



The Link between Moral Psychology and Ethics in the Moral Subject Curriculum: A Focus on Protagoras' Virtue Education

Hwan NamGung*^a & In-Jae Lee^a

* Corresponding author

Email: honetomeet2015@naver.com


a. Seoul National University of Education, Seoul, Republic of Korea

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ABSTRACT

The moral subject curriculum incorporates various disciplines, such as ethics and moral psychology. This study integrates moral psychological, and ethical perspectives within the moral subject curriculum to ensure content consistency. The Korean elementary school's moral subject curriculum integrates a constructivist perspective for moral psychological aspects alongside the virtue ethics theory for ethical considerations. We analyze the virtue education perspectives of Protagoras and Socrates to determine their compatibility with constructivism, with a focus on Protagoras. For this analysis, we set criteria for analyzing educational perspectives related to constructivism and objectivism. Based on these findings, we analyze the virtue education perspectives of Protagoras and Socrates to identify their distinctive characteristics. Ensuring consistency of content is essential for developing Korea's moral subject curriculum.

KEYWORDS

Constructivism; moral psychology–ethics link; Protagoras; Socrates; virtue education.

INTRODUCTION

A curriculum is developed using disciplines related to the subject. In Korean elementary schools, the moral subject curriculum focuses on ethics and moral psychology (Ministry of Education, 2015). Ethics and moral psychology encompass various fields, each with arguments and counter-arguments. For instance, ethics often revolves around setting rules or principles to assess the morality of an actor's behavior. Kantian ethics and utilitarianism exemplify this.

Conversely, another perspective prioritizes discerning the appropriate words and actions in specific situations, sometimes criticizing rules and principles as post-contextual (Anscombe, 1958; Foot, 1958). Other perspectives also exist in moral psychology, such as learners understanding the moral situation while qualitatively developing their cognitive structure by themselves or through interactions, that absolute moral knowledge exists, and learners improving their moral ability while gradually recognizing the knowledge. If specific perspectives on ethics in the moral curriculum are set as the theoretical background, it is imperative to examine whether the moral psychological perspective used in the moral subject curriculum is linked to the ethical perspective.

The Korean elementary school curriculum adopts a constructivist perspective to facilitate students' comprehension of the framework. Aligned with curriculum development objectives, the curriculum should:

[p]rovide an opportunity to explore the world in various areas through a wide and balanced curriculum suitable for the level of development of learners, and design and operate a school curriculum to enable the overall growth and development of learners (Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 9).

The constructivism perspective is utilized in the elementary school moral subject curriculum to:

[c]onstruct a process of teaching and learning that fosters students' autonomous competence by using moral problems experienced in daily life as learning materials to increase the connection between life and moral classes (Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 203).

Furthermore, the moral subject curriculum should "[d]evelop moral thinking skills and problem-solving skills through individual and group activities that explore various moral problems and find moral solutions" (Ministry of Education, 2022, p. 204).

Content consistency holds paramount importance in the development of a moral subject curriculum. When curriculum developers align appropriate learning content and methods with specific learning objectives, permitting students to choose their educational content and method individually may result in inconsistency. Therefore, if a constructivist perspective were adopted in the moral curriculum, an ethical perspective linked to this perspective should be used. However, the Korean moral subject curriculum lacked interest in whether the constructivist perspective could be linked to ethics, which constitutes the primary theoretical background in the moral curriculum for content consistency.

The national framework influences the curriculum for subjects in Korea. In other words, the national framework for curriculum is the fundamental principle of the subject curriculum design. The moral subject curriculum emphasizes ethics and uses moral psychology but is guided by the national framework in its design. Thus, the moral subject curriculum adopts constructivism from a psychological perspective. Therefore, it is crucial to identify an ethical perspective aligned with constructivism that diverges from the existing moral subject curriculum.

Socrates' theory emphasizes the integration of knowledge and conduct, while Aristotle's theory prioritizes forming an autonomous and integrated personality; Korea's moral subject curriculum has incorporated these principles (Ministry of Education, 1987, 1997). However, the ethical framework used in the curriculum varies across different curriculum periods. This study establishes a standard to confirm whether virtue education, rooted in virtue ethics theory, can be linked to a constructivist perspective. Virtue ethics theory provides a perspective on leading a proper life. In contrast, virtue education operationalizes this theory with its educational goals, content, and methods. Moral psychology provides a framework for understanding the educational implications derived from ethics (Yoon & Kim, 2008). Therefore, by analyzing the contrast between constructivism and objectivism, this study aims to establish a framework for comprehending the educational perspective.

