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Toward the virtuous mover: a neo-Aristotelian interpretation of physical education

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ABSTRACT

Background: The philosophy of the discipline of physical education among school, further and higher education curriculums remains misunderstood, understudied and underdeveloped. With growing levels of uncertainty concerning its philosophical nature, general future (e.g. eradication, more of the same, radical change), and the role the profession plays within modern educational institutions, there is an urgent need to acknowledge, problematize, interpret and to study the unavoidably philosophical nature of the subject.

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to strengthen the justification for movement-oriented character education in schools by articulating a neo-Aristotelian interpretation of physical education.

Key Concepts: Aligned with this goal, I begin by clarifying my guiding philosophical framework of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics by synthesizing the concepts of virtue, character, phronesis and eudaemonia. Subsequently, I deconstruct contemporary practices associating character education to physical education circles with the goal of illuminating the potential of a philosophically informed approach compared to the dominant practice-driven and anecdotal view of character. In summary, I address the field's; overreliance on caught character; overemphasis on performance virtue; disproportionate focus on résumé virtues over eulogy virtues; the use of character as a peripheral curriculum activity; and lack of emphasis on wisdom and eudaemonia. Thereafter, I articulate one Aristotelian interpretation of physical education as if (neo) Aristotle was the teacher himself. From this position, I describe an education fixated on the affective domain, primarily concerned with helping youth to comprehend their moral potential in life through movement and inspired by the view that the cultivation of virtuous skills, agency, and reasoning are foundational to a flourishing society.

Conclusion: By taking this approach, I philosophize the concept of the 'Virtuous Mover' and the potential ways in which school-based physical educators might begin to help future generations of youth to flourish.

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Nearly a decade ago, Steven Stolz's (2014) book titled *The Philosophy of Physical Education* presented a comprehensive insight into the nature of the discipline. Referring to the likes of Plato, Aristotle, Arnold, and MacIntyre among others, Stolz discussed various topics including

movement-oriented traditions, meaning making, the role of play in education, and the morality of movement. Unfortunately, it is argued that the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the discipline among school, further and higher education curriculums remain misunderstood, understudied and underdeveloped despite the subject being thoroughly engrossed in various permeating traditions (Schempp 1996; Stolz 2014). Much of this confusion, according to Theodoulides and Armour (2001), McNamee (2005) and Standal and Aggerholm (2016), is rooted in the field's constant need to justify itself as an academic subject in the world of education. Moreover, the apparent lack of professional consensus toward the morality of movement education, and how school-based physical educators should best complement this tradition in pluralist societies has served to limit the field's affective aspirations (Brunsdon and Walker 2021; Casey and Fernandez-Rio 2019).

Without firm and fertile soil in which to meaningfully base situationally sensitive forms of affective teaching (Jones 2008), in any sense of the meaning, it is not surprising that pedagogies conceptualized in the spirit of character or moral education in physical education have struggled to move beyond the test pilot mode (Casey and Fernandez-Rio 2019). Additionally, with growing levels of uncertainty concerning its nature (MacAllister 2013; Stolz 2014), future (e.g. eradication, more of the same, radical change; Kirk 2020), and the role the profession plays within modern educational institutions (Ward et al. 2021), there is an urgent need to build on the precarious discussion concerning the foundational moral philosophies of the discipline. Therefore, in response to the call to acknowledge, problematize, interpret and to study the 'unavoidably philosophical nature' of the subject (Stolz 2014, 2), the present paper articulates a neo-Aristotelian interpretation of physical education with the intention of strengthening the justification for movement-oriented character education in schools.

Drawing from Aristotle's theory of virtue ethics as a guiding philosophical framework (Aristotle, Ross, and Brown 2009; Arthur et al. 2017; Center for the Study of Ethical Development [CSED] 2021; Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues [JCCV] 2017; Kristjánsson 2015, 2019), I begin this paper by clarifying the concepts of virtue, character, phronesis and eudaemonia. Afterwards, I deconstruct present-day views and practices foregrounding character formation and critique their use in contemporary movement education settings. I do this not to be overly critical, but rather, to illuminate the potential for teaching character through movement. Subsequently, I will articulate an Aristotelian interpretation of physical education to twenty-first-century schooling to describe how educators might facilitate an education for the 'Virtuous Mover.' By virtuous mover, I refer to a mover (e.g. persons engaged in all kinds of movement, play, physical activity or sport) that is fully virtuous (e.g. persons who understand, are motivated to and continuously act virtuously), embodies movement-oriented moral wisdom and intentionally pursues their moral potential within movement circles.

