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Purpose as a moral virtue for flourishing

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Positive psychology has significantly influenced studies in the fields of moral philosophy, psychology and education, and scholars in those fields have attempted to apply its ideas and methods to moral education. Among various theoretical frameworks, virtue ethics is most likely to connect positive psychology to moral educational studies because it pursues *eudaimonia* (flourishing). However, some virtue ethicists have been concerned about whether the current mainstream concept of positive psychology can apply directly to moral education because it focuses on subjective aspects of happiness, but not its objective and moral aspects. Thus, I will consider whether the concept of purpose, which was investigated recently by a group of psychologists and emphasizes both subjective and objective aspects of happiness, can address this issue. I will examine whether purpose is a moral virtue contributing to flourishing, consider if its nature is possibly a second-order virtue and whether it is distinguishable from other second-order virtues.

Keywords: purpose, positive psychology, moral virtue, virtue ethics, happiness, flourishing, moral education

Introduction

Positive psychology has been one of the most significant developments in the field of psychology. Recently, it has begun to have a significant influence on studies in moral education. Scholars and educators in the field of moral education have attempted to apply the theoretical frameworks and methods of positive psychology to their research and educational activity (Kristjánsson, 2010a). At the most fundamental level, a group of philosophers focusing on the philosophical foundation of moral education have sought a way to incorporate positive psychology in their theories. Among philosophers, virtue ethicists would be most interested in this topic because their philosophical standpoint holds that the most important pursuit in human life is *eudaimonia*, i.e. flourishing (Hursthouse, 2012). In fact,

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eudaimonia has been the core concept of virtue ethics since Aristotle (2009). However, many moral philosophers, even virtue ethicists, who seem to be happy with the findings from positive psychology, are pessimistic about the efforts to apply positive psychology to moral education. Some virtue ethicists express concern that positive psychology, without careful moral philosophical considerations, is not morally justifiable or applicable to moral education. For instance, Kristjánsson (2007b, 2013) argued that the current mainstream version of positive psychology usually focused on only subjective aspects of happiness, which was not necessarily justifiable from the perspective of moral philosophy. However, positive psychologists, who initially focused on subjective aspects of happiness, began to pay attention to another dimension of happiness, that is, meaning, which seems to overcome the limitation of the previous definition of happiness that was mainly associated with hedonism (Seligman, 2011).

Unfortunately, these attempts to justify positive psychology and to apply it to moral education cannot be successful without serious and critical considerations from the perspective of moral philosophy. Although positive psychologists can develop a more psychologically sophisticated concept of happiness, this concept may not be any more morally justified than the previous one. For instance, we may imagine the counterexample of a happy and socio-emotionally well-adjusted gang member. This gang member is always happy and satisfied with what he is doing and understands the meaning of his job: taking good care of and having good relationships with his cohorts and doing his best for the sake of the vicious purpose of his group. Meanwhile he has his negative affection under control and has strong socio-emotional resiliency. If we define happiness, the ultimate aim in life, with only current mainstream positive psychological ideas, we cannot identify easily what is wrong with his case. However, if we take account of moral philosophy, we realize immediately that this case is not morally acceptable (Han, 2015; Kristjánsson, 2013). This simple example shows why moral philosophical accounts are necessary when attempting to apply positive psychology to moral education. Because of the very nature of this educational endeavour, that is, the pursuit of a morally, more specifically, a moral philosophically justifiable, developmental goal, it is inevitable to expect critical considerations regarding whether or not findings and suggestions from psychology, positive psychology in this case, are morally acceptable from the perspective of moral philosophy (Han, 2014). This happy, well-adjusted and resilient gang member, who does not seem to be problematic at all from the perspective of current mainstream positive psychology concentrating on subjective happiness, cannot be representative of the developmental goal of moral education aiming at flourishing.

Therefore, this article acknowledges the concerns of virtue ethicists and other moral philosophers, who have attempted to seek a philosophically valid way to apply positive psychology to moral education. Moreover, it will attempt to find if any studies in positive psychology are acceptable to moral philosophy and significantly inspire moral education. Thus, this article will focus on purpose as an

