

PRACTICAL WISDOM AND THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE

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This is an unpublished conference paper for the 5th Annual Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues conference at Oriel College, Oxford University, Thursday 5th – Saturday 7th January 2017.

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“All in good time, my pretty.” – Wicked Witch of the West in The Wizard of Oz, by F. Baum

(I) I shall begin this chapter by describing a new Aristotelian virtue. (II) Next, I shall use this virtue to illustrate an account of how agents use practical wisdom as well as non-rational methods for decision-making. (III) I shall then extend this account to decision-making by collectives. (IV) Finally, I shall complexify my account of the new virtue, and use the additional aspects of my account as clues to bring out several further tasks of practical reason.

I. GOOD TIMING IS AN ARISTOTELIAN MORAL VIRTUE

What does it take to be an Aristotelian moral virtue? There are no make-or-break conditions, of course. The character trait which I shall propose (1) governs a sphere, (2) concerns some good, and (3) is conducive to happiness. It (4) consists of both cognitive and conative components, and (5) conforms to the doctrine of the mean. Its (6) components are independently realizable, (7) allowing for intermediate states between virtue and vice. It is (8) acquired through a heavy dose of habituation blended with teaching, and (9) presupposes both natural capacities and goods of fortune. I shall assume that such a character trait has enough Aristotelian features to qualify as an Aristotelian moral virtue.

Sphere, Goods, and Happiness

Virtue ethicists divide human life into clusters of situations, each cluster concerning an important sort of value, a good to be pursued, and/or harm to be avoided. Each virtue is initially defined as a multi-faceted disposition to respond well to the situations in one of these *spheres*. Courage is a disposition to respond well to situations involving threats to physical safety. Temperance is a disposition to *respond well* to situations involving opportunities for sensual pleasure. Truthfulness is a disposition to respond well to opportunities for presenting oneself to others. The defining good at stake in such situations is reputation or respect. And so on.

Virtue ethicists disagree about how to flesh out this *thin theory* of the virtues – how to specify the meaning of “respond well.” Some say that a trait is a virtue if it is good for society, or thought to be good by society, or good for humanity, or endorsed by God, or ... well, lots of possibilities have been proposed. Sometimes it seems that every non-contradictory philosophic position, and quite a few contradictory ones, eventually find academic defenders. Aristotle fleshes out the thin theory of the virtues in terms which are ultimately, though not directly egoistic. Following Aristotle, my *thick theory* takes the virtues to be character traits which are conducive to leading a good life, a life characterized by happiness, or well-being, or flourishing (*eudaimonia*). “Responding well” means responding in ways which generally enhance the happiness of the agent.

Of course, all acts take time and take place in time. But in some situations, time is not only a backdrop, but also an *object* of choice in its own right. Indeed, in these situations, time is the primary focus of our perception, passion, etc. It is crucial to assume the right stance toward time, itself, as well the things which occur within time. These situations constitute a *sphere* of human life. In these situations, as we are all exquisitely aware, time is an important *good*. More

time would make every healthy person's life better. What sort of good is time? The physicists' way of thinking about time (space-time) is part of theoretical wisdom, and so not central to my concern. Instead, I am going to be talking about a social scientists' understanding of time. My focus is time as conceptualized, experienced, and acted upon by people rather than as measured by machines.

Time is not a uniform thing; it might be flexible or fixed, expensive or free, inexorable or stopped, etc. Time has many potential aspects; it is quantifiable, fungible, weaponizable, transferable, commercializable, etc. Time is not an intrinsic good. Mere time is worthless, or even a burden, as we all know from the occasional experience of having too much time on our hands. Instead, time is an *instrumental good*. It is not just a necessary condition for happiness like health or friendships; it is a necessary condition for accomplish things. Time is a tool like money or power. Time is valuable because it is necessary in order to make a difference to the world, to have an impact on someone or something.¹ Since time is this sort of instrumental good, the appropriate stance toward time is a tendency to use it well, to accomplish something worthwhile with it, along with the appropriate intellectual and emotional stances. My society places great emphasis upon this feature of time, and backgrounds some of time's other features which are therefore less familiar and perhaps more controversial. In America, time is money.² Just as money can be spent, saved, given, or received, so we talk of *spending* time on or with, *saving* time for, *giving* time to, and *receiving* time from someone. I shall begin with this way of thinking about time, and later turn my attention to other conceptions.

Free time is an important sort of time, although the virtue I am sketching is concerned with other sorts of time as well. We all want more free time, but that does not mean that we want time to do nothing or even unscheduled time. Leisure time is not empty time, but rather time to do whatever one wants. Sometimes people want to relax, and that is certainly one sort of worthwhile thing. But people typically fill much of their free time with leisure activities, some of which involve important commitments to people and projects. Some leisure activities involve frenetic schedules.

The amount of the time one has at one's disposal depends upon one's job, family, health, wealth, etc. as well as one's natural and learned efficiency. One's time is, to a significant extent, a matter of luck. So is the nature of that time. Thus, time is one of the *goods of fortune*.

Clearly, some character traits concerning time are *conducive to happiness*; others are not. If virtues are comprehensive dispositions which are conducive to the happiness of their possessors, then there is a virtue which takes time as its object. I shall call that virtue *good timing*, and the people with the character trait of good timing, *time lords*.

Components and Mean

Each virtue is a complex package of dispositions to *perceive*,³ *feel*, *desire*, *think*, *choose*, and *act* in a particular way, about a certain set of situations.⁴ Courage, for example, is a disposition to perceive situations in terms of physical safety and risk, to feel fear and confidence, etc. Good temper is a disposition to perceive situations in terms of insult and injury, to feel anger, to desire retaliation, etc.

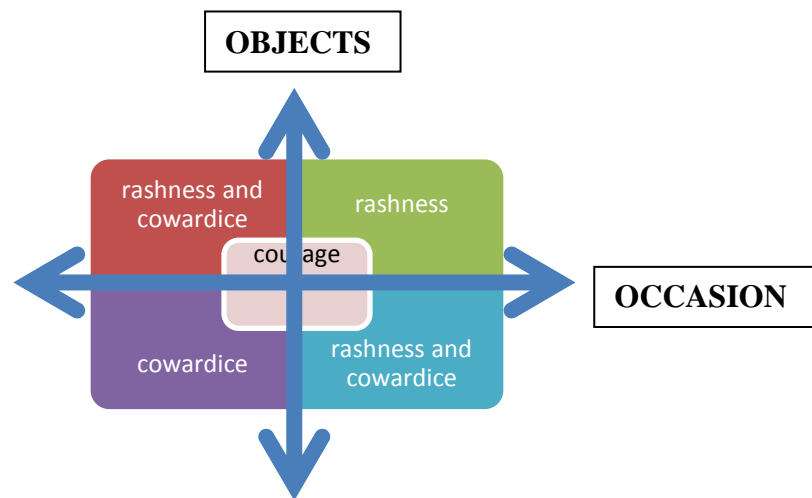
Each of these *components* of virtue consists of several *sub-components*. For example, the passion component for courage includes the disposition to feel fear to the right *degree*, on the right *occasions*, for the right *duration*, towards the right *objects*, with respect to the right *people*.

In each situation, some components (feelings, desires, choices, and acts) lie on a continuum, so their sub-components can be thought of as *parameters*. Appropriate feelings,

desires, choices, and acts are moderate with respect to each parameter. Inappropriate feelings, desires, choices, and acts are excessive or deficient. Of course, this is Aristotle's famous/notorious *doctrine of the mean*. To each virtue there correspond two vices *because* agents may go wrong in two opposite directions with respect to each parameter.

Indeed, a single agent can go wrong with respect to different parameters in opposite directions. For example, it is possible to be afraid of too few things, but excessively afraid of each of those things. Such a person is both rash (in one sense) and cowardly (in another sense).