Notwithstanding this purpose, readers should be aware that this paper does not include an all-encompassing review of the philosophy of sport literature. Rather, it acknowledges a foundational framework (JCCV 2017) that is intended to be a starting point for those who are unfamiliar with this affective philosophy. By framing the teaching of the virtuous mover in physical education as one important component within a broader habituated experience, it is hoped that the current paper will build upon colleagues (e.g. Hardman, Jones, and Jones 2010; Jacobs, Knoppers, and Webb 2013; Stolz 2014) account concerning the morality of the discipline, as well as promote flourishing-oriented discussions about the moral underpinnings of movement-based pedagogy (Jones 2005, 2008; MacAllister 2013). Further, I hope to highlight the importance of moral theory informing affective pedagogy and inspire educators to self-actualize their understanding of, potential for and ability to teach children morally. To this end, scholars would notice that this interpretation carries the ethos of what Kirk (2020) coined as a Pedagogy of Affect: that is, an axiology, theory, and pedagogy purely fixated on and motivated by the affective domain.

Philosophical framework

For a virtue ethicist, eudaemonia is the ultimate goal (Kristjánsson 2015, 2019). Otherwise understood as human flourishing or well-being, eudaemonia is about a life well lived. A life in constant pursuit of objective excellence, centered on the common good, and in search of true happiness with the aim of achieving one's potential (Aristotle, Ross, and Brown 2009). To achieve eudaemonia one must understand what it means to live well and to constantly reflect upon whether the knowledge they currently possess is sufficient for eudaemonia to occur. To flourish one must balance personal happiness and pleasures with their life satisfaction and refine their naturally acquired dispositions, skills and states of character in ways which facilitate greater levels of flourishing (Kristjánsson 2015). Well-being is not a sporadic and temporary state of being that can be achieved effortlessly, rather, it is a harmonious moment in one's life that has been refined over time. In this way, individual excellence can transform itself into humanitarian excellence. To achieve eudaemonia, however, one must possess a good sense of virtue and prudence (JCCV 2017; Kristjánsson 2015).

To be a virtuous person, one must cultivate moral, civic, performance and intellectual virtues into their character (Bredemeier and Shields 2019; Shields 2011; JCCV 2017). Character, broadly, refers to a cluster of dispositions and tendencies that are complex, multifaceted and are deeply connected to one's emotions, feelings and values (Arthur et al. 2017; Bredemeier and Shields 2019). Character, as informed by our socialized experiences, is inherently connected to historical, societal and cultural conventions and acts to influence how we interact with other human beings (Hardman, Jones, and Jones 2010). A person's character, consequently, is culturally constructed and socially integrated into an individual's behavior through systematic ways. Good character, as guided by various kinds of virtue, equates to knowing the good, desiring the good and doing the good regardless of the context (Likona 2009).

Moral virtues (Bredemeier and Shields 2019; Kristjánsson 2015; Likona 2009; Shields 2011) are essential to whether an individual can understand, ascertain, achieve and maintain eudaemonia and is therefore the most important type of virtue a person can possess. Moral virtues (Bredemeier and Shields 2019; Shields 2011) are broadly defined as characteristics that (in)directly motivate persons to act morally and counteract nonmoral considerations by empowering the common good via moral agency. Virtues of this kind might include tolerance, justice, compassion and integrity (JCCV 2017). Not only are moral virtues the most important but they are the most challenging to conceptualize, develop and adhere to over the course of one's life (Kristjánsson 2015). In this way, moral virtues are at the core of what it means to be human. It is the subconscious instrument individual's use to navigate all aspects of life and informs what they deem to be the most appropriate (moral) actions to take. It is the glue that is molded through habituation and teaching, among other things, which underpins all types of virtue together and balances one's virtue- or vice-like behaviors (Arthur et al. 2017; Shields 2011).

Civic virtues (Kristjánsson 2015; Shields 2011) are primarily concerned with others, and those with which people share human history, culture and society. Contemporary perspectives foreground civic virtue (Kristjánsson 2015) as essential to a flourishing society as this requires an inclination to and passion for empowering common good. Specifically, civic virtues refer to dispositions that enable a person to conscientiously engage in society in ways which support societal and cultural well-being (Bredemeier and Shields 2019). Examples of civic virtue might consist of public advocacy, civility, open-mindedness and valuing environmentalism (JCCV 2017). Civic virtues are thus, essential to the success of a democratic and socially just society as one must not only consider how their voice and actions benefit their own sense of flourishing, but they must equally consider how it enhances (or disrupts) the flourishing of those around them and in the societies with which they reside (Arthur, Kristjánsson, and Vogler 2021; Bredemeier and Shields 2019).

