Pedagogy of Prudence, the Mother of All Virtues

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ABSTRACT

This exposition of the concept of Aristotelian prudence is driven by the evident presence of Aristotelian virtue ethics in the recently crafted "MATATAG Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) and Values Education (VE) Curriculum Guide," prepared by experts selected by the Philippine Department of Education. It is necessary to clarify the concept of Aristotelian prudence so that stakeholders do not mistake it for a neutral term, as though even wrongdoers can be said to be prudent when they engage in objectionable activities. This lack of express ethical boundaries must be given careful attention in the GMRC and VE, which were crafted to increase the likelihood that students will become morally better persons. We argue that Aristotelian prudence comes in varying levels. We articulate a sharp divide between prudent actions with morally acceptable ends and what may look like prudent actions with morally objectionable ends. We do not deviate from therationally

informed or enlightened sense with which Aristotle used the term prudence in Nicomachean Ethics. Finally, we discuss teaching strategies and techniques to show how prudence may be taught effectively to students of GMRC and VE.

Keywords: Values Education, reasoning, prudence, higher-order thinking, virtues, values

Introduction

In this work, we examine the Aristotelian concept of prudence as posited in "Nicomachean Ethics" and its application within the Philippine public school system. Given that moral agents often diverge on what constitutes prudent action, this paper argues that schools must employ targeted pedagogical approaches to cultivate students' higher-order thinking skills. To this end, we provide an overview of techniques for teaching prudence in ethical decision-making. Ultimately, the study reveals a significant curriculum gap: despite the central role of prudence in the Department of Education's (DepEd) MATATAG Good Manners and Right Conduct (GMRC) and Values Education (VE) programs, the value lacks consistent emphasis across the grading periods from Grades 1 to 10.

According to Aristotle (2000), prudence is a cardinal virtue that is inevitably the mother of all other cardinal and non-cardinal virtues. Our singular focus on the Aristotelian notion of prudence is premised on the palpable presence of Aristotelian virtue ethics in the detailed GMRC and VE curriculum guide. In this work, we proceeded with our tasks on the assumption that the said curriculum guide is broadly Aristotelian in orientation, as evidenced by the premium it places on the moral concepts commonly associated with Aristotle and his work, Nicomachean Ethics. Some of these concepts, found across various parts of the curriculum guide, include *phronesis*, prudence, justice, courage, friendliness, truth, patience, sympathy, responsibility, and good habits (Department of Education, 2024). No virtue ethicists, except Aristotle, were mentioned in the curriculum guide.

We emphasized in this work that the concept of Aristotelian prudence comes in varying levels, depending on the factors that influence its quality (Audi, 1997). Subsequently, we articulated the inevitable, though not always obvious, divide between prudent actions with morally acceptable ends and those that may appear prudent but have morally objectionable ends. We did this task

carefully, not to suggest that Aristotle missed the point we wanted to clarify. Therefore, we did not deviate from the rationally informed or enlightened sense with which Aristotle used the term prudence (in ancient Greek: "*phronesis*") in his ethical framework. We have no reason to suspect that Aristotle's conception of prudence is naive or thoughtlessly broad or narrow in scope. We concur with Yuengert's observation that "Aristotle's prudence is thinking about doing, and embraces every important consideration that bears on action and the well-being of the acting person: his interest narrowly defined, his social nature and communal responsibilities, and his orientation toward the transcendent" (p. 33).

We did not lose sight of the circumstances that influenced or played a vital role in the development of Aristotle's ethical ideas during his time, which are far from isomorphic to the prevailing social and cultural realities in the present-day Philippines. Be that as it may, evidence shows that Aristotle thought of virtues in terms of right proportion, as determined by reason (Russell, 1946). Hence, right proportion or moderation, as determined by reason through its reflective or informed realizations from experiences, ruminations, deliberations, contemplations, and memories of relevant lessons learned, is one of the defining features of prudence in Aristotelian ethical theory.

We elucidated the notion of prudence as it occurs in Aristotelian ethics to help stakeholders in education avoid the dangerous or destructive mistake of confusing it with a neutral term, as though even wrongdoers or offenders can be prudent in the course of perpetrating nefarious activities. This lack of express ethical boundaries must be given due cautionary attention in the GMRC and VE, which were crafted to enable the DepEd to effectively increase the likelihood of turning students into morally better persons (i.e., citizens and individuals). Again, we departed from the assumption that Aristotle's notion of prudence is reasonably acceptable as opposed to the kind of prudence that suits the interest of someone with morally impeachable actions premised on morally questionable grounds.

At this juncture, an important question must be raised: Why is prudence the mother of all virtues? To answer this question, we must first discuss prudence and state some possible extensions without departing from its Aristotelian sense.

