



Recovering Aristotle’s Practice-Based Ontology: Practical Wisdom as Embodied Ethical Intuition

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Abstract

The renewed engagement with Aristotle’s concept of practical wisdom in management and organization studies is reflective of the wider turn towards practice sweeping across many disciplines. In this sense, it constitutes a welcome move away from the traditional rationalist, abstract, and mechanistic modes of approaching ethical decision-making. Within the current engagement, practical wisdom is generally conceptualized, interpreted or read as a form of deliberation or deliberative judgement that is also cognizant of context, situatedness, particularity, lived experience, and so on. We argue that while this way of conceptualizing practical wisdom moves closer to practice in accounting for the concrete and particular reality within which individuals enact ethics, it does not adequately account for practice in the ontological and relational sense posited in practice theories. Practical wisdom conceptualized on the *deliberative* dimension still retains a higher emphasis on distinct entities (individuals/institutions), reflexive agency, conscious mental states, goal-directed action, and intentionality. In other words, it puts a higher stress on individual *wisdom*, as opposed to *practice* or the relational interaction of the individual and social inhering in practice. We offer an alternative conceptualization of practical wisdom based on the *dispositional* mode of being in the world which is rarely deliberate, intentional, or reflective. Our conceptualization integrates Aristotle’s original ethical framework, which is already embedded in a practice-based ontology, with insights from practice theories to show how practical wisdom is intuitively channelled in the *dispositional* mode in a given social configuration of virtues/ends.

Keywords Practical wisdom · *Phronesis* · Aristotle · Practice theory · Virtue ethics · Habitus · Intuition · Ontology

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”—Will Durant (1926, p. 87), paraphrasing Aristotle.

Introduction

Traditionally, ethics in management and organization studies (MOS) draws from rules- and codes-based Kantian, utilitarian, or similar philosophical perspectives. These perspectives incorporate the modernist emphasis on rationality, efficiency, calculability, instrumentality, and so on (Bauman, 1995; Painter-Morland, 2008; Parker, 1998). Universal

prescripts or rules/codes are seen to offer a straightforward solution to the problem of how to ensure or guarantee ethical conduct. This assumes the existence of free or autonomous selves who can make decontextualized rational decisions by simply referring to abstract rules/codes. On this view, as Parker (1998, p. 32) points out, the project of ethics is “an attempt to develop knowledge about how we (or they) should behave through employing some version of (the scientific) method”. The emphasis is on finding various means to govern, control, manage, and regulate the conduct or behaviour of individuals through “deliberate rational analysis and emotional detachment” (Painter-Morland, 2008, p. 97; Carter et al., 2007; Letiche, 1998). Kitson and Campbell (1996, p. 23), as an example of this approach, suggest a five-step model for solving ethical problems: “identify the problem; generate alternative solutions; evaluate the alternatives, using cost–benefit approaches; select the solution; implement the chosen solution”. Such problem-solving tools and models are designed to strip away “subjectivity and personal perceptions” (Painter-Morland, 2008, p. 97), which are seen

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as so many barriers to ethics or just plain “noise” (Jones, 2003, p. 237).

It is against this modernist tradition to which mainstream ethics is largely wedded that alternative conceptualizations have started to emerge. These alternative formulations are mostly joined in their rejection of universalism, prescriptivism, rationalization, institutionalization, and instrumentalization of ethics. In general, there is a movement away from a detached or decontextualized form of ethics that prescribes what a free subject ought to do to be ethical, to an ethics that is grounded in practice or to how it manifests for “concrete individuals in their actual situations” (e.g. Kelemen & Peltonen, 2001, p. 157; Carter et al., 2007; Clegg et al., 2007; Loacker & Muhr, 2009; Weiskopf & Willmott, 2013). As Painter-Morland (2008, p. 102) puts it, “embodied, emotional agents, who carry within themselves the biases of their own particular life-situations, simply don’t see the world in a homogeneous way and therefore pose a threat to the notion of universal truth...”. The practice orientation to ethics endeavours to reclaim ethics from the high perch of universal truths and abstract prescriptions to the messy reality of embodied lives and practical situations.

This turn to practice is not unique to ethics in MOS but rather mirrors the wider turn in the social sciences to re-examine everyday phenomena through a practice-based lens (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Mietinen et al., 2009; Nicolini, 2009; Orlikowski, 2000; Whittington, 2006). It is within the context of this wider theoretical interest in practice that the renewed engagement with Aristotle’s concept of practical wisdom may also be properly understood. Practical wisdom holds immense potential to locate ethics in the dynamic ontology of the practical world, against traditional ontology that has always “embraced an economy of values that privileges the eternal, universal and necessary over the finite and contingent” (Long, 2002, p. 36; Eikeland, 2006). In this sense, the renewed engagement with practical wisdom constitutes a welcome alternative to the traditional static, rationalist, or mechanistic modes of conceptualizing ethical decision-making.

The argument we develop in this paper, however, is that while the current engagement with practical wisdom takes us close to *practice* in the sense of the concrete and contextual reality in which ethics is enacted, there is still much scope to close the distance from *practice* in the ontological or relational sense posited in practice theories. These ontological and relational dynamics are already embedded in Aristotle’s original ethical framework. We argue that the contemporary readings or interpretations of Aristotle’s practical wisdom in MOS rightly lay major stress on aspects that were missing in the rationalist or mechanistic rendering of ethics, aspects such as context, situatedness, particularity, lived experience, values, interests, emotion, and so on (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2004, 2007; Kavanagh, 2012; Mercier & Deslandes, 2017; Nonaka