Subsequently, it analyzes the perspectives on virtue education presented by Protagoras and Socrates in Plato's dialogue "Protagoras" to identify their respective characteristics. Protagoras argues that individuals can serve as virtue teachers according to their level of understanding (*Protagoras*, 327e); they can select a virtue teacher according to their ability, and actors can assess the value of actions taken in moral situations from their viewpoint (*Protagoras*, 333e-334c). Therefore, Protagoras' virtue education can likely be linked to constructivism. Thus, this study analyzes Protagoras, which exemplifies virtue education linked to constructivism. However, in the context of the previous Korean elementary school moral curriculum, Socrates' virtue education was utilized instead of that of Protagoras.

Consequently, this study aims to propose methodological considerations necessary to link ethics and moral psychology in the moral subject curriculum. To this end, based on the educational psychological perspective, we intend to establish a framework for grasping the characteristics of moral education that reflect the ethical perspective regarding educational goals, content, and methods. The study devises a method to design a moral subject curriculum to link ethics and moral psychology.

Characteristics of Constructivism, Objectivism, and Their Education Types

Constructivism and objectivism offer distinct perspectives on existence or phenomena. Constructivist and objectivist education embody these perspectives, respectively, with their divergent forms stemming from variances in underlying perspectives. Moral psychology provides a framework for understanding the educational forms derived from ethics (Yoon & Kim, 2008). This section identifies the characteristics of constructivism and objectivism and the

educational approaches derived from these concepts to establish the theoretical foundation for analyzing virtue education.

Constructivism and Constructivist Education

Constructivism is a theory that argues for the qualitative development of cognitive structures by actors to understand existence or phenomena. Von Glasersfeld (1989) attributes the origins of constructivism to G. Vico, a Neapolitan philosopher. Vico posited that while God created the real world, only God can fully comprehend it, leaving humans to understand only the world they perceive. Constructivism generates divergent opinions about existence or phenomena, depending on whether it is radical. While radical constructivism denies the existence of an objective reality (von Glasersfeld, 1984; Watzlawick, 1984), non-radical constructivism acknowledges the existence of an objective reality (Jonassen, 1991).

Radical and non-radical constructivism differ in terms of whether the actor recognizes the reality of the existence or phenomenon interpreted through their cognitive structure but focuses on human cognitive structure to recognize and understand existence or phenomenon. The understanding of one's being varies based on individual perspectives. This is because each person's life process is different; hence, their life values are different, and thus, their interpretations of existence are diversified (Jonassen, 1991). Therefore, from a constructivist perspective, the knowledge of existence is not existence itself; instead, it is the content that interprets existence (Cobb, 1994; Jonassen, 1991).

Constructivist education focuses on creating learners' meaning while flexibly developing their understanding structure for valid interpretation of existence or concepts (Blumer, 1969; Kumar, 2011). Constructivism comprises individual and social constructivism. According to individual constructivism, humans develop their understanding of existence while qualitatively improving their understanding framework according to the universal cognitive development process (Piaget, 1970; von Glasersfeld, 1989). Meanwhile, social constructivism argues that humans develop their understanding of existence or concepts through expanding their understanding via social interactions (Brown et al., 1989; Vygotsky, 1978).

No correct category has been observed in the knowledge of existence, whether for personal or social constructivism. However, various interpretations of existence or concepts exist (Blumer, 1969). No single interpretation of existence can claim to be correct. Nevertheless, specific interpretations are considered correct in the real world, while others are considered incorrect. Specifically, there is a standard for assessing something as right or wrong. Various interpretations can be classified as right and wrong depending on the standard. However, explaining this objectivity from a constructivist perspective is challenging because constructivism does not concern itself with the correct interpretation of existence; instead, it focuses on the cognitive structure of an individual who interprets existence. Therefore, it separates the individual's cognitive structure that interprets external reality from the actual external reality and focuses on how the individual's cognitive structure improves qualitatively. Overall, constructivism's primary purpose is not to study the objectivity of knowledge.

Therefore, objectivism criticizes constructivism for reducing the world to consciousness (Hazelrigg, 1986).

Objectivism and Objectivist Education

Objectivism argues that existence is real, but human perception is incomplete; thus, humans must strive to recognize existence. Objectivism considers realism and essentialism as its origins (Lakoff, 1987). Realism asserts that existence is outside humans and independent of human experience, while essentialism argues that what makes an independent entity special is essential among the attributes that constitute knowledge. There are several beings in the real world. Objectivism focuses on the beings corresponding to objects of knowledge (Jonassen, 1991). Existence is independent of humans and other beings (Hazelrigg, 1986). In other words, other beings, including humans, do not complete existence. Existence is structured by its attributes (Jonassen, 1991). Therefore, human perceptions, thoughts, and emotions of existence become secondary to existence itself. Objective recognition is challenging through senses in which the size of the same being is perceived differently, depending on the distance, sensitivity, and mood. Even if objective recognition is possible, an individual's experience and values are formed by those life experiences that intervene in interpreting objective perceptions. Therefore, individual perceptions, thoughts, and emotions of existence differ from existence itself.