Prudence

Based on our study and discussion of prudence below, we define it as an intellectual value whose application is characterized by the following: (1) deployment of higher-order thinking skills (e.g., critical, creative, and imaginative thinking) when addressing practical problems (e.g., practical issues, moral predicaments, moral dilemmas) and (2) performance of the action entailed by a decision whose design is to yield best results. The following are examples of problems that require prudential thinking. Should abortion be legalized in the Philippines? Should same-sex marriage be legalized in the Philippines? Who should Filipinos elect as their next president? What career should I pursue? Who among my suitors will make the best partner in life? How much should I save from my salary? What is the best class schedule for me? Where and how should I spend my next vacation? Should I remind my relative to pay his debt, even if it will make him angry again? Answers to these problems vary from person to person, depending on one's circumstances and level of prudence. People wear different ethical lenses and have different realities and prudential thinking capacities. Prudence is absent when reason is used to justify evil or immoral actions (e.g., murder, forging illicit romantic relationships, engaging in illegal drug business).

Aristotle (1941) defined prudence as the rational capability to respond to practical problems for the common good. Prudence is pragmatic wisdom, which is a device used to find the right or the best path that leads to happiness, which is not just any happiness or the type of happiness derived from the experience of worldly, bodily, or earthly pleasures. This happiness is of the higher-order type, which can be found through a virtuous path after subjecting a problem to higher-order processing. More shall be said about this

shortly when we turn to the pedagogy of prudence. It must be noted at this point that the type of happiness before us can only be found through rational deliberation.

The operation of reason here is not an endless process of intellectualizing, problematizing, philosophizing, or decision-making. It would be imprudent for a woman to deliberate endlessly as to whom she will marry among her equally agreeable suitors. In the same vein, it would be imprudent for moral agents to fall into inaction due to ceaseless problematizing when they have limited time to make a final decision in response to a problem that requires an immediate response. For instance, it would be imprudent for a senior high school student to go through a protracted contemplation and deliberation on whether he/she will pursue a career in science or law. Indecision here due to ceaseless thinking about the matter is deemed imprudent, owing to the consequence of unnecessarily losing opportunities, benefits, or so-called window time to make the best decisive action. "Too late" sums up the last point expressed herein.

Prudence is the intellectual torch that illuminates and guides the search for the virtuous paths of justice, fortitude, and temperance. This point finds support in DeMarco (n.d.) when he said, "No virtue—obedience, courage, generosity, or anything else—is virtuous without prudence, which is the virtue of being realistic." Pieper (n.d., as cited in Transancos, 2015) said that translating true knowledge into prudent actions requires the process, first, of deliberation, second, judgment, third, decision, and last, action. Absent deliberation and judgment, the moral agents who make uninformed decisions and leap into action are considered thoughtless, whereas, absent decision and action, the moral agents who limit themselves to deliberation and judgment are considered irresolute (Transancos, 2015).

Following Aristotle's lead, Pieper (1954/55/59) defined prudence as

> …the mold and mother of all virtues, the circumspect and resolute shaping power of our minds which transforms knowledge of reality into the realization of the good. It holds within itself the humility of silence that is to say, of unbiased perception; the trueness-to-being of memory; the art of receiving counsel; alert, composed readiness for the unexpected. (p. 22)

Happiness and satisfaction can be discrete goals of prudent actions. In Aristotle's virtue ethics, prudence is exercised in pursuit of happiness, a state higher than mere satisfaction. Happiness from being pleasantly surprised by childhood friends is different from the satisfaction felt when an educational study yielded convincing answers to questions raised. It is possible to feel satisfied without necessarily being happy. A person seeking justice for his/her loved one may feel satisfied with the court's decision on the legal case filed against the accused, but such a decision does not necessarily make him/her happy.

Aristotle may not have discussed satisfaction in his ethical theory. Still, given the varying pursuits of different people separately surrounded by different circumstances in the modern world, it is fitting to include a brief observation about satisfaction as a possible end of decisions made for problems that moral agents might want to answer. Satisfaction is not identical to happiness, but these authors believe that some people's attempt to exercise prudence is aimed at achieving a satisfying result of a specific action, where the feeling of satisfaction is not necessarily one of bliss or happiness but just a state in which those who feel satisfied wish nothing more than the simple cessation of wanting to consume or experience more of something, which can be food, water, knowledge, pleasure, etc. In sum, satisfaction here is defined as having reached the point where one has already had enough or his/her fill.

Prudence: mother of all virtues

Aristotle listed prudence as one of the cardinal virtues. The others are justice, courage, and temperance; beneath them are virtues such as truthfulness, liberality, and friendliness. The Latin root of the term "cardinal" is "*cardo*," which means "hinge" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.) or "door hinge" (Etymonline, n.d.). The cardinal virtues are the joints that keep all the other virtues under each of them together. They are considered to be the foundational moral habits that make the good life, human happiness, and human flourishing possible.