& Toyama, 2007; Nonaka et al., 2014; Vriens et al., 2018). These aspects tend to be considered in practical wisdom conceived as a form of *deliberation* or deliberative judgement (e.g. Bachmann et al., 2018; Flyvbjerg, 2001, 2004, 2007; Mele, 2010; Mercier & Deslandes, 2017; Nonaka & Toyama, 2007; Sison et al., 2012). Practical wisdom in deliberative terms, however, retains a major emphasis on distinct entities (individuals/institutions), reflexive agency, conscious mental states, goal-directed action, and intentionality. One might say there is a higher stress on the individual capacity to deliberate or act with *wisdom*, rather than on *practice* or the relational interaction of the individual–social that informs practical action. This is not a tendency peculiar to MOS but noted to prevail more widely in philosophy: “deliberate action, and its extreme form, deliberation, are the ways of acting we tend to notice, and so are the only ones that have been studied in detail by philosophers” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1991, p. 236). In contrast to deliberation or a *deliberative mode* of being, this paper offers an alternative conceptualization of practical wisdom based on the *dispositional mode* of being, by invoking Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Heidegger, 1996). Practical action in this dispositional or habitual mode is rarely deliberate, intentional, or rational but rather constituted by everyday “unreflective, non-intentional dispositions of acting, speaking, thinking and so on...” (Zigon, 2007, p. 135). We do not suggest that deliberation is absent in the dispositional mode, but that the primary orientation is dispositional, and any deliberation occurs within a socio-culturally and historically grounded dispositional frame of reference. By locating practical wisdom within the *dispositional mode* (as opposed to *deliberative mode*), we shift the current stress in the literature on practical wisdom from individual *wisdom* to the *practical*, or the dialectic between the individual and social inhering in the practical. In doing this, we also surface the nature of practical wisdom in the form of embodied ethical intuition.

Ames et al. (2020), based on a review of literature in the area of practical wisdom/*phronesis* in administration and organization, call for further research on how practical wisdom is channelled in the decision-making process, taking into account the interdependence of practical wisdom with all the other elements in Aristotle’s virtue ethics framework. We believe that the conceptualization of practical wisdom we outline in this paper, integrating Aristotle’s original ethical framework and practice-based perspectives, makes a significant contribution to the ongoing debate on ‘how’ ethical decision-making occurs in practice within a specific configuration of virtues, ends, and so on in the social world. Specifically, our contribution may be stated as follows: (1). We put forward an account of how practical wisdom is channelled in the *dispositional* or everyday mode of being in the world against mainstream accounts that are based on the *deliberative* dimension;

(2). By explicitly linking Aristotle's ethical framework with practice-theoretical insights, we show how the ontological potential of practice already present in Aristotle's original conceptualization of practical wisdom may be fully realized. In this way, our account helps strengthen and complete the growing turn towards practice in MOS; and (3). The dispositional account of practical wisdom we offer in this paper could fruitfully inform and guide sociological analysis of how practical wisdom is shaped and channelled as embodied ethical intuition within diverse social worlds. Instead of examining practical wisdom as a deliberate and intentional individual act in a particular context or isolated event, these sociological explorations could draw attention to how the relational and historical dynamics of specific socio-cultural worlds inhere in the way practical wisdom draws its dispositional content (of virtues, ends, and so on), and the way it is intuitively expressed.

We begin this paper by presenting Aristotle's original account of practical wisdom/*phronesis*, including how it relationally interacts with other elements in his system. Specifically, the connection between ethics and the social implicated in Aristotle's framework is brought out. We then discuss the practice-based ontology drawing from Bourdieu (1977, 1990), Schatzki (2001, 2002) and others, and note the features of this ontology that are already present in Aristotle's ethical framework. We invoke Bourdieu's concept of habitus to shed further light on the practical or everyday mode of being in the world which we term the dispositional mode, as we argue that it is within this dispositional mode of being that practical wisdom is expressed. We then show how practical wisdom tends to be largely conceptualized within a deliberative mode of being in management and organization studies. Following this, we refer to Aristotle's distinction between the different forms of knowledge, specifically between practical wisdom/*phronesis* and theoretical wisdom/*sophia*, to clarify and elucidate the form of knowledge that practical wisdom embodies within a dispositional mode of being in a practice-based ontology. We then combine Aristotle's ethical insights, drawing mainly from Dunne (2009), Wiggins (2012) and others in philosophy, with practice-theoretical perspectives discussed earlier, to surface the nature of practical wisdom. Although this brings together different disciplines, the core tenets hold them very much together. We offer some concluding remarks on how this paper may help inspire and guide empirical work on practical wisdom in specific sites of the social in the global market economy.

Aristotle's Practical Wisdom

Aristotle's (1998) ethical formulation radically differs from Kantian, utilitarian, or similar perspectives in that it offers no ethical rules or master principles such as the categorical

imperative or the greatest good for the greatest number. Crucially, it speaks to the question of "what it is good to be" as opposed to "what it is right to do" (Cordner, 2004, p. 584). The key concepts within Aristotle's ethical apparatus such as *arete*/virtue, ends/goods, and *phronesis*/practical wisdom operate holistically and relationally to synthesize and realize a unified mode of ethical existence, rather than being independent or distinct concepts. There is a general tendency, however, to adopt these concepts independently or separately leading to a "false impression of the theory as a whole" and this is "particularly acute in the case of the relationship between *phronesis* and ethical *arete*" (Long, 2002, p. 49; Annas, 1998; Eikeland, 2006). This section lays out how these concepts work together within Aristotle's framework as we intend to link this relational conceptualization to practice-theoretical ideas in the next section.

Virtue and Ends

Ethical virtue or *ethike arete*, closely translated as excellence of character, is a *settled disposition* or state (*hexis*), rather than a capacity or a feeling. A capacity is an ability to do something but does not for that reason presuppose appropriate action, and a feeling, be it sympathy or anger, does not of itself suggest that it would be directed to the right object. A virtuous disposition is largely developed through a process of habituation starting in early life as it is in habitual exercise and action that it becomes a settled state. As "we transform our initial naturally given dispositions into virtues of character, we do so by gradually coming to exercise those dispositions" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 154). One becomes courageous by acting courageously and generous by acting generously which is to say that one's actions feed into who one is, and the converse. In the process of acquiring a virtuous disposition, a person is led to naturally find delight in virtuous actions; in this sense, one's emotions also become aligned with virtue, for instance, an unjust act provokes indignation (Annas, 1998; Flowers, 2003; Simpson, 1992). One might say that a virtuous disposition orients one "not only to act in particular ways, but also to feel in particular ways. To act virtuously is...to act from inclination formed by the cultivation of the virtues" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 149; Sherman, 1989). This is markedly different from the Kantian perspective where one rationally follows a categorical imperative or moral principle regardless of one's predisposition or felt inclination.