Knowledge of objectivism is related to existence itself. Specifically, it is existence itself or the concept obtained by categorizing beings and the objective connection between concepts (Lakoff, 1987). Therefore, objectivist education aims to change behavior and cognitive structure according to existence itself or the concept by guiding students to recognize existence itself or the concept (Vrasidas, 2000). However, no one accurately knows the existence itself or the concept owing to the intervention of subjectivity arising in the process of recognition and interpretation. This represents a problem in setting educational goals because they must be explicitly presented to learners.

However, we can identify who is more accurately perceived based on a social consensus regarding existence itself or the concept (Jonassen, 1991). Nonetheless, the act of judging who knows more accurately in a situation in which existence itself or the concept is unknown is bound to be subjective to some extent. However, objectivist education distinguishes between experts and non-experts based on social consensus on existence or the concept for practical reasons of goal-setting. The learner is educated by targeting the content recognized by the expert.

In objectivist education, efficiency is emphasized. Objectivist education is rooted in F. W. Taylor's scientific management (Callahan, 1962). Scientific management is a method that leads an industry to produce the most efficient results through task analysis and standardized systems. All the outcomes meet objective and scientific standards through the standardized system. The punishment and reward system attracts individuals to achieve tasks. Curriculum

theorists, such as F. Bobbitt and R. W. Tyler, developed the following curriculum model based on an objectivist perspective:

- Identify class goals
- Choose useful learning experiences
- Organize the learning process in the best way possible
- Evaluate learning (Bobbitt, 1918; Tyler, 1949).

In other words, efficiency emphasized in objectivist education refers to a methodical design that leads students to become familiar with the learning goals and learn the content, assuming that learning goals and contents can be set. Objectivist education defines knowledge that must be imparted through education as either existence itself or conceptual knowledge. While the ideal is objectively conveying these aspects, this is often not achieved. Objectivist education aims to educate students by using content closely aligned with existence itself or conceptual knowledge. Therefore, objectivist education requires teachers to consider the learning methods students should use to understand the learning content.

Objectivist education differs from objectivism owing to the practical reason for setting educational goals. In objectivism, no individual holds ultimate authority over knowledge, as complete recognition of existence or concepts is deemed unattainable. However, objectivist education operates differently, with influential figures possessing knowledge owing to establishing standards through social consensus. These standards classify individual perceptions of existence or concepts qualitatively, and the knowledge of those deemed experts becomes the basis for setting educational content.

Establishing a Framework of Understanding to Identify Education Characteristics

Moral psychology provides a theoretical basis for setting educational goals, selecting and organizing educational content, teaching and learning methods, and evaluating these methods (Ha, 2022). Thus, this study aims to extract perspectives on educational goals, content, and methods by comparing constructivism, objectivism, and their education types and to establish a framework to identify the characteristics of education. Constructivism and objectivism are philosophical perspectives that guide education direction, with constructivist and objectivist education representing their respective implementations. Therefore, this study examines constructivism, objectivism, and their educational implementations regarding educational goals. It focuses on constructivist education and objectivist education regarding educational content and methods.

Perspectives on Educational Objectives

Constructivism and constructivist education aim to enable individuals to construct their own meanings while flexibly developing their cognitive structure for a valid interpretation of existence or a concept. In the case of constructivism, the focus is on the individual's cognitive structure that interprets existence rather than the correct interpretation of existence (von Glasersfeld, 1989). Therefore, unlike objectivist education, constructivism has no basis for

determining an individual's current level of knowledge compared to the goal. Unlike objectivism, in constructivism, the direction of an individual's ability remains undetermined. It only determines whether the individual's cognitive structure has improved qualitatively compared to the past. Rather than setting any standards or directions, this study calls for a goal that focuses on improving individual abilities compared to the past—a *relative goal*.

There exists a process of comparing the learner's understanding of existence and actual existence in the *relative goal*. However, this is to confirm how the learner's understanding has qualitatively improved instead of setting the correct category regarding content, thereby evaluating the learner's level of understanding based on it or guiding the learner to the correct category.

Objectivism aims to achieve an objective understanding of existence itself or a concept (Lakoff, 1987). An objective understanding of existence itself or a concept stems from a complete understanding of existence itself or the concept. However, individuals are subjective because they have accumulated experiences and formed values from those experiences. They interpret existence and concepts based on this subjectivity. Therefore, the goal of objectivism is challenging for humans to reach. Thus, learners must recognize that their perception of existence or a concept is fragmentary and constantly criticize it to avoid fragmentation (Oakeshott, 1933). This is how one's perception can move closer to existence and the concept. This study calls for a goal that humans cannot attain through their efforts but that can be approached as a *goal as a direction*.