Whilst performance virtues or foundational characteristics (Brunsdon and Walker 2021; CSED 2021) are not intrinsically moral they are nonetheless necessary for a flourishing life. Performance virtues (Shields 2011) are dispositions that inform one's ability to manage life and to effectively

accomplish intended purposes and goals. Explained differently, whilst an individual might not understand what eudaemonia means to them, performance virtues can be understood as the skills, tools and qualities that an individual needs to begin and to take a hold of such a journey. By cultivating qualities such as ambition, assertiveness, discipline, perseverance and the like (CSED 2021), civic and intellectual virtues can remain true to their foundations in which they were cultivated. Indeed, an ethic of excellence (e.g. high levels of performance virtue) is perhaps the most visible and teachable type of virtue when compared to for example, intellectual virtues, however, it can equally be the most challenging to balance when in pursuit of eudaemonia (Berger 2003). From this lens, performance virtues can only be considered as truly virtuous when the virtues jointly serve moral means and ends (Kristjánsson 2015, 2019).

Intellectual virtues (Baehr 2021; Kristjánsson 2015), when compared to other types of virtue are those most closely connected to that of phronesis. Intellectual virtues (Baehr 2021) are the complex bridges that join all types of virtue together and serve to deliberate on which knowledge(s) are most useful and which (virtuous) action(s) are the most appropriate. Thus, possessing a good sense of intellectual virtue can be referred to as having an assortment of overarching habits of mind or critical thought that motivates one's pursuit of eudaemonia (Kristjánsson 2015). In this view, virtues such as curiosity, attentiveness, analytical thinking and empathy (CSED 2021) are at the forefront of one's pursuit of truth and act to balance an individual's unique motivations with their feelings, emotions, abilities and current positionality in society. Virtues of this kind act to mediate for and against the kinds of moral friendship (e.g. friendships of mutual appreciation, self-reinforcement, love in the pursuit of eudaemonia) or nonmoral and amoral friendship (e.g. utility-based friendships or exclusive pleasure-based friendships) one develops overtime (Kristjánsson 2015). Significant to intellectual virtue, therefore, are person's ability to discern what constitutes as (not)enough virtue in a constantly developing context and culture.

Having cultivated moral, civic, performance and intellectual virtues into their character, one would be able to develop a good sense of phronesis. Otherwise understood as practical wisdom, phronesis (Kristjánsson 2015) can be defined as a necessary ingredient required to make distinct moral judgments between excellences verses wickedness, what's best for the particulars (e.g. individual or highly specific experiences) and the universals (e.g. common experiences shared by groups of people), and ultimately influences the types of virtues that ought to be embodied. While a virtue ethicist would have no issue with an individual pursuing knowledge itself and attaining various forms of intelligences, an Aristotelian posits the need for the individual using the knowledge they possess in a wise and ethical manner because simply maintaining knowledge is not sufficient for eudaemonia. Thus, practical wisdom is the feature that balances mixed, virtue- and vice-like behaviors via a golden mean and assists one's ability to use different and often competing virtues (Kristjánsson 2015).

A phronetic person, therefore, is one with a comprehensive knowledge of what constitutes virtuous and vicious behavior but is unequivocally motivated toward promoting the common good (Kristjánsson 2019). Wisdom, is practical because the most appropriate actions can be logically coupled with well-thought-out reasoning and emotions and become connected to an individual's self-actualized natural character. Having developed their states of character in ways that facilitate a good sense of phronesis (e.g. by practicing and internalizing various virtues), one would be more likely to achieve the kind of eudaemonia espoused in neo-Aristotelian moral philosophy (Brunsdon and Walker 2021).

Having now clarified my guiding philosophical framework, the remainder of the paper is dedicated to presenting a neo-Aristotelian interpretation of school physical education as if (neo) Aristotle was the teacher himself. Thus, I begin by presenting a critique in which I deconstruct five contemporary practices related to character and physical education. Afterwards, I problematize the concepts of virtue, phronesis and eudaemonia in a broad pedagogical sense (Jacobs, Knoppers, and Webb 2013; Jones 2008) before philosophizing the concept of the virtuous mover. By framing physical education as an integral developmental platform connected to a broader habituated

experience, I, like Camiré and Trudel (2010), believe that teachers and administrators would become more proactive in their moral programming.

Critique of contemporary character education practices in physical education

Although the terms character and character education would not alarm sport pedagogues, at least in the first instance, what it means to teach character to children through movement is on second thought, an entirely different affair (Jacobs, Knoppers, and Webb 2013). Despite its importance to the field of teaching and teacher education, a lack of professional consensus related to the affective domain is a significant shortcoming that has hindered teachers' ability to teach morally (Brunsdon and Walker 2021; Casey and Fernandez-Rio 2019; Colgan 2020; Theodoulides and Armour 2001). Given its unjustified association to political stereotypes, taboo myths and the like (Kristjánsson 2015), it is not surprising that pedagogies conceptualized in the spirit of character or moral education in physical education have struggled to move beyond the test pilot mode. In response to this predicament, I will now present five philosophically grounded critiques of character in contemporary movement settings with the aim of inviting educators to go beyond the realm of ethical bystanding (Likona 2009). Instead, like Jones (2005) and Hardman and colleagues (2010), I argue for a more intentional, inclusive, and meaningful form of character education in schools. Without addressing these misconceptions and practices this concept will remain problematic and continue to hinder the flourishing of youth.