Aristotle insists that virtue is that which is sought for its own sake, and not for the sake of something else. Other goods such as wealth cannot be viewed as perfect goods as they are always sought for the sake of something else. However, he also contends that virtue results in the chief good or *telos*, which is, *eudaimonia* or human flourishing (Ackrill, 1978; Adkins, 1984; Simpson, 1992). What this means is

that for the virtuous who grow to find happiness in virtue, a virtuous life constitutes in its very living the ultimate end of *eudaimonia* (Aristotle, 1998, Book I, chapter 7). In this sense, *eudaimonia* is not a separate end or good achieved through virtue but rather virtue constitutes *eudaimonia* in itself. The incorporation of a virtuous disposition brings about a transformation in what constitutes happiness for oneself such that in 'acting well' one simultaneously experiences 'living well' (Fiasse, 2001, p. 325).

Practical Wisdom

Ethical virtue requires the channelling of an intellectual virtue (*dianoetike arete*) called *phronesis* or practical wisdom. If "virtue makes us aim at the right mark", it is "practical wisdom [that] makes us take the right means" (Aristotle, 1998, Book VI, chapter 12). In this sense, it is "not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, nor practically wise without moral virtue" (Aristotle, 1998, Book VI, chapter 13). One's disposition must be oriented to the good or virtue to exercise practical wisdom but one must also exercise practical wisdom over a period of time to develop a virtuous disposition. This is a key point because it "repudiates any merely calculative efficiency with respect to means, any ability that could serve indifferently all ends whether good or bad and to which goodness, then, would accrue only incidentally" (Dunne, 2009, p. 277). As such, a practically wise person or *phronimos* is necessarily a virtuous person who is attuned to "what sort of thing conduce to the good life in general" (Aristotle, 1998, Book VI, chapter 5). The definition of a good life or virtuous life, however, is specific to a spatio-temporal context such as in this instance the Greek *polis* rather than some universal notion of a good life.

While virtue is a state or disposition that manifests in appropriate action, practical wisdom determines the action in terms of a mean between the more and the less, or simply put, in terms of appropriateness (Brown, 1997; MacIntyre, 2007; Rorty, 1980). This mean does not imply "a connoisseurship of undemanding moral moderation" (Dunne, 2009, p. 310), as the translation of the term practical wisdom as prudence is sometimes taken to suggest. It is "not a compromise, some kind of mediocrity, or uncritical 'moderation'" but rather comparable to "hitting the centre of a target", which might even be "considered an extreme" in that sense (Eikeland, 2006, p. 28). Courage for instance may be determined as a mean between cowardice and recklessness but what counts for courageous action will differ from one practical context to another. This judgement of what is appropriate is not a matter of following abstract or universal rules. Aristotle argues that, "matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us have no fixity.... The agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate

to the occasion" (Aristotle, 1998, Book II, chapter 2), and "such things depend on particular facts, and the decision rests with perception" (Aristotle, 1998, Book II, chapter 9). Not anyone's perception, however; only that of a *phronimos* who is already predisposed towards the good. In a practically wise person, "the finding of the virtuous mean, is reason finding what accords with reason. As and when each situation arises, a finely attuned reason, unclouded by the distractions of passion, will simply sense what is right, what goes too far and what does not go far enough" (Simpson, 1992, p. 515). In other words, it is an "'an eye of the soul' which is fixed on the good; and what makes it so fixed—thereby transforming it into *phronesis*—is ethical goodness" (Dunne, 2009, p. 277; Simpson, 1992) or a virtuous disposition.

Ethics and Politics

Aristotle's ethics as laid out in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (Aristotle, 1998) is intimately intertwined with political ideas as discussed in his *Politics* (Aristotle, 1921), and "can be properly understood only if they are so read" (Adkins, 1984, p. 29; Simpson, 1992; Wiggins, 2012). However, many authors tend to ignore this connection or the unified insight this connection offers (Adkins, 1984; Bernasconi, 1989; Simpson, 1992). Some ways in which this is evidenced is when practical wisdom is reified as an independent concept outside of the virtue ethics dispositional framework or when *eudaimonia* is held to be something of a general human flourishing, "independent of the values of his, or any, culture" (Adkins, 1984, p. 30). It is when we take Aristotle's ethics and politics together that a practice-based ethical formulation embedded in the social materializes. It is given consideration in this section given its importance in locating practical wisdom within a practice-based ontology.

Although Aristotle makes reference to the human *ergon* or function and links virtue to the fulfilment of this *ergon* from a metaphysical biological perspective, he does not conceptualize the fulfilment or realization of this function in isolation or in a political vacuum. Even if "biology played some part in the argument that human beings have an *ergon*, the identification of that *ergon* is derived from the presuppositions and attitudes of daily life in ancient Greece" (Adkins, 1984, p. 47). Aristotle's list of virtues is inspired by ordinary experience in his cultural milieu and the opinions of the good citizens of the Greek *polis* (Adkins, 1984; Putnam, 1988; Simpson, 1992). In this *polis*, everyone "knew who the virtuous citizens were; everyone could recognize courage or magnanimity" (Putnam, 1988, p. 379). In this sense, Aristotle draws the content of the virtues from the particular socio-cultural and historical realities of his place and time. The primary task of the political administration of the *polis*, as he outlines in his *Politics* (Aristotle, 1921), was to nurture virtue in the community as commonly understood

and agreed upon in that community. In other words, the conditions for realizing virtue or a virtuous disposition in the Greek *polis* that Aristotle almost seems to take for granted are not taken for granted at all but rather carefully configured and maintained through his political ideas and vision (Simpson, 1992). It makes sense then that Aristotle equates *politike* to the art of the practical good, linking *eudaimonia* of the individual to *eudaimonia* of the polis (Adkins, 1984, p. 29). Aristotle's argument that one cannot be virtuous if one is not living in a political regime that supports the realization of virtue or that is not governed by a ruler who is virtuous is perfectly coherent within this overall scheme of ideas.

If one were to accept the view that no moral account can be completely detached from the historical and socio-cultural reality of which it is the product, it also becomes possible to make sense of certain objectionable aspects of Aristotle's theory, for instance, the fact that non-Greeks or slaves were not considered capable of virtue. These aspects serve to illuminate the individual–social relational dynamic of the particular time and place when one considers that those who were not considered capable of virtue were also barred from opportunities to develop a virtuous disposition in the social context, reproducing the self-fulfilling logic.