alternative concept that was studied by scholars in the field of social, developmental and positive psychology (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988; Battista & Almond, 1973; Bronk, 2014; Colby & Damon, 1992; Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964; Damon, 2008; Recker, 1992; Robbins & Francis, 2000; Ryff & Singer, 2008; Shek, 2012). Among them, Damon (2008) provided a well-defined explanation of the nature of purpose. He proposed, 'purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self' (Damon, Menon, & Bronk, 2003, p. 121). This purpose consists of three main components: long-term intention, actual action plan and commitment and beyond-the-self motivation (Damon, 2008). Given the definition and structure, the idea of purpose embraces not only subjective but also objective aspects of happiness, which were represented by the concept of beyond-the-self motivation. Thus, in this article I expect that it will potentially be acceptable from the perspective of virtue ethics. On the one hand, many purpose-related studies presented how the presence of purpose contributes to subjective well-being, which was measured by self-reporting methods (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch, 2009; Burrow & Hill, 2011; Burrow, O'Dell, & Hill, 2010). Moreover, Damon (2008) warned that we should carefully distinguish a noble purpose, which is morally acceptable and admirable, from an ignoble life goal (e.g. the goal of youth terrorists, who engaged in bombing London). Based on this account, Han (2014b) suggested that the concept of purpose would enable us properly to connect positive psychology and moral education. Thus, in this article I will consider whether purpose is morally acceptable and can be a moral virtue from the perspective of virtue ethics. I will also consider the nature of purpose as a second-order virtue and if so, whether or not it can be differentiated from other second-order virtues.

Purpose as a moral virtue

Is purpose a moral virtue? To answer this question, I will begin by reviewing the features of moral virtue proposed by moral philosophers and considering briefly whether purpose has those features.

First of all, a moral virtue should possess a dispositional element (Snow, 2010). It should generate motivational force for a certain moral behaviour and have a habituated and internalized disposition. The sense of purpose, purposefulness, generates motivation for behaviour, particularly that for the achievement of a person's ultimate goal. In fact, the necessary elements of purpose embrace not only intention, but also motivation and concrete action (Bronk, 2011). In addition, purpose should have a long-term character or disposition. Although it might be partially modified, it should not radically change in the short term in the absence of any significant life event (Damon, 2008). Thus, the hypothesis of this article suggests that purpose is a long-term disposition.

Second, a moral virtue should significantly contribute to the achievement of true happiness, that is, *eudaimonia*. According to the psychological studies of purpose, this is the most important necessary condition for flourishing. Without purpose,

our life will drift with no direction, resulting in a valueless life (Damon, 2008). In addition, purpose brings or at least accompanies various physical and mental benefits in terms of positive psychology. For instance, the presence of purpose is significantly associated with self-reported life satisfaction (Bronk et al., 2009), and positive affect, hope and happiness (Burrow & Hill, 2011; Burrow et al., 2010). As the results of positive psychological studies showed, it is obvious that purpose significantly contributes to the promotion of subjective happiness. In addition, when evaluating whether or not a certain trait, purpose in this case, contributes to the achievement of *eudaimonia* and can be considered as a moral virtue, it is necessary to evaluate it from objective as well as subjective perspectives (Kristjánsson, 2007b, 2013). Of course, purpose per se does not necessarily orient towards moral ends. For instance, some purposeful adolescents are trying to pursue their life purpose in non-moral domains including, but not limited to, arts, music, sports, hobbies and leisure (Bronk, Holmes Finch, & Talib, 2010; Damon, 2008; Damon et al., 2003). However, psychological researchers interested in purpose and life meaning have also to carefully consider the concept of *eudaimonia* as well as subjective happiness when they defined happiness in their studies (Bronk, 2014; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Their previous studies, which particularly employed empirical methods, have developed a measurement focusing on well-being based on the concept of *eudaimonia*. One of the main psychological constructs of interest of these studies was purpose in life, the main topic of this article. It was not closely tied to subjective, short-term well-being survey results, but regarded to promote long-term psychological well-being that had not been completely predicted by previous measures (Ryff, 1989). This purpose in life score was even closely positively correlated with biological well-being in terms of neuroendocrine, cardiovascular, immune measures and sleep quality while the hedonic happiness score was not (Ryff & Singer, 2008; Ryff, Singer, & Dienberg Love, 2004). Furthermore, the researchers have mentioned that we can possibly distinguish noble purpose from ignoble or evil purpose from an objective perspective (Damon, 2003; Damon et al., 2003), unlike the case of subjective happiness that is not evaluable in terms of morality. For instance, although a zealous terrorist can diligently seek his/her meaning of life and feel happiness from a subjective perspective by participating in immoral activities, his/her purpose can be neither morally justifiable nor admirable from an objective perspective (Damon, 2008). Thus, purpose also embraces objective aspects of happiness in terms of morality similar to the cases of other moral virtues inevitably associated with *eudaimonia* although the definition of purpose per se does not necessarily include any moral term.

