

***Phronesis* and Virtue Internalisation**

It has been suggested in passing that *phronesis* can facilitate the internalisation of virtue (e.g., Jubilee Centre, 2022; Kristjánsson, 2017). This conceptual paper takes a closer look at some possible connections between (1) the development of *phronesis* and (2) the internalisation of virtue.

1. *Phronesis*

The paper follows Kristjánsson and Fowers' (2024) neo-Aristotelian model of *phronesis*, comprising four components or functions:

- i. *Constitutive* (moral perception)
- ii. *Emotional regulative* (reason-infused emotion)
- iii. *Blueprint* (a general justifiable conception of the good life)
- iv. *Integrative* (adjudication between conflicting virtues).

2. Virtue Internalisation

Among the various components of virtue – perception, emotion, desire, motivation, behaviour, style (Kristjánsson, 2017) – the only component that could meaningfully undergo a process of “internalisation” is that of motivation. This process is described by Organismic Integration Theory (Pelletier & Rocchi, 2023; Ryan & Deci, 2017), which situates four types of motivation along an autonomy continuum:

- a. *External* (rewards, sanctions, compliance)
- b. *Introjected* (avoid guilt, enhance self-worth)
- c. *Identified* (personally valued behaviour)
- d. *Integrated* (coherence with other aspects of the self).

Thus, a virtue would be internalised as its motivation moved along this continuum, from (a) to (d). It is worth observing that (a)-(d) largely concur with Aristotelian levels of moral development (e.g., Curzer, 2012; Sanderse, 2017; cf. Krettenauer & Stichter, 2023).

3. Connections between (1) and (2)

(iii) → (c)

Having a blueprint of the good life encourages one to personally value or identify with behaviours that align with this blueprint.

(c) → (iv)

The integrative function of *phronesis* needs virtues to act upon; one cannot adjudicate between conflicting virtues until one has sufficiently internalised – to the level of (c), I would argue – at least two virtues.

(iv) → (d)

Apparent conflict among internalised virtues must be resolved before one can experience the self as fully coherent.

References

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