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**What is the Virtue of a Philosopher?**

Plato, Nietzsche, and the Love of Wisdom.
Abstract.

To answer the question of how a philosophical life and character are a virtuous life and character, I begin by surveying Plato and Nietzsche, both directly and through secondary commentaries. For each, I develop a view of their ideal, virtuous philosopher. For Plato this ideal is partly embodied in the natural philosophers of the Republic, but more fully displayed in the figure of Socrates. Figures defined by a philosophic Eros, which drives them to pursue wisdom and truth unrelentingly and despite all resistance. For Nietzsche, the chosen figure is that of the philosopher of the future, a character of supreme mental strength, self-confidence, and a playful experimentalism. Both Plato and Nietzsche's philosophers are seen to have an interest in education, at least insofar as it can cultivate exceptional individuals to achieve true philosophic character. Based on the points of agreement between these two philosophers, I present an ideal of philosophic virtue that focusses on the motivating love of wisdom and the strength of mind and character to pursue that love to its fullest in the face of all obstacles, which I claim will be available only to few, even potentially. Following the formulation of this ideal virtue, I defend the virtuous character of the love of wisdom as the fullest development of a human excellence in knowing the world; it is a virtuous excellence in both answering questions and in determining which questions are worthy of deep study. This second part of philosophic excellence, the determination of what is worth valuing, addresses concerns about the objective value of truth and allows us to argue against reliance on motivational value alone. Finally I answer the objection that may stem from my assertion that most people do not have even the potential to achieve philosophic virtue, this restriction however, is seen to follow naturally from the formulation of philosophic virtue presented.
1. Introduction.

It seems to me that one of the questions it is inescapably incumbent upon us, as practitioners of philosophy, to answer, is the question of why our work is worthwhile. Philosophy produces no immediate material benefits, and the extent to which the lives of both its practitioners and the wider human community are improved by philosophical advancement is a much debated matter. If we are called to ask why philosophy is worth doing, it seems to me that one of the best ways we might ask that question, is to ask how the practice of philosophy can be virtuous, or, more properly, how the life of a philosopher can be a virtuous life. Certainly many philosophers spend a great deal of time pursuing questions about what a virtuous, worthwhile human life is, and many ancient philosophers trumpeted the life of a philosopher as the truly virtuous life, but it does not follow that such a life appears clearly virtuous today. Indeed, many of the same allegations against the philosopher that Plato contends with in the Republic bite just as deeply today. In this thesis, I will attempt to build up a broad view of the essential character of an ideal philosophic life, generalizing from broad points of agreement between otherwise disparate philosophical positions, and to show how the philosophic life can be considered truly virtuous. In this search for virtue, I do not wish to assert that all philosophers do or should achieve a virtuous character through their practice of philosophy. I hope simply to sketch an ideal of what philosophy must be, if it is to be called virtuous, what the talents and character of a philosopher should be for them to be considered virtuous as a philosopher, rather than by their possession of any other virtue.

One of ideas that will inform this investigation of the philosopher’s virtue is a linguistic one. The term that has become ‘virtue’ in the cannon of philosophy is the Greek arête, the excellence of a thing, it’s suitedness for its function. The virtue of knife is to cut, the virtue of
food is to nourish. It is with this conception of virtue as excellence toward proper ends that I wish to approach the virtue of a philosopher. Of course, the question of what the proper end, and thus the proper excellence, of a human is has been a question since the inception of philosophy. I wish to focus, at the beginning, on excellence in practice, rather than simply on excellence of ends, though these may turn out to be fundamentally connected. It seems likely that most of us would acknowledge a number of potentially excellent capacities naturally present in a human. I submit that one such capacity is our faculty of enquiry, the ability to separate truth from falsehood, coupled with the desire to know more than we already do. This faculty can have many different realizations. It is present in the craftsman or the engineer as well as in the philosopher, but in different ways. I take the philosopher, the philosopher that is the object of this investigation at least, to be one who has developed the human excellence of our capacity to know the world to its highest degree, and who pursues that search as an end in itself, rather than for any more immediate practical consideration.

In this investigation, I hope to construct an ideal of philosophic virtue that does not depend on any single philosopher’s notions of the nature or scope of the philosophical project, while, at the same time, making use of the insights that far abler philosophers before me have had into the nature of philosophy and its practitioners. To that end, I will primarily base my investigation on the works of two men: Plato and Nietzsche. Both of these thinkers have left a significant volume of thought directed at the nature of philosophy and philosophers. While there are vast gulfs between the conceptions of virtue and philosophy present in these works, there are also notable points of agreement, as we will see. It is from these points of agreement that I propose to construct an account of philosophic virtue in general.
2. Plato’s Virtuous Philosopher.

What wisdom can we find in Plato regarding the character of the philosopher? Certainly a great deal, including many mutually exclusive portraits of different methods of enquiring into the subjects of philosophy and the character that those inquiries demand. Since I am primarily interested in the question of character rather than that of method, I will focus here on the Philosopher as sketched in the Republic, as that is the philosopher defined most by his nature as opposed to his methods or other behaviors. Roslyn Weiss identifies four philosophic types in the Republic, and identifies the natural philosopher\(^1\) introduced in the “third wave” as the best of the types presented. Following this identification, I will examine the nature of this philosopher and how he can be considered virtuous. I will also consider the contrast between the glowing description of the Republic’s withdrawn philosophers and the publically engaged Socrates, an obvious choice for a model of philosophic virtue.

The investigation of this ideal philosophic nature begins at Stephanus page 475 of the Republic. Socrates asserts, on analogy with lovers of boys or lovers of wine, that “the philosopher too is a desirer of wisdom, not of part of its and part not, but of all of it.” (Republic 475b) A philosopher “goes toward learning gladly and in an insatiable spirit.” (Republic 475c) The defining trait of the philosopher then is a consuming desire for learning or wisdom, to the point where he may seek it at the expense of other things. The analogy with a lover of boys should make us think that the philosopher will be willing to do much that others would not in his pursuit of wisdom, just as a smitten lover might abase himself in pursuit of a beautiful young

\(^1\) That is, one who is a philosopher by nature, as opposed to one who only becomes a philosopher by the imposition of a particular kind of education.
man. There is and must be something special about the Eros which possesses a philosopher, because Eros taken broadly is characteristic, not only of the philosopher, but also of the Tyrant of the Republic. The tyrant is one possessed by “some terrible wild form of desires” that in most people only “becomes manifest in dreams.” (Republic 572b) The portrait of the tyrant is of someone ruled by desire and by all desires, unable to ignore any lust and striving insatiably to fulfill any and every desire he might have. This does not closely accord with the portrait of the philosopher, yet both are said to be men of Eros. This is a puzzle that we must wait until later to resolve. The desire of the philosopher here, contrary to the base desires that define the tyrant, is for a looking-beyond, and a raising of consciousness. The philosopher ignores opinion and concerns himself with Being only, a Being overtly identified in the Republic with the world of Forms. The philosophers are those “who devote themselves to each thing itself that is.” (Republic 480a) The philosopher is not contented with appearances but searches for being and truth.