Third, moral virtue can be fostered through habituation, internalization and teaching (Aristotle, 2009; Snow, 2013). Purpose would also be fostered in the same ways. Modelling, mentoring, tutoring and inspiring, which are the ways to foster moral virtue proposed by Aristotelian moral philosophy (Kristjánsson, 2006; Steutel & Spiecker, 2004), are also the most important ways for purpose development (Bronk, 2011; Damon, 2003, 2008). In addition, like other moral virtues, an early intervention, which Aristotelian moral philosophy has regarded as a necessary

condition for acquiring virtue in, is also crucial for purpose development. In fact, the majority of exemplars presented in Colby and Damon's (Colby & Damon, 1992) and Damon's (2008) seminal works emphasized that purpose in their lives had been cultivated since their early days, and early environmental and educational factors around them significantly contributed to the formation of their purpose. Of course, a person can find his/her purpose even in late adulthood (e.g. Virginia Durr), similar to the case of a conscientious person in virtue ethics. However, as argued in Aristotelian virtue ethics, a person who could not habituate or internalize moral virtue, but who is conscientious and can control him/herself as the result of the later development of reasoning (Wright, Matlen, Baym, Ferrer, & Bunge, 2008), might experience inner mental conflicts between his/her self-oriented desires and moral ends. Unlike this conscientious person, a virtuous person who has fully habituated and internalized moral virtue even during his/her early days, does not experience conflict and can put moral virtue into practice happily (Han, 2015; Sanderse, 2014). Thus, a person who established his/her purpose early would not experience many conflicts and would have stronger resiliency compared with those who had not. The majority of exemplars, who internalized their purpose in their early days, showed strong positivity in all aspects of their lives; on the other hand, Virginia Durr's life experience was filled with resentment, anger and another kind of negative emotions, which fuelled her purpose commitment, in the same way (Colby & Damon, 1992). Of course, some have proposed the contribution of encore careers to psychological well-being among elders (Freedman, 2006; Mark & Waldman, 2002). Some elders in encore careers who started their second careers after retirement even reported that they found a sense of purpose and meaning in life that their first careers did not provide them with (Encore.org., 2014; Simpson, Richardson, & Zorn, 2012). People in encore careers showed high scores in dimensions of physical and psychological well-being including purpose and meaning in life (Christ et al., 2007; Peter & Hart Research Associates., 2008; Topiwala, Patel, & Ebmeier, 2014). These reports would suggest that people can find their purpose in life and achieve *eudaimonia* even in their later life. However, we should take into account the fact that people's sense of purpose in life significantly declines as they age (Bronk, 2014; Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 2008). Given this fact, although we cannot completely deny the possibility of the acquisition of purpose in late adulthood, the positive contribution of the later acquisition of purpose to *eudaimonic* happiness and self-fulfilment would not be strong as the case of the early acquisition. Consequently, although people who discover their purpose in life in late adulthood must be psychologically healthier comparing to people drifting without any purpose throughout the whole life, their cases would be developmentally optimal if we consider people who realize their purpose in adolescence or early adulthood. Thus, purpose also requires habituation and internalization for its optimal formation, similar to the case of moral virtue.

Fourth, for a more sophisticated version, moral virtue should be guided by *phronesis*, that is, practical wisdom. Moreover, the training and cultivation of *phronesis* are also required for virtue development (Carr, 1996). A habituated and

internalized virtue by itself is merely a rudimentary form of virtue, not a fully developed one (Kristjánsson, 2013; Sanderse, 2014). Same as for the case of moral virtue, purpose also should require deliberation based on rationality for its complete performance, in addition to the process of early habituation and internalization. For instance, a dreamer or dabbler[1] may seem to have a rudimentary form of purpose, but if he or she lacks wisdom, his/her intention or experience will not necessarily produce positive outcomes. This is because an individual with only a rudimentary form of purpose, that is intention in the case or a dreamer or experience in the case of a dabbler, cannot decide the appropriate degree of motivation and direction for behaviour, as illustrated by the concept of the golden mean in Aristotelian virtue ethics (Aristotle, 2009; Foot, 2003). The presence of wisdom, which enables a person to consider carefully what they should ultimately pursue to flourish, unlike a dreamer; and by which means they can achieve the end, unlike a dabbler, allows purpose to perform optimally, leading to an appropriate end by providing appropriate behavioural directions (Bronk, 2011; Damon, 2008). Moreover, similar to the case of *phronesis*, which can be developed through advice and education, the deliberative and rational aspect of purpose can be cultivated in the same way. In fact, an interview-based psychological experiment showed that adolescents who reflected on and discussed purpose were able to make their purpose and meaning of life more sophisticated (Bundick, 2011). This aspect will be discussed again in the next section regarding the nature of purpose as a second-order virtue playing a corrective role.