The goal of objectivist education, like the goal of objectivism, is to recognize the existence or the concept and change behavior and cognitive structure accordingly. However, considering the educational goal must be explicitly presented to students, objectivist education defines what is a good understanding of existence or the concept based on social consensus (Callahan, 1962), thereby dividing individuals into experts and non-experts (Jonassen, 1991), and setting expert knowledge of existence or the concept as educational goals. The problem is that set standards, that is, the content of what is a good understanding of existence itself or the concept, do not match existence or the concept. This is because, as objectivism argues, existence or the concept is subjectively interpreted. Therefore, it should be considered that the standards of objectivist education have arbitrary elements. However, the knowledge of a person recognized as an expert by these criteria becomes authoritative. It must be followed by a learner who wants to reach the goal. This is referred to as an *authoritative goal* in which knowledge gains authority by arbitrary factors, such as social consensus.

The *goal as a direction* and *authoritative goal* acknowledges that existence exists; however, the learner cannot fully understand existence itself. Therefore, a *goal as a direction* emphasizes the constant efforts of learners. Meanwhile, an *authoritative goal* is a realistic goal that learners can reach and give authority to.

Perspectives on Educational Content

Constructivist education views knowledge of existence as an interpretation of existence. It does not assess the quality by comparing existence with human understanding of it; therefore, there are no correct or incorrect categories in the knowledge of existence regarding the content of existence (Blumer, 1969). Consequently, constructivist education focuses on evaluating whether learners with this education develop a structural understanding that enhances their ability to explain existence more effectively than before. In conclusion, “knowledge as an interpretation of existence” refers to an individual’s understanding of the structure of existence and development of existence rather than mere content considerations, such as the correct or incorrect category.

Objectivist education views the knowledge of existence as the realization of existence itself and assumes that existence exists. Therefore, human perceptions, emotions, and thoughts about existence are different from existence itself. This is because these results are obtained while interpreting existence according to human subjectivity. Therefore, existence itself is content that humans cannot fully understand. However, as individuals strive to grasp existence fully, they understand the direction in which knowledge about existence should evolve. Based on this understanding, we can judge the best knowledge of existence discovered so far (Jonassen, 1991). *Knowledge as an embodiment of existence itself* signifies the knowledge that ultimately requires grasping existence itself. However, this is challenging owing to human limitations; thus, it is perceived as the most objective explanation of existence.

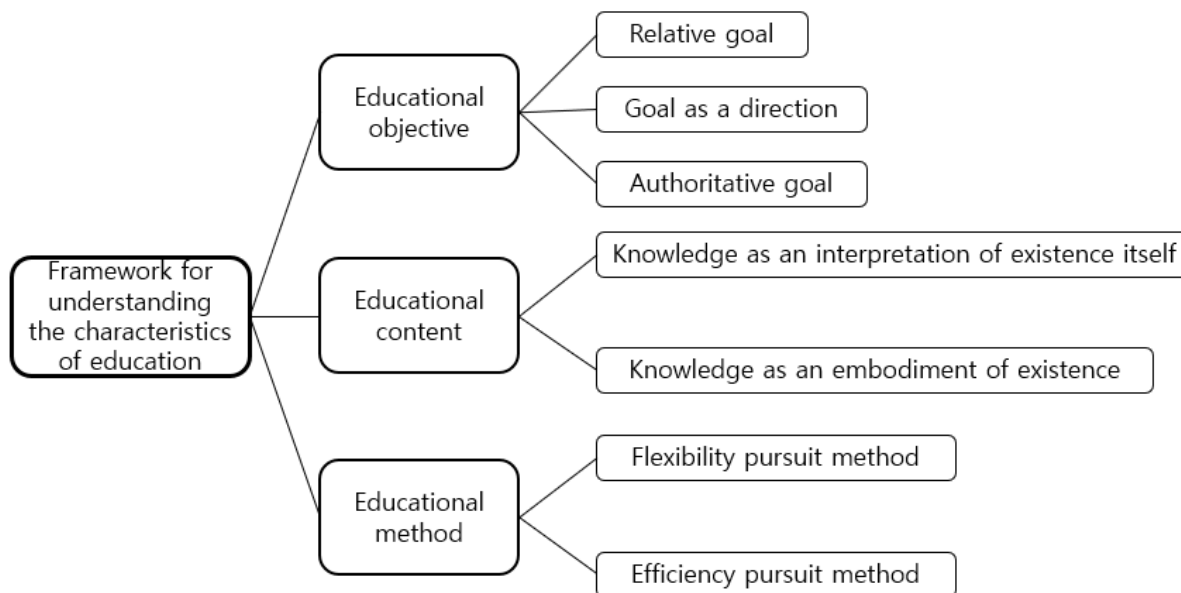
Perspectives on Teaching Methods

Constructivist education focuses on the learner’s understanding of existence rather than on the correct understanding of existence. In other words, it assesses whether the learner’s understanding structure can fully understand existence compared to the past. Therefore, constructivist education challenges learners’ confidence by providing examples of situations where their understanding structure may be stereotypical or misconceived, encouraging them to be more flexible in their understanding structure (Kumar, 2011). The *flexibility pursuit method* is a method of self-criticism about the understanding structure of one’s being so that learners have a better understanding structure than before in understanding the learning content compared to considering the correct category.