However, Aristotle regarded prudence as the mother of all cardinal and other virtues because he believed that the other paths to justice, courage, temperance, and other virtues can be found only through the exercise of prudence, which is an act of sagacious practical problem- solving or decision-making (Aristotle, 2000). Pieper (1959) said, "…none but the prudent man can be just, brave, and temperate, and the good man is good in so far as he is prudent" (p. 13). Prudence, being a rational value, cannot reside in immoral thoughts and acts.

It is not a surprise if Aristotelian prudence has been likewise associated with ideas like wisdom, circumspection, open-mindedness, broadmindedness, sagacity, mindfulness, foresight, insightfulness, perceptiveness, discernment, heightened consciousness, sharpness, decisiveness, moderation, and reasonableness, as well as being judicious, thoughtful, cautious, careful, vigilant, reflective, and astute (Aristotle, 1941; Pieper, 1959; Pieper, n.d., as cited in Trasancos, 2015; Pakaluk, 2005; Yuengert, 2012). Following the logic of the foregoing, no one, indeed, will count as prudent if he/she lacks any of the aforementioned thematic ideas. Therefore, we regard such traits as distinct intellectual values, dispositions, or both that should be cultivated among schoolchildren to habituate them to comport themselves with prudence when responding to problems throughout their lives as citizens and individuals.

Following Aristotle's logic that prudence is the mother of all virtues, we adopt the view that it is a prerequisite for becoming a virtuous or morally good person (i.e., an individual and a citizen). What does this mean? Prudence is a relational concept. It can neither exist nor be practiced in isolation, for its enactment is always in pursuit of another virtue, say, justice, temperance, courage, or another virtue beneath the cardinal virtues. What may count as a prudent decision on whether schoolchildren from underprivileged or underserved groups deserve differential instructional treatment in a general education classroom is done in pursuit of justice. What may count as a prudent act of fearlessness in the face of a bully's aggression is done in pursuit of courage. Moreover, what may count as prudent self-control before a sumptuous variety of dishes at a buffet is done in pursuit of temperance. The same approach applies to other virtues whose attainment is the goal of exercising prudence. Of course, moral agents are not just either prudent or imprudent in their actions. Prudence comes at varying levels in various contexts, and thus, exercising prudence does not readily mean that the moral agent will always find the virtuous path. A moral agent, in this case, the students of Values Education and GMRC, must value and learn to exercise high-level prudence in pursuit of the appropriate virtues in various situations. In sum, a prudent act that is well within the scope of the virtuous path, say, of justice, courage, or temperance, is marked by the quality of having high-level wisdom, rationality, sensibility, circumspection, mindfulness, thoughtfulness, sense of moderation, and other such-like qualities (Aristotle, 1941; Pieper, 1959; Pakaluk, 2005; Pieper, n.d., as cited in Trasancos, 2015, in Trasancos; Yuengert; 2012).

Prudence is the virtue that capacitates the moral agent to give the wisest response to a problem. It is a compass needle that enables moral agents to determine the course they must follow to find the most just, courageous, and temperate actions. Wisest here can mean the best or virtuous course of action or, in some cases, the least undesirable among difficult choices. Abortion, pre-marital union (or sex), death penalty, divorce, West Philippine Sea dispute with China, same-sex marriage, possible legalization of prostitution

(or recreational use of marijuana), and teenage pregnancy are just some of the issues for which multiple competing proposed answers have been presented in various forums in the Philippines. That no single proposed answer to any of these and other similarly tricky problems has been left unchallenged suggests that the community is not in agreement as to which of the competing alternative solutions is the best or wisest after all. Since the commission of human errors cannot be eliminated, there is always the possibility that answers given to problems, while not undesirable, still leave room for improvement of students' decision-making abilities. In the Philippine VE curriculum, it seems that the DepEd has rightly adopted the principle of spiral progression to ensure that learning expands and levels up as students move up from one grade level to another toward becoming the citizens the system wants them to be.

It is easy for people with high-level discernment to tell that it is imprudent for a low- income citizen to own a Lamborghini, Mustang, or Porsche car if he/she does not have the means to maintain a luxury and high-performance vehicle. It is likewise imprudent for someone to live alone in a mansion that he/she cannot afford to maintain and whose space is way more than he/she needs. Similarly, it would be imprudent for anyone to have a child if he/she is unprepared to provide adequate support for his/her children. Prudence applies to a myriad of problematic situations that adults and children may encounter. For this, it is also prudent for the education system to habituate schoolchildren to practice high-level prudence to better function as productive citizens and happy individuals. After working diligently during weekdays, it is reasonable for the working citizen, the teacher, for instance, to take a Friday or Saturday break by enjoying a movie or two while seated on a massage couch. But it would be more prudent, for health reasons, granting that the teacher had adequate rest and nourishment, to take such a leisurely break on a stationary bike or a treadmill.