We now move to a discussion of the practice-based ontology drawing from Bourdieu, Schatzki, and other practice theorists, and note how its key features are already present in Aristotle's ethical framework. This discussion sheds light on the dominant or practical mode of being in the world, which we term the dispositional mode, and how it is differentiated from the deliberative mode. These insights are used to locate practical wisdom within the dispositional mode of being, as opposed to mainstream accounts that largely draw upon the deliberative mode.

Practice-Based Ontology

Aristotle's ethical framework embeds most of the core ontological features that distinguish and join together different practice theories into a coherent family, even though there are minor differences between individual perspectives (Nicolini, 2013; Schatzki, 2001). Practice theories posit "the primacy of practice" over individual entities in the constitution of social life (Schatzki, 2017, p. 35; 2001), and in this sense, constitute a radically different way of thinking about, understanding, and theorizing phenomena. Some key ontological aspects emphasized in practice-theoretical perspectives may be captured as follows: (1). Relationality or the dialectical interaction between agency–structure or habitus–field or subject–object, (2). Background understanding or culturally shared understanding, (3). Dispositional orientation to action, and (4). Embodied knowledge. We use Bourdieu's (1977, 1990) concept of habitus to discuss how all of these

aspects are implicated in a mode of being we term the *dispositional* mode.

Practice is "the basic ontological dimension of our being in the world... meaningfully structured by a texture of social and material practices that remain unthought of as such, but that we more or less share in common" (Nicolini, 2013, p. 34). In this sense, practice "at once underlie subjects and objects, highlight nonpropositional knowledge, and illuminate the conditions of intelligibility" (Schatzki, 2001, p. 10). Practice forms the "omnipresent pre-existing constitutive context in which human lives transpire" (Schatzki, 2017, p. 37), as "there can be no absolute break with tradition, a condition that reinforces the inherent nonrepresentability of 'significance'" (Nicolini, 2013, p. 35). The socio-culturally and historically constituted context gives "structure and meaning to what people do" (Nicolini, 2013, p. 9), and it inheres "within the ability to 'go on' within the routines of social life" (Giddens, 1984, p. 4; Schatzki, 2017). To be part of a practice is to unconsciously adopt "certain norms of correctness (what is right and wrong) as well as certain ways of wanting and feeling" (Nicolini, 2013, p. 5; Reckwitz, 2002). Practical knowledge as such "is inscribed in the body..., not subject to deliberation" (Nicolini, 2013, p. 20; Rouse, 2006; Schatzki, 2017). There is a "space for initiative, creativity, and individual performance" in practice; however, "individual performances take place and are intelligible only as part of an ongoing practice..." (Nicolini, 2013, p. 4).

Bourdieu conceptualizes practice in terms of "the dialectic of social structures and structured, structuring dispositions" or the field and habitus (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 41). Bourdieu's habitus, which echoes Aristotle's *hexis* or settled disposition (Eikeland, 2006; Sayer, 2010; Wacquant, 2004), is the active presence of past experiences inscribed in each agent as schemes of perception, thought, and action. It is "a mediating construct that helps us revoke the common-sense duality between the individual and the social by capturing 'the internalization of externality and the externalization of internality'" or the "ways in which the sociosymbolic structures of society become deposited inside persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and patterned propensities to think, feel and act in determinate ways..." (Wacquant, 2016, p. 65). The "ultimate reasons for commitment to work, a career or the pursuit of profit in fact lie beyond or outside calculation and calculating reason in the obscure depths of a historically constituted habitus, which means that, in normal circumstances, one gets up every day to go to work without deliberating on the issue, as indeed one did yesterday and will do tomorrow" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 10). Aristotle's conceptualization of a virtuous disposition that is developed in the course of education, training, experience, and habituation in interaction with the socio-cultural-political structures of the Greek *polis* may be conceived of

as a virtuous habitus, or a habitus that is internally wired towards realizing externally defined conceptions of virtue in the social system in which it is located, as “objective conditions generate dispositions objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54).

The embodied habitus or disposition explains the inherent consistency and coherency in everyday choices and actions without having to resort to the language of deliberation, intentionality, conscious mental states, goals, and so on. It shows how individuals act “intentionally without intention” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 12) or “without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 53). The habitus speaks to the features of the dominant practical or dispositional mode of being in the world or what Heidegger (1996) calls the “ready-to-hand” mode which is unreflective, unthinking, and unobtrusive such as when one uses the hammer without consciously reflecting about it, as opposed to the “present-at-hand” or the *deliberative* mode, which occurs in rare instances when there is a breakdown in the ready-to-hand mode such as when the hammer unravels and we are made conscious of it as such. The ready-to-hand mode is called up in Bourdieu’s idea of practical sense which the habitus develops as a “feel for the game” in a given social space (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 66). A feel for the game is the ability to meet the ever-unfolding future in the immediate moment, such as when a player over a course of playing in a specific field expertly anticipates where the ball might fall and moves accordingly, without having to intentionally strategize the move. The “movement is not only always edging into the ever new present; it is also deeply layered with its own past. Each new act arises within the terrestrial magnetism of our past acts, which lie sedimented in our habits” (Dunne, 2009, p. 268). Practical sense as such is a state of the body rather than a state of the mind; it is not what one has, such as knowledge, but what one is. To relate this to Aristotle’s ethical framework, one cannot stand apart from one’s virtue as it constitutes who one is; “a virtuous action can never be identified as such without reference to the disposition of the agent who performs it” (Dunne, 2009, p. 247). In this sense, “agents are possessed by their habitus more than they possess it” as “it acts within them as the organizing principle of their actions...” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 18). One might relate Bourdieu’s (1998, p. 86) example of Noblesse Oblige to the character of the Athenian gentleman in Aristotle’s *polis* whereby the nobleman’s cultivated disposition in a sense compels him to be honourable because “it is stronger than him”.

In the next section, we show that practical wisdom in management and organization studies tends to be largely based on the *deliberative* or the present-at-hand mode. This is to contrast and contextualize the alternative mode

of conceptualizing practical wisdom we offer in this paper, based on the *dispositional* or ready-to-hand mode.