This philosopher is motivated in his search for truth by Eros, the same consuming, divinely inspired love that animates romantic lovers. This is consistent with dialogues such as the Symposium, in which properly understood Eros is desire for the form of the beautiful or the good, rather than only for a particular beautiful thing: “what everyone loves is really nothing other than the good.” (Symposium 205e) The progressively better understanding of the true object of Eros depicted in the symposium seems to at least partly mirror the gradual raising of perception depicted in the Republic’s cave analogy: just as the burgeoning philosopher lifts their

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2 Pederasty, sexual relations between an adolescent boy (eromenos) and an older man (erastes), were an accepted part of Athenian life. “In theory Greek pederasty was part of the process of selection and advancement of worthy boys by a prominent lover and patron.” (Percy, 120) Ideally, the erastes saw to the moral and intellectual development of his eromenos. However, the trope of an older man shaming himself with a too-ardent pursuit of a beautiful boy was also present in the culture. It seems to me that we ought to have both these ideas in mind when considering Plato’s analogy.
perception from shadows to physical images, to reflections and finally to the true objects, the lover moves from particular bodies, to all bodies, to souls, to the learning of beautiful things. This clearly suggests that anyone who fully understands erotic desire will be driven toward philosophic pursuits.

Given this fundamentally Erotic nature of the virtuous philosopher, a complete understanding of the philosophic nature described by Plato must wait on a full understanding of Eros in Platonic terms. In his investigations of the nature of Eros, especially the *Symposium*, Plato expounds a vision of Eros that makes its place as the foundation of a philosophic nature much less counterintuitive than everyday conceptions of desire might. Placing desire at the heart of a philosopher is also particularly conducive to the idea of philosophic virtue, since a virtuous character motivates virtuous actions and desire is a clear motivating force. What then is the nature of Plato’s philosophic Eros?

In the *Symposium*, in the speech of Diotima, as related by Socrates, which is generally taken to represent the most important exposition of Platonic Eros, Eros is described progressing up a ladder of understanding, until at the last it is directed at the form of beauty itself. “one goes always upward for the sake of this Beauty.” (*Symposium* 211c) Eros’ object is described as progressing upward from particular bodies, to bodies in general, “from beautiful bodies to beautiful customs, and from customs to learning beautiful things” (*Symposium* 211c), before finally directing itself toward beauty alone, as an immortal form. This contemplation of the beautiful itself is the end of Eros fully understood. Those who direct their love always at lower rungs of this ladder of progress have not fully grasped the nature of their own desire. This progress of the object of love is closely mirrored in the *Republic’s* cave image, in which perception begins with mere shadows, turns to the graven images that produced them and then
rises through reflections to contemplate things that are truly in the world, ending with the sight of
the sun. Socrates explains the image as describing the “soul’s journey upward into the
intelligible region” (*Republic* 517b), a journey of raised perception in which “the last thing to be
seen, with great effort, is the look of the good.” (*Republic* 517b) The education of the
philosopher and the pursuit of Eros both have the same end, the vision and understanding of the
forms, the power to “know just what is beautiful” (*Symposium* 211d) or just what is good. The
story of Eros in the *Symposium* indeed offers a more complete story, because it contains an
explanation of the motivations that drive this raising of consciousness. The philosopher is driven
to seek knowledge of what is true, for Plato’s middle period the Forms, because it is the nature of
Eros to be directed at the beautiful, which ultimately means the Form of Beauty.

Stanley Rosen suggests that the *Symposium* “relates Eros to poetry, inspiration, madness,
and privacy.” (Rosen 456) If Eros, at least in some understandings, is a private sensation, this
could help to explain the withdrawal of the *Republic*’s philosophers into private contemplation
and consequent abandonment of the politics and public life of their communities. Rosen uses
this private/public contrast to explain why, apart from its place in the nature of a philosopher,
desire comes in for a broadly negative portrayal in the publically focused and publically
conducted *Republic*; the place of Eros is in the intimate gatherings among friends of the
*Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. On Rosen’s interpretation these dialogues, and thus Eros, belong to
one half of Plato’s philosophic method, the poetic. This contrasts with the mathematical aspect
embodied in dialogues like the *Sophist*. I, however, will argue that the idea of the philosopher as
an erotic man is fundamental to any understanding of Plato’s vision of philosophy, as
demonstrated by already shown equivalence between the progress of the lover Diotima’s speech
from the *Symposium* and the abstract and mathematical portrait of philosophical awakening presented in the *Republic*’s divided line and cave images.

On this reading, the withdrawal of the philosopher from public life represents an imperfect understanding of the philosophic Eros more perfectly embodied by Socrates. In this case, the philosophers of the Republic are imperfectly virtuous and “mistake themselves for the good” (Obdrzalek 427) Not fully understanding the true object of their own Eros for wisdom, the withdrawn philosopher conceives his own wisdom as sufficient satisfaction for his love of the whole of wisdom and truth. However, for Plato, “ones *erōs* completes itself in the commitment to admitting that one is out for others’ best interests.” (Russon 124) Fully understood, the love of the whole of wisdom and truth should motivate us not only to seek out own enlightenment, but also to strive for others’ understanding of the truth. Socrates understands the full commitment of his love of wisdom to a greater degree than even the natural philosopher of the *Republic*, and it is only in this full understanding that the Philosophic Eros becomes a morally virtuous motivation as well as an epistemically virtuous one. The withdrawn philosophers, despite their imperfect understanding of their own erotic nature, have achieved a state that seems unproblematically virtuous on an epistemic level. Their eyes are lifted above the world of appearance and opinion and focused firmly on truth and being. Socrates moves beyond even this. Not only has he turned his own soul toward the forms; he descends into the non-virtuous city to aid others in their own turnings toward wisdom, the beautiful and the good.