Prudent and imprudent: a problematic binary divide

We maintain that prudence is a necessary attribute of every person who counts as morally good. Absent prudence, one cannot be considered a morally good person. This thesis finds further support from the following,

> …man can only be prudent and good simultaneously; that prudence is part and parcel of the definition of goodness; that there is no sort of justice and fortitude which runs counter to the virtue of prudence; and that the unjust man has been imprudent before and is imprudent at the moment he is unjust. *Omnis virtus moralis debet esse prudens*— All virtue is necessarily prudent. (Pieper, 1959, p. 16)

Moreover, where there is prudence, the moral agents may have varying abilities to apply such value or virtue. Consequently, even if moral agents are to count as morally good, their moral goodness, all the same, may also come in varying levels. This is why we find the prudent-imprudent and good-bad bifurcations too Spartan to be tenable. We believe that morally good people may not be equally morally good in the same way that intelligent problem-solvers may not be similarly or equally prudent with their actions. This thesis is quickly illustrated by children whose level of prudence or moral goodness differs from that of their parents. The same can be said about students and their supposedly more knowledgeable teachers. In sum, prudence, or the lack of which, comes in varying degrees (Hursthouse & Pettigrove, 2003, July 18/2022, Oct. 11), depending on factors like the breadth of related experiences, depth of reflections, relevance of epiphanies, level of thinking aptitudes, stage of cognitive development, emotional maturity, and strength of learning retention of moral agents.

That prudence is best approached in terms of level or degree is a solution to the problematic view that moral agents are just either prudent or imprudent in how they respond to problems. The

competing answers to an issue or a problem may all be considered prudent, but the search for the best answer to a complex problem is often not a simple matter of finding what counts as a sensible answer, for the competing proposed answers may not translate into equally prudent actions after all. That is to say, one or some of the answers can be more or less prudent than the rest.

At this juncture, it is crucial to note that it is common for moral agents to differ in opinion on what action counts as most prudent or otherwise. It is here that competent teachers and their use of reliable learning materials can facilitate the education system's attempt to sharpen students' abilities to determine, through higher-order thinking, what may reasonably count as a highly or the most prudent action. This pedagogical concern requires us to address the questions of which strategies and techniques must be adopted to effectively teach prudence at the level of Philippine basic education, especially in public schools.

Pedagogy of prudence in VE: strategy and techniques

The MATATAG curriculum requires that moral concepts and statements be taught to grades 1 to 10 GMRC and Values Education students (Department of Education, 2024). We emphasize that the curriculum recognizes the Republic Act 11476 mandate that the GMRC and VE programs should ensure sustained cultivation of higher-order thinking (Republic Act 11476, 22 July 2019). As proof, the MATATAG GMRC and VE curriculum has clearly articulated that the development of thinking skills listed in the 21st-century skills is a mission to be accomplished through the concerted pedagogical efforts of the teachers of GMRC and VE and other areas of study (e.g., Social Studies, Languages) (Department of Education, 2024). The premium that the curriculum places on the horizontal articulation of related competencies across subject areas is sufficient evidence for this observation (Department of Education, 2024). It is crucial to emphasize that the sustained teaching of the four cardinal virtues should be a vital part of the GMRC and VE curriculum, as it is largely grounded in Aristotle's virtue ethics. But it must be

remembered that prudence, the mother of all virtues, is the one to exercise in pursuing a virtue aspired to, such as justice, courage, temperance, etc.

That the connection between the Aristotelian virtue ethics and the supposed logical contents of the MATATAG VE and GMRC curriculum should be strong is a prescription that needs no further explanation. A philosophical curricular foundation should squarely match what the curriculum claims it intends to deliver. So, for now, it will suffice to state this immediately preceding normative advice as a reminder. We will not belabor the concern that the teaching of prudence in the MATATAG VE and GMRC curriculum is something that might not happen if the teachers, expected as they are, simply adopt the MATATAG GMRC and VE curricular instructions, where the intensive teaching of the mother of all virtues is not expressly mandated in every lesson across all grading periods and all grade levels. This concern is important, but it is not the focus of this paper. Instead, we will address the question, "How must prudence be taught?" To answer this problem, we will first define the concepts of strategy and technique.