Fifth, in addition to the previous considerations focusing on whether purpose is a moral virtue, I will examine whether it is universally acceptable. In fact, there have been continuous controversies about whether or not moral virtues can be universal (Hursthouse, 2012). More specifically, people have been suspicious about whether a certain virtue, a first-order virtue in particular, that is morally justifiable and admirable in one era or cultural context, can be viewed in the same way in another era or cultural context. For instance, in the case of pride, although regarded as a virtuous trait in recent years, it was regarded as a vice in the cultural context of Christianity in the medieval era (Lippitt, 2009). Consequently, might purpose as a moral virtue also be limited and not universal? In fact, purpose has been regarded as a virtue in virtually all eras and cultures, including Western, Confucianism and Buddhism cultures, although there might be minor differences in the concepts of purpose in each cultural background. For instance, Christianity regards purpose of life associated with a calling from God as one of the most fundamental necessary conditions for a meaningful and valuable life (Warren, 2002). In Eastern cultures, achieving the ultimate purpose of life, such as the completion of self-cultivation in Confucianism or true enlightenment and Nirvana in Buddhism, has been morally admired (Ho, 1995; Rāhula, 1974).

In conclusion, given those answers to questions regarding whether purpose satisfies necessary conditions as a moral virtue, I argue that purpose can be a moral virtue.

Purpose as a second-order (Meta) virtue

Given the previous accounts regarding the nature of purpose as a moral virtue, we may now endorse that purpose is a moral virtue that enhances flourishing. Then, where would be the most appropriate place for this virtue, purpose, in the hierarchy of virtues? The tentative conclusion in this article is that purpose is a second-order virtue that plays a corrective role and moderates the performance of other first-order virtues and the strength of motivational force of behaviour.

First, purpose plays a corrective role in the relationships among various moral virtues. Purpose provides other virtues with the proper direction where they should aim, and when and where they should be put into practice. For instance, courage without purpose would be meaningless. An adolescent, who was introduced in 'The Path to Purpose', was presented as an example of a 'dabbler' (Damon, 2008). He planned to work diligently as a soldier for years to gain a variety of experiences. However, he did not have any purpose for all of those activities; he just dabbled. Of course, he would be courageous when he worked as a soldier. He would do his best to be the best soldier when he was dispatched to dangerous sites, and he would discern when he should go forward, and when he should take care of his safety. He would be neither cowardly nor reckless. In terms of the virtue of courage, he would possess this virtue as a good, courageous soldier while he was fulfilling his military service. Nevertheless, Damon (2008) pointed out that his experiences and endeavours lacked a direction; of course, these experiences might be helpful to his future, however, he had no long-term goal. He did not have any purpose that organized the direction of all of those concrete activities. Without purpose, although a person might possess and exercise individual moral virtues at a certain moment, all of those individual virtues or virtue-like things, cannot appropriately facilitate the achievement of his/her flourishing in the end. Why should the young soldier be courageous at the moment he was fighting his enemies? It would be to flourish, according to teleological virtue ethics. If a virtue cannot contribute to flourishing in the end, its value in the teleological virtue ethics framework would be threatened significantly. Foot (2003) argued,

> We might think of words such as 'courage' as words such as 'poison' and 'solvent' and 'corrosive' so name the properties of physical things. The power to which virtue-words are so related is the power of producing good action, and good desires. But just as poisons, solvents, and corrosives do not always operate characteristically, so it could be with virtues. (p. 176)

Therefore, a certain virtue can be a vice and even valueless in a certain context. In this article, I contend that without the meta-virtue, purpose, the very value of a particular moral virtue, that is, its contribution to flourishing, would be nullified and become valueless, at least in the long term, and would become a non-virtue or even a vice, as Foot argued.

In addition to this aspect of providing an appropriate direction and guide to first-order moral virtues, purpose also modulates dispositions or motivations.

To show this, I will begin by talking about two imperfect statuses in the development of purpose: dreamers and dabblers.

First, dreamers have a sort of long-term goal, but they do not have any concrete action plan to realize it; so, as their very label implies, they are just dreaming (Damon, 2008). Although they seem to have a rudimentary form of purpose, a dream, they can hardly achieve their ultimate purpose, because they do not know what they should do or pursue, and they lack motivation for action, at least in the short-term. Because our lives are similar to building blocks, without any short-term plan or goal, which creates the foundation block for our whole lives, we cannot completely flourish in the long run. Therefore, dreamers do not actually do anything that seems to be relevant to or contribute to the achievement of their purpose, and they usually lack behavioural motivation to accomplish any concrete activity. As a result, according to Damon's (2008) account, which required concrete plans and actions as the necessary conditions of purpose, this unrealistic dream is a mere daydream that hardly generates any behavioural motivation to realize the dream. Finally, dreamers are not involved in any practical activity, which is essential to achieve their ultimate dream. In fact, they also do not know what they should do, and merely hesitate at that moment; there will not be any fruitful outcome if they stay in this subnormal status. Consequently, there will be no *eudaimonia* in the end for mere dreamers. Although they might feel happy to dream of their non-realistic goal, it may not be possible to say that they are living 'a worthy life' from the objective perspective. This suboptimal status represents a severe lack of motivation due to the absence of purpose.