All possible passional dispositions can be portrayed in a multi-dimensional space delineated by the several parameters. A multi-dimensional cube centered on the origin models virtuous passions. The space between this cube and a larger cube also centered on the origin models vicious passions. The space outside of the larger cube models brutishness. Here is a two-dimensional illustration of courage and its vices. The sub-components of the thought component (i.e. practical wisdom) are quite different. I shall discuss them in detail below.



Good timing fits this picture. It has the right *components*. People feel, desire, perceive, think, choose, and act in various ways toward time. For example, they *feel* rushed or relaxed, *want* more or less leisure time, are more or less *aware* of the passage of time, *consider* carefully or haphazardly how to spend their time, *resolve* to spend more or less time on themselves, and *act* on or against such resolutions. Moreover, people develop dispositions to react in these, and other ways with respect to time.

Each of these components can be analyzed into corresponding *sub-components*. The component of *desire* with respect to time includes the sub-components of degree, occasion duration, objects, and people. Time lords have the right desires with respect to time (desires conducive to happiness), but others overvalue or undervalue it. They desire free time too much or too little, or they desire it on too many or too few occasions. They desire to spend their free time on too many or too few things. They desire to spend time with only some of the right people, but others with all of the right people plus some of the wrong people. Similarly, for the components of passion, choice, and action. Overall, when desire, passion, choice, and/or action with respect to time is inappropriate (i.e. conducive to unhappiness), it can be described as either excessive, or deficient. Thus, the virtue of good timing conforms to the *doctrine of the mean*. It is bracketed by vices.

Good timing's component of *thought* can also be broken down into sub-components, although these will turn out (in section III) to be quite different than the sub-components of

feeling, desiring, choosing, and acting. One cognitive aspect of good timing is its general principle or value, the *right rule* of good timing. I take it to be something like this: “Spend time efficiently. That is, spend time on tasks that are worth the time.” Vicious actions are versions of underusing or misusing time. Just as the vices bracketing liberality are prodigality and stinginess, so the vices bracketing good timing are *time hoarding* and *time wasting*.

Disunified Components

To be virtuous, agents must possess *all* of the *components of virtue*. People who do not reliably perceive situations correctly, or feel the right passions, or have the right desires, etc. lack virtue. Moreover, possession of any component of virtue requires possession of *all* of its subcomponents. A person who is typically *excessively* angry at the right time, for the right length of time, about the right things, and at the right people does not have virtuous habits of anger. Neither is a person who typically feels the right amount of anger at the right time, for the right length of time, about the right things, and at the *wrong* people.

Possession of all of the virtue components and sub-components is a high bar; virtue is rare. Many people do not make it over the “good enough” threshold in *any* respects. *Vicious* agents go wrong with respect to all of the components. They not only have bad passions and desires, and act on them, they also have false beliefs about right and wrong which seem to justify their actions. Thus, vicious agents think they are virtuous. When Dwight, the intemperate drinker has his usual three drinks too many before driving home, he does not think, “I shouldn’t have,” but rather “I drank moderately.”

One might think that people who go wrong with respect to one component or subcomponent also go similarly wrong with respect to the other components or subcomponents. But not so. Agents often go wrong with respect to some component or subcomponent while getting others right. Each of the components is, to some extent, separable from the others.⁵ A common failure mode is to get the knowledge component right, but the passion component wrong. These people typically do know what is right to do, but to have trouble doing it because of wayward passions and desires. People who desire and feel wrongly, but typically act rightly are *continent*; people who succumb to temptation are *incontinent*. Less often mentioned are other character traits in which only some components are right. People with the wrong beliefs about ethics and the right passions who act on their passions (e.g. Huck Finn) might be called *reverse incontinent*. People with the wrong beliefs about ethics and the right passions who act on their beliefs (e.g. Himmler) might be called *reverse continent*.⁶ They think they are incontinent and continent, respectively. Aristotle refers to people with certain mental illnesses (roughly mood and personality disorders) as *brutish*. Brutishness seems to be an extremely high degree of vice. While people who fear enemy soldiers too much are cowards, people who have a phobia of mice are brutish rather than cowardly. The virtue ethics version of supererogation is *heroic virtue*, an extremely high degree of virtue. Aristotle distinguishes simple brutishness from brutish versions of continence and incontinence by whether the agents recognize the wrongness of their desires, and if so, whether they can refrain from acting on these terrible desires. He could have mentioned heroic versions of continence and incontinence, too.

States of Character	Passions and Desires	Reasons and Reasoning	Choices and Actions
Heroic virtue	Very Right	Very Right	Very Right
Heroic continence	Wrong	Very Right	Very Right

Heroic incontinence	Wrong	Very Right	Wrong
Virtue (<i>arête</i>)	Right	Right	Right
Continence (<i>enkrateia</i>)	Wrong	Right	Right
Incontinence (<i>akrasia</i>)	Wrong	Right	Wrong
Reverse Continence	Right	Wrong	Wrong
Reverse Incontinence	Right	Wrong	Right
Vice (<i>kakia</i>)	Wrong	Wrong	Wrong
Brutishness (<i>thēriotēs</i>)	Very Wrong	Very Wrong	Very Wrong
Brutish continence	Very Wrong	Right	Right
Brutish incontinence	Very Wrong	Right	Wrong

All of this applies straightforwardly to the virtue of good timing. Of the people who have the right attitudes towards time, and make the right choices, some also have good (or even terrific) desires and passions, but others struggle successfully or unsuccessfully to implement their choices. And of course, some people have the wrong attitudes, and others have wrong (or even terrible) passions. Thus, not only is there a virtue of good timing and a pair of vices, there are also corresponding character types of *continence*, *incontinence*, *brutishness*, and *heroic virtue* within the sphere of temporality.

II. PRACTICAL WISDOM FOR INDIVIDUALS

Now that good timing has been shown to be not only a virtue, but an Aristotelian virtue, I shall use it to illustrate my analysis of practical wisdom. Contemporary Aristotelians generally attribute three functions to practical reason: (A) adjudicating conflict-of-virtue dilemmas, (B) persuading or overruling passions, and (C) determining what to do and feel within the sphere of a single virtue.⁷ Practical reason has these functions with respect to every virtue. Practical wisdom is the disposition to perform these tasks well. I shall say a bit about (A) and (B) in this section,⁸ and then go on to discuss (C) with respect to individuals in some detail here, and with respect to collectives in section III. In section IV, I shall add four further functions of practical reason to this list. Although I shall utilize the virtue of good timing as an expository clue and college teaching as an illustration throughout, I shall maintain that functions (D), (E), (F), and (G) are as universal as (A), (B), and (C). Practical reason has all seven of these tasks with respect to all spheres. The abilities necessary to achieve these tasks are the sub-components of practical wisdom.

(A) Decision-Making When Virtues Conflict

Each virtue is a disposition to provide a complex set of appropriate responses to situations of a different sort. That is, each virtue consists of tendencies to approach situations with distinctive ways of feeling, desiring, perceiving, reasoning, choice and action. Each virtue provides a different way of perceiving situations, a distinctive *perspective* on situations. Each virtue offers the agent a view of situations in terms of that virtue's distinctive goods, right rules, salient features, etc. Courage sees and responds to situations in terms of safety and risk; good timing sees and responds to situations in terms of time saved or lost, well-spent or wasted; and so on. They see the same situation through different lenses.

Now virtues sometimes offer perspectives when they have no business doing so. They intrude into inappropriate spheres. Such *trespass situations* create conflicts between the home-court virtue and the interloper. For example, Gertrude is reliably, though not always right about

honor and dishonor. She takes offense when her teacher offers to give her extra time to finish her exam. Her good-temper trespasses into the sphere of temporality.