In objectivist education, students can specify what they need to learn, which is the knowledge necessary to understand existence itself, as determined by experts. As the learning content is established in this manner, objectivist education introduces the concept of efficiency by offering methodological considerations to enable students to understand the established learning content (Bobbitt, 1918; Tyler, 1949). In other words, school education must organize the learning process effectively to deliver the set learning content. Therefore, the *efficiency pursuit method* is an approach to efficiently reach a goal under the premise that the learning content has been set. Figure 1 illustrates the framework for understanding the characteristics of education, which is broadly divided into goals, content, and methods. This figure clarifies the characteristics of education in terms of educational goals, content, and methods.

Figure 1.

Framework for Understanding the Characteristics of Education



Investigating Protagoras’ and Socrates’ Virtue Education

Perspectives on Educational Objectives

Protagoras’ Virtue Education

Socrates asks Protagoras what he can learn. Protagoras says, “You can learn civic science (*Protagoras*, 319a).” Here, civic science refers to “the skills one must have to become a proper political leader or a proper citizen (Plato, Kang Trans., 2017, p. 165).” In the *Protagoras* dialogue, civic science is defined as “excellence as a citizen (virtue).”

Protagoras cites a story in which Epimetheus distributed abilities suitable for all beings but did not distribute them to humans, causing them to become weak. Prometheus witnessed Epimetheus’ mistake, stole technical wisdom and fire from Hephaestus and Athena, and gave it to individuals, handing them the power to protect themselves. However, individuals without civic science lack trust and unity or kill each other by acting unjustly. Zeus, who feared human extinction, brought humility and justice to humans. At this time, civic science was allocated so everyone could access it (*Protagoras*, 320d-322d).

Despite allocating civic science, citizens are divided into just and unjust individuals. They fume or admonish the bad habits of unjust people because they believe that good habits are developed through caring, training, and teaching. Therefore, Protagoras emphasizes that virtue can be taught (*Protagoras*, 323b-324b). Citizens strive for each other to have justice and virtue, as it is in everyone’s interests to do so. However, not everyone has the same abilities. Therefore,

each person aims to become a virtue teacher as much as possible. Hence, one cannot find someone who teaches virtue perfectly (*Protagoras*, 325d-328a).

This implies that virtue is real and that individuals can interpret it in their own way but cannot fully understand virtue itself (Güremen, 2017). Individuals have different levels of understanding of virtue, and Protagoras contends that individuals can teach virtue according to their abilities. This presupposes that virtue education goals can be set according to each ability, aligning with the focus of this study that moral psychology and ethics should be linked. In Protagoras' virtue education, authority is not given to the knowledge of the person who best understands virtue, and the learners are not required to reach the goal by targeting that person's knowledge. Instead, it is argued that a teacher can set and teach educational goals according to a student's level. It is challenging for learners to set educational goals concerning the teacher. Nevertheless, in society, there is no knowledge with authority, and learners can choose and receive education that suits them to improve their understanding of virtue through interactions with teachers. Protagoras' virtue educational goal can be seen as a *relative goal*.

Protagoras' perception of the virtue educational goal can be confirmed in his argument, which criticizes part of the Simonides Ode. Protagoras argues that the before and after parts of the ode do not match:

For a man, indeed, to become good truly is hard,
In hands and feet and mind foursquare,
Fashioned without reproach.
Nor ringeth true to me
That word of Pittacus—

And yet 'twas a sage who spake—Hard, quoth he, to be good (*Protagoras*, 339b-c).

Protagoras posits that if it is challenging "to become good," it should be challenging "to be good." However, according to the Ode, Patagos' words, "It's hard to be good," are not appropriate expressions and are thus criticized by Protagoras. He sees becoming good and being good as the same concept. If the educational goal of humans is to raise their level from the past, then "to become good" means "being a good person," that is, "to be good." Therefore, when looking at the virtue educational goal as a *relative goal*, "to become good" and "to be good" must become challenging or accessible together.

