguments against the Direct Blueprint View thus make unverified empirical assumptions about human psychology. Without further investigation of the merits of these assumptions, we will not be warranted in deciding whether the Direct Blueprint View gives a plausible or implausible account of the way real wise people (would) deliberate. This is not to suggest that every empirical claim needs to be backed by research before we are justified in believing it. Sometimes informal observation will do. But that is not the case

[102] For this argument, see Broadie (1993, 199 – 200), who argues that the Grand End Theory "presupposes a command of philosophical ethics."

with the claims at hand, since we have reason to worry that our intuitive ideas about how experts and the wise deliberate may be inaccurate.

The arguments for the other part of the standard position, the ones in support of the Indirect Blueprint View, have similarly unverified empirical assumptions. The two main reasons the Indirect Blueprint View seems plausible have to do with ensuring the consistency of conduct and its conduciveness to a genuinely good life. Valerie Tiberius (2008, 65) puts the first reason this way:

> Because our various commitments provide support for each other, a conception of the good life that locates these commitments on the same map ensures that the commitments we have do not undermine each other and can be pursued together in the same life.

The idea is that the way to avoid inconsistency in our conduct is by building, through reflection, a rough but general conception of the good life that situates our commitments in relation to one other.

Similarly, a conception of the good life is thought necessary to ensure that our commitments contribute to a life that is actually good. Kraut gives an Aristotelian description of this second reason for holding the Indirect Blueprint View (1993, 374):

> by seeing reason as the foremost good of human life, the student of philosophical ethics acquires a more substantial criterion for making everyday decisions than he had before. The right level of wealth, honor, pleasure, friendship, and so on, is the level that leads to the fullest flourishing of rational excellence.

Developing this conception of the good life not only deepens and specifies a person's grasp of what to do; it also helps her avoid implausible conceptions of the good life, such as the warrior life of Genghis Khan. This suggests that having a blueprint enables a person to decide which traits she should cultivate so that she will actually live well. Using the blueprint

this way does not involve using it to deliberate about what to do in a particular situation. Instead, the blueprint helps a person decide what character traits to develop, and these character traits guide her to the right decisions in particular situations. But the blueprint is necessary to make good decisions, since having it is the only way to ensure that we will have the traits that actually contribute to decisions that comprise a genuinely good life.

Importantly, both of these arguments for the Indirect Blueprint View make unverified assumptions about human psychology. According to the Indirect View, having a consciously accessible conception of the good life is supposed to indirectly result in virtuous conduct even though that conception is not directly applied in deliberation about particular situations. According to the arguments, the blueprint ensures the consistency and correctness of our commitments in a way that indirectly improves our decisions about what to do in particular cases. But the question is whether we really do need to have a blueprint to ensure the correctness and consistency of our commitments. The answer will only seem obvious if we forget what it means to have a blueprint figure in deliberation. Having a blueprint is more than having an incomplete or unsystematic list of the values that comprise the good life. Once we notice this, it is not hard to see that we would be hasty to assume that a wise person needs to have a blueprint to make good decisions. After all, we would not want to *assume* that experts in other tasks, such as dancing or firefighting or whatever, have a comprehensive and systematic conception of successful conduct in their domains. It may be reasonable to assume that they could say something about the subject when asked, but that is different than being able to call to mind a comprehensive and systematic conception of success (or the traits contributing to success) in their area of expertise.

The hastiness of this assumption is made even clearer when we consider that the general trend in psychology has been towards "dual-process" theories of cognition, according to which judgments are produced not only by effortful conscious reasoning but also by quick, effortless intuitive processes that take place outside of conscious awareness (Kahneman 2011; Wilson 2002; Haidt 2001). It could be that even our judgments about what commitments to have or character traits to cultivate can be sufficiently guided by intuition rather than conscious deliberation, let alone conscious deliberation with a blueprint. Then again, it could also be that the arguments for the Indirect Blueprint View are correct. As with the arguments against the Direct Blueprint View, the point now is not that the arguments make empirical assumptions that are unjustifiable or false. The point is that the standard arguments make empirical assumptions that we are not justified in rejecting or accepting without further investigation.