Eros is what drives the Platonic philosopher towards wisdom and understanding. For the sake of his desire for the whole of wisdom and truth he undertakes the “long and arduous development, involving a good deal of trouble and education” (*Theatetus* 186c) that is necessary to turn the soul towards what is true and away from mere appearances and opinions. This
turning, driven by erotic desire brings them to the learning of beautiful things, of truths. At this stage the philosopher has achieved an epistemic virtue: they discern truth and falsehood with virtuous perception and take virtuous actions in accepting the former and denying the latter. A further move in understanding, a realization that the desire for the whole of wisdom and truth is necessarily a desire for wisdom and truth to be had by all, leads to a development of further virtue. In this final ascent of the ladder of understanding, driven by fulfillment of the philosophic eros, the philosopher becomes a teacher. Socrates goes out into the city and strives to bring others to wisdom. In so doing the philosopher has moved from a purely epistemic virtue to one that is also moral.

I wish here to offer an independent justification for the claim that Eros properly understood, the Eros of the philosopher which finds its end in knowledge of the forms, is unavoidably concerned with education, and with the greatest possible number of people achieving wisdom, rather than only with a personal relationship with the form of the beautiful. This argument will proceed from two basic premises. First, I wish to take seriously the Republic’s assertion that a philosopher desires “wisdom, not of part and part not, but of all of it.” (Republic 475b, italics mine) Secondly, I will accept the suggestion of the Symposium that “love is wanting to possess the good forever.” (Symposium 206a) Therefore the philosopher’s Eros must lead him to desire the whole of wisdom and truth in perpetuity. This is, of course, an unattainable goal for a finite, mortal being. No individual could ever grasp the whole realm of knowledge, and, even if they could, they would not possess it eternally, only for a human lifespan. The process of education, particularly in the Socratic conception of guiding others to make their own insights, addresses both problems. As more people have their souls turned towards the domain of knowledge and wisdom, more of the whole can be made visible by each
one’s unique insights, as education is passed from generation to generation, the knowledge already attained can be retained in perpetuity, not by any individual, but by a continuous community of knowers.

We might also argue for interest in education on similar, but less emphatic grounds if instead of the Symposium’s commitment to desiring goods for all eternity, we simply took as grounds Miranda Fricker’s insight that commitment to some particular good ought to mean a stronger commitment to that possessing that good securely. (Fricker 7-8) This also ought to push Platonic philosophers to valuing education, in that education bears on securing the goods they desire. For the Platonic philosopher, who desires the whole of wisdom and truth, education of others can further his own grasping of the truth, in that it provides better interlocutors to engage in a dialectic. Dialectic is certainly Plato’s stated method for reaching truth, whether or not truth is equated with contemplation of the forms. Any philosopher who acknowledges his own finitude, but nevertheless desires the greatest possible share of wisdom and truth will desire others to pursue the same project of dialectic and thus grasp a greater part of the whole of wisdom and truth.

The most significant piece of criticism leveled at the philosopher of the Republic is that such a man will be useless to his polity and not contribute to public life. Plato places the blame for this on the ignorance of the rest of the polity, saying that for philosophers in politics “there is no ally with whom one might go to the aid of justice.” (Republic 496d) Rather than become corrupted or destroyed by politics, the philosopher “keeps quiet and minds his own business.” (Republic 496d) In a community that does not recognize his worth, the philosopher withdraws to virtuous obscurity. They withdraw because pursuit of truth does not agree with obedience to popular opinion, a necessity for the would-be political star in democratic Athens. Their
withdrawal is to avoid being pulled away from truth and virtue by the pressures of public life, which drive those in politics to always offer the masses what they desire. This withdrawal can to avoid being swayed by the opinions of the mob has its parallel in the Nietzschian rejection of dogmatic truth, as we shall see later. The trouble with this virtuous withdrawal is that it puts the supposedly virtuous natural philosophic type at odds with Socrates, surely a role model for philosophers himself. Roslyn Weiss suggests that the philosophers depicted in the Republic lack a virtue, generally ignored in that work, which distinguishes Socrates as superior: the virtue of piety.

Weiss asserts that the philosophers of the Republic fall short of Socrates “because their justice is being measured against his piety.” (Weiss 141) Socrates, like the just philosopher, keeps himself out of politics, but, unlike them, he does not withdraw from the public sphere. “Not content to protect his own soul’s purity”, as the just philosopher is, “Socrates descends into the trenches as seeks to improve souls one by one.” (Weiss 139) Socrates mission of education is fundamentally a pious one. His calling to improve the souls of his fellow Athenians and call them to virtue comes “at the behest of the god.” (Weiss 136) Surely Socrates is more zealous than those withdrawn philosophers in his pursuit of wisdom and truth. He seeks them, not only in his own mind, but seeks to produce them in others as well. Because of this, I will take Socrates as the true ideal of Plato’s philosopher, taking this engagement to be driven by an understanding that transcends that of the withdrawn philosopher.

Both the pious Socrates and the merely just philosopher of the Republic demonstrate the ability of the true philosopher to go against the general tide of opinion. This resistance to pressure from others is fundamental to the philosopher’s development, as the greatest danger that besets the progress of one naturally suited to be a philosopher is that “his family and fellow
citizens will want to use him for their own interests” (*Republic* 494c), leading him astray from his proper philosophic development and filling him “with pretentious preening and a vapid, stupid, smugness” (*Republic* 494d) at his own intellectual gifts. Only if he can resist this pressure to embroil himself in politics and legal disputes and hold himself apart from everyday opinions and concerns can the potential philosopher realize his capacity for knowledge of Being. The ability to hold one’s convictions against the current is what allows the philosopher to develop, and to pursue a mission of education in a society that does not respect philosophic wisdom.

Plato’s virtuous philosopher, then, is defined by Eros, an overwhelming desire. For the philosopher, this desire is for wisdom and truth. If one naturally inclined toward philosophy, and possessed of all the intellectual gifts necessary to pursue it successfully, possesses also the strength of will to resist the worldly, corrupting influences of unenlightened friends and family, they may finally come to fully understand the object of their desire, and to contemplate Being itself. One who fully understands the nature of that driving Eros, however, will not simply withdraw into contemplation. They will, instead, go back down into the marketplace and seek to guide others along the arduous path to true wisdom, securing a greater share of truth preserved across the years by a community of philosophers.