Strategy, in the context of this work, means a plan, goal, or policy. An example of this is to win a war without engaging the starving enemies in bloody combat. Various techniques (e.g., diplomacy, deception) may be deployed to implement this strategy. Technique, in this respect, is a particular way of implementing a plan, pursuing a goal, or enacting a policy. An example of a technique that may be deployed to implement the abovementioned strategy is to send food supplies to your famished enemies to make them think your equally starving troops have enough food supply and will survive a protracted war or standoff. Here is another illustrative situation to clarify the concepts of strategy and technique. Suppose the police want to arrest as many wanted criminals as possible in less than 24 hours. The strategy is to arrest them by luring them into a trap; the technique is to send them free tickets to a Manny Pacquiao boxing match. The tickets state that they won from an online lottery free access to a special viewing room, where complimentary drinks

and snacks will be served while they watch Pacquiao's boxing match live. The preceding examples show that strategy without technique will not translate to success, whereas technique without strategy is an act devoid of purpose. Strategy and technique are meant to go together. In formal education, a teaching strategy (e.g., getting the students to think critically) can only be brought to life by deploying relevant teaching techniques, which can be facilitative, instructive, etc.

In the MATATAG curriculum, one of the major matters to address is how to teach Values Education. One strategy that may be implemented to increase the likelihood that the GMRC and VE will effectively turn out morally good Filipinos who are in possession of Aristotelian virtues is to sharpen progressively—this being the function of spiral progression— the students' ability to exercise prudence. But this is just a strategy, a code of action that is broad in scope and open to interpretation. So, a strategy, being general in nature, does not state any specific action, which is construed as a technique in this context. Following the difference between the foregoing conceptions, a teaching technique is a specific instructional means of honing the ability of the students to apply prudence in the vast expanse of their lives as moral agents, citizens, and individuals. Most, if not all, of the techniques below for teaching prudence may be deployed both in GMRC and VE. The bigger challenge is the development of learning materials and lesson plans to ensure that the teaching and learning content and exercises are age-appropriate and logically aligned with the goals of the subject area.

Socratic method

One technique that may be used effectively to teach prudence is the Socratic method, which engages students, usually orally, by asking them leading questions on a selected topic. We need not scan the horizon for directions where some relatable topics or objects of Socratic inquiry can be found. Faithfulness to Aristotelian philosophy, which again is a major foundation of Philippine Values Education, will suffice to answer the question,

"What should be the focus of the searchlight of prudence?" This query quickly directs the teacher to answers that can be located in Aristotelian ethics itself. The cardinal virtues of courage, justice, and temperance, doubtless, should be among the objects of prudential problem-solving. The virtues assigned under the cardinal virtues can also be central considerations in determining what may count as the most prudent answers to diverse problems. How often should the Socratic method be deployed? Whenever there are conceptual ambiguities in a problem, it will help to utilize the dialogic technique of interrogating and attempting to clarify a key concept. GMRC and VE teachers should master the Socratic method as the teaching of prudence requires spirally progressive thinking about and application of cardinal and non-cardinal virtues.

The Socratic method may be deployed to elicit students' ideas of courage even if they have not read any article about it. But it may also be utilized to get the students to use and acquire the scholarly language found in select articles on the virtue concept in question (e.g., courage, justice, temperance, love, gratitude, forgiveness, discipline, integrity, dignity); that is, if the Socratic exercise is designed to sharpen the student's ability to analyze, interpret, evaluate, reason, draw conclusions, synthesize ideas, detect thinking errors, etc. Prudence in action may not appear at this point to be anywhere near in sight, but the attempt to better understand key concepts in problems like "How ought I to behave in X situation to count as a courageous person?", "What should I do in Y situation to count as a just person?", and "Have I had enough of the buffet?" will remain more difficult to resolve satisfactorily if the students are lacking in foundational and clear understanding and knowledge of the boundaries of values to possess as virtues.

Suppose the matter before a class of grade 7 students is, "How should bully victims respond courageously to a threat of bodily harm from bullies? If prudence is to be taught here, it should be clear to the students that the whole exercise springs from thinking about key concepts. Again, the problem solvers will most likely be unable to answer the problem satisfactorily if the nebulous concepts

of courage and bullying, for instance, are left unclarified because they are assumed to be self-explanatory. The students should have clear ideas of acts of courage and bullying so they can determine when and how to respond and act with prudence or, better yet, high-level prudence. Here, mastery of the Socratic method will greatly aid the development of the student's ability to break down and define key concepts. Such analytic ability is vital to the prudential way of responding to a problem. There are two preliminary and vital questions to raise on the bullying matter before us: "'What is bullying?' and 'What is courage?'" On courage, the teacher may ask first who among his/her students considers himself/herself courageous. Whether or not the students raised their hands, asking them such questions will most likely stir up interest in the topic.