It might be objected that I have overlooked a further argument implicit in Tiberius' description, quoted above in §5.2, of the Indirect Blueprint view.[103] Part of Tiberius' goal is to explain what makes decisions *justified*. What makes a decision justified is that it is grounded in a consciously accessible, comprehensive, and systematic conception of the good life. Although the grounding is indirect, it is still a grounding: a person's decisions are justified only to the extent that they can be traced back to value commitments that she can situate in a blueprint of a good life. Thus a wise person needs a blueprint to deliberate about

[103] See also Tiberius (2008, 65): "A reflective conception of a good life, then, situates our individual commitments in a justificatory framework. The need for our own reflective approval of how our lives are going requires a conception of a good life for its satisfaction. Without such a conception we would have no sense of how our various commitments function together as an evaluative standard and no reason for confidence in the justification of the individual commitments we have." I am grateful to Valerie Tiberius and an audience at the University of Minnesota Department of Philosophy for helpful discussion of this objection.

her character traits because without one the decisions she makes as a result of those character traits would not be justified.

The problem with this objection is that insofar as wisdom is an ideal worth striving for, it does not require such a strong form of justification. Being wise certainly requires making reliably good decisions, and this requires not only doing the right things but also doing them for the right reasons. But meeting this standard does not require the ability to entertain a comprehensive and systematic conception of the good life. If all a wise person can say about why her way of doing things in a particular situation is best is that, for example, it is kind, or respectful, or preserves her self-respect, then that does nothing to undermine the claim that she is acting in response to reasons. And if her decisions are the result of a reliable capacity to identify real reasons for action, then there are philosophically respectable accounts of epistemic justification according to which those decisions are justified.[104]

The only way to salvage the justification argument for the Indirect Blueprint View is to saddle it with controversial empirical premises. We could suggest that, as a matter of contingent fact, people cannot acquire a reliable capacity to identify reasons for action without having a blueprint they use to deliberate about their character. Perhaps the ability to make decisions that jointly contribute to a well-lived life can be acquired only by honing one's character by reference to a comprehensive and systematic picture of such a life. Perhaps. But this claim is empirical and cannot be justified with speculation alone. Without further evidence from relevant empirical research this claim – like the others standardly

[104] Externalist and virtue epistemic accounts of justification and knowledge are examples. See, for instance, Sosa (2007; 2009). See also McDowell (1979) for a similar point about the knowledge of the virtuous as a reliable sensitivity to reasons for action.

figuring in arguments for and against the blueprint views – cannot be justifiably affirmed or denied.

This result is significant because it reveals that the merits of the Direct and Indirect Blueprint Views hinge upon empirical assumptions that need further testing. The standard arguments fail to provide the requisite test because they do not adequately ground their claims about the nature of wisdom in relevant empirical psychological research. Findings in the empirical study of expertise and decision-making could lead us to different conclusions about the role of blueprints in wise deliberation, and the standard arguments not only ignore this research but also fail to help us decide which findings are relevant and which are not. In the next section, I argue that the expert skill model shows that both Blueprint Views are false.

5.4 THE EXPERT SKILL MODEL AND BLUEPRINTS

So what can research tell us about the empirical merits of the Direct and Indirect Blueprint Views? Since wisdom is an expert decision-making skill in an area of complex choice and challenging performance, the relevant evidence will come from studies of expert decision-makers in these areas. And this evidence tells against both the Direct and Indirect Blueprint Views.

Take the Direct Blueprint View first. Research on expert decision-makers in firefighting and a variety of other similar domains has shown that experts make decisions through three processes (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 303–5).[105] The first process is the

[105] See §2.3.

most common: 80 – 90% of experts' difficult decisions are made through the exercise of their intuitive ability to see a good course of action immediately, effortlessly and without conscious deliberation (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 303; Klein 2009, 91). Psychologist Gary Klein illustrates this process by recounting an interview with an expert firefighter. The firefighter was called with his crew to a serious fire at a three-story apartment building. After delegating the crew tasks to gather more information about the fire and to prepare to fight it, he found out that the fire hydrant was empty. This made for a dangerous situation:

> He had to extinguish the fire, which was growing in intensity, even though he hadn't determined where the seat of the fire was and the only water he had was the little that he brought with him on the fire trucks. The apartments had been constructed with a common attic, making it likely that the fire would destroy the entire unit if he didn't quickly get it under control. Without hesitation he ordered his crew to aim all of their water at the point that he judged to be the seat of the fire. All of the water. If he guessed wrong he would just have to watch the fire destroy the entire building. His guess was right. The water he had was enough to extinguish the blaze, barely. Afterward, he explained to my research team that fires grow exponentially. By the time he was certain of the location of the seat of the fire, the fire would have been too large to contain. He had to rely on a blitz attack to catch it while it was small. He had to rely on his judgment. (Klein 2009, 89)

When Klein's colleagues used this scenario to test firefighters in other departments, they found that the experienced firefighters made the same decision, while the newly promoted ones hesitated and tended to keep some water in reserve (2009, 90). The experienced firefighters recognized, as a result of their deliberate practice and experience, a situation they'd dealt with before and were able to identify quickly and without conscious deliberation how to respond.

The other two decision-making processes experts use are necessary when an intuitive choice is absent or perceived as possibly deficient. When an intuitive choice is lacking, expert decision-makers spend most of their time investigating the nature of the situation further until a satisfactory course is identified. Interestingly, the research shows that experts do not spend their time identifying and comparatively evaluating the different possible courses of action. Instead, they spend their time investigating the nature of the situation until a choice becomes obvious (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 305). The third process involves testing an intuitive decision through mental simulation to determine if it is sufficient. Rather than testing the intuitive decision by comparing it to other options, experts play out the intuitive choice in their minds to see if it is satisfactory. If it is not, then another option is identified and simulated (ibid).

None of these decision-making processes involve applying a blueprint of success in a domain to generate a choice in a particular situation. Most of the time, experts rely on intuition to decide what to do. But when they need to deliberate, they do so by mentally simulating the choice at hand to see if it is satisfactory. This mental simulation does not proceed by comparing the choice to a comprehensive conception of success in the domain. Expert firefighters do not make a decision about how to deal with a fire by thinking about whether it is implied by general principles describing effective firefighting. Rather, they use mental simulation to consciously play out a particular choice to see if it would have particular results that undermine particular goals that are recognized as important in the situation. Klein describes this process using the example of chess players:

> We can learn from skilled chess players. They don't settle for the first satisfactory option. They really do want to play the best move possible. Their strategy is to conduct mental simulations of each one of the promising moves, imagining how the option would play out

> deeper and deeper into the future. Then they take stock of their mental and emotional reactions to what they see in this mental review. If they feel that a line of play is going to get them into trouble, they reject that move. Other moves may have potential and are worth thinking about, and some just feel right – they just seem to be more promising than the others. Thus, the players are considering several moves, but their choice is based on how each choice stands up to the mental simulation, not on a comparison of moves using standard criteria. Skilled chess players don't compare options using the Rational Choice method […], because there is little benefit to rating options on the same evaluative dimensions, such as controlling the center of the board, increasing the defense around the king, and making a good shape with the pawns. These kinds of ratings don't capture the dynamics of the game position. Instead, the mental-simulation strategy lets chess players appreciate how a move works for that game. (Klein 2009, 96)

Using a blueprint to make particular decisions would amount to using what Klein calls the Rational Choice method, in which a decision-maker evaluates options using one set of evaluative criteria that apply to all situations. Since expert decision-makers in areas of complex choice and challenging performance, like firefighting, use intuition and mental simulation instead of the Rational Choice method (Klein 2009, 09–2; Klein 2007, 26–8), it follows that they do not make particular decisions by applying a Blueprint.

This provides *prima facie* evidence against the Direct Blueprint View. (Further evidence comes from studies of how expert decision-makers develop their expert skill. Below I explain how this evidence tells against the Indirect Blueprint View, though it could also be applied here against the Direct Blueprint View.) Unless there is something distinctive about the domain of wisdom that makes a Blueprint necessary in deliberation about particular all-things-considered decisions, we should conclude that the Direct Blueprint View is false. In my initial defense of the expert skill model,[106] I considered and

[106] See §2.5.

rejected various attempts to undermine the expert skill model by citing a relevant different between wisdom and other decision-making skills. The question now is more specific: is there a difference relevant to determining whether a wise person deliberates with a blueprint?