To begin with, I would like to offer a discussion of how I will make use of Nietzsche for this work. As with almost any positive reading of Nietzsche, my reading of Nietzsche for the purposes of this project will represent a picking and choosing of fragments that support the reading I wish to offer. I will not assert that any of the readings I offer are without
counterevidence in Nietzsche’s corpus, or even within the works I will focus on, *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nonetheless, I will offer readings that I believe remain true to fundamental insights from Nietzsche’s texts, even if they are at odds with other passages. That having been said, how will I read Nietzsche? At present, I wish to read Nietzsche as believing in virtue, and in a structure of virtue that is not incompatible with other ancient or modern conceptions of virtue. Further, I wish to read the ‘philosopher of the future’ hintingly described by Nietzsche as exhibiting particular virtues proper to a philosopher. After an investigation of those virtues, I will argue that the philosopher of the future has an end, not simply accidentally, but as an affirmative goal, the advancement of the whole of humanity by means of the cultivation of exceptional individuals, particularly the initiation of others into true philosophy.

Who is Nietzsche’s ideal philosopher? Is it the philosopher of the future? Do such philosophers exist? Can they? These questions are, frustratingly enough, much more difficult than the equivalent inquiry into Plato’s ideal philosophic type. Nonetheless I will attempt to produce a broadly acceptable sketch of the philosopher of the future as Nietzsche’s ideal of philosophic character and practice. To begin, I will take up the issue of whether the philosopher of the future is intended merely as an aspirational figure, to shake us from conventional thinking, or as a fully realized and realizable practitioner of new philosophy. I will then survey various authors to get a fairly uncontroversial set of character traits for the philosopher of the future. I will follow Alexander Nehamas in identifying Nietzsche, at least in his capacity as narrator of *Beyond Good and Evil*, as embodying the philosopher of the future. I will extend this identification to embrace the later books of the *Gay Science* as well. Using this identification of
Nietzsche's narrator with the philosopher of the future, I will bring out traits that are imputed to the philosopher of the future by Nietzsche in those works.

Before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of Nietzsche's ideal of a philosopher's virtues, it seems necessary to establish whether the philosopher of the future is a model of actuality or potentiality that embodies those virtues, or whether it is only an aspirational figure, intended to spur us to the acquisition of a set of virtues that may not be identical to the one's the philosopher of the future is said to possess. Nietzsche himself wonders “have their ever been philosopher's like this?” (BGE 211), which seems to suggest that the further question, of whether there can be such philosophers, is not totally absurd. Hicks and Rosenberg develop the thesis of the philosopher of the future as “a figurative device in the context of Nietzsche’s educational project” (Hicks and Rosenberg 25), and argue that “We are to use them as an aid in reaching the developmental point at which we can, perhaps, go on without them.” (Hicks and Rosenberg 25) In such an interpretation, the virtues Nietzsche ascribes to the philosopher of the future are not necessarily the same virtues he desires to produce in readers, or the those that an ideal philosopher will have, since the figure is a guide to be discarded in the course of development rather than a model to be emulated. This interpretation, while interesting, is perhaps strained by the depths of praise which Nietzsche lays on the philosophers of the future, and by Nietzsche's own response to the question of whether such philosophers have ever been: “won’t there have to be philosophes like this?” (BGE 211)

Rather than adopting a vision of the philosopher of future as an unattainable figure, I will follow Alexander Nehamas in taking the philosopher of the future to be not only possible, but an actual figure, embodied by Nietzsche, particularly as the narrator of Beyond Good and Evil. (Nehamas 59) This identification goes along with Nehamas' suggestion that we “must read
Beyond Good and Evil as a long, sustained, sometime rambling and disorganized, but ultimately coherent, monologue.” (Nehamas 51) Treating the text as a monologue necessarily directs our focus to the character delivering it, which Nehamas takes to be the philosopher of the future. This idea provides us with an interpretive lens of considerable power, because it lets us take Nietzsche’s first person statements as referring to the philosopher of the future, even when this is not made explicit, and thus provides a much broader window on the qualities of Nietzsche’s ideal philosophic type. Using this lens on Beyond Good and Evil, and extending it, I think unproblematically, to at least the last two books of The Gay Science, I will attempt to offer a more complete and more useful picture of Nietzsche’s view on philosophic virtues and character.

To begin then, what are the generally agreed traits of Nietzsche’s philosopher of the future, the ones attributed explicitly to them in his writing? In their experimentation, their openness to new beliefs and new values “the philosophers of the future will be very free spirits, but they will not be merely free spirits.” (Mullin 384) They must however possess the experimentalism of the free spirit and “undertake experiments for the purpose of acquiring knowledge.” (Fulkerson-Smith 188) Free spiritedness, while not the whole of the philosophers’ character, is central to their genesis, because it is that free spiritedness which allows the philosopher of the future to “shake loose of contemporary value judgments and to interpret differently.” (Mullin 387) This freedom from contemporary values, from reification of the commonplace morality, is of course one the primary differences between a philosopher of the future and the type of past philosopher that Nietzsche highlights when he insists “that people finally stop mistaking philosophical laborers and scientific men in general for philosophers.” (BGE 211) While the philosophical laborer categorizes and systematizes the values of his own time, the philosopher of the future “has, in every age, been and has needed to be at odds with his
This need to be at odds with contemporary values and common opinions must call to mind the withdrawal of the Platonic philosopher, who likewise finds the values of the public sphere at odds with the practice of philosophy. This, as yet, does not necessarily distinguish the philosopher of the future dramatically from the merely free spirit, who may also shake off contemporary values and find himself somehow untimely.

Amy Mullin has suggested that the real distinction between a philosopher of the future and a free spirit is that the former possesses, in addition to freedom, a kind of developmental good taste “that tells the spirit what it must not incorporate, as well as what it may.” (Mullin 401) The philosopher of future is able to use the experimentation with new values to its own benefit and enhancement in way the merely free spirit cannot. Fulkerson-Smith follows the same line and asserts that “the philosopher of the future acquires and integrates knowledge and the merely free spirit only acquires knowledge.” (Fulkerson Smith 192) It not merely the way he acquires knowledge that distinguishes a philosopher of the future from mere philosophical laborers, it something about the way he synthesizes what he has learned, how he uses his knowledge for himself, and perhaps also for others. It does not seem inappropriate to term such a faculty wisdom.