Since it is incumbent upon the Socratic teacher to raise leading questions, especially when the students' answers are unsatisfactory, the facilitation of students' thinking, if done masterfully and when it becomes a common classroom activity, creates an environment where students start to get the hang of subjecting their thoughts to metacognitive thinking. A similar approach applies to the concept of bullying. For teachers to increase the likelihood that they will be able to engage the students in Socratic dialogue, they must have a firm grasp of the concepts in question. Having advanced knowledge of different conceptualizations enables the teachers to easily and quickly guide the students in examining and modifying their ideas into better answers to the conceptual questions raised. Only after having arrived at clear and acceptable definitions of bullying and courage will students be able to give well-informed answers to the question, "What then will constitute a prudent action in response to bullying?" But still, the exercise in prudence does not end here, as students may propose different answers to the latest question. In the Socratic method, such answers are to be tested, evaluated, impeached, or interrogated by the teacher and students. Socrates did the same by challenging the acceptability of his students' answers to his questions. The aim of the engagement is not simply to drive the students to demonstrate prudence overtly but also to get them to become progressively better at processing

and answering vital questions until they become accustomed to engaging in higher-level thinking to determine the best possible course of action whenever they are making decisions, tackling issues, or solving problems. Other examples of problems in which different values are involved and that GMRC and VE students may be asked to address, depending on their age, social context, and intellectual capacities, are the following. Should all students, regardless of their intellectual or physical, or both states, be treated equally? Should a secret transgender girl or woman disclose her real gender identity? Should selling and eating junk foods in school be banned? Given that public education is free, under what circumstances may a student stop attending school? Is it always right for a student to follow his/her passion when choosing a career? Should there be all-gender restrooms in all public schools? Should transgender female athletes be allowed to compete in the women's category?

When teachers utilize the Socratic method, they should treat the students with utmost respect and kindness. They should assure the students that the engagement is meant to hone the learners' ability to think prudentially rather than abuse them (Stuckey et al., 2007). Adding humor to the Socratic engagement will also go a long way toward helping students enjoy the interaction, feel relaxed, and easily remember the supposed takeaways from the inquiry.

Problem-based learning: community of inquiry, thought experiment, and debate

Problem-based learning is known for using realistic and practical problems to sharpen the students' critical thinking skills (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, n.d.). Thought experiment, debate, community of inquiry, and other problem-oriented teaching techniques are sub-categories of problem-based learning. We, the authors, further liberalize the concept of problem-based learning to include hypothetical moral dilemmas and predicaments as legitimate problems to address within the ambit of problem-based learning, as the concept of "problem- based learning" does not entail that it is confined to practical problem-solving. This

extension of meaning creates a secure room for conceptual questions, which are often a vital, if not essential, component of problem-based learning (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, n.d.).

Community of inquiry ("COI" from hereon) is typically deployed to engage a group of students on a selected question. When it is not done online, students usually sit (in chairs or on the floor) in a circle and proceed to share their answers to the question. The inquiry is essentially a search for a good, better, or best answer to a question that elicits different, competing, or conflicting answers coming from diverse perspectives of those involved in the inquiry. The majority of the COI participants usually determine the question to answer. In COI, the teacher is both a participant and a facilitator (Garrison et al., 2000). COI provides a safe learning space for the students to share their ideas without fear of being mistreated for whatever they want to say as social inquirers with emotions and identities (Garrison et al., 2000). The COI participants are cooperating thinkers who seek to make meanings and better inform themselves about a selected community problem (Garrison et al., 2000). COI fosters independent, clear, imaginative, creative, logical, and collaborative thinking. It increases students' confidence in expressing their ideas or views. COI cultivates and establishes a culture of open-mindedness, tolerance, and respect (Fisher, 2000). To see COI in action, demonstrations of which can be found, analyzed, and studied more thoroughly on YouTube.

Despite its unsurprising appeal to many teachers and students, COI has its limits. It is not forbidden for the teacher to pose a COI question or problem to the students, but this carries the risk of the significant majority being uninterested in the teacher-selected question. There, too, is the problem of limited time, which is only around 45 minutes for VE and GMRC. Class sizes in public schools are more or less 50 students, and the same is true in many private schools. One of the goals of the COI is to create a room for every student to participate actively in the inquiry in every session, but 45 minutes is too short a period even if the class will skip the preliminary COI stage, which is the process of selection of the

question to be answered by COI participants. Of course, the COI does not require everyone to speak, but the goal remains: Get all the participants to voice their thoughts during the inquiry. All participants should have equal chances to be heard. The application of COI can be time-consuming as it seeks to accommodate all who want to speak in response to the matter inquired about, which can be just a preliminary conceptual question.