Moreover, spheres are not disjoint; many situations fall into multiple spheres. Such an *overlap situation* may be viewed in different ways, each corresponding to one of the different virtues governing it. And these different perspectives may yield different recommendations about what to do in that situation – another source of virtue v. virtue conflicts. For example, Hambone is just about to pull all of the delicate strands of his lecture together in the last few minutes of his 1½ hour class, when the fire alarm sounds. He knows that if he doesn't bring closure to his lecture now, the students will more-or-less forget the whole thing over the weekend, and he will have to spend another 1½ hours redoing the lecture. From the perspective of good timing, this would be a big waste. Therefore, Hambone has a reason – not a vicious consideration, but a reason flowing from a virtue – for finishing the lecture. Speaking anthropomorphically, good timing urges Hambone to ignore the alarm for a few minutes. On the other hand, from the perspective of courage, the fire alarm indicates that this is the sort of dangerous situation in which a few minutes could make a very big difference. Delay would be unacceptably risky, and thus rash. The virtue of courage gives Hambone a reason to lead the students out of the building immediately.

Trespass and overlap situations produce conflict-of-virtue dilemmas. One role of practical wisdom is to resolve such conflicts.

Determining what to do and feel from the perspective of a single virtue is non-trivial, but at least one may use common values, common principles, common goals, etc. to choose among options. For example, people may choose between options within the sphere of time using efficiency as the criterion. “A stitch in time saves nine.” But when adjudicating conflict-of-virtue dilemmas, one is faced with choosing among *incommensurable* goods, principles, goals, etc. One must determine which goods are worth which amounts and sorts of time. Can practical reason make tradeoffs without a common denominator? Can people reasonable rank one choice above another in an overlap situation?

People *do* make good and bad choices in conflict-of-virtue dilemmas. The question is “How?” rather than “Whether?” The answer is that practical reason compares the pictures presented by the competing virtues in trespass and overlap situations. In most cases, there is no conflict. The virtues present different, but compatible pictures. They urge the same action, or different actions which are both morally fine. In cases where the pictures do conflict, the picture which makes the most sense is the right picture, and its associated recommendation is the right choice.⁹

Of course, determining which picture makes the most sense is hard. A common sense approach is to reject extremes. Spending five minutes finishing a lecture while the fire alarm warns of imminent immolation would be an obviously bad choice. Common sense also says that when trade-offs are not extreme, then typically almost any choice will be morally acceptable. One picture may be best, but the other may be good enough.

(B) Persuading or Overruling Passion

Following Aristotle, I take the mind to contain three springs of action: (1) brute desires (e.g. hunger, thirst), (2) passions and desires influenceable by reason (e.g. fear, love), and (3) practical reason. Thus, the potential for conflicting impulses exists not only within a faculty (e.g. between different desires), but also between faculties (e.g. between reason and desire). When reason reliably makes right choice and reliably persuades passions and desires to concur, the

agent is virtuous. Some thinkers maintain that this persuasion is always easy for virtuous people. If that were true, then there would be no virtuous people. I shall maintain that persuasion is often difficult for everyone. Many strategies are useful; few are effortless. Even though she is good-tempered, when Isolde's student no-shows for an appointment, her later discovery that the student had an excellent reason does not immediately eliminate her anger. She may have to talk sense to her emotions for a while.

When reason is right, and reliably overrules rather than persuades bad passions and desires, the person is continent. If bad passions and desires typically win such conflicts, the person is incontinent.

(C) Decision-Making Within a Single Sphere

Practical wisdom is sometimes treated as a magical incantation which solves all of the problems confronting virtue ethics theorists. Discussions proceed thus.

Questioner: "How do virtuous agents do X?"

Virtue Ethicist: "Practical wisdom!"

Black box materializes. Questioner is silenced and dumfounded.

But this move substitutes a term, or at best a faculty for an explanation. Here I shall try to wash the glittery sparkles out of the term, "practical wisdom." I shall begin by describing some of the ways in which practical reason manages decision-making within a sphere. I urge a big tent approach; different sorts of situations call for different sorts of decision-making. Only some of these decision-making methods actually involve practical reasoning. (Conversely, I will later argue that only some practical reasoning involves decision-making.) When I pry open the black box, a dozen decision-making methods will jump out, but a thorough exploration of the box's contents must be up to others. Some of these decision-making methods are Aristotelian; others are not.

(1) Rule/Case (R/C)

A familiar sort of reasoning consists in applying general principles to particular cases. Technically, there are two similar versions of rule/case reasoning which require two corresponding, related abilities. R/C#1: General rules are combined with facts about the world to yield less general rules. This sort of R/C reasoning might begin at the very top: *ultimate principles* (right rule) plus facts yield *intermediate principles*. Or it might take place at a lower, but still general level: intermediate principles plus facts yield more specific principles. R/C#2: In the second sort of R/C reasoning, intermediate principles are combined with particular facts about the situation to yield *particular actions*.¹⁰

For R/C#1 to yield good intermediate principles, agents need (a) correct general facts about the world, (b) good ultimate principles, and (c) deductive reasoning ability, i.e. the ability to apply principles appropriately. For R/C#2 to yield right particular actions, agents need (d) correct facts about this situation, (e) good intermediate principles, and again (c) deductive reasoning ability. These are some of the sub-components of practical wisdom.

Consider R/C decision-making with respect to the use of time in teaching. Some good timing policies are *formalized* in the syllabus. For example, an absence policy is a rule governing how students spend some of their time. Other policies are *informal*. For example, a teacher might resolve to push former students who drop by for a chat out of the office when current students with appointments show up. In all such cases, a general principle is combined with general facts

in order to yield a more specific rule, or with particular facts to yield a particular action in a particular situation.

R/C decision-making is particularly appropriate for the task of distributing time justly because justice is cashed out in terms of principles. Aristotle's principle of distributive justice is this. Treat equals equally; unequals proportionately unequally. Thus the formal and informal principles mentioned above turn out to be rules for the just allocation of time.

(2) Means/Ends (M/E)

A very different way of reasoning is instrumental reasoning (i.e. reasoning towards a goal.) Like R/C, means/ends reasoning might be somewhat arbitrarily divided into two sorts corresponding to two different skills. M/E#1: Long-term ends¹¹ are combined with facts about the world to yield long-term means to these ends. M/E#2: These means are revised as short-term ends, and combined with facts about the situation to yield short-term means to these short-term ends. For M/E#1 to select effective means to these long-term ends, agents need (a) correct general facts about the world, (f) appropriate ultimate ends, and (g) instrumental reasoning ability. For M/E#2 to determine the right particular actions, agents need (d) correct facts about this situation, (h) right short-term ends, and (i) instrumental reasoning ability.¹²

Unlike R/C, M/E is intrinsically structured in temporal terms. Immediate goals are typically closer in time than intermediate goals which are, in turn, closer in time than ultimate goals. But this is true in all spheres; it is not a function of the sphere governed by good timing. In the sphere of temporality, M/E practical reasoning takes time to be a goal in some way.

For example, it is crucial that letters of recommendation not take too much time to read; they will be ineffective unless they are skim-able in one minute or less. To achieve this goal, Jedaiah might refrain from writing long-winded letters. Similarly, to ensure that there will be time to cover the crucial course material, he might set aside a couple of catch-up days when constructing a syllabus.¹³

(3) Correction

Most people are aware of a gap between what they believe they *should* do and what they believe they *can* do. Some of the causes of such gaps are general problems, such as a tendency to make snap judgments about all sorts of things. Others are sphere-specific, such as a tendency to be stingy or to drink too much. While eliminating these bad tendencies would be best, doing so is typically a long-term project with a high failure rate. In the meantime, many people adopt decision-making practices which take their failure modes into account. There are two sorts of gaps. Agents may be aware of typical failure modes, and expect that that, like most people, they will tend to fail in these ways. Alternatively, agents may be aware of failure modes peculiar to themselves. Like R/C and M/E, correction decision-making might be somewhat arbitrarily divided into two sorts corresponding to two different skills. C#1: Knowledge of what should be done is combined with standard coping strategies to yield actions suitable for most folks. C#2: Knowledge of what should be done is combined with coping strategies tailored to the particular agent's weaknesses to yield actions suitable for the particular agent.¹⁴

For example, Karl might resolve to sleep on important decisions because he knows that for most people, hasty decisions are often bad decisions. Karl might also resolve to ask his wife to make future tipping decisions because he knows that, unlike most people, he tends to over-tip. These compensation mechanisms are epicycles on other forms of decision-making, but they are common and important. Thus, I list correction as a separate type of decision-making.