Fundamentally, the philosopher of the future is characterized by kind of strength and mental and emotional health that allows him to embrace the world without the fears and anxieties, or the crutches used to overcome them, that inhibit the thinking of the common man. The philosopher of the future is an embodied philosopher, who does not retreat to the realm of supposedly pure cognition. Whereas “formerly philosophers were afraid of their senses.” (GS 372), the philosophers of the future “are all of us sensualists… not according to theory, however, but in praxis, in practice.” (GS 372) The philosophers of the future engage fully with the
sensible world, rather than fearing it as deception and retreating to the realm of thought alone.
The philosopher of the future does not need the comforting support of the agreement of others, and finds himself “very remote from that which the people... take for wisdom” (GS 351), nor does he need the comfort of faith, even in his own ideas, but rather can “bid farewell to every belief, to every wish for certainty.” (GS 347) The philosopher of the future is secure enough in himself that he does not need reassurance from others, from faith in god, even from faith in his own ideas beyond what they deserve. This strength allows the philosopher of the future to “dance even on the verge of abysses” (GS 347), and to “live continuously in the storm cloud of the highest problems and heaviest responsibilities.” (GS 351) This great intellectual fortitude is produced by the philosopher’s ability to suffer, to endure “the tension that breeds strength into the unhappy soul.” (BGE 225)

This kind of mental fortitude, what Nietzsche calls “a new healthiness, stronger, sharper, tougher, bolder and merrier than any healthiness hitherto” (GS 382), is not by any means an exhaustion of the traits of the philosopher of future, but it can be read as fundamental. This fortitude can be read as what makes the philosopher able to dare to cast of the values of the herd, able to “reach for the future with a creative hand” (BGE 211) and serve as “commanders and legislators” (BGE 211) of new values. Only this great mental fortitude gives them the intellectual courage to abandon the values of their own society and experience and to experiment with new ones, even in the face of opposition and misunderstanding. Nietzsche’s virtuous philosopher then, is a person with the mental and emotional strength to hold themselves apart from society and its values and remain cheerfully, playfully experimental, even with the weightiest questions. They are motivated in their experimentation by “genuine honesty”, which is “our virtue and we cannot get rid of it, we free spirits.” (BGE 227) This genuine honesty
contains or is allied to “disgust at clumsiness and approximation” and a “sly and discriminating curiosity.” (BGE 227) This idea of genuine honesty, as a totally different trait from the dogmatic will to truth, which Nietzsche critiques, is one of the few glimpses we gain of the motivation that drives the philosopher of the future. While it is not identical with Platonic Eros, it does seem that Nietzsche’s philosopher is fundamentally animated with a desire to know truths and a hatred of falsehood.

The idea of experimentation is particularly important, because it is the experimental nature of Nietzsche’s philosopher that balances the rejection of old values with the creation of new ones. Nietzsche’s experimental drive does not recoil from failure, but almost revels in an endless process of striving, which he likens to the waves, as one retreats, perhaps disappointed, “already another wave approaches, still more eager and wild than the first…Thus live we who exercise will!” (Gay Science, 310) This drive to continually experiment and search for new values and new points of view is what makes the philosophers of the future’s playfulness more than idleness. They are animated by a spirit of continual inquiry after what is valuable. They do not only tear down or reject old values; they continually seek or create new ones to replace the old.

Nietzsche’s philosopher, like Plato’s, does not hold himself apart, even though he has the strength to do so. Instead, he remains powerfully concerned with his fellow man. I will follow Christine Daigle in holding that Nietzsche can be read as suggesting “an agent-based virtue ethics that concentrates its efforts on the development of the character of the agent.” (Daigle 6), in other words, a virtue ethics. Daigle connects such an ethics with the idea of flourishing for all, and suggests that given a commitment to virtue ethics “Nietzsche needs to advocate a political system that would favor the flourishing of all.” (Daigle 11) She is thus concerned that “he seems
to adopt an aristocratic, if not Platonic, stance that is concerned with the flourishing of only a
select group of individuals.” (Daigle 12) This concern with Neitzsche’s focus on the freedom
and flourishing of the noble or exceptional person misses, I think, the extent to which
Nietzsche’s exceptional man is concerned with “the enhancement of the type ‘man’.” (BGE 257)

This concern with advancing not only the individual but the community or the species is
particularly the concern of Nietzsche’s philosopher of the future, “whose conscience bears the
weight of the overall development of humanity.” (BGE 61) This is why Nietzsche’s focus on the
aristocratic, noble or exceptional need not be at odds with the idea of universal flourishing; when
the excellent person is free to excel, they will, in turn, advance the state of all the rest.
Nietzsche’s characterization of this relationship is not always reassuring on this point, saying that
the noble must view society “only as the substructure and framework for raising an exceptional
type of being up to its higher duty and to a higher state.” (BGE 258) Even while believing this,
however, the progress of humanity weighs on the noble individual’s conscience, and he is
animated by a gift giving virtue, as Lester Hunt reads Nietzsche, the noble individuals “who are
not creatures of duty at all, are naturally a blessing to others” (Hunt 93), because they freely give
of the spiritual goods that they have built up, not out of duty but from a virtuous charity.

How then does the philosopher of future accomplish his task of enhancing the type man?
To what extent can he be considered an educator? Brett Fulkerson Smith suggests that
“Nietzsche is more or less clear that the philosopher of the future can be conceived as a cultural
physician.” (Fulkerson-Smith 193) But emphasizes that the medical model must be understood
as “diagnostic and not therapeutic” (Fulkerson-Smith 194) because the philosopher of the future
does not merely cure cultural ills, but rather is concerned with the cultivation of others. This
cultivation, this advancement of others in response to social ills is an educational program and
“the philosopher best accomplishes his job of educating others...by way of personal example.” (Hicks and Rosenberg 6) Here we see that the Nietzschean philosopher can be cast as a Socratic figure, one who goes out amongst the unenlightened in order to help them advance to his own enlightened state. In his person, the philosopher provides a seductive example that “tempt others to experience a self-induced great liberation...in the name of their cultivation, their elevation to, and the elevation of, humanity.” (Fulkerson-Smith 197-98) The educational project of the philosopher of the future is to “tempt others to become who they are.” (Fulkerson-Smith 198) This last can of course be read in two ways, the philosopher of the future entices not simple conversion, but also that each person should pursue their own unique passions. The philosopher of future improves mankind by making it more diverse, by breaking the homogeneity of man into a myriad of individuals who pursue their own excellence, their own untimely passions and virtues.

Nietzsche’s virtuous philosopher then, the philosopher of the future, is an exceptional individual, marked by a strong will, a boundless confidence, and a drive to experiment philosophically. This self-confidence does not lead to the philosopher holding fixed views, but rather frees them to cheerfully give up beliefs whenever necessary. They are content to live without faith, because they are motivated, above all, by the genuine honesty that requires opposition to all dogmatic beliefs. These exceptional philosophers take the advancement all humanity as their obligation, and move accomplish it by cultivating other exceptional individuals to reach their full potential. The true philosophers are creators of new values, based on their deep insight into the world as it is, without being bound by tradition, should the tradition be wrong.
4. An Ideal of Philosophic Virtue.