Overreliance on caught character

The first and most obvious critique of current character education practices in physical education is affiliated to the field's overreliance on the perspective that character is inherently 'caught' (JCCV 2017) though experiencing content, models, school cultures, and teacher behavior alone (see e.g. Harvey, Kirk, and O'Donovan 2014). Despite the noticeable connection between the utility of distinct physical activities and critical elements of certain pedagogical models to affective teaching, without an intentional, well-thought-out and coordinated effort (see e.g. Shields and Bredemeier 2011) these isolated practice architectures are incapable of single-handedly facilitating an education for the flourishing child. In this way, moral teaching is stunted as youth are denied access to foundational forms of taught character that are essential for moral habituation (Arnold 2001; Camiré and Trudel 2010; JCCV 2017; Kristjánsson 2015). Put differently, caught character can, if left unchecked and to youth's own devices, be rationalized in ways which serve nonmoral ends, provide a safe space for the development of vice-like behaviors, and contradict an education for the eudaimonic person (Jones 2005). Through framing character education as a 'taught' and 'intentional' practice primarily and as a 'caught' and 'unintentional' practice on a secondary basis, not only would youth be provided opportunities to internalize different kinds of virtue, but they might become motivated to seek 'sought-after' virtues on their own accord. As Kirk explained:

We've always worked in the affective domain in physical education. We've always talked about character building . . . motivation, resilience, perseverance, fun, enjoyment, but always is hoped for byproducts of the work of developing physical competencies, rather than as intended learning aspiration. (Vasily 2021, 24:17-24:46)

Overemphasis on performance virtue

The second and not so obvious critique of movement-based character education practices is the field's overemphasis on cultivating performance virtue at the expense of moral, civic and intellectual virtues (Brunsdon and Walker 2021). As Camiré and Trudel (2010) argued, the physical nature of the field has favored the development of performance-oriented movers and has typically sought to teach 'other' virtues to enhance winning traditions and not because they are important in their own

right (e.g. the virtues of teamwork and loyalty are perceived as valuable only if they contribute to success). Given the pressures teachers experience due to curriculum developers extreme focus on examination results (Arthur et al. 2017), and the musical chair timetable structure (Casey and Kirk 2021) for example, it is understandable why educators are likely to deploy memetic practices favoring the development of performance virtues (Brunsdon and Walker 2021). Unfortunately, if children are to become virtuous movers (e.g. movers that possess full virtue), they must be exposed to a range of character traits that are not most obviously related to and motivated by athletics (Camiré and Trudel 2010). In this way, youth can become accustomed to including broader types of virtue into their character and become equipped to create and maintain ethical movement arenas. As Kristjánsson illustrated:

Moral values must remain foundational in a life of character, and while the cultivation of performance matters *in addition* to moral coaching, performance only has value in so far as it complements moral aspirations and makes them more serviceable. (2015, 6)

Disproportionate focus on résumé virtues over eulogy virtues

This third critique is related to the field's disproportionate focus on résumé virtues (e.g., occupation related virtues in punctuality or productivity) compared to eulogy virtues (e.g. deeply personal virtues related to an individual's being in honesty, communication or empathy) (Brooks 2015). Put differently, numerous educational policies (e.g. forms of accountability and funding, 'academic' qualifications, performance-related pay) would require educators spend more time teaching virtues that would make potential employers (and universities) happy, as opposed to deeper virtues that complement learners' relationships with their friends, family and communities (Arthur et al. 2017; Wilkinson et al. 2020). That is not to say that résumé virtues are not important, rather, they play an essential role in an individual's life, especially with the rise of neoliberalism in all walks of society (Bredemeier and Shields 2019). Résumé virtues alone, however, are not sufficient for eudaemonia as forms of wisdom in the working domain can and will continuously stunt the development of other types of wisdom that are essential to life outside of this space (Hardman, Jones, and Jones 2010; Jones 2005; Wilkinson et al. 2020).

Naturally, this is not helped when the rationale behind virtue development in physical education is, in some ways, motivated by equipping youth with 'sport-based résumés' which are then used and reinforced with external coaches in alternative movement settings (e.g. afterschool and external sport clubs) (Jones 2005). Equally problematic for eudaemonia, is when taught virtue is reduced to singular activity-based résumé virtues (e.g. virtues solely based on the tactics, strategies and values related to a specific area such as temperance when defending in rugby) and when the virtues are not connected to broader societal conventions (e.g. temperance in the workplace and personal family festivities) (Camiré and Trudel 2010). By balancing the teaching of eulogy and résumé virtues under the umbrella of eudaemonia, youth would be able to develop forms of wisdom that are conducive for human flourishing.