Socrates's Virtue Education

Socrates argues that anyone can stand up and advise others in the same manner when they have to deliberate on matters concerning state administration. Therefore, even the best citizens emphasize that they cannot transmit their virtues to others (*Protagoras*, 319a-320b). There are two main cases of not being able to teach virtue. One is when everyone knows about virtue perfectly, and the other is when everyone does not know it well. If everyone has full knowledge of virtue, there is no reason to distinguish between the best and the worst. Therefore, no one can teach virtue because no one has full knowledge of it.

Socrates refutes Protagoras' claim that the context of the Simonides Ode does not match, explaining that virtue cannot be taught. Socrates views "to become good" and "to be good" as different concepts (*Protagoras*, 340b-c). At the end of the Simonides Ode is "(in the case of 'to be good') God alone can have this privilege." According to this phrase, "to be good" is not something individuals can do (*Protagoras*, 344c-d). Therefore, "to be good," corresponding to the goal, goes beyond the scope of human understanding.

Overall, two primary scenarios exist where teaching virtue is not possible. The first scenario is when everyone possesses a perfect understanding of virtue, while the second occurs when no one possesses a sound understanding of virtue. Becoming good, that is, becoming a virtuous person, is possible, even if it is challenging. However, being good corresponds to a level that human efforts cannot reach (Balaban, 1987). According to Socrates, virtue is knowledge, and achieving virtue through education is not solely dependent on practicing righteous behavior. Instead, it involves consciously recognizing and comprehending the inherent virtues in such behavior (Smith, 1923). Overall, Socrates' virtue educational goal can be perceived as a type of *goal as a direction*.

Perspectives on Educational Content

Protagoras' Virtue

This study aims to distinguish between virtue and "virtues." Virtue is a concept that encompasses each "virtue," such as justice and discernment, while "virtues" is a term that refers to things, such as justice and discernment. Protagoras argues that "virtues," such as justice, discernment, and reverence, are the same as the eyes, nose, and mouth of the face and that virtue is the whole face (*Protagoras*, 329c-e). Specifically, each virtue has its characteristics, virtue being a concept that encompasses virtues with these unique characteristics. Therefore, what is just might not be pious, and what is pious might not be sensible. In response to Socrates' question, "Is what we call justice in itself just, or is it unjust?" Protagoras responds, "That is itself just (*Protagoras*, 330c)." His response indicates that the value of an action cannot be explained in terms other than the virtues of justice in a situation where the virtues of justice are required. In response to Socrates' question, "Do you think there is a person who behaves sensibly while behaving unfairly?" Protagoras answers, "Yes (*Protagoras*, 333d)." In other words, what is just and sensible refers to actions with different values.

When explaining the value of an action as a virtue, who judges that a particular value of an action is a certain virtue? Protagoras argues that an action may benefit some individuals and not others, and good exists in various types — something can be good outside the human body but bad inside it (*Protagoras*, 333e-334c). In the end, the actor is the subject who judges whether a behavior is related to a specific virtue and the moral value of the behavior in consideration of the situation in which it is performed (Balaban, 1987). In conclusion, Protagoras' virtue can be regarded as a type of *knowledge as an interpretation of existence*.

Socrates' virtue

In a conversation with Protagoras, Socrates questions whether piety is just or unjust. He induces Protagoras to respond by stating that piety and justice belong to the same category (*Protagoras*, 331a-b). Socrates argues that folly is the opposite of wisdom, and acting foolishly is the opposite of acting wisely and sensibly. At the same time, he argues that justice, piety, discernment, and wisdom should be one because the opposite of folly is one (*Protagoras*, 332a-c). Specifically, virtue is one, and virtue and virtues have a relationship that differs only by the extent of large or small.

All virtues have the same form; therefore, virtues are termed “virtue” (*Meno*, 72c). Here, the “same form” refers to virtue. Plato argues that the root of all things exists. The root is not completed by anything else, including the human soul, but by itself (*The Republic*, 508b; Demos, 1937). The root of all things is the cause of all beings, and all beings are imitations of the root (*Phaedo*, 75b, 100d; Demos, 1937; Wegener, 1953). Hence, the root of all virtues is virtue. Thus, all virtues can be regarded as an imitation of virtue. Therefore, all virtues become valuable. The actor observes moral behavior and tries to recognize virtue by making intellectual efforts based on it. However, owing to human limitations, only several virtues are discovered (*Meno*, 74a; Demos, 1937). Nevertheless, if a person continues to explore what virtue is, they will find increasing clarity (*Meno*, 100b; Morris, 1933-1934). In conclusion, Socrates’ virtue attempts to recognize virtue; instead, it recognizes virtues; thus, it can be regarded as a type of *knowledge as an embodiment of existence itself*.