I cannot see any relevant difference between the domain of wisdom and other areas of expert-decision making that would make the Direct Blueprint View plausible. After all, wise people and other experts share the same general decision-making challenges. Making good decisions in firefighting and similar areas requires dealing with complexity. As Gary Klein describes it, these areas are complex rather than stable or well-ordered:

> These situations may change rapidly and unexpectedly. We have to keep track of more factors, and they link to each other in lots of different ways. We may also have the feeling that we don't know some of the important linkages. (Klein 2009, 10)

This complexity is due partly to the fact that the goals of the domain are many and interact in complex ways. Even experts have to work to figure out how to manage conflicts and trade-offs between goals (Klein 2009, 208–10) and to figure out which specific goals are important in a particular situation (Klein 2009, 212–3). Experts deal with this complexity by building tacit mental models of their domains through experience, practice, and reflection. These mental models give experts decision-making skills that enable them to identify good decisions without relying on blueprints.

Wise people need to deal with the same general difficulties. They need to identify which ends matter, specify what they require, and determine the best means to achieve them. It is plausible to suppose that wise people would deal with these challenges in the same way as other experts – namely, without applying a blueprint to decide what to do in particular

situations. Instead, they recognize situations they have dealt with before and responses they have used successfully in the past, and when they need to deliberate they test these responses with mental simulation.

The evidence, then, tells against the Direct Blueprint View. So what about the Indirect Blueprint view? I am unaware of any research that directly addresses the question of whether expert decision-makers have blueprints of their domains that play this sort of indirect role. Nevertheless, there is compelling evidence against the Indirect Blueprint View.

One piece of evidence comes from research on how people develop expert decision-making skill. In general, people acquire expert decision-making skill in domains of complex choice and challenging performance by undertaking extensive motivated, effortful, reflective and self-guided practice that provides good feedback on domain-related performance (Ericsson 2008, 991; Ericsson et al. 2006, 692). As I explained in Chapter 3, this deliberate practice helps a person develop the set of intuitive, deliberative, and meta-cognitive abilities that make up expert skill. To become experts, learners monitor their practice to make sure it will give them good feedback on their performance, and they reflect on their decisions and how they were made so that they can adjust and improve their performance on future tasks (2008, 991 – 992; Klein 1997, 348 – 349). This might seem to be a point in favor of the Indirect Blueprint View, since we could imagine that reflection on one's practice and experience would involve constructing a blueprint of success in one's domain that could then be used to guide practice and assess its results. A closer look at the sort of deliberate practice that produces expertise, however, tells a different story.

Although developing expertise requires plenty of thoughtful reflection, it does not require constructing or applying a blueprint. Instead, experts develop their intuitive,

deliberative and metacognitive decision-making abilities by challenging their understanding of particular situations rather than by acquiring a consciously accessible, comprehensive and systematic conception of their area of expertise.

One way people challenge and refine their understanding of what to do is through feedback in practice. Intuitive expertise (expertise with an intuitive component) in a domain can be developed only when there are regularities governing good and bad decisions in that domain and a person gets sufficient feedback in practice that helps her identify these regularities (Kahneman and Klein 2009, 520). For instance, experience can help a firefighter learn to see when a burning building is dangerously unstable or to see where a fire will spread: repeatedly seeing how things turn out helps them learn to recognize patterns in the factors affecting a fire's development. Indeed, people tend to learn best when feedback is clear and relatively immediate and when they get feedback not only on the outcome of their decision but also on the quality of their decision-making process (Phillips, Klein, and Sieck 2004, 308). In areas of complex choice, the understanding we develop through feedback is predominantly tacit and so cannot be consciously articulated or boiled down to consciously applicable procedures or checklists (Klein 2009, 34–41).[107]

Nevertheless, mere feedback is not sufficient to develop expertise: conscious reflection on the feedback is required to make appropriate sense of it. But this reflection does not involve constructing a blueprint. Klein notes that people "make sense of cues and data by fitting them into frames such as stories" (2009, 196). These stories take the form of "action scripts," which "are hunches for how to decide" that are triggered when an expert

[107] As Klein (Klein 2009, 41) puts it, "every type of expert we have studied has built up a repertoire of patterns to quickly make sense of what is happening. These patterns are not facts, or rules, or procedures. They are based on all the experiences and events the experts have lived through and heard about."

mentally simulates a particular course of action she is considering. As I noted above, these hunches trigger awareness of specific goals at stake in the situation rather than a comprehensive and structured picture of the general goals of a domain. To develop expertise, a person needs to engage in critical reflection strategies that shed the old, unreliable action scripts of a novice in favor of more reliable ones (Klein 2009, 277). These strategies, discussed previously in §3.4.5, proceed by challenging our understanding of particular situations without requiring us to acquire an explicit, general and systematic conception of success (Klein 2009, 278–281).