Our educational system is certainly oriented around the résumé virtues more than the eulogy ones. Public conversation is, too – the self-help tips in magazines, the nonfiction bestsellers. Most of us have clearer strategies for how to achieve career success than we do for how to develop a profound character. (Brooks 2015, xi)

Character as a peripheral curriculum activity

A fourth critique corresponds to the lack of time and space dedicated to the intentional teaching of character education in schools (Arthur et al. 2017) and in physical education curriculums. Unfortunately, when character is indeed taught, contemporary practices often position character education on the periphery of the curriculum through one off multi-activity units (Brunsdon and Walker 2021) or in watered-down schemes of work under the umbrella of 'teambuilding,' 'word

of the month,' 'extreme activities,' 'responsibility units' and so forth. With such a narrow role and importance in movement education settings (Camiré and Trudel 2010; Vasily 2021; Stolz 2014; Wilkinson et al. 2020), youth are unlikely to develop a cluster of admirable virtues through this context, are likely to correlate good character with 'alternative' activities and are strained when attempting to assemble connections between peripheral and core curriculum areas. Accordingly, the Aristotelian philosophy reinforces the need for character being at the heart of all teaching and learning experiences if youth are to become moral (sports)people, and if children are expected to transfer learning into other areas of life (e.g. the workplace and community) (Arnold 2001). In this way, the realm of physical education has the potential to become a platform in which all kinds of affective qualities can be integrated and (un)learnt (Harvey, Kirk, and O'Donovan 2014).

A view of teaching grounded primarily in a subject knowledge base – in terms of expertise, skill and competence – does not capture the essential meaning of the occupation. Good teaching will enrich and expand the minds of the pupils by encouraging reflection, self-evaluation and the practice of virtues. (Arthur et al. 2017, 8)

Absence of wisdom and eudaemonia

The final and most important critique is associated to the absence of wisdom and eudaemonia when teaching for character. Affective teaching can only go so far without an ultimate objective (e.g. eudaemonia or another moral end), or as Casey and Kirk (2021) prefer, without a particular main idea and learning aspiration in mind. A primary critique, then, is that rather narrow conceptions of 'character' has itself been used as 'the' affective outcome as opposed to the medium in which a 'true' affective outcome can be accomplished. In this circumstance, character approaches noticeably fail to facilitate an education for the moral, democratic and socially just citizen and are unlikely to challenge youth to achieve their moral potential (Arnold 2001; Arthur, Kristjánsson, and Vogler 2021; Stolz 2014).

With such a reduced role in the moral education of youth, especially in physical education, children become accustomed to superficially practicing virtue as opposed to embodying authentic forms of virtue into their state of being. Like children who exclusively experience the multi-activity model (Casey and Kirk 2021), children are more likely to become 'practice players of virtue' as opposed to virtuous movers (e.g. movers chasing their moral potential through virtue refinement) as they are provided relatively few real-life scenarios in which to develop, practice and master forms of virtue and wisdom acting to complement their flourishing (Camiré and Trudel 2010). An education for the virtuous mover can only be realized when realistic connections between virtue, wisdom and flourishing are intentionally discussed, and afford youth with the time to transform their relationship with eudaemonia. Through this occurring, affective teaching in physical education is more likely to shift from being an enduring problem (Casey and Fernandez-Rio 2019) toward a more nuanced and practiced reality. As Kristjánsson stated, 'Phronesis requires direct teaching about the nature of the well-rounded life, [and] in turn providing the learner with a theoretical blueprint of eudaemonia' (2015, 37).

At the beginning of the paper, I addressed the need to study the 'unavoidably philosophical nature' (Stolz 2014, 2) of the discipline. This was followed by clarifying my guiding philosophical framework before deconstructing the primary complications foregrounding contemporary character education practices in movement education settings. What follows, is one neo-Aristotelian interpretation of physical education in which I discuss human flourishing, virtue and phronesis to outline how physical educators might begin to integrate an education for the virtuous mover. Before doing so, however, readers ought to be aware of another important disclaimer.

This philosophical interpretation is but one of a possible many. With the aim of 'somewhat' reinforcing the initiative and concept 'Philosophy for Teachers' (Colgan 2020) from afar, except with a much broader and movement-oriented audience, readers should acknowledge that this interpretation is aligned with the view that teaching is a relational practice and that character can only be

successfully taught when students are understood, are equal shareholders in the educational processes and are respectfully invited to engage with the educational experience (Baehr 2021). Understood in this way, I align with Jones (2008) and Jacobs and colleagues (2013) by conceiving one broad overarching structure and not the (physical) content as this would ignore the situational sensitivity of virtue, could serve to limit the creativity of experts in schools and the extent to which this interpretation can connect with educators located in diverse settings. To this end, I hope that readers recognize their potential for integrating virtue education through movement and apply their unique expertise in ways that enable all youth to flourish.