(4) Guesswork, (5) Habit, (6) Pattern Recognition

Guesswork, habit, and pattern recognition are different ways to get to a decision. All three methods are alike in that they involve no practical reasoning. Guessing (or making a random choice) is neither automatic nor cognitively intensive, of course.

Acting from habit is automatic. It is just repetition of what went before. However, this does not mean that habits are brute, mindless reactions to situations. Habits may be quite thoughtful and complex, but the thinking goes on while the habit is being formed. Habituation and habitual action are very different. Habituation can be sophisticated and thoughtful. Agents build new habits deliberately, or adapt habits formed under some situations to new situations. When agents are building or adapting, then they are using R/C, M/E, or some combination or alternative decision-making method. But when agents are acting from already ingrained habit, they are not reasoning.

Pattern recognition certainly takes some thought. Not only must one recall a previous situation, and how it was handled by oneself or another, one must also recognize a resemblance to the current situation, and repeat the previously successful maneuver. Nevertheless, like habit and guesswork, pattern recognition does not involve practical reason. This may seem counter-intuitive, so let me explain. Common sense is a bundle of good perception, theoretical wisdom, and practical wisdom. These three are deeply intertwined in our daily life. Their cooperation and interpenetration makes it both nearly impossible and very important to distinguish them. As Aristotle might have said, it is necessary to separate them in thought. Roughly speaking, perception provides facts about situations; theoretical reason classifies situations; practical reason determines what to do about situations. Now we sometimes know what to do with certain sorts of situations, but find it difficult to recognize tokens of these types when we see them. Once we identify the situation, the choice of action is clear, so it mistakenly seems that identifying the situation *is* choosing the response to it. For example, suppose Leila's husband beats her regularly. She is wondering what to do. This is a practical problem; the task is to make a decision and then act on it. Leila is aware of the social consensus that leaving rather than reforming abusers is the right choice in abusive relationships. The challenge for her is to recognize that this is an abusive relationship. Though this might be easy from the outside, it is difficult for Leila. Her cognition is malfunctioning in various ways for various reasons. But finally she manages to label the situation as abusive. At that point, it instantly becomes clear to her that she should leave. Whether Leila is able to implement that choice is another matter, but she makes the choice immediately upon coming to see and classify the situation clearly. So it seems as if practical reasoning is what she does. But actually, she merely accepts the results of others' practical reasoning. The faculties that Leila actually uses are perception and theoretical reason.

(7) Optimizing, (8) Satisficing, (9) Obedience

Decision theory provides a plethora of decision-making algorithms. I have picked two. Sometimes choices are made by optimizing: examining all alternatives in order to find the best option which is to maximize goods and/or likelihoods or some combination of these. Philosophers as well as other folks are fascinated with this approach. But in almost all cases, identifying a best choice is unnecessary. Morality does not demand the best choice, but only an acceptable one.

Hence satisficing: examining alternatives only until the first acceptable one is found. What we should seek is an option which is good enough, just as when seeking knowledge in the

course of ordinary life we should seek beliefs which are probably approximately true. When returning from vacation, Manfred should settle for believing that his car is parked somewhere near the southeast corner of the airport parking lot where he left it, rather than worrying that it has been stolen, or struggling to remember whether it was in the 15th or 16th spot in row K. Similarly, he should set aside a few minutes right before class to prepare rather than struggling to specify exactly the optimum number of minutes.

Despite widespread agreement about the importance of independence of thought, and making one's own decisions, one of the most common and useful methods of decision-making is to pick an authority, and then do what the expert recommends. For example, since Narcissa is a only a novice plumber, she watches a U-Tube video about how to fix a water faucet, and then follows the instructions. That is, her decision-making algorithm in this case is simply to do what she is advised to do. I shall call this decision-making procedure, "obedience."

(10) Intuition, (11) Extrapolation, (12) Combination

Intuition is a fancy name for some other method of decision-making performed in a flash. Philosophers as well as other folks are fascinated by quick decisions. They suggest that truly virtuous people decide what to do so fast that reason doesn't even get a chance to become involved. But I suggest that this fascination with speed is inappropriate. People who are slow to reach the right decision because they are hindered by wrong passions or principles are indeed worse than virtuous people, but what makes them worse is not their slowness. People who are slow to reach the right decision because they are more methodical and careful are not morally worse than those who shoot from the hip and reach the right decision quickly.¹⁵

Extrapolation is also a name for some other method. Like pattern recognition, extrapolation begins with a relationship between current and past situations. But while pattern recognition works when the situations are the same, extrapolation works when the situations differ significantly. Extrapolation extends a pattern. The agent does not repeat his/her previous response, but rather modifies it in light of the differences of situation. For example, when Orchid finds it necessary to organize a speaking tour, she might build on her experience with writing syllabi, i.e. her familiarity with organizing the reading for a semester.

Agents use R/C decision-making on some occasions, M/E decision-making on others, habit on yet others, etc., but combinations on most. For example, much practical reasoning goes through three stages: perception, principles, and planning. First, *perception* frames the situation through feedback loops involving normative and descriptive beliefs, desires, and passions. R/C decision-making models the *principles* stage. Starting from general principles, the agent determines what particular thing would be good to achieve in a particular situation. M/E decision-making models the *planning* stage. Once having decided what would be good to achieve, the agent makes it his or her end, and settles on the means for accomplishing it.¹⁶

Example

Professor Petunia has been teaching for years. From **habit** rather than practical reasoning she puts her coffee cup and notes on the table when she enters a classroom, says "Hello, welcome back" to the class, and checks for chalk before beginning her lecture or discussion.

As part of an evaluation of her TA, Petunia observed her TA's class last week. She liked her TA's way of tying points made in the discussion to current movies in order to get points across more quickly and effectively, and resolved to reference pop culture more in her own

classes. When she does so, she is imitating her TA's technique. Because she is 60 years old, she must do it in a very different way than her 24 year old TA. This is a sort of **extrapolation**.

Over the years, Petunia has more-or-less memorized numerous stories and spiels which she uses in lectures and class discussions whenever they are relevant. When a student raises a familiar challenge or she comes to a familiar point in a lecture, Petunia **recognizes the pattern** from previous occasions, and deploys the previous response. Once started on a spiel, she continues from memory, alone. She does not have in mind ends, means, rules, or applications when she speaks, but rather her spiels emerge along well-worn lines. Petunia recalls typical challenges and makes their memorized counter-moves on autopilot.

On other occasions, Petunia does not see how to adapt a spiel, but she has a hunch about what would work well. Following her gut in this way is **intuition**. On yet other occasions, Petunia has neither a way to adapt, nor a hunch. But rather than expend class time trying to work out a reasonable answer, Petunia simply makes a **guess**.

Many of her decisions within the flow of a class discussion are made by applying certain pedagogical principles. Some of these concern the virtue of good timing. She has formally adopted a policy of halting the discussion a few minutes early to allow time for pulling the discussion together, and previewing the next meeting's reading. Informally, she adopted a policy of giving more time to low participators than to class big mouths whenever both raise their hands. When applying these policies, Petunia is simply using **Rule/Case** decision-making.

Petunia often has a particular objective in mind, a particular set of points she wants to get across. She works out a multi-stage plan about how to cover these points and leave enough time for the main points. She thinks not only about what to cover at each stage, and in what order to move, but how much time to spend on it. These decisions concerning time are made by using **Means/Ends** decision-making.