Perspective on Teaching Methods

Protagoras’ Virtue Education

Protagoras argues that individuals become angry with or admonish bad attributes of unjust individuals because they believe that good attributes arise from care, training, and teaching. Therefore, he argues that virtue can be taught (*Protagoras*, 323b-324b). However, he does not elaborate on the right understanding of virtue. He argues that everyone can be a virtue teacher as it is in everyone’s interest (*Protagoras*, 327e-328a).

Protagoras argues that certain actions benefit certain individuals (*Protagoras*, 333e). In other words, individuals’ value judgments about actions are different even with the same behavior. He argues that various types of good are good outside the body. However, sometimes, they are not good inside the body (*Protagoras*, 334b-c). In other words, even with the same behavior, the value of the behavior varies depending on the situation. This can mean that, in the same situation, there may be values everyone feels are the same. However, no matter how similar the situation is, if the actors are different, the perception and the appropriate behavior will change, making the value judgment of the behavior vary. Therefore, the content of Protagoras’ virtue varies from one person to another.

Therefore, learning virtue from individuals is learning knowledge of good quality. However, the critical point is that learners accrue different knowledge regarding content. Thus, learners can adopt a flexible understanding structure while accepting a different understanding

of virtue through guidance within the group (Güremen, 2017). In conclusion, Protagoras' virtue education uses the *flexibility pursuit method*.

Socrates' Virtue Education

Socrates asks Protagoras if physical training, military service, and medical treatment are good because they cause us extreme pain or if they are good for later health, physical condition, and the country's well-being (*Protagoras*, 354a-b). For him, virtuous behavior is not selected based on immediate joy or pain but rather determined by judging what ultimate joy and pain are from the perspective of life as a whole (Wilburn, 2016). A technique is needed to judge this ultimate joy and pain, which Socrates calls the "art of measurement (*Protagoras*, 356d-e)." The art of measurement is a method of comparing the joy or pain to be experienced in the future with the present joy or pain, eliminating the distortion of the senses, such as sight, where magnitude appears different depending on distance, and hearing, where the same sound differs depending on distance (Balaban, 1987).

An idea is not something that can be fully recognized through human intellectual efforts (*Phaedo*, 75b). Plato argues that "the soul is compelled to employ assumptions in the investigation of it, not proceeding to a first principle because of its inability to extricate itself from and rise above its assumptions" (*The Republic*, 511a). Therefore, he proposes dialectics, which is not a method of recognizing ideas through ideological thinking but rather one of recognizing ideas using the genera obtained through the generalization process (*Sophist*, 253b-d; Wegener, 1953; Wolfsdorf, 2011). The art of measurement, which is a method of recognizing virtue, is considered the same kind of dialectic because they are reduced to knowledge that humans can understand to partially recognize virtue (Wegener, 1953). Therefore, the art of measurement must grasp the virtue; however, due to human limitations, it objectively explains existence in a way that humans can understand instead of finding absolute truth that learners cannot fully comprehend because it can only be reached by flawless logical means (Sullivan, 1961). In conclusion, Socrates' virtue education uses the *efficiency pursuit method*.

Conclusion: Connecting Socrates' Virtue Education with Constructivism

Constructivism focuses on the human interpretation of existence. It acknowledges that existence exists if constructivism is not radical. However, it emphasizes how human understanding of existence has improved qualitatively. Therefore, constructivist education provides learners with a flexible understanding structure through a process that allows them to encounter new experiences and perspectives to improve their understanding structure qualitatively.

Objectivism focuses on being itself, which is the object of knowledge. It asserts that being itself is independent of humans and other life forms. However, because humans are subjective, owing to their experiences and values, they cannot objectively recognize and understand existence itself. Therefore, in objectivist education, social consensus is used to determine the correct understanding of existence, and individuals' understanding of existence is qualitatively classified based on this. Objectivist education guides learners by establishing the understanding

judged to be the most correct as an educational goal. Objectivist education is considered the most efficient way to convey educational content.

This study presented a framework of understanding to identify the educational perspective by comparing objectivism and constructivism and their education types in terms of educational goals, content, and methods. Concerning educational goals, *relative goals* focus on how an individual's understanding of existence improves qualitatively from the past rather than considering the correct answer, category of rightness, and direction. *Goal as a direction* requires individuals to constantly criticize their current understanding, acknowledging that it is fragmentary, to understand—if only partially—existence itself. "Authoritative goals" determine and empower what the right understanding of existence itself is through social consensus, acknowledging that individuals cannot objectively understand existence itself. *Knowledge as an interpretation of existence* pertains to understanding knowledge that examines the structure of human understanding. This aids in determining how an individual has qualitatively improved their understanding of existence compared to the past. *Knowledge as an embodiment of existence itself* refers to knowledge that is judged to explain existence most objectively among the knowledge of existence.