Based on the points of agreement between Nietzsche and Plato, I wish here to construct an ideal of philosophic virtue that respects the most important qualities highlighted by those philosophers and accords with our intuitions about the nature and value of philosophy. First and foremost, I take the philosopher to be one who is motivated by love, a powerful driving desire for wisdom and for truth as the building block of wisdom. It is this love of wisdom that is the genesis and driving force of the philosophic life. When this love is developed and understood to its highest degree, it motivates more than solitary contemplation. The fully virtuous philosopher understands his own love of wisdom as inseparably containing a desire for the wisdom of others. Following this virtuous desire, the philosopher’s practice strives to advance others along the path to wisdom at the same time as the philosopher continues his own progress. This virtue, born from an intense love of wisdom, is not the province of all people. Not all have the potential to become virtuous philosophers. Even among those who naturally possess a deep love of wisdom, only a few will also possess the necessary strength of will to avoid corruption of one kind or another, and be born into lives that allow them to complete their development into virtuous philosophers. In the sections that follow, I will justify the identification of the love of wisdom as a virtuous character trait, by eventual appeal to the idea of a true philosopher as one who knows what it is truly valuable to pursue. Following this justification, I will defend the claim that we ought to consider this virtue as only available, even potentially, to a few.

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3 Nietzsche, of course, is not enamored of the value of truth, insofar as it is dogmatic, and sometimes seems to suggest that we should radically privilege the interest in not believing falsely over the interest of believing truly. However, while I appreciate Nietzsche’s insights, I do not subscribe to a similarly relativist position. It seems to me that if we believe in truth, we must acknowledge it as a fundamental end of philosophy.
5. How is the Love of Wisdom Virtuous?

It can be generally remarked that traditional intellectual virtues, such as open-mindedness, intellectual courage, and integrity are importantly different from the traditional moral virtues, in that, while they are excellences of character, they do not serve as motivations for action, in particular truth-seeking, in the way that moral virtues motivate virtuous actions. Clearly, if we want a philosophic virtue that is intellectual, rather than purely moral, and serves as a strong motivation for truth seeking, as I would argue a philosophic virtue does, we will have to look elsewhere. I will begin this paper by following Nenad Miscevic in identifying such a virtue in curiosity or inquisitiveness. Building on this, I will explore the suggestion that, as argued by Zagzebski, such a virtuous motivation can endow the actions it motivates with value. I will attempt to avoid the concerns raised by both Zagzebski and Miscevic about whether truth is independently valuable, or whether we desire truth as such, by focusing not on a simple desire for truth, but rather on the love of wisdom as a motivating philosophic virtue. While motivational value will appear problematic, the idea of a philosopher’s ability to discern wisdom as an object will allow me to argue for the objective value of truth, as sought by philosophers, based on the superior ability of the philosopher, suggested in both Nietzsche and Plato, to discover what is truly valuable.

As Miscevic asserts, inquisitiveness, unlike the intellectual virtues mentioned earlier, is “a motivating truth-seeking virtue, a choice-related feature of the mind, of the sort similar to generosity and courage.” (Miscevic, 244) While motivating toward truth, inquisitiveness at its broadest is not clearly virtuous. There can be “trivial, imprudent, and immoral inquisitiveness.” (Miscevic, 247) The first two, I think, do not threaten a potential analogy between inquisitiveness and moral virtues. There can certainly be acts of charity that are real, but so...
trivial as to not really qualify as virtuous, such as lending someone 25 cents for a parking meter, and prudential interests can certainly conflict with virtues like bravery. The potential for immoral inquisitiveness, such as inappropriately prying into the affairs of others, is much more worrisome, if we wish to make inquisitiveness the hallmark of a virtuous kind of character.

The potential for such immoral inquisitiveness should, I think, suggest a move away from simple truth-seeking as an intellectually virtuous motivation. Truths about private shame or indiscretion are no less truths, and one who simply desires truth ought to be just as interested in sordid truths as in exalted ones. The alternative I will offer is to consider the love of or desire for wisdom, rather than for simple truth. Without attempting to precisely define wisdom, I think we can easily agree that it is centered around truth, but not exhausted by truth or equally concerned with all possible truths. While I adopt this change primarily in response to the potential for immoral inquisitiveness, it seems equally able to answer the charge of potentially trivial curiosity, since trivial truths ought to fall outside the scope of wisdom. Given the life and death of Socrates, the potential for conflict between the love of wisdom and prudential interests is unabated, but that ought not militate against considering it as a virtuous motivation.

If we accept that the love of wisdom is indeed an admirable motivation, worthy of being termed virtuous, then we can attach some value to the truths sought by philosophers based on Linda Zagzebski’s suggestion that “positive motives can also confer value on the acts they motivate.” (Zagzebski, 158) The love of wisdom is positive in any sense desired. It is an admirable motive and it is a positive desire rather than a negative aversion. Zagzebski focuses her account of this kind of motivational value on the love of truth, which she takes to have “a kind of value that is capable of conferring additional value on the acts it motivates.” (Zagzebski, 157) It seems to me that this idea of value can be easily applied to the love of wisdom, and
indeed that it may be easier to defend the idea of such a value accruing to the love of wisdom as opposed to the love of truth. Zagzebski’s article focuses on the value that can accrue to act of belief from virtuous motivation, because she is concerned with a virtue based definition of knowledge, since I am not similarly concerned, I wish to focus instead on the value that accrues to the act of philosophic inquiry. If we accept love of wisdom as an admirable motive, then we ought to accept the activity it motivates, that of seeking wisdom and truth, as virtuous behavior.

Ought we to accept that the love wisdom possesses the kind of value as a motivation that makes the acts that flow from it valuable? Evidence for the idea that love constitutes a transformatively valuable motive is abundant. Love certainly has the potential to explain and make acceptable extreme behavior that would otherwise be unacceptable. Consider what would otherwise be viewed as a simply selfish action like kind of intensive jockeying for position that attends application to a selective private school. Ordinarily, such behavior would be socially distasteful or inappropriate but when they are done in the service of a beloved child, they are, at the very least, understandable, and, in many minds, entirely acceptable. The value placed on love can extend to an assessment of epistemic actions as well, the intellectual dishonesty inherent in refusing to accept evidence that would challenge a dearly held belief would generally be taken as an undeniable intellectual and moral failing, but when the belief one clings to is in the good conduct of a loved one, I would submit that the intellectual dishonesty moves, in most cases, from reproachable to tragic. However, love can also be a negative quality. As seen in the case of the tyrant, love or passionate desire that is indiscriminate in its objects harms both the lover and those around him. In general love directed at clearly unworthy ends: love of violence, love of power, love of money, etc., is not admirable, and does not make actions taken for its sake any more laudable; it may even make them less so. It seems then, that we should be wary of
justifying the virtuous character of the love of wisdom by appeal to love as a virtuous motivation.