Practical Wisdom in Management and Organization Studies

The renewed engagement with practical wisdom in MOS in recent years takes off from the wider turn towards practice as a transformative way of understanding and theorizing known phenomena. While this renewed engagement constitutes a turn towards practice in moving away from rationalist and abstract rules- and codes-based ethics to the concrete and particular realities of ethical decision-making, we argue that it is a partial turn as it does not adequately account for the ontological and relational dimensions of practice elaborated in the previous section. In specific terms, practical wisdom in MOS is largely modelled on the *deliberative* mode of being or the present-at-hand mode, which invokes intentionality, conscious mental states, propositional knowledge, goal-directedness, and so on. In this sense, it still retains a higher emphasis on *wisdom* or the individual side of the individual–structure dialectic, rather than accounting for the individual–social relational dynamic which lends towards a non-deliberate, unreflective, unintentional, and non-goal-directed mode of engagement with the world. To fully engage with the practice turn, as we call for in this paper, requires us to put relational thinking at the heart of theorizing which implies that we acquire a new vocabulary, a “vocabulary of practical action in place of an overwhelmingly intentionalist vocabulary that includes more popular terms like ‘context’, ‘goal’ and ‘purpose’” (Chia & Holt, 2006, p. 639).

Authors in management and organization studies largely conceptualize, interpret, or read Aristotle’s practical wisdom as a form of deliberation or deliberative judgement with a conscious common goal in view, though they differ in terms of which specific aspects are weighed in on in the process of deliberation. Flyvbjerg (2004, p. 284; 2001, 2007) presents a contemporary interpretation of practical wisdom as involving “not only appreciative judgements in terms of values but also an understanding of the practical political realities of any situation as part of an integrated judgement in terms of power”. Flyvbjerg’s interpretation emphasizes judgements in relation to aspects such as values and power. In his view *phronesis* is “that activity by which instrumental rationality is balanced by value-rationality”, following Weber’s definition of instrumental and value rationality (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 4; 2004). In other words, for Flyvbjerg, the tempering of instrumental concerns with value-based goals and concerns in making judgements is demonstrative of practical wisdom. This is captured by Mele (2010, p. 643) in the idea of balancing “efficiency and ethics”, and by Queiroz (2015,

p. 339) in the idea “that when deliberating, the economic agent must also come to a final decision by linking the personal relative means to others’ decisions and... personal end to the Supreme good or happiness, which is always a common end”. Nonaka and Toyama (2007, p. 378) interpret practical wisdom as a “political judgment” though in their view the judgement relates to “the ability to initiate action toward the future based on universal consensus about specific goals and measures reached through the shared judgment and conviction of individuals in each context”. This is also understood as the “ability to determine and undertake the best action in a specific situation to serve the common good” (Nonaka & Toyama, 2007, p. 377). To “build and practice such a strategy, one has to know what is “good” (ideal), and make judgments in particular situations (practice) to realize such goodness” (Nonaka & Toyama, 2007, p. 391). This involves “constantly asking oneself what is the ‘good’” or thinking “from a larger perspective than the particular situation they are facing” (Nonaka & Toyama, 2007, p. 385). In many conceptualizations of practical wisdom such as Nonaka and Toyama’s (2007), reflection about and conscious pursuit of the “good”, sometimes referred to as common good or human good, becomes central to the deliberative process (e.g. Bachmann et al., 2018; Mercier & Deslandes, 2017; Moberg, 2007; Provis, 2010; Sison et al., 2012; Vriens et al., 2018). Mele (2010, p. 642) too suggests that, “practical wisdom introduces ethics in decision making by considering both the end or goal pursued and the means to achieve such an end from the perspective of the human good”. For Kupers and Statler (2008, p. 379), it is “an activity of making judgements and taking actions that enact the common good, or in Aristotle’s phrase, happiness (Greek, *eudaimonia*)”. As noted by Wolcott (2020, p. 18), the conceptualizations and interpretations of practical wisdom, though different in certain aspects, broadly agree upon “careful deliberation and discernment, consideration and prioritization of ethical demands, and creative thinking in pursuing and nurturing the goods essential to human life”. In other words, they emphasize individual capacity or ability to make a well-deliberated decision through conscious reflection and calculation on specific aspects of a particular situation, with an intention to realize a considered common goal or good.

The deliberative decision-making or judgement in these conceptualizations is not presumed to take place in a vacuum; many authors also acknowledge the conditionality and contextuality of ethical deliberation and judgement. Aspects such as context, situatedness, concreteness, particularity, local knowledge, lived experience, and so on are also noted in the literature in different ways (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2004, 2007; Kavanagh, 2012; Mercier & Deslandes, 2017; Nonaka & Toyama, 2007; Nonaka et al., 2014; Vriens et al., 2018). Nonaka and Toyama (2007, p. 378)

suggest that judgement accounts for “contextual circumstances, addresses particulars, and shifts aims in process when necessary” while Vriens et al., (2018, p. 676) view the context as the “deliberative context” wherein deliberation and reflection about organizational goals, societal contribution, and so on might be undertaken. Shotter and Tsoukas (2014, p. 379) take a different approach by calling for a focus on “situational details, exploring felt emotions and the actions they prefigure, and looking for particular sequences of actions and how they interactively unfold”. Authors such as Roca (2007) and Schwartz (2011), similarly, prioritize individual impulse, emotion, and intuition over cognition within a situated context in their conception of practical wisdom. In general, there is an acknowledgement that practical wisdom is enacted in relation to concrete situations and lived lives within broader contexts such as the organization or society (Ames et al., 2020), rather than in light of universals. However, it is still the individual I who consciously, intentionally, or reflectively deliberates upon an external context to achieve a specific goal. From a practice-based ontological perspective, the social is not external but rather crucially internalized by the individual habitus/disposition such that ordinarily one cannot stand above or apart from the social context whose content of virtues, values, ends, and so on one comes to imbibe over a period of time. And in this sense, one cannot ordinarily hold a deliberate or reflective stance over one’s own settled orientation or disposition. This dispositional dynamic, which operationalizes the individual–social or habitus–field dialectic within a practice-based ontology, tends to be missed when practical wisdom is modelled on the deliberative mode. A formulation of practical wisdom on the dispositional mode problematizes a deliberative stance, as the stance would be directed not only externally but also inwards towards one’s own embodied way of being, unconsciously oriented towards a particular concept of virtue and idea of flourishing that is socially specific rather than ‘common’ or ‘universal’.