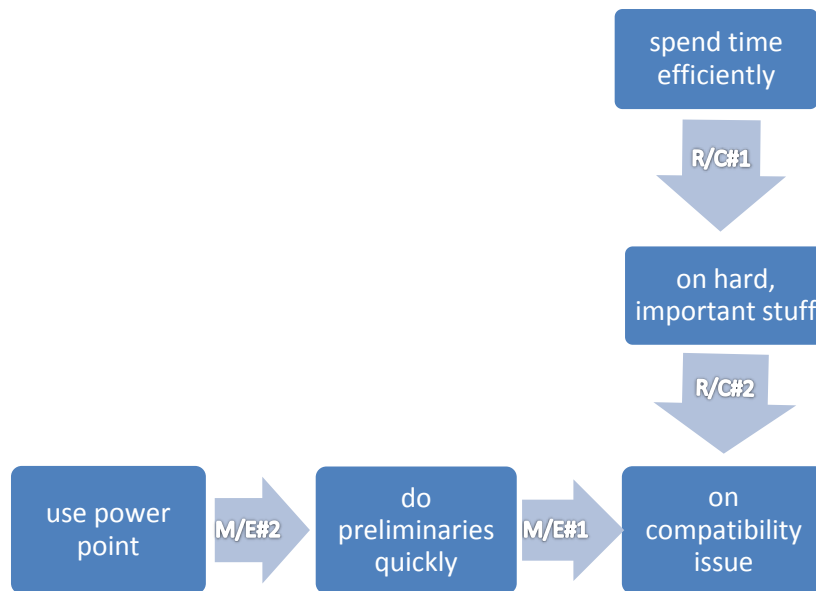
Knowing that female students tend to get less attention than male students, Petunia compensates by calling on women first whenever both men and women raise their hands. She is also aware of her own tendency to take articulate answers more seriously than they deserve, so she rephrases fuzzy answers before responding. These are **corrections** to her teaching style.

All of these ways in which Petunia makes decision about her class discussion are comparatively straightforward. But none can handle the complex decision-making necessary to lead a free-ranging discussion. After several moves, her spiels always run out, and Petunia needs a plan about what move to make next. As she is in new territory, she can no longer move from habit, pattern recognition, or extrapolation. Pedagogical principles alone won't do it. Nor does Petunia think at the beginning of her first class on the NE, "My goal is to explain Aristotle's Doctrine of the Mean. How do I get there from here?" It would be absurd to visualize a concrete goal such as this, and then work out a string of 47 moves which would get the class to that point. That might work in a lecture, but not in a discussion. Similarly, it would be absurd to think of all possible outcomes (or even a significant number of them), and then choose the best (or even one of the better ones).

Instead, Petunia thinks of some very general principles of good timing such as, "Spend time efficiently on things that are worth it." Next, she thinks of theorems applying this general principle to the classroom: "In class discussions, spend more time discussing hard, important stuff than on easy or trivial stuff." Petunia then applies this theorem to the particular discussion. She thinks, "A discussion of whether heroic virtue is compatible with the doctrine of the mean would get students thinking about the doctrine of the mean. The doctrine of the mean is important, and the compatibility issue is hard. Therefore, spending lots of time on it would be a

good use of time.” Petunia decides to spend the bulk of her upcoming class period on the compatibility issue. *Petunia has deduced a concrete end suited to her situation by using a chain of R/C syllogisms.* At this point, Petunia switches from R/C to M/E. She seeks a means to insure that the bulk of her class time is spent on the compatibility issue. “To get the discussion of the compatibility issue going, I will need to present both the doctrine of the mean and the concept of heroic virtue. But in order to spend the bulk of the class on the compatibility issue, I can’t get bogged down in these presentations.” Finally, Petunia seeks for a way to achieve this intermediate goal. She thinks, “I can’t get both of the doctrine of the mean and the concept of heroic virtue on the table briefly via a class discussion. I’ll have to present them via lecture.” She begins to create PowerPoint slides. *Petunia has deduced a concrete action suited to her situation by using a chain of M/E syllogisms.* (Of course, Petunia typically does not go through this whole business. In particular, she almost never starts with first principles. And most of the moves are informal or even unconscious.)

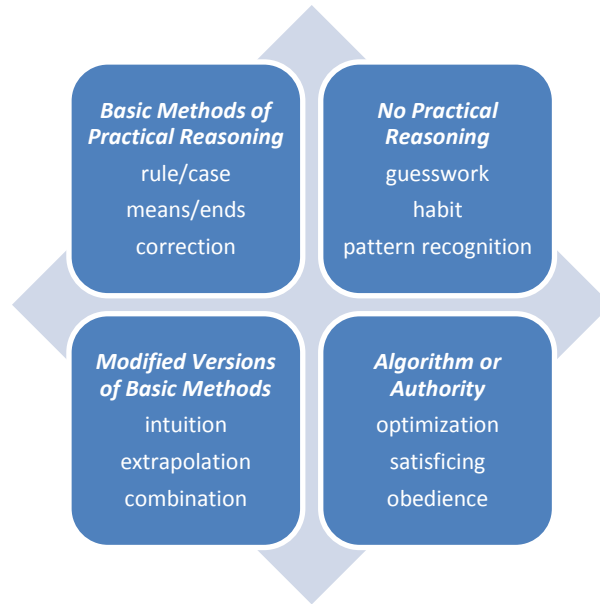
I have been using examples drawn from the virtue of good timing and the skill of teaching, but analogous points could easily be made for the bits of practical wisdom associated with any of the other virtues and complex skills.¹⁷ Courage, for example, requires several sorts of decision-making to cope with numerous different sorts of situations. Mastering the skill of soldiering includes mastering these different decision-making procedures. Just as Petunia, the teacher, does not use the same decision-making skills to deal with all of the challenges she faces, so Queequeg, the soldier, does not use the same decision-making skills to deal with unexpected attacks, meticulously planned offensives, maintaining equipment, etc.



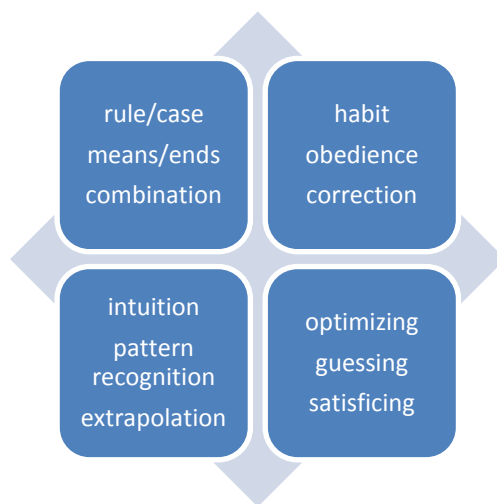
Interim Summary

I have presented twelve decision-making methods. They may be grouped in two different, interesting ways. I began by sketching three ways in which practical reasoning works (R/C, M/E, and correction). From these sketches I infer that practical wisdom consists of sub-components including at least (a) through (i). Time lords have all, or at least most of these sub-components. I suggested that three other common decision-making methods are not really sorts of practical

reasoning at all (guesswork, habit, and pattern recognition). Some decision-making methods consist of a multitude of smaller decisions, but I described a trio of methods which consist of a single decision to turn over the decision-making to an algorithm or authority (optimization, satisficing, obedience). Finally, I maintained that a last trio of methods (intuition, extrapolation, and combination) are really reducible in different ways to the methods already mentioned.



Curiously, an alternative grouping mimics Kant's chart of the twelve categories of the understanding,¹⁸ I organize the methods of decision-making into four different clusters, each consisting of three methods, where the third member of each cluster is (in some sense) a synthesis of the other two. The first cluster is straightforward: combination is explicitly described as a synthesis of R/C and M/E. The second cluster consists of habit (repeating ones' own previous action), obedience (following the actions dictated by someone else), and correction (performing a modified version of one's previous action in order to bring it closer to the dictated action). The third cluster consists of optimizing (seeking until one finds the best act), guessing (not seeking at all), and satisficing (seeking until one finds an act which is good enough). The fourth cluster consists of pattern recognition (doing what was previously done by oneself or by another person in a similar situation), intuition (making a leap to a different act without understanding why it is appropriate), and extrapolation (reasoning from the previous act to a new act).