We need not, however, rely on debatable motivational value to justify the philosophic love of wisdom as virtuous. Both Plato and Nietzsche offer us resources to justify an independent value for the objects of philosophic inquiry, and thus secure love of wisdom as virtuous based on virtuous ends. The heart of it lies in this: it is the business of a philosopher to discover what is truly valuable. In book nine of the Republic Socrates pursues the idea of a tripartite soul to the conclusion that there are three kinds of men, those who love gain, those who love honor, and those who love learning and wisdom. He then asks who is best suited to judge which of these ways of life is best, which pleasure is superior. The conclusion is that, since “it’s impossible for anyone except the lover of wisdom to get a taste of what’s involved in the sight of what is” (Republic 582c), the source of the philosopher’s pleasure, while the philosopher can and does experience the pleasures of the other two, it is the lover of wisdom who does “most beautiful job of judging among the men.” (Republic 582d). Nietzsche also speaks to the nature of the philosopher being one who looks beyond tradition or opinion to determine what is truly valuable: “We, however, would seek to become what we are, --the new, unique, the incomparable, making laws for ourselves and creating ourselves! And for this purpose we must become the best students and discoverers of all the laws and necessities in the world.” (Gay Science 335) If we understand the laws Nietzsche discusses in terms of moral laws, which does not seem inappropriate, then it is easy to see a parallel with Plato; in this case also, the philosopher bases his way of living and guides his actions based on his wisdom and his knowledge of true values.
The philosopher's project, as seen here, is to determine what is valuable. We need not necessarily grant such broad virtue to the philosopher as Plato does, but a virtuous philosopher must possess virtue proper to his sphere, else they are not virtuous. If the philosophers virtue is to determine value, and there sphere, as I would take it, is that of inquiry, then their virtue should be the capacity to ask worthwhile questions and find true answers. It is not that truth is valuable because philosophers value it. Philosophers value truth because they have determined that it is worth valuing. This is fundamental to the idea of philosophic virtue that I wish to convey, and it both broadens and narrows the field of those who may be said to fully achieve such a virtue. On the one hand, it is a rare talent to be able to determine which questions are truly worth asking. On the other, it is clearly not a talent or concern limited to practitioners of philosophy, but rather looms large in any kind of inquiry. Indeed, the ability to distinguish worthwhile work from the trivial is greatly desired in all our intellectual endeavors. This idea returns us to the idea of virtue as excellence. The philosophic virtue is the perfection of a human capacity for excellence in knowing the world. It is the full development of our capacity to question and seek true answers, and it perfects not only the ability to answer questions, in an unswerving pursuit of truth, but also our ability to ask them, in that virtuous philosophers concern themselves with questions that matter, not with any question at all. This should serve to answer the question with which we began. Philosophy can be virtuous, the philosopher can be virtuous, when they possess the truly excellent capacity to determine what avenues of inquiry are worthwhile and are animated by a love of wisdom to pursue those questions despite any obstacle that may present itself.
6. The Virtue of a Few.

One of the questions that necessarily arises from this project of sketching the virtue of a philosopher is that of who has the potential to achieve that virtue. I have followed the suggestions present in both Nietzsche and Plato that only a few people have even the potential to fully achieve philosophic virtue, that there are a small number of people suited, either by inborn nature or accident of upbringing, to the perfection of a philosophic virtue driven by a philosophic Eros. Simply put, both the motivating love of wisdom and the ability to distinguish worthwhile investigations appear to be rare rather than common. This limited community of the potentially virtuous contrasts sharply with accounts of the traditional moral virtues, which are generally taken to be available to a wide variety of persons and across a wide variety of lifestyles. In this section, I will present some arguments for the universal availability of traditional virtues and go on to show why these arguments do not hold for philosophic virtue as I have presented it, particularly because of the strong focus on the motivational character of philosophic virtues.

One account of moral virtues is to say that “the virtues can be unified by practical intelligence even though different virtues will be emphasized in different ways of life.” (Annas 94). This is the kind of account provided by Julia Annas. On this conception of virtue, the practical intelligence that guides virtuous behavior is given central emphasis. If practical intelligence is unified, as Annas reasonably holds, rather than there being separate kinds of practical intelligence for each separate kind of virtue, then the unity of virtue and the potential for a plethora of differently virtuous lifestyles follows fairly easily. This is an entirely appropriate account of virtue that focusses on the idea of practical intelligence. “Practical intelligence develops over your character as a whole” (Annas 86), and makes the full development of any single virtue into the development of all virtues, ready to guide one’s action.
when needed, because all virtue springs from the same font of practical intelligence. It is entirely appropriate, on such an account, for virtue to be potentially available to most people, but this condition does not hold for an account that does not stress the unifying quality of practical intelligence.

Another argument for the universal availability of virtue comes from Plato’s *Protagoras*, in which the basic moral virtues of justice and conscience are declared, by the titular orator, to be in the possession of all, since communities “could not come into being if only a few shred in them.” (*Protagoras*, 322d). Protagoras’ contention is that we all necessarily behave as though everyone possesses an educable moral sense, in that we punish moral lapses and attempt to remedy them in a way that would not be done either for a defect in some other skill, which is possessed by some and not by others, or in the case of a natural defect such as weakness or sickness. Protagoras tells Socrates that “the wickedest man who has been brought up in a society governed by laws is a just man, an expert in this sphere” (*Protagoras*, 327c-d), when compared someone not raised in a lawful society. The essential argument is that, by necessity, all those who participate in a generally orderly society are well on the way to moral virtue, simply because that society cannot and does not tolerate gross lapses away from the moral norm.

Neither of these arguments for the universality of virtue applies, however, to the virtue of a philosopher as here conceived. It is not necessary, and indeed not even desirable, that all people should be animated with an Erotic passion for wisdom. Such a passion is almost a kind of madness. Remember, the baser form of Eros is what drives a man, otherwise sober and respectable, to perform outrageous and shameful acts in pursuit of his eromenos. While a philosopher need not abase himself in the pursuit of wisdom, his eros still overrides other concerns and drives him to pursue wisdom, for himself and others, at the expense of other
concerns. Society would not be well served if every man placed contemplation and the search for truth above practical concerns. Philosophic virtue, as presented here, is also not subject to the arguments for unity and universality deriving from the unity of practical intelligence presented by Annas, since we have here conceived of philosophical virtue as primarily dependent on motivation, rather adhering to the model of right behavior guided by practical intelligence. The philosophers virtue in seeking wisdom, is a fundamentally different kind from those described by Annas, in that it is not exercised in reaction to the circumstances of a life in the same fashion. That is to say, there is not a stage of philosophic virtue in which it lies dormant, waiting to be called forth as circumstances warrant. Philosophic virtue consists in possessing an admirable motivation, the love of wisdom, and in following that motivation in a virtuous fashion. The philosopher seeks knowledge, not only when presented with some opportunity, but always, shaping their life around that pursuit.