On the other hand, there is the case of dabblers. As presented previously, the adolescent who vigorously participated in various activities, such as military service, but lacked an ultimate purpose for those activities, is an example of a dabbler (Damon, 2008). Given this example, the behavioural motivation of dabblers is much stronger than that of ordinary people. They always want to engage actively in various activities to accumulate experience. Unfortunately, their vigorous activities do not focus on a certain direction. We may say, 'They are doing well' at that moment; however, it would be hard to conclude that those activities will contribute to or result in flourishing in the end. Of course, dabblers' experience could be valuable itself, given the philosophical account that *phronesis* can only be developed through an accumulated and continuous life experience (Aristotle, 2009, pp. VI–8). However, dabblers are 'just' and 'merely' doing all of those things. As presented in Damon's (2008) work, when an interviewer asked why they were doing such activities across diverse fields and dimensions that did not seem to have any connection, the dabblers responded that they did not exactly know why they were doing them or how those activities could be helpful to make their lives meaningful and flourishing. Moreover, although a dabbler might have a strong affective virtue, such as passion, that initiates the motivational system, without contemplative activity, this vigorous exercise of the motivational system that ignites the dabbling behaviour might not conduce to flourishing. This is because rational excellence is a necessary condition for flourishing; it enables us to refine

the crude exercise of the motivational system ignited by affective virtue, that is, passion and to discern which is right and which is wrong (May, 2010). A dabbler lacks this rational aspect in virtue ethics, so he/she can hardly achieve *eudaimonia* with only excessive passion and behavioural motivation but lacking the direction of rational excellence. In essence, all activities would become meaningless and valueless. This status, represented by excessive behavioural motivation among dabblers, does not seem to contribute to the achievement of flourishing, i.e. *eudaimonia*, in the long run.

Given these two pathological statuses, a dreamer and dabbler, I will argue that the presence of purpose is crucial to guide the direction of experience and activity, and to adjust behavioural motivation. Unlike a dreamer or dabbler, a purposeful person can decide prudently what he/she should do at a certain moment, and can maintain his/her behavioural motivation at an appropriate level, which would correspond to the Aristotelian middle way, to achieve his/her ultimate goal. More specifically, first, purpose shows us the direction of correct activities. Furthermore, purpose guides the exercise of first-order virtues to a certain end. Thanks to the existence of this second-order virtue, a purposeful person can appropriately concentrate his/her energy on activities that are required to achieve his/her ultimate goal (Bronk, 2011), which will eventually bring him/her to *eudaimonia*. In addition, because a purposeful person can continuously and prudently determine if his/her current passion, affection and behaviour are appropriate for the successful achievement of his/her ultimate goal (Bronk, 2011; Bundick, 2011), it seems evident that he/she has rational excellence in addition to a mere affective virtue and unsophisticated version of a dream (May, 2010). With this assumption, I contend that purpose is a second-order virtue that enables a person who possesses it to decide which actions to take and which virtues to exercise at a specific moment for the achievement of his/her noble long-term goal, and ultimately for flourishing.

Second, purpose plays a corrective role in maintaining the level of behavioural motivation at an appropriate level. A lack of motivation leads to the non-productive status of a dreamer. This type of person is not usually involved in any constructive activity, and eventually, would not achieve any goal due to the lack of actual effort in realizing his/her intention. On the other hand, excessive motivation makes a person a dabbler. This person does not know where to focus and expend effort, so he/she could easily waste both physical and mental energy. Because humans have limited energy, wasting it due to lack of focus would not be helpful to his/her well-being. These futile developmental statuses do not help to achieve *eudaimonia*; they need correction and guidance to approach an ideal status. To avoid such failure in terms of motivation, purpose plays an important role. A person with this virtue, a purposeful person, can maintain an appropriate level of behavioural motivation to achieve his/her ultimate goal in the end, unlike either a dreamer or dabbler. This person knows when to act and when to stop, and where to spend and concentrate energy and where not to pay attention (Bronk, 2011; Damon, 2008). Thus, purpose can correct the two non-productive motivational statuses and guide a person to the ultimate happiness. Therefore, I conclude that

purpose can play a corrective role in deciding a proper thrust and focus of endeavours, and in controlling the degree of behavioural motivation between the two extremes: dreamers' (insufficient) and dabblers' (excessive) behavioural motivation.

Given these aspects of purpose as a moral virtue, I propose that it is a second-order virtue. However, it is still unclear that whether or not purpose as a candidate for a second-order virtue is distinctive from other previously proposed second-order virtues. Thus, I will consider whether purpose is an independent second-order moral virtue.

Can purpose be differentiated from other second-order virtues?