For example, one strategy is to get in the habit of asking yourself a simple question: "What evidence would it take to change your mind?" (2009, 277–8). By thinking about what evidence it might take to change to changer her mind about a particular issue, a person makes her views of how things are and what matters explicit so that they can be tested. Reflection on the evidence required to undermine a belief about a particular decision improves our decisions without requiring that we construct a comprehensive, let alone systematic, account of a good life.

Another critical reflection strategy is "to use analogies and metaphors" (Klein 2009, 279). Considering analogies helps reveal errors in our views while also altering the motivational and emotional aspects of our intuitive understanding of what to do. As I've stressed, analogical reasoning about conduct could help us avoid rigidity in our understanding of what, all-things-considered, to do.[108] When the best course of action in a particular situation is unclear, it can help to try to identify relevantly similar situations about which we are more confident. A smart phone owner who considers drunk driving wrong

[108] See §2.4, §3.4.5, and §4.5.

because it puts lives at unnecessary risk should take note of some recent research: texting while driving causes a level of distraction that poses a similar level of unnecessary risk to oneself and others (P. D. Jacobson and Gostin 2010). Unless there is some other relevant difference between these two ways of conducting oneself (driving drunk and texting while driving), we should abstain from them both. Considering analogies in this way improves our understanding of what to do by helping us identify particular goals at stake in a situation and giving us a way to see which goal or goals actually matter in that situation.[109] This will contribute to a person's ability to determine, for example, when telling the truth is the kind thing to do, when vigorously defending her beliefs is an expression of self-respect and when it is disrespectful or obstinate, and so on.

Although considering analogies thus gives a person a better grasp on what matters when, it does not give her a blueprint of the good life. For it to do so, it would have to give her a consciously accessible picture of how all the commitments that comprise a good life fit together. But considering analogies in the way described above will not make all of the justificatory connections between those commitments explicit. It will allow a person to say things like "putting others at unnecessary risk is irresponsible," and "texting while driving is seriously irresponsible," and "it is not dishonest to withhold your opinion here" and, more generally, "that is a bad reason for doing such-and-such." But having a blueprint requires being able to say more than this: it requires being able to say why kindness (justice, self-respect, etc.) is part of the good life, what generally tends to make acts kind (just, etc.) rather than not, whether and how kindness' importance depends upon or justifies other commitments, and so on. So the strategy of considering analogies, like the strategy of

[109] This is not to say that analogies will always dislodge a shoddy perspective in favor of a better one. See §4.5.

identifying the evidence that could undermine your views, does not result in a person's having a blueprint.

These are only two of the critical reflection strategies Klein identifies based upon his extensive study of expert decision-makers. Nonetheless, they highlight an important characteristic of all the strategies and the deliberate practice they are a part of: they do not involve constructing and applying, even indirectly, a blueprint for success.[110] Since people can and do become experts in domains of complex choice and challenging performance without a blueprint, it is reasonable to suppose that people can become wise without constructing a blueprint either. Working one's understanding into a reliable and consistent whole may take a lot of work, but it is not achieved by developing a consciously accessible, systematic, and comprehensive conception of a good life.

Of course, this is not to suggest that a person does not need to reflect on which commitments contribute to living well and which do not. That is surely something she will need to do, and these reflections will likely arise as a result of engaging in critical reflection strategies that start by considering particular decisions and situations. A wise person may be able to call up a list of some or all of the commitments or virtues that contribute to living well, but this kind of incomplete or unsystematic list is not a blueprint.[111] Having a blueprint is having a consciously accessible conception of the general commitments that contribute to the good life and the justificatory relationships that obtain between those commitments. The expert skill model tells against the Indirect Blueprint View because it provides evidence

[110] The other strategies are to keep an eye on how many contradictions we need to explain away to defend our beliefs, look at comparable cases, bring in people new to the issue for a fresh perspective, construct exercises and simulations that bring out conflicts and problems with our views, identify and evaluate plausible alternative views, practice coming up with new explanations for the facts, and be curious about anomalies. See Klein (2009, 278–81).