III. PRACTICAL WISDOM FOR COLLECTIVES

Contemporary philosophers tend to think of choices as something individuals make, and practical wisdom as a virtue of decision-making which individuals have or lack. This is part of a larger, unfortunate tendency to think of agents as isolated individuals, independent of the collectives within which they are imbedded. Remedying that tendency is a long-term, multi-front project.¹⁹ One positive step would be to acknowledge that in addition to individuals, collectives also engage in decision-making and possess practical wisdom. Presumably, the choices of collectives can be *ultimately reduced in some complex way* to the choices of their members, but it is useful to think and talk of collectives as making decisions, just as we find it useful to talk about physical objects, even though such talk can be reduced to statements about subatomic particles or color patches. In both cases, it is useful because such talk cannot be *simply* reduced.

One reason why simple reduction is impossible is that people can have different beliefs, commitments, actions, dispositions, etc. *qua* members of a collective than they do *qua* private individuals.²⁰ Another reason is that over time, different individuals can move in and out of the collective without changing the collective in any significant way.²¹ Moreover, the decisions of members of collectives combine in complex ways. For example, we all know from bitter experience that mere knowledge of the predilections, principles, and plans of the members does not enable one to predict the outcome of a committee meeting. The decisions of a collective are not easily reducible to those of the members. The phenomena of group-think and mass-hysteria provide extreme examples. But more commonly, the decisions of a committee often result from compromises, clashes, second thoughts, crankiness after long meetings, or some other sort of group dynamic.

Once it is granted that collectives can make decisions, it is obvious that the decision-making of a collective may be better, worse, or just different than the decision-making abilities of its members. Of course, the practical wisdom of the members is an important factor, but synergies, conflicts, organizational structures, environments, and many other factors may also facilitate or inhibit the quality of a collective's decision-making. Thus, although the quality of a collective's decision-making may be *ultimately reduced in some complex way* to that of its members, often there is no simple reduction. A natural way to express the fact that some collectives reliably make good decisions is to say that they have practical wisdom. As we all

know from university committee-work, even if most of the members of a collective have practical wisdom, the collective, itself, may lack practical wisdom. Conversely, even if most of its members lack practical wisdom, a collective may have practical wisdom.

Each of the twelve decision-making methods mentioned above is commonly used by collectives as well as by individuals. Universities provide convenient examples of collective decision-making about time and teaching.

Universities' **rule/case** decision-making is formally enshrined in *operating policies*. A simple example is the policy which specifies that classes are to be scheduled no less than 10 minutes apart so that students and faculty members will have enough time to move from one class to the next.

Universities love making *strategic plans*. Of course, strategic planning is **means/ends** decision-making, much of which concerns time and teaching. For example, a university is concerned about its students' surprisingly long time from matriculation to graduation. One problem is bottleneck classes – required classes which fill up too quickly, forcing students to who need these classes to graduate, but can't enroll in them to register for additional semesters. To ameliorate this problem, the university plans to teach more sections of the bottleneck classes. To teach these additional sections, the university plans to hire more instructors.

As we all know, despite their penchant for planning, universities quite often make decisions without using practical reasoning at all. You join a committee and are informed that the committee meetings are on Tuesdays. When you ask why, you are told that the committee has always met on Tuesdays. That is, you are informed of the *custom* rather than given a reason. The choice of meeting time is made from **habit** rather than from practical reasoning.

A common experience in university life is that a cluster of people leave administration within a short period of time, and a new team replaces them. When the new team finds itself at a loss or makes some bad judgments, observers remark, "The old guard knew how things were done around here." Universities use **pattern recognition** to make decisions, and this fact is typically noted when a recurrent problem is treated as a new problem by a team without *institutional memory*.

When universities *extend a policy* to cover new situations or people, they often **extrapolate**. For example, a university might move from offering maternity leave to offering parental leave. The new policy will be a modified version of the old one, differing from it in a few respects.

As we all know, university committees faced with tough decisions sometimes just shoot from the hip. They make what seems to be an *arbitrary choice*. Good committees are actually using their **intuition**. That is, they come to believe that one choice is better than the others on the basis of subliminal clues or memories, and go with that choice, without being able to explain how they arrived at the decision. Unfortunately, most committees are simply **guessing**.

University decisions are increasingly dictated by accreditation agencies. For example, a university might change the number of hours a student is required to spend on certain sorts of courses simply because its accreditation agency tells it to do so. This is an example of the university version of **obedience**.

Much university decision-making consists in **optimizing** or **satisficing**. A standard way in which departments set about *hiring faculty*, for example, is to use whatever time it takes to select the best candidate. By contrast, a standard way to *hire low-level staff* is to use as little time as necessary in order to select an adequate candidate.

Universities know that they make mistakes – sometimes quite bad ones. Thus, they create an *appeals process* which is a decision-making procedure designed to **correct** for past and potential decision-making errors. For example, faculty members who are denied tenure are offered the opportunity to make their case to appeals committees.

To summarize, collectives make decisions. When they reliably make good decisions, it is reasonable to describe their decision-making dispositions as practical wisdom. Like individuals, collectives use a variety of different methods. I have described collective correlates of all of the decision-making methods mentioned in section II.

Types of Practical Reasoning	University Examples
Rule/case	Operating policies
Means/ends	Strategic plans
Correction	Appeals process
Guesswork	Arbitrary decisions
Habit	Custom
Pattern recognition	Institutional memory
Optimizing	Hiring faculty
Satisficing	Hiring staff
Obedience	Obeying accreditation agencies
Intuition	Seemingly arbitrary decisions
Extrapolation	Extending policies
Combination	Combination

IV. FURTHER FUNCTIONS OF PRACTICAL WISDOM

So far I have been utilizing what I take to be my own culture’s dominant conception of time to illustrate my account of practical wisdom. On the dominant conception, time is instrumentally valuable – useful for accomplishing various tasks. Like money, time is a scarce good. It is shareable, transferable, and quantifiable. Above all, it is to be used efficiently rather than hoarded or wasted.

The dominant conception is certainly not the only conception. Leaving aside alleged distinctions among cultures such as the distinction between “linear” and “cyclical” time commonly linked to stereotypes of West and East, many conceptions of time and good timing are present to a significant degree within my own culture. People often slip into using these other conceptions of time. The appropriate beliefs, passions, desires, perceptions, choices, and actions are different under different conception of time. So are the sub-components of these components. Mapping all of this would be a vast task far beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, I shall sketch four additional, vaguely existentialist ways of thinking about time: life-time, sacred-time, quality-time, and narrative-time.

As mentioned above, Aristotelians generally attribute three functions to practical reason: (A) adjudicating conflict-of-virtue dilemmas, (B) persuading or overruling passions, and (C) determining what to do and feel from the perspective of a single virtue. These apply to all virtues. I shall use these different conceptions to bring out four different tasks of practical reason (D) penetrating self-deception, (E) projecting values, (F) accommodating passions, and (G) creating a self. When performed well, these tasks produce aspects of practical wisdom.

(D) Life-Time

The dominant conception of time understands time in in the extended *present*. Since it is concerned with accomplishing things, its jumping-off point is “the now,” for that is when action begins. Rosehips decides to go on vacation, but to delay the ticket purchase in the (probably doomed) hope that prices will drop. Although nothing has happened, her action has begun; its first portion is “not buying tickets.”