Given the accounts presented in the previous section, we may endorse that purpose plays a corrective role to moderate the performance of other first-order virtues for flourishing. However, there might be some counterarguments regarding whether this role is similar to or redundant with other second-order virtues in Aristotelian virtue ethics. In Aristotelian virtue ethics, several second-order virtues, like purpose, play a corrective role or add virtuosity to first-order virtues. These second-order virtues include *phronesis*, *megalopsychia* and justice (Curzer, 1995; Kristjánsson, 2013). Because they play a corrective role similar to that of purpose, some might argue that it is redundant to speculate whether purpose can be fully explained by one of or a combination of those three second-order virtues or to propose purpose as an individual second-order virtue. However, in this article, I propose that purpose is separable and distinctive from other second-order virtues, and is eligible for recognition as an individual virtue.

First, I will consider the case of *phronesis*, which is usually translated as practical wisdom. The most important role of *phronesis* is to enable its owner to exercise appropriately the ability of sensitivity and virtue judgement (Kristjánsson, 2007a). As warned by modern virtue ethicists, there might be conflicts between competing virtues at a certain moment, when a person encounters a moral dilemma; as a solution to this conundrum for virtue ethics, *phronesis* can identify which virtue to prioritize and pursue at that moment. With this practical wisdom, a form of second-order intellectual virtue, a person can make an appropriate practical decision regarding which virtue to perform. As proposed earlier, *phronesis* enables a person to sense the most critical point of an encountered dilemma. After sensitively perceiving the context of the problematic situation, *phronesis* enlightens him/her, and he/she can make a wise decision regarding what to do at that moment (Kristjánsson, 2010b). In short, the exercise of *phronesis* results in an appropriate judgement. Thanks to *phronesis*, a person can choose between the virtues of friendship and justice to cope appropriately with a given dilemma. In addition, *phronesis* can provide us with insights about the degree to which a certain virtue should be exercised. In terms of Aristotelian virtue ethics, *phronesis* is essential to find an appropriate middle path (Carr, 2014). For instance, when we need courage to cope with an impending dangerous situation, *phronesis* shows us the middle way

between cowardice and recklessness, which can vary across different situations. Given these aspects, I suggest that *phronesis* is a sort of second-order virtue and plays a corrective role. It seems that the work of *phronesis* and purpose is similar, because both of them play a corrective role and enable us to make an appropriate judgement at a certain moment for our flourishing. According to the psychological function of purpose, purpose shows us which activity to prioritize, which should not be done hastily to achieve the ultimate goal; in other words, as previously introduced, purpose provides us with a wise and concrete action plan. If we see this aspect, *phronesis* seems to be similar or even identical to purpose. However, there is a significant qualitative difference between the two, which is whether it directs a concrete, ultimate end. According to the definition of purpose, purpose must have its concrete end, particularly a beyond-the-self end (Damon, 2008). Of course, *phronesis* seems partially to share this aspect, the directedness to an ultimate end because the exercise of *phronesis* ultimately will result in the achievement of *eudaimonia*. However, *phronesis* itself does not necessarily have any concrete end and does not have to drive its possessor to a certain intended end. Although it provides its possessor with the ability to make an appropriate practice judgement at that moment, it does not seem to him/her that it is aimed at a particular and concrete end. On the other hand, in the case of purpose, purpose should drive its possessor to a certain beyond-the-self goal. Thus, because of this difference between the two virtues, whether or not there is a certain, concrete ultimate end, purpose would differ significantly from and be separable from *phronesis*, although the two seem to play a similar role in judgement making, a corrective and directive role as second-order virtues.

Second, *megalopsychia* (magnanimity or 'greatness of soul') would also be a second-order virtue that adds excellence to other associated first-order virtues. Aristotelian virtue ethics regards *megalopsychia* as the 'crown of the virtues'. This prime virtue always shows us a middle way between two extremes based on greatness and self-knowledge. It enhances the value of each individual first-order virtue (Kristjánsson, 1998). In addition, *megalopsychoi*, the possessors of this virtue, possess all subordinate individual virtues and all of the appropriate virtues direct and guide their conduct (Curzer, 1991). The most distinctive aspects of the minds of *megalopsychoi* are that first, their greatness is fully developed, and they are deserving and worthy enough to be admired by others and second, they have a correct self-knowledge and recognize that they are worthy beings (Kristjánsson, 2002). In other words, they would be recognized as the exemplars of great self-respect, instead of mere self-esteem (Kristjánsson, 2007b). Given these aspects, purpose seems similar to this higher-order virtue, *megalopsychia*. As was presented earlier, both of them play their roles across multiple spheres unlike first-order virtues, which are strictly limited to serve for only one designated sphere. In addition, both purpose and *megalopsychia* are second-order virtues, which exist above and orchestrate the activity of individual first-order virtues. Furthermore, purposeful people may be regarded as *megalopsychoi* because they are expected to be morally admirable and to possess self-respect. Nevertheless, I argue that these two virtues are