[111] Or, at the very least, it is not the notion of a blueprint that is most interesting and operative in contemporary discussions in the literature. See §5.2 above.

that a wise person need not have this kind of conception in order to develop a reliable understanding of what to do.

5.5 CONCLUSION

If the above argument is a good one, then both the Indirect and Direct Blueprint Views are false. A blueprint of the good life is not required for being or becoming wise. This result is significant both because it tells us something important about the nature of wise deliberation and because it illustrates how the expert skill model can give us philosophically sensible and empirically plausible answers to our questions about wisdom.

It is worth emphasizing that this result in no way undermines the idea that a wise person's decisions are justified in a way a non-wise person's are not. One of the assumptions motivating the Indirect Blueprint View was that a wise person's decisions are justified only if they are grounded, at least indirectly, in a blueprint she can consciously reflect on. But our examination of the expert skill model shows that this assumption is unwarranted. An expert's decisions about what to do are justified because they result from reliable decision-making abilities that novices lack. Similarly, a wise person's decisions are justified because they result from reliable decision-making abilities, honed through deliberate practice, that the rest of us lack. Nevertheless, a wise person is not necessarily a moral philosopher, so if she fails to live up to philosophical standards of justification – if she cannot articulate a comprehensive and systematic theory – that does not mean her decisions are not justified or that she is not wise.[112]

[112] I thank Valerie Tiberius for suggesting this way of putting my point.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

According to the expert skill model, wisdom is an expert decision-making skill akin to expertise at firefighting. By making this connection between wisdom and more ordinary practical skills, the expert skill model enables us to bring the study of wisdom back down to earth: it gives us a philosophically sensible and empirically plausible account of wisdom in the real world. This is important because it helps us appreciate wisdom as an ideal worth striving for. The expert skill model does this, I have argued, by providing answers to some central questions about wisdom:

1. What kind of achievement is wisdom, and how does it manifest itself in real people?
2. Can real people develop wisdom?
3. How can real people develop wisdom, if indeed they can?

In answering the first question, the expert skill model gives us a clearer picture of the ideal of wisdom. Wisdom is an understanding of how to conduct oneself, all-things-considered, and this understanding manifests itself as a set of abilities. Wise people are able to see intuitively how to respond to a situation, but they are also able to deliberate when intuition is silent or yields a poor choice. This is in part because wise people have an ability to tell when to go with their gut and when to deliberate more. These abilities help a wise person identify what she should do. But two other abilities play an important role in a wise

person's excellent conduct: a wise person knows how to deal with temptations and other internal obstacles that threaten to pull her away from what she has identified as the thing to do, and she knows what to do to keep improving her understanding of what to do. Although a wise person need not have a comprehensive conception of the good life in order to make good decisions, she will be adept at reflecting on her conduct and even her reflective practices themselves. So wise people are intellectual in the ordinary sense of being thoughtful, careful, and reflective.

This result also highlights a fruitful line of further research. I have focused mainly on the cognitive aspects of wisdom, though there are important questions about the affective nature of wise understanding that need answering. For instance, what strategies will a wise person use to regulate her emotions so that she conducts herself well? Will a wise person ever feel or express anger? It is worth wondering whether the expert skill model can help us answer these questions.

By answering the second and third central questions, the expert skill model assures us that wisdom is humanly attainable and gives us some guidance about how to achieve it. Because expert skills like wisdom are developed through deliberate practice and feedback, we might worry that no feedback will be sufficient to help us see what we really should do all-things-considered. But this worry overlooks the resources reflection can provide: by reflecting not only on reasons for and against different ways of conducting ourselves but also on good and bad ways of reflecting, we can get feedback that corrects the sometimes pernicious influences of our culture and upbringing.