A related, but somewhat different conception of time focuses on the total length of time remaining in a person’s *future*. On this conception, too, time is a limited, shareable, quantifiable, instrumentally valuable good. Indeed, it is the ultimate good of fortune, for without it nothing is possible. But life-time is not transferable; it cannot be bought, sold, given, or taken.²² After a while, one’s time is up! “Everything dies. Baby, that’s a fact.”²³ Viewing time in this way focuses the agent’s mind on the fact that life is not just finite, but too short. It is the ultimate scarce resource. Each person comes to see not just that all people are mortal, but that he or she is mortal. Each of us will eventually die. Moreover, each person comes to see this not merely intellectually and disinterestedly, but emotionally and personally. This recognition pushes people, in turn, to shake free of the trivial everyday concerns, and turn their attention to what is actually important.

Of course, one can generally avoid thinking about death (or even go into denial), or focus on death excessively (or even obsessively). These failure modes of thought might manifest themselves in correlated passions, desires, etc. Thus on the life-time conception of time, good timing fits the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean. The vice resulting from focusing too little on the finiteness of life-time might be called *inauthenticity*. The vice resulting from focusing too much on one’s own finitude might be called ... (wait for it) ... *existentialism*.

As Heidegger also pointed out, individually and socially people are constantly engaged in a huge conspiracy to deny their mortality. They use myriad maneuvers of distraction in order to “cover over” the fact of their limited life time.²⁴ “Everyone knows they’re going to die, but nobody believes it.”²⁵ Heidegger thinks certain shocking experiences offer people the opportunity to “uncover” this fact, i.e. to face it squarely. Perhaps so, but what faculty does the work? People do not *perceive* their own mortality. Nor do people discover it *emotionally*, for although the emotional reaction is extreme, it is a result rather than a cause of the discovery. Mortality is not uncovered by *theoretical reason*, either. Theoretical wisdom tells people that their time is limited, but that is not news. Indeed, that knowledge is what terrified people, and led people to cover over their limited lifespan in the first place. *Practical reason* is the faculty which handles the task of uncovering. People don’t simply recognize with shock that they are going to die; they recognize that there are things they want to get done, and things which will probably remain undone. Impending death is uncovered in terms of action. When a person a person kicks the bucket, the bucket list is seldom completed.

I suggest that practical reason is responsible not just for uncovering the fact of one’s own death, but for uncovering countless other covered-over facts. Life-time is a clue revealing a task of practical reason across all spheres. Why practical rather than theoretical reason? The reason is that unlike forgetting or misunderstanding, covering-over is a response to a demand to do (or not do) something one desperately does not want to do (or not do). It is about action. On an individual level, practical reason has the task of penetrating rationalization, denial, self-deception, etc. On a collective level, practical reason has the tasks of whistle-blowing, speaking truth to power, and generally telling decision-makers what they don’t want to hear.

(E) Sacred-time

A common theological perspective on time is that it is *not* a scarce resource, or even a good at all. Eternity, which is a sort of timelessness, is the valuable thing. From the perspective of eternity, time is not intrinsically, or even instrumentally valuable. It is merely a *preliminary to eternity* (afterlife or reincarnation). Time may even have negative value. It may be seen as undesirable, a trial or punishment to be endured on the way to eternity. On the other hand, time spent with God (e.g. in prayers or ceremonies) is sacred-time of extra-high value.

From the perspective of sacred-time, one can focus too much on this life, or on certain parts of this life, thus *overvaluing* time. Or one can focus so much on the afterlife, the next life, or the sacred stretches of this life that one is unable to cope well, or at all with this life, thus *undervaluing* time. Thus, on the sacred-time conception of time, good timing also fits the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean.

Whether to attach any value to time at all, whether to value it positively or negatively, and how much to value time, are all important questions. The answers are largely, but not completely provided by cultures. Individuals are able to reject their cultures' answers, to *choose* whether, and how to value time. This raises the question of which faculty has the role of correctly valuing time? Again, it is practical reason, for again the value or disvalue placed upon time arises as people consider what to *do* with it. For example, should one serve god or mammon in this life?

By drawing attention to the fact that practical reason determines the value of time, the sacred-time conception highlights the fact that practical reason determines the value of other things, too. Like time, these other things gain value by being valued. We project value onto them. And we do this by choosing projects – a task of practical reason.²⁶ On an individual level, practical reason projects value by setting intermediate and ultimate ends. The fan belt in the auto parts store is passed over as valueless until the belt in one's car breaks. Then it acquires value. On a collective level, practical reason projects value by formulating mission statements and their equivalents. Theoretical reason plays a role in determining which ends should be chosen, but it is practical reason which ultimately makes the choices.

(F) Quality-time

On the dominant, life-time, and sacred-time conceptions, time is an objective quantity, passing (so to speak) at a constant rate. Every portion of person's life, as well as his or her life as a whole consists of a certain quantum of time. Time is valued by the minute. But there is also a sense in which time is subjective. On this conception, what is valuable is not more time, but rather more pleasant time. We say, "Have a good time at the party," and "Spend quality time with your kids," rather than "Stay a long time at the party" and "Spend lots of time with your kids." The goal is not to experience and share a great many moments, but rather to experience and share magic moments rather than miserable, or even mundane moments. Subjective time does not pass at a uniform rate, but rather it passes slowly or quickly depending on the quality of the agent's experience of the *present*. Now the faculty which determines what counts as quality-time is passion. Passions set the qualitative value of time, and practical reason responds. For example, when spending time with her beloved, Tipperary experiences time through the lens of love which is why she opts to prolong the moment. That is, she decides to remain with her beloved rather than rushing off to read yet another boring, unnecessary philosophy paper because her love has made the time, itself, enjoyable. Conversely, time spent stewing in anger is painful,

and Tipperary will seek to escape it, perhaps by fleeing into the philosophy paper which she now *needs* to read.

Pursuing high quality-time is like taking your dog to the park. You set the boundary conditions: pick a safe time and place, keep Spot from fighting with other dogs or bothering other people, ensure that Spot is fed and watered, etc. Within these constraints, you let Spot follow his passion, and even help Spot have a good time by throwing an occasional Frisbee. Similarly, practical reason sets the boundary constraints for following one's passions, and thus pursuing a good time. And within these boundaries, practical reason helps out when it can.²⁷

Time lords pursue high quality-time on the right occasions, to the right degree, etc., but people who lack the virtue of good timing pursue high quality-time excessively or deficiently along these parameters. That is, these people pursue it in immoral or counterproductive ways, and these ways can be described in quantitative terms. Thus, on the quality-time conception of time, good timing fits the doctrine of the mean. The vices are *over-indulging passions* and *under-indulging passions*.

Practical wisdom listens to, and accommodates passion not just about time, but about all sorts of things. Contemporary philosophers tend to describe the right relationship between passions and practical reason as a one-way relationship. Practical reason is tasked with persuading the passions of this or that decision – persuading people that this is the right way to feel in that situation. And when persuasion fails, practical reason cracks the whip. This is a welcome corrective to the Humean idea that our passions are given, and reason is their slave. But we should also recognize that reason doesn't drive all of the decisions. The choice to allow or disallow the pursuit of this or that pleasure (and if accepted, to work to enhance it) is always constrained, but not always made by practical reason. Within its boundary constraints, practical reason should not try to persuade, or dictate to passion. Instead, the quality-time perspective shows that practical reason also has the tasks of listening to, and accommodating the passions. Philosophers tend to overvalue reason and undervalue the passions (except for the sentimentalists who reverse this valuation error). Passions are, indeed, sometimes wild and crazy. But well-raised people have good desires and emotional reactions as well as practical wisdom. After they have listened to their heads, they are free to listen to their hearts.