not identical to each other, and they are not conditional on each other. The most evident counterexample would be a purposeful exemplar that does not have positive self-knowledge. 'Some do Care' introduced 23 exemplars who dedicated their lives to moral purposes and showed strong moral commitment, and analysed their common psychological traits and moral characteristics (Colby & Damon, 1992). Of course, all but one of the exemplars seemed to meet the definition of *megalopsychoi*. In the dimension of greatness, their moral commitment and moral purpose were praiseworthy, and there was virtually no doubt about it. In addition, they had very positive attitudes toward their lives and themselves, so they respected themselves as well as showed the virtue of humility. Given these aspects, as mentioned earlier, these 22 exemplars were morally worthy people from both of subjective and objective perspectives and can be regarded as *megalopsychoi*. However, one exemplar, Virginia Durr, differed significantly from the rest. The authors pointed out that although her moral commitment and moral purpose were doubtless admirable and worthy, her perspective toward society and her self-view were significantly negative. According to the interview data, she believed that she was not a positive human being at all and that society was filled with injustice and grief. This negative self-evaluation and social perspective were the sources of her moral commitment in the domain of social justice; her moral purpose was to fix the problem of social injustice, and her negative affection propelled her strong motivation. Although she had a strong moral purpose, which was beyond the self and morally praiseworthy like those of the other introduced exemplars, I conclude that Virginia Durr was an exemplar of purpose, but could not be *megalopsychos* because her self-knowledge was not positive. Given this counterexample, a fully purposeful person is not necessarily *megalopsychos*, and purpose is not identical to the virtue of *megalopsychia,* although both the virtues can be regarded as second-order virtues.

Finally, the virtue of justice is generally recognized as a second-order virtue because it consists of other moral virtues, such as courage and temperance. In addition, for the comparison with purpose as a second-order virtue, I note that general justice deals with the distribution of goods of fortune to others (Curzer, 1995); in other words, its sphere is basically other-oriented, not self-regarding. Unlike justice, purpose is self-regarding. Although the definition of purpose proposes that a true purpose should be beyond the self (Damon, 2008), the main focus of this virtue is self; it is about what shall I do, what shall I become in the future, and what shall I ultimately achieve in the end; 'beyond the selfness' defines only the thrust of the purposefulness, not the direction of purposefulness itself. For instance, in the case of general justice, a practical decision resulting from the exercise of this virtue should appear in the form of other-oriented decision, such as 'I shall distribute something to someone in a certain manner' or 'I shall treat someone in a certain manner'. In fact, if a statement regarding justice were solely self-regarding, it would sound awkward. For instance, a statement 'I shall fairly treat myself' makes no sense given the ordinary definition of justice in general. A statement should deal with both self and other and their relationship should be

appropriate even if it is intended to deal with self (e.g., 'I shall not unjustly treat myself harshly, and shall not treat others too magnanimously'). On the other hand, in the case of purpose, purpose would generate different but valid self-regarding statements, such as 'I shall study at this moment to achieve purpose A', or 'I shall work somewhere at this moment to achieve purpose B'. As presented previously, statements regarding purpose do not have to be other-oriented. Of course, according to the necessary condition of purpose, that is, the involvement of beyond-the-self motivation, purpose A or B could be other-oriented; for instance, A could be 'become an environmental scientist and work against illegal used oil emission', and B could be 'become a world-leading musician in a new field to inspire other people mentally'. In these statements of purpose, other-orientedness exists; however, an individual practical decision guided by purpose itself is self-regarding, and is not necessarily an imperative regarding something that one should do for another's sake. Thus, although these two virtues share the same property in that both play a corrective role and are second-order virtues, because their primary directions differ from each other, other-oriented in the case of justice and self-regarding in the case of purpose, I conclude that purpose would be a second-order virtue that is qualitatively separable from justice.

In this section, I discussed why purpose could be a second-order virtue according to Aristotelian architectonics although Aristotle did not directly mention this virtue in his works. I surmise that Aristotle at least would acknowledge and appreciate this virtue as a candidate consistent with the system of Aristotelian virtue ethics. Because purpose plays a corrective and directive role, like the conductor of an orchestra of first-order moral virtues, organizing each first-order virtue to make it work in an appropriate manner for an appropriate aim at a given moment, it would be a second-order virtue, which shares similar aspects with other second-order virtues, such as *phronesis*, *megalopsychia* and justice. In addition, I presented the reason why purpose differs from other second-order virtues and should be recognized as an individual, distinctive virtue, not a mere variation of other second-order virtues. In short, I contend that purpose can be a second-order virtue, which shows the way and guides us to *eudaimonia* by providing practical, concrete and wise action plans and corrects our subnormal motivational status, the status of a dreamer (insufficient behavioural motivation) or a dabbler (extreme behavioural motivation).