Since prudence is reflected in actions, it is also natural for the students to include the attempt to determine what might constitute a virtuous, prudent, or, say, courageous, just, temperate, or the most reasonable action in a given problem. If an action is genuinely courageous, just, temperate, or virtuous, then it is necessarily prudent given that it is determined by prior higher-order deliberation and principled choice-making, i.e., acting according to what is believed to be right. The COI can only shoulder part of the task of turning out a prudent person, given its limitations, which are further exacerbated by the short time allotted to the subject and oversized classes, especially in public schools. Other pedagogical techniques should complement the COI. One of the complementary devices that may be deployed is the so-called thought experiment.

Thought experiment, as used in teaching the action- and goal-oriented Aristotelian prudence, is a pedagogical technique of posing a practical problem that stimulates problem- solvers to assess different possibilities, scenarios, or courses of action in a hypothetical situation. While in the COI, students might want to answer the question, "What is respect?" or "What is fairness?", a related problem for thought experiment may come in this form: "How should a child respond when his/her mother tells him/her that he/she owes his/her mother because his/her mother gave birth to him/her?" This exercise allows the students to hear answers from different perspectives. Regularly conducting this exercise will help develop open-mindedness into an intellectual habit, a quality inextricably linked to a person who possesses the virtue of prudence.

As was pointed out, the 45-minute period allotted to VE and GMRC is too short for the COI to create sufficient room for a relatively exhaustive inquiry if the class consists of more than 45 students. A thought experiment can remedy this COI limitation if the teacher deploys the seminar method, where students are assigned into groups and take turns hearing each other on the matter before them. In the meeting that immediately follows, group presentations of answers yielded by the last meeting's seminar activity can be conducted to create further space for students to consider the merits of the views articulated in other groups.

Below are other examples of thought experiment problems that may be used in VE and GMRC, depending on the students' level of thinking capabilities. "Is it right for a mother to tell her child, especially during a dispute, that her child owes him/her because she brought him/her into this world?" "Should same-sex marriage be allowed in the Philippines?" "Should the Philippines adopt the federal form of government?" "Should students wear school uniforms?" "Should all-gender restrooms be installed in public schools?" "If siblings argue over household chores, how should tasks be assigned?" "Is it right to report to the teacher those who are just copying their supposed homework from other classmates?" "Should one proceed with his/her plan to join a peaceful protest against the abuse of natural resources and environment even if there is a possibility of backlash from the school administrators?" Problems like these— questions that give rise to competing and conflicting answers–make a good exercise in prudential problem-solving, given that intellectual values are visualized in thought experiment scenarios, where the best course of action is the object of the chase. Of course, the teachers of VE and GMRC should have already answered all the thought experiment questions before posing them to the students. In this way, the teachers can make necessary corrections or contribute to the students' answers to elevate the quality of their learning from the thought experiment. Whether or not thought experiments are conducted seminar-style, they should assume the form of a learning activity more akin to brainstorming than to disputation, a common feature of debate. Thought

experiment questions may be debated over, of course, but the concept of debate discussed in this work comes in the form of structured disputation between competing teams.

Debate, unlike the thought experiment, is a formatted presentation of arguments and counterarguments between two groups of disputants. In the context of this work, the thought experiment questions for teaching prudence are problems usually given in the same period, during which the class is divided into small groups so that all students have equal opportunities to respond to the problem assigned to each group. In a debate, the issue to resolve is usually given in advance, several days, a week, or more before the debate is held. This is to provide the disputants with ample time to find pieces of evidence that their respective teams will present to persuade the judges that their entire argument is stronger than the other side's argument. In a debate, a big chunk of evidentiary data is proffered as a set of true factual information from supposedly reliable or trustworthy sources. Whether or not justice is the value that is being pursued here, it is worth noting that the search for true premises, which can be painstaking, is a vital part of prudential problem-solving in a debate context. Unlike thought experiments, which are exploratory and relaxed in nature, especially when conducted in a seminar group of, say, 10 students, the debate atmosphere exudes a discernible air of uneasy or stressful tension, as the opposing teams present their supposedly true pieces of evidentiary claims, and one team is bound to win and the other to lose, unless the judges declare a tie. That is to say, it is typical for the practice of argumentation in a debate to be aimed at winning the battle of reasons. For this reason, it is fitting for the teacher to remind the students that the debate is meant to cultivate open-mindedness, inform the students about an issue, and emphasize the place of reason in the search for the best possible answer to a controversy or a complex problem. Far from being a venue where disputants are warranted to be rude to each other and argue aggressively, or even deceptively, for the sole purpose of winning the engagement, the debate is deployed as a pedagogy of prudence as it is a fertile ground for the development of intellectual respect toward those who hold different views on an issue. The goal is to get the value of respect to evolve into a virtue.