A neo-Aristotelian interpretation of physical education

Human flourishing

For the neo-Aristotelian physical educator, an education for the virtuous mover would start with an emphasis on flourishing. As I described earlier, a flourishing life is one that is centered on the common good, is in constant pursuit of objective excellence, and is motivated by the ideal of achieving one's moral potential (Aristotle, Ross, and Brown 2009; CSED 2021; JCCV 2017; Kristjánsson 2015, 2019). Viewed in this way, a teacher would start by (re)identifying learners' views about, understanding of, and goals associated to movement and a life well lived through dialogue, be that on a one-to-one, small group and whole group basis. These meaningful, modeled and guided discussions, for example, can be logged in individual and class-based learning diaries, communicated at parent-teacher meetings, and used to help youth to identify the kinds of virtues (e.g. honesty, integrity, civility) and wisdom (e.g. personal and professional dispositions) they ought to aspire to learn to achieve eudaemonia. These goals can then be acknowledged, celebrated and then respectfully integrated into the teacher's moral pedagogy to create a curriculum for flourishing. As Jones (2008) described, by establishing a nursery of good character (e.g. a community with a shared moral ethos), a pedagogical focus targeting the health of the ethos (e.g. the moral culture of the class, content, curriculum, profession, society) and the character of its agents (e.g. pupils, parents, teachers) can become a more harmonious reality. In these small ways, not only will youth be charged with identifying, acknowledging, exploring and questioning (un)acceptable moral standards (e.g. dilemmas, rules, principles) that are silent to their learning journey, but they will be given opportunities to develop these standards should it be appropriate and if certain components are acting against societal flourishing.

Naturally, the mental capacity and maturity of youth will be significant to whether virtue knowledge, reason and action or the pursuit of phronetic knowledge, truth and understanding can be self-actualized as a eudaemonic objective and aligned to societal goals. Thus, an education for a good life, and especially one that is understanding of socio-political and spiritual issues, must begin with a guided reflection of one's current possession and expression of virtue and virtue in movement (e.g. What virtues do they presently demonstrate? What vices have they previously demonstrated? What level do they demonstrate these virtues and vices, and how is this impacting their flourishing?) (Hardman, Jones, and Jones 2010) prior to teaching learners how to interpret, analyze, evaluate, compare and judge their own and others character in morally appropriate ways (Kristjánsson 2019). For example, a wise sportsperson would know not to judge a fellow mover's character solely on their sports skills, and exclusively engage with able movers demonstrating high levels of performance virtue (Berger 2003) as one's ability to consistently create, maintain, and manage fun, meaningful, and eudemonic movement circles often require people to share spaces with people that demonstrate different traits and forms of wisdom. Alternatively, a virtuous team would recognize the value of determination and leadership, however, they would not prioritize these to the point where it diminishes the moral rules, regulations and rituals set forth by the sport itself and demonstrated by others (Shields and Bredemeier 2011). Consequently, the teacher's ability to use effective eudaemonic questioning is essential (Camiré and Trudel 2010) as questions such as:

How can our relationship with movement compliment your career and overall health?, How can families become connected through movement and why might this impact their outlook on life?, or How might sport present a pathway for cultural learning?, are likely to become commonplace.

Clearly then, the teacher's socialization, ability to highlight moral exemplars that are apparent in movement spaces (e.g. movement-based charitable efforts, elite athletes following written rules and codes of conduct, youth sport fair play rules and rituals), and to teach morally and for morality (Brunsdon and Walker 2021) inclusively in the artificial context of movement will have a profound influence on student's eudaemonic engagement, actions and reflections (Hardman, Jones, and Jones 2010; Jacobs, Knoppers, and Webb 2013; Jones 2008; Kristjánsson 2019). Given the variance of persons character, developmental level, social status and context (Kristjánsson 2019), the physical educator is required to acknowledge that youth currently being taught might not have acquired the right kind of movement experience or moral character necessary for flourishing but should be nevertheless dedicated toward cultivating all types of virtue in varying degrees over time.

Virtue

With a newly developed or renewed focus on flourishing, the neo-Aristotelian physical educator would prioritize the teaching of all kinds of virtue with the purpose of creating, developing, (re)educating, and then reinforcing youth's virtuous foundation. Before infusing the teaching of moral virtue with performance and intellectual virtue (Arthur et al. 2017; CSED 2021), then, movement practitioners might initially prioritize a fusion of moral and civic virtue with the aim of cultivating flourishing friendships. As I described earlier, friendships can both facilitate and undercut vice or virtue and is a significant bridge between those who do or do not lead a flourishing life (Kristjánsson 2015). Through fostering friendships that reinforce the importance of possessing a good sense of virtue and wisdom, the journey between memetic, progressive and transformative character education in schools (e.g. shifting from teacher- to student-centered pedagogy) might be realized more efficiently (Brunsdon and Walker 2021).