(G)Narrative-time

Time is crucial to the way in which we think of ourselves, and the way in which we make sense of our own life. But the crucial sort of time for this is not space-time, or monetized-time, or life-time, or sacred-time, or quality-time. Ulrich's *self* consists of (a) his *past* failures and successes interpreted in the light of his commitments to future projects, (b) his *future* projects interpreted in the light of his past failures and successes, (c) and his *present* character interpreted in the light of his current physical, intellectual, social, and cultural situation. To make sense of one's life is to see it as a story – a coherent narrative in which one's past actions lead naturally to one's present character and situation, which in turn leads naturally to one's future hopes, fears, plans, etc. This is a process of selection among past events, present traits, and future goals. To succeed, one must think of time as a personal time-line consisting of events, desires, etc. which are meaningful because they fit into a story. Other events, desires, etc. don't fit, and are therefore unimportant. It is also a process of spin. Our understanding of events, desires, etc. must be a function of how they fit. Ulrich's failed marriage might be understood as an aberration if it is followed by a successful second marriage, but as the beginning of a trend if it is followed by three more failed marriages, for example.

The ways of going wrong on the narrative-time conception of time are ways of deceiving oneself and/or others about oneself. That is, they are versions of bad faith. Sartre describes bad faith in various ways. Roughly speaking, bad faith is focusing on the facts about oneself in order to deny one’s possibilities, and/or focusing on one’s possibilities in order to deny the facts about oneself.²⁸ That is, one vice consists in *overemphasizing the past* (and present) in order to underemphasize the future, and the other vice consists in *overemphasizing the future* in order to underemphasize the past. Thus, on the narrative conception, good timing fits the doctrine of the mean.

As with the other conceptions of time, practical reason is the faculty which does most of the work. Theoretical reason does the interpreting, but it is practical reason which ultimately determines Ulrich’s self. Practical reason chose his past actions and picks his future projects. Both past and future are crucial determinants of present character. Past choices built present habits; present goals lead to future choice of acts. Indeed, crafting a self is one of practical reason’s most important tasks.²⁹ Collectives craft selves, too. Often the crafted self is displayed on the home page of the organization under headings such as: “history of the institution,” “news and current programs,” and “goals and coming initiatives.”

We tend to think of things as having objective natures. I am currently sitting on a chair. No matter what I think or do, I cannot make it into a jet plane. But like selves, the natures of things are actually partially determined by practical reason. The thing upon which my computer currently rests was manufactured and used as a card table for decades. When I first put my computer on it, it was a card table with a computer on it. But now that I have been sitting at it, typing on it, reading at it, storing pens, pencils, paper, post it notes, and paper clips, on it, etc., for a few years, and plan to continue doing so for the foreseeable future, it has become my desk. Practical reason not only crafts the self by integrating past, present, and future, it crafts other objects in the same way. Like selves, other objects are constituted by a set of (past) facts, a set of (present) truths, and can be transformed by the (future) actions of agents.

Types of time	Vice	Vice	Practical Reason Tasks: Individuals	Practical Reason Tasks: Collectives
Monetized time	Time hoarding	Time wasting	(A) Inter-sphere choice	
Monetized time	Time hoarding	Time wasting	(B) Persuade or overrule passion	
Monetized time	Time hoarding	Time wasting	(C) Intra-sphere choice	Decision-making
Life-time (future)	Inauthenticity	Existentialism	(D) Penetrate self-deception	Whistle-blowing
Sacred-time (eternity)	Overvalue time	Undervalue time	(E) Project values	Mission statements
Quality-time (present)	Overindulge passions	Underindulge passions	(F) Accommodate passions	???
Narrative-time (past/present/future)	Overemphasize the past	Overemphasize the future	(G) Create self and objects	History and plans on web pages

Summary

I began by arguing that a simple, partial version of the virtue of good timing (i.e. good timing with respect to monetized time) fits Aristotle's architectonic of virtue ethics. Using the combination of the virtue of good timing and the skill of teaching as illustrations, I have tried to exhibit operations of practical reason. (C) Within the sphere of each virtue, practical reason utilizes several types of decision-making. I mentioned (1) rule/case, (2) means/ends, (3) correction, and nine other methods of decision-making. I showed that all of these methods are employed not only by individuals, but also by collectives.

But practical reason has other tasks. It is widely recognized that practical reason (A) adjudicates conflict-of-virtue dilemmas, and (B) persuades or overrules passions. As a clue to four further tasks which are not widely recognized, I have mentioned four additional alternate conceptions of time found within our culture. That is, I sketched some less evident aspects of good timing. (D) **Life-time** shows that practical reason has the task of ensuring authenticity by uncovering what has become covered over. (E) **Sacred-time** illustrates that one of practical reason's most important tasks is defining values. (F) **Quality-time** prompts the acknowledgement that practical reason must accommodate passions. (G) Finally, **narrative-time** reminds us that practical reason is the primary creator of the self and other objects.³⁰

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VI. ENDNOTES

¹ Ironically (or perhaps not), ours is a rather Nietzschean conception of time. We think of time as necessary for accomplishing things, the exercise of the drive Nietzsche calls the Will to Power. F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* sect. 13.

² The statement, “time is money” is attributed to Ben Franklin,

³ By “perception,” I do not mean awareness of simple particulars (e.g. color patches, smells), but rather awareness of much more complex particulars (e.g. comfy chairs, insults).

⁴ In MODEL, I provide a more complete picture.

⁵ People can also go wrong to different degrees with respect to different components of virtue.

⁶ Bennett 125-129.

⁷ Kristjansson calls (A) and (C) the *constitutive function* and the *integrative function*, respectively (Kristjansson 96).

⁸ I shall treat (B) in some detail in ch. 6 (COLLIDE).

⁹ See ch. 6 (COLLIDE).

¹⁰ “Everything sweet ought to be tasted, and this is sweet...the man who can act and is not restrained must...act accordingly” (Aristotle, NE 1147a29-31).

¹¹ Here I mean the agent’s aims within the situation rather than the agent’s goal in life.

¹² “The end being what we wish for, the things contributing to the end are what we deliberate about and choose” (Aristotle, NE 1113b3-4).

¹³ Part/whole reasoning (reasoning toward completing a whole, bit-by-bit) can be understood as a sort of means/ends reasoning. First this bit, then that bit, next the other bit, and so on.

¹⁴ “Of the extremes one is more erroneous, one less so. Since to hit the mean is extremely hard, we must, as a second best, take the least of the evils. But we must also consider that some of us tend to one thing, some to another. We must drag ourselves away to the contrary extreme as people do in straightening sticks that are bent” (Aristotle, NE 1109a33-b7 with omissions).

¹⁵ Ironically, this fascination with speed may be a function of our society’s valorization of time. See below.

¹⁶ “I need a covering, a coat is a covering. [Therefore] I need a coat. What I need I ought to make, I need a coat. [Therefore] I make a coat...If there is to be a coat, one must first have B, and if B then A, [Therefore] one gets A to begin with” (Aristotle, *De Motu* 701a17-24).

¹⁷ Analogous points could easily be made for life as a whole, too. People do not act by habit, or rote rule, or try to relate each move in life to a concrete conception of happiness.

¹⁸ “The function of thought in judgement can be brought under four heads, each of which contains three moments. They may be conveniently represented in the following table.” “The third category in each class always arises from the combination of the second category with the first.” (Kant B95, B110)

¹⁹ See PART IV.

²⁰ Fricker 247.

²¹ Byerly and Byerly 37-38.

²² Except perhaps in very unusual cases (e.g. organ donation).

²³ Bruce Springsteen, “Atlantic City.”

²⁴ Heidegger 295-299.

²⁵ Alborn 80. By the way, this remark shows that knowledge is not simply (a) true belief + justification, or (b) true belief + account, or (c) true belief + anything else. Belief requires some sort of acceptance.

²⁶ Although this is the first step in some constructivist accounts, I am not taking further steps here.

²⁷ My thanks to Anne Epstein for suggesting this analogy.

²⁸ Sartre 55-67. See ch. 9 (INTEGRITY).

²⁹ Korsgaard agrees that self-constitution is a task of practical reason, but she talks of the agent's choices, simpliciter. She does not highlight the temporal side of self-constitution. She is describing the constitution of agency rather than of the self, as I have defined it (Korsgaard 18-19).

³⁰ Thanks to Anne Epstein, and the Jubilee Center for Character and Virtues.