Based on the foregoing discussions, an increasing complexity or level of challenge can be discerned in the sequential application of the following techniques for teaching prudence: (1st) Socratic method, (2nd) COI, (3rd) thought experiment, and (4th) debate. However, depending on the teacher's judgment, this order may be rearranged or some of them may be skipped or replaced with other methods. In any case, the order of the techniques presented is an algorithm that satisfies the fundamental standard–increasing complexity of the activity–of the principle of spiral progression.

Conclusion

The Aristotelian concept of prudence is inextricably tied to the idea of wisdom or intelligence in action whose means and telos must be morally good. Prudence and moral goodness are also inseparable. The act of prudence, which spans from the first moment of thinking up to the execution of the decision on a practical problem, radiates themes like wisdom, circumspection, open-mindedness, broadmindedness, sagacity, and other values associated with intelligent problem-solving. Implementing the supposedly well-informed moral choices is done to live a morally better or fulfilling life that is happy and flourishing for the citizen and the individual.

Following the Aristotelian notion of a virtuous person, one cannot count as a morally good person if he/she is not wont to and will not consistently display prudence in his/her actions. The virtue of prudence remains to be acquired if all the students can do is a simple case of a contingent show of prudence. For example, the virtue of prudence has not, indeed, been acquired if the students would demonstrate disciplined thinking and thoughtful action only in the presence of a demanding teacher. Similarly, no virtue of prudence is displayed where students would choke and freeze in their seats or scream and run around in panic despite their regular training on how to conduct themselves during a strong earthquake. The pedagogical activity contemplated in this work is the complex task of teaching students what prudence is. The higher aim of the

enterprise is to find ways to get the students of VE and GMRC to appreciate the value of being able to function as an intelligent or prudent problem- solver and develop such function into a deep-rooted habit, if possible.

The MATATAG VE and GMRC curricula expressly state that one of their two philosophical foundations is virtue ethics. As pointed out, virtue ethics in the MATATAG GMRC and VE curriculum is largely Aristotelian in orientation; hence, it is not a surprise if prudence is among the contents that the curriculum guide requires to be taught. Prudence in Aristotle's ethics is listed not only as a cardinal virtue but also as the mother of all cardinal and other virtues. For this reason, it is ironic that prudence, a value that must be developed into a virtue among schoolchildren, does not stand out in the MATATAG VE and GRMC curriculum guide. The teaching of prudence should pervade the entire MATATAG VE and GMRC curriculum, as virtue ethics remains a significant part of its cornerstone. Hence, it is reasonable to expect persistent and uninterrupted cultivation of prudence, the mother of all virtues, across grading periods and grade levels by constantly engaging the students in diverse prudence- cultivating exercises. As shown, some techniques that may be utilized to progressively sharpen the student's ability to make and carry out wise decisions are the following: Socratic method, COI, thought experiment, and debate. These and other techniques for teaching prudence have their own values that may or may not increase, depending on how well they were matched with pedagogical goals and lesson contents. Of course, such techniques may be deployed separately or in a hybrid style to increase their effectiveness.

Education is a highly complex enterprise. Pedagogical rigidity or reliance on a single or a few teaching techniques is counterproductive, as no one method fits every situation. Rightly, teacher education and training emphasize determining the most effective teaching techniques that align with teaching strategies. For instance, prolonged discussion fails if students are uninterested, while Socratic method alone may be too restrictive for broad

curricula. Teachers must have alternative techniques to draw from their arsenal of pedagogical munitions. Straight lecturing can be a practical option where the teacher needs to cover more topics within a relatively short period, say, toward the end of the grading period or school year. Straight lecturing, if done masterfully, can also be a demonstration to the students of how to think about and speak the language of the subject matter before them.

For mastering problem-solving skills required in standards-based tests like the Civil Service Exam, PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study), UPCAT (University of the Philippines College Admission Test), NMAT (National Medical Admission Test), University of the Philippines Law Aptitude Test (UP LAE), repetitive drills are often more effective than freewheeling inquiry. Note that the problem-solving or higher-order thinking skills (e.g., analytic, interpretive, reasoning, evaluation, and conclusion-drawing skills) tested in the said tests are tightly tied to the concept of prudence. Notwithstanding the criticisms leveled against drills, the repetitive exercises for answering multiple-choice tests in critical thinking, with the guidance of an able teacher, are a technique that effectively supports the student's application for admission to a higher learning or professional institution. Ultimately, the "best" technique depends on the context and objectives. While drills serve standardized testing, structured debates are indispensable for developing the intellectual habits needed to resolve complex moral or social issues. In short, there is no universal "super technique," as the pedagogical value of every technique can vary from one educational context and set of objectives to another.

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