In this format, youth can be introduced to a philosophically informed pedagogic trinity in terms of the science of virtue (e.g. factual and research-based knowledge of virtue), the art of virtue (e.g. experiences where virtue refinement through creative and reflective practices are common) and the craft of virtue (e.g. experiences that promote mastery of virtuous skills). For instance, the science of teaching virtue would concentrate on introducing learners to a plethora of virtues and vices in terms of language, type, definitions, and meanings. For the youngest children, this might consist of teaching commonly understood virtues (e.g. kindness and patience) in a discrete and isolated manner before shifting to a more detached and embedded approach utilizing increasingly complex virtues (e.g. justice and humility) through progressively challenging content with more experienced learners. Next, the art of teaching virtue would prioritize opportunities for learners to practice and become good at identifying and deploying virtue in action, whilst equally discovering what vices are and how to best disrupt these occurring in the context of movement or otherwise. Guided by the golden mean (Kristjánsson 2015), the art of teaching virtue would help students to (re)create their personal character in the context of movement and would be a useful pedagogical tool when addressing complex dilemmas (e.g. fair competition, gamesmanship, societal issues) and helping youth to reflect upon the degree to which they employed a particular virtue for the right reason. For more experienced learners, this kind of education might also include acknowledging how physical activity settings (among others) nurture opportunities for an individual sportsperson or team to be vicious, before discussing how youth could potentially disrupt vices with competing virtues (see e.g. Shields and Bredemeier 2011).

Finally, the craft of teaching virtue would supply learners with experiences that enable them to mold, connect with, and to draw conclusions about related and often competing character traits which they may or may not have previously encountered. Accordantly, having created and then refined a moral disposition early on, youth would be in a prime position to practice virtuous skills

in isolated contexts before mastering their use of these skills in more generalizable settings (Arthur et al. 2017). Equally significant to the craft of teaching virtue, is that youth are provided equitable opportunities to cultivate theories, habits and skills that lead to the confrontation of vices in ethically appropriate ways. In this instance, virtue enactment can be embodied in isolation and communities as it relates to, for example, promoting ethical engagement in afterschool sport or working toward a particular school ethos. A pedagogue interested in teaching the virtue of courage, for example, would begin by defining the term and its relationship with the content (science of virtue) before creating a scenario and criteria in which to guide their students (courageous) exploration and engagement in the content being taught (art of virtue). Students would then be afforded opportunities to practice and think critically about this concept and to explore their own relationship with the discipline through the lens of the virtue (art of virtue). Depending greatly on the virtue in focus, the teacher would then create opportunities for students to demonstrate and explore their knowledge of this concept through the content in realistic ways, and to test their ability to employ the virtue at the right level, time and intensity (craft of virtue). To this end, this cyclical pedagogic trinity might then be used to inform future affective learning experiences and to guide movers toward possessing full virtue:

Character education is not about pushing moral learners wholesale from one 'stage' to another. Rather, progress in this area is piecemeal and often uneven. When a child learns mathematics, it does not progress from one stage of expertise to another in leaps and bounds; it learns one small method in this sub-area, perhaps forgetting another in another area, but gradually and cumulatively moves in the right direction, if all goes well. When things go badly morally, we grow base by degrees – virtue does not drop at once bodily like a mantle; similarly, when things go well, we normally grow virtuous by small increments. So any small improvement in virtue understanding or emotional sensitivity may count as real moral progress, even though it falls short of the overall actualisation of full virtue. (Kristjánsson 2019, 15).

Phronesis

Having cultivated a sufficient foundation in which various virtues are recognized and honored, the neo-Aristotelian physical educator would be in a prime position to promote the practical wisdom of youth on at least two fronts. At the minimum, and because all spaces require varying levels of phronesis, a phronetic teacher ought to facilitate an education focused on learning how and why to embody the right kind of agency through movement (e.g. agency serving flourishing). In this instance, one must constantly teach for the use and re-evaluation of virtue in terms of type (e.g. performance, moral, civic, intellectual), level (e.g. not enough, too much, just right), and appropriateness (e.g. use of supporting or competing virtue and vice) through diverse contexts if youth are to cultivate this higher-order virtue of phronesis (Baehr 2021; Kristjánsson 2015). For a mover without an awareness of their overly tenacious behavior in physical education settings would appear to be careless, rash, and struggle to find friends in which to meaningfully engage with. Alternatively, a mover with the capability of being tenacious but chooses to withhold this quality and instead demonstrates courtesy because it goes against the ethos of the nursery would appear to demonstrate higher levels of phronesis. Consequently, all nurseries must be willing to question their natural character (e.g. the virtues they acquired naturally) and to develop these in ways that allow the most appropriate virtue and judgment being learnt and applied.