By modelling practical wisdom on the dispositional mode of being in the world, it becomes possible to account for the ontological and relational features of practice theorized in practice-based perspectives. While there is scope for deliberation or intentional action within the dispositional mode of being, “consistency derives, not from being goal-direct or from an overarching strategic plan but from internalized predispositions that orient actors in a particular way in their engagement with the world” (Chia & Holt, 2006, p. 644). Conceptualizing practical wisdom as a mode of knowledge constituted within a dispositional dynamic in a specific social site helps us understand how it is channelled within and channels this relational dynamic through the mediating position of the body. Before we move to a consideration of how practical wisdom as a form of knowledge is shaped

within this dynamic, it would be fruitful to consider Aristotle's account of the different forms of knowledge.

Modes of Knowledge: Practical Wisdom (*phronesis*) vs. Theoretical Wisdom (*sophia*)

Aristotle makes reference to five intellectual virtues or forms of knowledge: *sophia*, *episteme*, *nous*, *techne*, and *phronesis*. Some scholars including Heidegger contend that Aristotle actually conceives of only two, namely, *sophia* (theoretical wisdom) and *phronesis* (practical wisdom), the other intellectual virtues being subsumed under these two (Bernasconi, 1989). It seems possible to broadly categorize the five intellectual virtues in terms of the two: theoretical (represented by *sophia*) and practical (represented by *phronesis*). *Episteme* is theoretical and *techne* practical. Even though *techne* associated with *poiesis*/production is practical knowledge, it differs from *phronesis* which relates to *praxis*/practice in at least three key ways: (1). The “reasoned state of capacity to act [i.e., *phronesis*] is different from the reasoned state of capacity to make [i.e., *techne*]... neither is acting making nor is making acting” (Aristotle, 1998, Book VI, chapter 4), (2). “While making has an end other than itself, action cannot; for good action itself is its end” (Aristotle, 1998, Book VI, chapter 5), and (3). *Phronesis*, unlike *techne*, is not morally neutral; it is intimately intertwined with ethical virtue. In other words, *phronesis* “is both ethical and intellectual” (Eikeland, 2006, p. 34; Dunne, 2009). *Nous* (intuitive intelligence/intuitive reason/intuition) may be oriented to practical as well as theoretical knowledge. In terms of the distinction between theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*), *sophia* relates to universals, whereas *phronesis* to particulars (Long, 2002; Thorsrud, 2015). Heidegger contends that the “*arche* of *sophia*, its principle or its whence..., has the character of something necessary and lasting, whereas the *arche* of *phronesis* is open to change and so,... is brought into concrete relation to the action” (Bernasconi, 1989, p. 132). *Sophia* “is concerned with beings that are ‘always the same’” (Long, 2002, p. 39), whereas *phronesis* with practical matters that are contingent, unpredictable, mutable, and indeterminate (Nicolini, 2013; Thorsrud, 2015; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997). Aristotle emphasizes the contingent or indeterminate nature of *phronesis*:

“...The whole account of matters of conduct must be given in outline and not precisely, as we said at the very beginning that the accounts we demand must be in accordance with the subject-matter; matters concerned with conduct and questions of what is good for us have no fixity, any more than things that concern health. The general account being of this nature, the account of particular cases is yet more lacking in

exactness; for they do not fall under any art or precept but agents themselves must in each case consider what is appropriate to the occasion...” (Aristotle, 1998, Book II, chapter 2).

Crucially, *phronesis* is not knowledge in the sense of “detached knowledge about something, a knowledge whose significance resides solely in its content and is unaffected by the manner of its possession by the knower” (Dunne, 2009, p. 275) as is the case with *sophia*. Theoretical knowledge of the virtues would not bring a person any closer to enacting *phronesis*/practical wisdom because it is informed by the habitual disposition or state of character rather than being a form of propositional knowledge (Aristotle, 1998, Book VI, chapter 12). This indicates the “impossibility of separating out of phronetic action an element of knowledge as possessed and another element of application” (Dunne, 2009, p. 275). To put this in Bourdieu's (1990, p. 33) terms, the impartial or theoretical observer who is not immersed in practice but instead analyses it from a distance does not have the same relationship to the object that inheres in practice, and therefore does not see the “self-evidence of the familiar world” which cannot be seen other than by “producing and reproducing it practically”. One who is immersed in practice, on the other hand, might have difficulty articulating practical knowledge or the principles that govern their own actions because they are incorporated in the habitus below the level of consciousness. To emphasize a point made earlier, practical knowledge is held in the body rather than the mind, and relates to being rather than knowing in a detached or propositional sense (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Dunne, 2009).

Aristotle seems to take an anti-Platonic stance in establishing “*praxis* as a separate form of knowing with its own logic and legitimacy” (Nicolini, 2013, p. 23). However, he still echoes Plato in granting a privileged position to *sophia*, and in that sense, to a life of contemplation rather than practical living (Dunne, 2009; Long, 2002; Thorsrud, 2015). Aristotle seems to believe that a life devoted to theoretical activity leads to perfect *eudaimonia*, whereas a life of practical activity realizes it only in a secondary sense (Dunne, 2009). One might say that “although *phronesis* becomes increasingly important as the Ethics progresses, it is never permitted to trump the hegemony of *sophia*” (Long, 2002, p. 39). In doing this, Aristotle is said to have introduced a historical divide between theory and practice (Long, 2002; Nicolini, 2013; Stawell, 1904). However, the key position that Aristotle establishes with his work, that practice is not amenable to “theoretical pretensions in its direction” and that it requires “its own specific kind of knowledge” paves the way for understanding practice on its own terms (Dunne, 2009, p. 243). Aristotle's “intense concern to do justice to the world of finite contingency leads him to develop a mode of knowledge, *phronesis*, that implicitly challenges the hegemony of *sophia*” (Long, 2002, p. 35). It is the “peculiar structure of

this practical knowledge”, markedly different from *sophia* or theoretical knowledge, that Aristotle brings to light with his conception of *phronesis* (Dunne, 2009, p. 243).

Different authors define the divide between theory and practice that has dominated the Western intellectual tradition in slightly different ways, such as that between *sophia* (as theoretical wisdom) vs. *phronesis* (e.g. Long, 2002), or *episteme* (as scientific knowledge) vs. *phronesis* (e.g. Nicolini, 2013), or *techne* (as technical rationality) vs. *phronesis* (e.g. Dunne, 2009). No matter which way it is defined, all these distinctions serve to highlight the modernist propensity to favour theoretical or universal knowledge over the practical or local. We stress upon the *sophia* vs. *phronesis* distinction as *sophia* is historically accorded the highest place among the different forms of knowledge, and in this sense, symbolizes the dominant thrust towards theoretical knowledge in the West.