Regarding the educational method, the *flexibility pursuit method* is an educational strategy that promotes self-criticism among learners, encouraging them to examine and adjust their existing understanding structures actively. This method empowers learners to reflect on their knowledge and beliefs, fostering a deeper understanding and greater flexibility in their thinking. Conversely, the *efficiency pursuit method* focuses on optimizing the delivery of learning content. This strategy encourages educators to consider how to convey information in a manner that is both effective and resource-efficient. The efficiency pursuit method aims to maximize learning outcomes within a given timeframe or resource constraint by prioritizing streamlined communication and instructional techniques.

Regarding educational goals, Protagoras' virtue education pursues *relative goals*. Protagoras focuses on learners' growth, arguing that they could choose a virtue teacher according to their level. Socrates' virtue education pursues *goal as a direction*. Socrates regards "becoming good" as different from "being good," the latter being beyond the categories humans can grasp. However, he insists that humans must constantly strive to recognize virtue.

Regarding educational content, Protagoras' virtue is *knowledge as an interpretation of existence*. He regards each virtue as having its own value, and the actor can judge the value of moral behavior based on the situation. On the other hand, Socrates' virtue is knowledge, which is *an embodiment of existence itself*. He regards the relationship between virtue and virtues as essentially no different than large and small. Moreover, he assesses that virtue is complete by itself and is the cause of virtues. Meanwhile, virtues are the parts of virtue, containing the essential aspect of rightness—that is, virtue—but they do not explain virtue itself. Socrates argues that a person seeks to recognize the essential aspect of rightness, that is, virtue, through

intellectual effort but has only found instances with the essential aspect of rightness, not rightness itself, such as justice, discernment, and courage.

Regarding educational methods, Protagoras' virtue education uses the *flexibility pursuit method*. Learners can improve their understanding comprehensively and flexibly by being exposed to other content about virtue from their surroundings. Socrates' virtue education employs the *efficiency pursuit method*. Socrates proposes that virtue can be measured (*Protagoras*, 357b). The art of measurement reduces virtue to knowledge that learners can rationally handle and to recognize virtue that humans cannot fully recognize partially. Table 1 compares Protagoras' and Socrates' perspectives on virtue education. Protagoras' virtue education can be linked to constructivism in the moral subject curriculum, while Socrates' perspective is related to objectivism or objectivist education. However, in the previous moral curriculum, his perspective on virtue education was used (Ministry of Education, 1987). Hence, can constructivism and Socrates' virtue education be linked?

Table 1.

Comparison of Protagoras' and Socrates' virtue education

Scholar Perspective	Protagoras	Socrates
Educational objectives	Relative goal	The goal as a direction
Educational content	Knowledge as an interpretation of existence	Knowledge as an embodiment of existence itself
Education method	Flexibility pursuit method	Efficiency pursuit method

Ethics concerns itself with the pursuit of a good life, which entails a life oriented toward moral values that transcend daily moral behavior (Singer, 1993). Specifically, ethics provides moral values or goals for actors. Virtue education guides humans in what and how to teach and learn to realize the ultimate values or goals presented in virtue ethics theory. The goals presented in virtue ethics theory and the teaching and learning contents and methods presented in virtue education can be regarded as the relationship between goals and means (Lee, 2001).

Moral psychology provides a theoretical foundation for setting educational goals, selecting educational content, organizing principles, teaching and learning methods, and evaluating these methods (Ha, 2022). Additionally, it provides a framework for understanding the form of education derived from ethics (Yoon & Kim, 2008). Therefore, the goals proposed by the virtue theory and the teaching and learning contents and methods presented in virtue education must be linked to moral psychology to ensure content consistency within the moral subject curriculum.

As previously mentioned, constructivism focuses on the qualitative development of learners' understanding of existence. However, it lacks the theoretical basis for efficiently achieving the right understanding of existence. Socrates emphasizes virtue, asserting that human perception of virtue is insufficient compared to the essence of virtue itself. Socrates advocates constant striving to recognize virtue, even if partially. Therefore, Socrates' virtue education lacks a theoretical framework for individual interpretation of existence and qualitative development of such interpretation. Thus, constructivism does not inherently provide a framework for understanding Socrates' virtue ethics theory and subsequent virtue education.

The following methods should be employed to effectively integrate moral, psychological, and ethical perspectives in the moral subject curriculum. First, identify the ultimate values or goals of the ethical perspective intended for use in the moral subject curriculum and analyze the educational contents and methods embodying this perspective. Second, the theoretical basis for the moral and psychological perspective should be established to incorporate it into the moral subject curriculum to provide educational goals, content, and methods. Finally, the ultimate values or goals presented by the ethical perspective should be compared with the content and methods of moral education. If consistency is observed, the moral psychological perspective is a valid framework for understanding the ethical perspective. However, discrepancies may necessitate the adoption of a different moral, psychological, or ethical perspective to ensure content consistency.

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