Equally important to this phronetic foundation, is the role of the teacher in developing students' ability to skillfully reason, as well as foster an understanding of how to link phronesis to their virtuous agency. From this viewpoint, through teaching for a good sense of cleverness, open-mindedness, and multiperspectivity through unique and universal experiences (Baehr 2021; Kristjánsson 2015), logical connections between what virtuous, mixed or vicious agency is and could look like in the broad field of movement can be made more obvious and compliment learner's moral self-actualization. A wise group of movers after learning the rules of a sport and being presented with a problem or dilemma by the teacher, for example, would attempt to align their knowledge

of the content to their (moral) disposition and to respond to the problem in ways that align with their nursery's ethos. In this way, the science, art and craft of teaching virtue when coupled with memetic, progressive and transformative pedagogy (Brunsdon and Walker 2021) can assist learners' ability to challenge nonmoral movement arenas. Having an inadequate grasp of virtuous skills and knowledge of how and why to apply virtue in wise ways will, however, not only serve to limit individual flourishing but this would equally hinder the overarching aim of this philosophy, that is, to use wisdom in ways which contribute to a flourishing society (Aristotle, Ross, and Brown 2009).

The virtuous mover

Having prioritized the teaching of virtue, phronesis and flourishing, the neo-Aristotelian physical educator would have facilitated an education for the virtuous mover. That is, an education fixated on the affective domain, primarily concerned with helping youth to comprehend their moral potential in life through movement and inspired by the view that the cultivation of virtuous skills, agency and reasoning are foundational to a flourishing society. Naturally, what it means to achieve one's moral potential as informed by their engagement with movement is complex, unique to the individual and is reliant on the kinds of (moral) teaching children have experienced. As such, practitioners need not fixate virtuous mastery at the forefront of all their instructional and curricular opportunities and in the expense of movement-based content. Instead, they ought to prioritize a broad and comprehensive education that clearly integrates one's character formation to and through movement-based content, curricular and standards overtime and in meaningful ways.

In these coordinated ways, movers and movement communities of all kinds would be actively involved in developing an eclectic curriculum that is oriented toward eudaemonia as informed by their nursery's personal, socio-political and historical circumstances. Indeed, a practitioner motivated by this objective would disrupt instances of virtue imbalance, and where necessary, apply taught, caught and sought practices (JCCV 2017) that orient learners away from possessing vice. In doing so, the idea about harmonious and flourishing movement circles becomes a little closer as youth would be afforded opportunities to cultivate and embody movement-oriented moral wisdom. Additionally, while it is impossible for youth to become truly virtuous (movers) before their emerging adulthood stage, it is highly plausible that one's experience with movement can, when combined with their broader habituated experiences, contribute toward their possession of virtue and their capacity to morally reason by this time. With due consideration, then, the potential for and possibility of movers becoming virtuous through physical education and other movement education settings is too good of an opportunity to pass up as not only will this license youth to challenge their sense of precarity (Kirk 2020), but this will equally strengthen the role of movement culture as a vehicle for promoting human flourishing.

Conclusion

In this paper, I attempted to articulate a neo-Aristotelian interpretation of physical education with the intention of strengthening the justification for movement-oriented character education in schools. With this aim in mind, I began by attending to an issue at hand, that was, the need to study of the 'unavoidably philosophical nature' (Stolz 2014, 2) of the discipline. Subsequently, I clarified my guiding philosophical framework of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics by synthesizing the concepts of virtue, character, phronesis, and eudaemonia (Aristotle, Ross, and Brown 2009; JCCV 2017; Kristjánsson 2015, 2019). Afterwards, I deconstructed contemporary views and practices toward character education in physical education by presenting five critiques. In summary, this addressed the field's; overreliance on caught character (Harvey, Kirk, and O'Donovan 2014; Kristjánsson 2015); overemphasis on performance virtue (Brunsdon and Walker 2021; Camiré and Trudel 2010); disproportionate focus on résumé virtues over eulogy virtues (Brooks 2015); the use of character as a peripheral curriculum activity (Arthur et al. 2017; Stolz 2014); and lack of emphasis

on wisdom and eudaemonia. Thereafter, I presented a neo-Aristotelian interpretation of physical education in the form of the virtuous mover and as if Aristotle were the teacher himself.

This paper builds on the view that moral philosophy ought to inform affective teaching (MacAllister 2013; McNamee 2005) and does so by problematizing one of a possible many philosophies to the field. Additionally, it attempted to disrupt the field's apparent lack of professional consensus toward the affective domain in the hope of strengthening its position in the academy (Brunsdon and Walker 2021; Casey and Fernandez-Rio 2019; McNamee 2005; Ward et al. 2021). Despite this, if we are to truly understand and embody Kirk's (2020) concept of a pedagogy of affect, additional movement-oriented interpretations dedicated to the creation and maintenance of situationally sensitive affective pedagogies are required (Theodoulides and Armour 2001; Jones 2008; Standal and Aggerholm 2016). In bringing this paper to a close, I reiterate Stolz's call for teachers and scholars alike to study the unavoidably philosophical nature of our discipline so that youth can flourish through movement.

Disclosure statement

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