Philosophical perspectives such as Kantianism, utilitarianism, and others follow the dominant historical orientation in being located within a *sophia*-based ontology, whereas Aristotle's ontology of *phronesis* forms a significant point of departure for later influential thinkers such as Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, and Bourdieu, many of whom are credited with initiating the turn towards practice and from whom we draw major inspiration in this paper. The practice turn in this sense heralds a recovery of Aristotle's ontology of *phronesis* which lay dormant over a long period of marginalization (Nicolini, 2013; Tsoukas & Cummings, 1997). Nicolini (2013, p. 29) in fact believes that, “Aristotle's original hierarchy [has now been] rediscovered and inverted”. We take a slightly less optimistic view. The ontology of *sophia* with its claims to universal or abstract knowledge is far too deeply entrenched and pervasive especially in the academic field to be simply overturned (Kavanagh, 2012). The predominant framing of *phronesis*/practical wisdom in deliberative terms, dissociated from the dispositional or habitual dynamic that grounds it in the social or local sphere, seems to us to retain traces of a *sophia*-based ontology even though there is a strong intent to move closer to practice. By conceptualizing practical wisdom in dispositional terms, we attempt to relocate it within Aristotle's practice-based ontology. In the next section, we show how practical wisdom when thus relocated comes to be channelled within a disposition–social dialectic in a specific site of the social.

Practical Wisdom as Embodied Ethical Intuition

We posited that the dominant mode of engagement in a practice-based ontology is ready-to-hand, that is, unreflective, non-deliberate, and unintentional. Yet, this mode includes within its internal structure a logic of its own that might be

best characterized as practical. Bourdieu's concept of the habitus or incorporated disposition demonstrates how the past is inscribed in each agent as schemes of perception, thought and action which decisively orient one towards particular choices and actions in the future, such that there is an overall consistency and coherency in the life of the individual even without there being conscious intention or deliberate action or goal direction to achieve this. The habitus is “the source of [the] series of moves which are ... organized as strategies without being the product of a genuine strategic intention” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 73). Aristotle's emphasis on schooling, training, and developing habits of virtue (as understood in the Greek *polis*) from childhood upwards acknowledges the power of the habitus in orienting people towards virtuous ends, such that appropriate choice is not really an intentional or deliberate choice as such, but rather a choice that emanates naturally from a disposition that has habitually developed a love of the good and learnt to experience happiness or *eudaimonia* in it. This is why Aristotle (1998, Book II, chapter 1) says that, “It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather all the difference”.

Aristotle's ethical framework accounts for “the working and interactions of nature and culture which drive and are driven by the process of habituation through which a human being enters into a distinctive pattern of sensibilities, cares, and concerns...” (Wiggins, 2012, p. 101). Aristotle's concern with the political administration of the *polis* might in essence be viewed as a concern to positively mediate the nature–culture or disposition–structure dynamic that inheres in the habitus. In other words, it might be read as a concern to create the appropriate sociosymbolic structures in the *polis*, as they “become deposited inside persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and patterned propensities to think, feel and act in determinate ways, which in turn guide them in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu” (Wacquant, 2016, p. 65).

The workings and interactions of nature and culture produce their “own favored dispositions and habits” (Dunne, 2009, p. 273) in specific times/places, which Aristotle refers to as an ethos. And “those who participate fully in such a thing [ethos] will know to respond both directly and in some specific way to that which presents itself...” (Wiggins, 2012, p. 106). That is to say, the habitus develops a practical sense for “the spirit in which... to act” as it embodies an orientation towards the “end and of their own way to that end—some component which is inherently and irreducibly practical-cum-agential” (Wiggins, 2012, p. 100). There is a complexity to this that we briefly noted earlier: it is the virtuous disposition that orients practical sense or practical wisdom in a particular direction, but it is also by channelling

practical wisdom over a period of time that the virtuous disposition is constituted. As Aristotle (1998, Book II, chapter 1) posits, “For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g., men become builders by building and lyreplayers by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts”. The question is, how does one enter into this virtuous circle? Aristotle does not provide a direct answer to this but he argues that if a person only had theoretical knowledge about virtue, “he would be none the wiser” (Aristotle, 1998, Book VI, chapter 1). The only way to enter or rather embody this dialectic is through experience (Dunne, 2009; Hursthouse, 2006) or participating practically in a particular social scheme of virtues and ends. In other words, it is through “learning by taking part” that “we enter into a conception of the practical end” (Wiggins, 2012, p. 102) operating in a specific spatio-temporal configuration.

Within a social configuration or “body-activity-society complex” (Schatzki, 2001, p. 12), practical wisdom “arises within a moral state as its natural intuitiveness and not an independently achieved knowledge that can precede the state and be architectonic with respect to it” (Dunne, 2009, p. 276). This intuitiveness or sense acquired by a virtuous disposition cannot be represented in terms of propositional knowledge (Hursthouse, 2006; Wiggins, 2012). It is likened to an “eye of the soul” (Aristotle, 1998, Book VI, chapter 12) or a “perceptual capacity, born of experience” (Hursthouse, 2006, p. 299), developed in the social. In other words, it is *nous* which works in *phronesis* in relation to particulars as it works in *sophia* in relation to universals. Some authors refer to this intuition as practical *nous* or *phronesis nous* (Dunne, 2009; Hursthouse, 2006; Long, 2002; Wiggins, 2012) because practical *nous* is shaped by concrete socio-cultural and historical conditions of existence (Long, 2002) unlike the *nous* in *sophia*. Practical *nous* or intuition is developed by a virtuous disposition through habitual exercise, training, experience, and constant engagement with particulars within a given social configuration of virtues, ends, and so on. This is why Aristotle gives weight to the “undemonstrated sayings and opinions of experienced and older people” because experience has given them a critical advantage in developing practical *nous* (Aristotle, 1998, Book VI, chapter 11). What is key here is that while practical wisdom is embodied in the form of intuition or *nous*, it is always the intuition of one predisposed towards virtue or virtuous ends. However, what counts for virtue or virtuous ends is never fixed in space/time, and therefore the direction in which embodied intuition is channelled would always relate to the specific and particular socio-cultural and historical dynamics in which the *phronimos* is embedded.