But this is only part of what the expert skill model recommends as part of the deliberate practice towards wisdom: to become wise, we should also, for instance, set specific goals for

improving our decisions and get in the habit of reflecting on how well we meet them, practice shifting attention to other aspects of situations, get in the habit of trying out new ways to achieve what matters, practice critical reflection strategies, and consult the wise for guidance and feedback. While the complexity of all-things-considered decisions makes it impossible to acquire wisdom by memorizing specific decision-making procedures, we can develop wisdom by using the strategies that experts use to hone their decision-making skills.

In addition to clarifying our understanding of what wisdom is and how it can be developed, I hope to have provided further evidence that interdisciplinary collaboration between philosophy and empirical psychology is required for fruitful inquiry into the nature of virtue. Philosophers are often charged with being out of touch with empirical science relevant to their inquiry or of using methods made obsolete by science.[113] Recently, philosophers in many areas have taken this charge head on, endeavoring to show that philosophical thought and empirical research jointly contribute to satisfying answers to the questions that occupy us. I hope to have contributed to this cause by giving an example of some of the fruitful ways philosophical argument and empirical research can be combined to investigate normative ideals like wisdom.

[113] Consider physicists Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow's claim that "Philosophy has not kept up with modern developments in science, particularly physics" (Hawking, Mlodinow, and West 2010, 5). It is somewhat unclear which philosophers they had in mind or how seriously we should take these claims, since Hawking and Mlodinow themselves cite philosophers of science later in their book. Plus, contemporary philosophers of religion, for instance, pay careful attention to physics when discussing the "fine-tuning" version of the teleological argument for the existence of God (Manson 2009).

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APPENDIX:

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Content-based regularity: shared good or bad-making features of different instances of conduct.

Deliberate practice: motivated, effortful, reflective and self-guided practice that provides sufficient feedback on domain-related performance.

Deliberative ability: an ability to use slow, effortful, consciously accessible processes to search for and evaluate what one ought to do when an intuitive identification is lacking or inadequate.

Direct blueprint view: the view that a wise person at least sometimes needs to use a blueprint of the good life to deliberate about what to do in particular situations. (So application of a blueprint directly improves decisions about what to do.)

Domain of challenging performance: an area where successfully carrying out what is to be done requires sustained coordination of behavior, affect, and motivation in a way that does not come naturally to people and requires significant practice to achieve.

Domain of complex choice: an area where the factors governing good decisions are many, varied and interact in complex ways, and a person needs to identify what to do with limited time and psychological resources.

Efficient feedback: information about a decision's quality that is relatively clear, immediate, and capable of altering a person's cognition and affect in a way that improves her decisions.

Indirect blueprint view: the view that a wise person needs to use a blueprint to deliberate about what character traits to have. (So application of a blueprint indirectly improves decisions about what to do.)

Intuitive ability: an ability to identify what one ought to do quickly, effortlessly, and without conscious deliberation.

Meta-cognitive ability: an ability to identify when and how to rely on intuition and deliberation.

Perfect wisdom: the wisdom that enables a person always to conduct herself as excellently as possible.

Practical wisdom: deep and reliable understanding of how to conduct oneself, all-things-considered.

Procedural regularity: shared good or bad-making features of ways of deciding what conduct is good or bad.

Real world wisdom: the degree of perfect wisdom that real people can achieve.

Self-cultivation ability: an ability to identify how to tailor practice and experience in order to make intuitive, deliberative and self-regulative abilities even more reliable.

Self-regulative ability: an ability to identify how to influence one's environment, behavior, affect and motivations to overcome internal obstacles to doing what one has identified as the thing to do.

Self-regulative reason: a reason to take some action in order to overcome internal obstacles to doing what should be done.

Success-conducive feedback: information about the quality of a person's decision that actually provides a reliable indication of the quality of a decision.

Success reason: a reason to perform an action because performing that action in that situation would achieve, or contribute to achieving, a goal (or goals) that constitute success in the domain.

Theoretical wisdom: deep and reliable understanding of the way the world and the creatures in it are and work.

Understanding how to conduct oneself: Understanding how to conduct oneself in a domain D is (a) an ability to identify (accurately, non-accidentally, and in a wide range of situations in D) what features in a situation require what response in order to achieve the goals of D, and, when there are internal obstacles to carrying out that response, (b) an ability to identify how to overcome those internal obstacles.