It may indeed be the case that “all human beings by nature stretch themselves out toward knowing.” (Metaphysics I, 980a 21), but there is a deep divide between the natural inclination toward knowledge that is a basic feature of human consciousness and the driving desire for wisdom and truth that is at the heart of the philosophic virtue. I will illustrate the nature of this divide by an analogy to John McDowell’s brilliant explication of the distinction between continence and temperance in Aristotle. The point I wish to draw from McDowell, which arises from a discussion of akrasia, is that there is a greater difference between the thought of one who is temperate, possessing full virtue, and the thought of one who is continent, exhibiting correct behavior without possessing the full virtue, than there is between the thought of the continent person and the incontinent one, who falls victim to akrasia. Both the continent and incontinent persons have the potential to behave in accordance with virtue or not. They feel the pull of
conflicting motivations, on the one hand they can be aware of what the virtuous course would be, but some motivation different from accordance with virtue may entice, some appetite or other will move them to intemperance. The temperate person, on the other hand, “can be completely aware of the attractiveness of the competing course [the non-virtuous one]; it is just that he is not attracted by it.” (McDowell 68). In a situation that calls for the exercise of a particular virtue, and ordinary person may behave in accordance with that virtue or they may not, depending on the resolution of conflicts between their reasoning and their appetites. The virtuous person necessarily follows the virtuous course, because no other course exerts attraction on them.

I suggest that the difference between a philosopher and an ordinary person regarding the search for truth is analogous the difference between the continent and temperate persons of McDowell’s analysis. The nature of our engagement with the world as humans necessarily presents all of us with countless opportunities to seek truth, to stretch ourselves toward knowing. For the most part, most of us take actions in accordance with virtue, that is we prefer truth to falsehood and endeavor to accept the former and to deny and expose the latter. Most of us, as is clear from our not infrequent lapses away from virtuous truth seeking, do feel the pull of other courses, and we are sometimes restrained from seeking truth by a myriad of other considerations, such as affection for our familiar beliefs, concern for our own comfort or the comfort of others, or simple laziness. Therefore we may be generally continent with regard to knowledge-seeking; we may possess the philosophic virtue in the same degree that Protagoras asserts we must possess conscience and justice, but we are undeniably subject to the potential of akrasia regarding truth and knowledge. The philosopher, of course, is like the temperate person. They feel no pull to any course that will not yield truth. Further, the philosopher recognizes that questions of truth and falsehood arise in all human endeavors, and relentlessly pursues truth and
resists falsehood. This second part is perhaps the most important. Most of us are, it seems to me, not greatly concerned whether some falsehood lurks, unexamined, in one corner of our store of beliefs, so long as it does not cause trouble in our endeavors. The virtuous philosopher, on the other hand, both seeks truth and rejects falsehood for their own sakes. This much, I think serves to illustrate why we should understand the philosopher's virtue as one that necessarily eludes most, even in mere potentiality. Whether or not true philosophers are so by nature, as Plato suggests, it should be clear that only a very few humans will ever develop such that the concern for truth outweighs all others to the degree herein granted the philosopher.

Moreover, the potential for a fully developed love of wisdom, at least as we have sketched it, seems to be dependent on the particular excellence that characterizes the philosopher. That is, the ability to distinguish worthwhile topics of inquiry. This is certainly not a capacity that all people possess. It seems to me that without at least some development of this excellence, wisdom does not truly appear as a potential object of desire. Only someone with the natural capacities that makes the search for wisdom really possible can properly distinguish a desire for wisdom from a more general motivation towards curiosity; it is precisely the ability to distinguish inquiries that are directed toward wisdom from inquiries in general that we have said distinguishes those who become virtuous philosophers. Perhaps this capacity to determine worthwhile investigations is a part of the generally possessed, educable practical intelligence, and perhaps it does not. Even if we take this capacity to be generally available, the arguments touching on the rarity of philosophic motivation stand on their own as sufficient justification for a limited community of potential virtuous philosophers.
7. Conclusion.

As seen here, a philosopher can achieve full virtue only through a combination of inborn talent and arduous development. To be virtuous, a philosopher must possess and develop the ability to distinguish questions worth asking, questions whose answers can lead toward wisdom, from those which cannot further that pursuit. This natural ability creates the potential for a philosophic Eros, or love of wisdom, to develop. A virtuous philosopher must possess sufficient intellectual courage and strength of will to pursue their own desire for wisdom and truth, even when it goes against with general opinion or common knowledge. Only such mental fortitude will allow the philosopher to remain uncorrupted by interests at odds with that of pursuing wisdom and truth. One who does possess the mental strength to pursue their natural desire for wisdom will come to understand that the love of wisdom is fully fulfilled not in lonely pursuit of personal insight but in a process of dialogue and exchange with other lovers, potential and developed, of wisdom. So the virtuous philosopher not only perfects their own ability to discern what questions are worth pursuing and pursues those questions in search of wisdom, they also bend their efforts toward the development in others of a like excellence in discerning valuable directions of inquiry, so that a greater part of wisdom can be found for all.

The ideal constructed in the thesis should not be taken as a description of or a guide to proper philosophical practice. It is not intended as such, and it seems unlikely that most philosophical practice can or ought to be a full instantiation of this philosophic ideal. The sketch presented here is of the necessary conditions for the process of inquiry to be virtuous in and of itself. It should be clear that the ideal sketched is not limited to the fields currently embraced by the academic discipline of philosophy. It rather describes a convergence of skill and motivation that can make any kind of truth seeking virtuous. The practical wisdom that makes fulfillment of
the virtuous motivation that is the love of wisdom possible ought not pick out what we think of as philosophical topics as the only worthwhile investigations, for surely there are myriad questions in the sciences and humanities whose answers are just as much a part of wisdom. He philosophers’ virtue is not theirs alone, then, but rather belongs to all who have the ability to know enough of wisdom that they come to love it and remain constant in its pursuit.
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