Conclusion

This article examined whether purpose is a moral virtue and can contribute to the current topic in moral education, that is, moral education for flourishing, as proposed by a group of positive psychologists. Based on the accounts of this article, I conclude that purpose is a second-order moral virtue that potentially will contribute to the achievement of *eudaimonic* happiness and flourishing. In fact, the concept of purpose takes account of and should promote both subjective and objective aspects of happiness. Moreover, it should be morally justifiable.

However, future studies should address several limitations. First, although this article considered whether purpose is a moral virtue and can be justified from the perspective of moral philosophy, because its analysis was preliminary, moral philosophers should conduct further studies with rigorous and sophisticated logic. This article discussed in the first section whether the concept of purpose could satisfy several necessary conditions required for moral virtue. However, another necessary condition might exist, and even more disconcerting, some aspects of purpose cannot fulfil such conditions. This limitation also applies to both the second and third sections of this article. Counterarguments that were not proposed in this article can threaten the status of purpose as an individual second-order moral virtue. These concerns demand further logically rigorous moral philosophical studies focusing on purpose by moral philosophers.

Second, additional studies should connect psychological findings regarding purpose and virtue ethics. In particular, positive psychologists should seriously consider how they could examine the objective and moral aspect of happiness in purpose. Of course, there have been several measurements focusing on purpose or purpose-related psychological constructs developed by psychologists (Bronk, 2014). For instance, there have been measure for the presence of purpose (Antonovsky & Sourani, 1988; Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964; Harlow, Newcomb, & Bentler, 1987; Hutzell & Peterson, 1986; Law, 2012; Peterman, Fitchett, Brady, Hernandez, & Cella, 2002; Robbins & Francis, 2000; Ryff, 1989; Schulenberg & Melton, 2010; Schulenberg, Schnetzer, & Buchanan, 2011; Starck, 1992), for the motivation to seek purpose (Crumbaugh, 1977; Schulenberg, Baczwaski, & Buchanan, 2014) and for both (Battista & Almond, 1973; Bundick et al., 2006; Cancer Austraila, 2015; Kim, Sun, Park, & Peterson, 2013; Morgan & Farsides, 2009; Recker, 1992; Steger, Kashdan, & Oishi, 2008). These previously developed measurements seem to properly measure the development of life meaning, meaningfulness and self-realization, which constitute the foundation of *eudaimonia*. However, they seem to pay attention to the presence of meaningfulness or motivation for seeking meaning, but not to whether a present purpose or motivation is morally admirable or justifiable as they are; in other words, these measurement would not be suitable to examine the objective and moral philosophical aspects of purpose as a moral virtue, which were discussed in this article. Therefore, further positive psychological studies should focus on this point to develop a proper measurement and study how morality exists in purpose, develops among youth, and can be fostered through moral education guided by the theoretical framework of virtue ethics. In fact, these empirical studies will contribute significantly to the development of the philosophical and theoretical framework of purpose, given the philosophical account that virtue ethics can be empirically supported by psychological studies (Han, 2014; Jeong & Han, 2013).

Finally, moral educators should study how the concept of purpose could apply to the practice of moral education guided by virtue ethics. Damon (2008) and Bronk's (2011) interview study reported that mentoring and other kinds of careful educational endeavours have significantly fostered the sense of purpose among

adolescent exemplars. In addition, Bundick's (2011) intervention study showed that educational activity, including discussion and reflection, contributed significantly to the formation and development of purpose among students. Although these previous studies briefly showed that educational activity could foster purpose development among students, they did not study directly how moral education in general can contribute to such development. Thus, future studies should develop and test educational methods to promote purpose development in moral education at the practical level. In addition, previous developmental studies usually considered purpose in general, but not its moral aspect. Thus, future studies in moral education should attempt to design and test the effect of educational activity to foster moral and noble purpose on top of mere life-meaning among students.

Despite the limitations that should be addressed by future studies, this article can still contribute to the field. Because scholars have attempted to find a concept of happiness that can be morally justifiable and applied to moral educational endeavour, but without any clear answer from positive psychology, the concept of purpose examined in this article potentially will provide an answer for them. Although we should be cautious about the limitations, we can endorse that this article opens further debate and investigation regarding the topic of purpose as a moral virtue that can constitute a part of the aim and content of moral education.

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Note

1. Adolescents can be classified into four categories according to three criteria: intention, activity engagement and beyond-the-self motivation. Drifting adolescents have neither a strong intention nor engagement in activity. Dreamers have a strong intention and beyond-the-self orientation but are not strongly engaged in activity to realize the intention. Dabblers are strongly engaged in activity, but do not have intention associated with the activity or beyond-the-self motivation. Purposeful adolescents have a strong intention and are strongly engaged in activities that originate from beyond-the-self motivation (Damon, 2008; Malin, Reilly, Quinn, & Moran, 2014).

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