So far we have discussed how practical wisdom is channelled as embodied ethical intuition in a practical or dispositional state oriented towards virtue (as defined within a

social context). This does not suggest that there is no space for deliberation or explicit propositions within this state but that any deliberation or intentional formulation occurs within the framework of the disposition or horizon of practical understanding. This emphasizes the primacy of practice rather than discounting the potential for deliberative or intentional thinking. While breakdown in the dispositional or ready-to-hand mode of being in the world that brings one to conscious awareness occurs relatively infrequently, it is still always a possibility. For instance, when a habitus formed in a particular social context with a certain internalized concept of virtue/ends moves to a different social context where the same concept of virtue/ends does not hold, one’s practical knowledge might get problematized or brought to the surface of one’s consciousness. However, the problematization is processed within the framework of one’s current practical understanding even though this process itself might lead to a readjustment of such understanding/background knowledge. As Bourdieu (1977, p. 20) puts it, “whenever the adjustment between structures and dispositions is broken, the transformation of the generative schemes is doubtless reinforced and accelerated by the dialectic between the schemes immanent in practice and the norms produced by reflection on practices, which impose new meanings on them by reference to alien structures”. Relating this to Aristotle’s ideas, while practical *nous* or intuition is the primary faculty that informs practical wisdom (Dunne, 2009; Flowers, 2003; Long, 2002; Sherman, 1989; Wiggins, 2012), deliberation (*eubolia*), comprehension (*sunesis*), and discernment (*gnome*) also figure in this scheme. We argue that a combination of deliberation, comprehension, and discernment are required to make sense of one’s ongoing life experience even within a dispositional mode, and these capacities feed into intuition. They also reinforce the fact that while *phronesis* as embodied ethical intuition develops out of habit or experience, it is “self-correcting”, and not “mere routine” (Dunne, 2009, p. 292) or “rote habit” (Long, 2002, p. 51). In other words, habituation “is not a mindless process...” (Sorabji, 1980, p. 216). One might say that while *phronesis* speaks to past experience or history of prior actualizations of *phronesis*, it still meets the new particularity on its own terms in the same way that the football player in Bourdieu’s example has a sense of how to meet the moment of the ball falling based on the previous experience, but each new event also requires an intuitive embodied engagement of its own. In other words, the dispositional mode of being accounts for deliberation, intention, propositional knowledge as well as innovation, creativity, and improvisation in one’s mode of engagement with the world.

By locating practical wisdom in Aristotle’s original practice-based ontology and revealing its embodied intuitive nature within a dispositional mode of being, we present an alternative way of conceptualizing practical wisdom that

fully exploits the theoretical potential of practice-based perspectives. We offer some closing remarks in the next section on how this practice-based conceptualization could inform empirical work on practical wisdom in the contemporary market-driven global economy.

Concluding Remarks

The growing interest in practical wisdom in management and organization studies is reflective of the wider shift away from rationalist, static, and mechanistic modes of theorizing to a mode of thinking that embraces the dynamic ontology of practice. With practical wisdom, Aristotle turns away “from the blinding light of eternal certitude towards the refracted world of turbid finitude” (Long, 2002, p. 44). Our present day turn to practice or practical wisdom is symbolic in the same sense as we turn our gaze away from universalities and certainties regarding ethics to what people actually do when they engage with ethics in the concrete and particular. However, the argument we develop in this paper is that while the current day engagement with practical wisdom in MOS makes the welcome move of taking us closer to practice in terms of the real world, it remains a partial move as it does not adequately engage with the ontological and relational dimensions of practice already present in Aristotle's original ethical framework. Conceptualizations of practical wisdom in MOS are largely based on the *deliberative* mode of being in the world, invoking intentionality, conscious mental states, goal-directedness, and so on. In this sense, these conceptualizations emphasize individual *wisdom* rather than accounting for the relational interaction of individual–social that is inherent in *practice*. We present an alternative conceptualization of practical wisdom based on the *dispositional* mode of being, which is primarily non-deliberate, unreflective, and unintentional. We integrate insights from Aristotle's ethical framework and practice-based perspectives to show how practical wisdom is channelled as embodied intuition when located within the relational dynamics of the dispositional mode in a practice-based ontology. In this sense, the practice-based understanding of practical wisdom we advance in this paper makes a significant contribution to the ongoing debate on how ethical decision-making occurs in practice within a specific configuration of virtues, ends, and so on in a social context. This understanding crucially incorporates all the relational elements in Aristotle's scheme of ideas, as against the general tendency in MOS to isolate practical wisdom out of its overall framework and thereby inadvertently cut its social reference. In fully incorporating practical wisdom within a practice-based ontology, we also contribute towards strengthening and completing the

turn towards practice in ethics in MOS. The practice-based conceptualization of practical wisdom we offer in this paper demands that we look for deeper insight into ethical decision-making elsewhere, not in the extraordinary but in the everyday. In other words, not in special individual acts or feats of conscious deliberation or deliberative thinking, but in intuitive responses to situations generated by dispositional orientation towards certain conceptions of virtues and ends in specific social worlds.

Bourdieu (1998, p. 88) makes the interesting observation that virtue is possible only under “social conditions of possibility of the universes in which the durable dispositions for disinterestedness may be constituted and, once constituted, may find objective conditions for constant reinforcement and become the principle of a permanent practice of virtue”. One might say that Aristotle's *polis* was just such a universe where the conditions for constituting durable dispositions for virtue were present or rather made present through political means. A question that might legitimately arise at this point is: given that the social conditions in the contemporary global economic order are vastly different, what does that imply for expressions of practical wisdom? It might be fair to say that the current market society whose self-interest maximization logic crucially animates the world of organizations is not configured for the development of a virtuous disposition or pursuing virtue for its own sake (as defined in a particular social configuration) in the way that Aristotle's *polis* was. MacIntyre (2007) acknowledges this fact in contending that the virtues are essentially incompatible with a capitalist society. So does that mean there is no hope for practical wisdom today?

We believe there is. We argue that while the power of capitalist social structures to undermine the virtue principle cannot be underestimated, the possibilities of the habitus in its dynamic interaction with different aspects of these social structures also must not. However, we have very little empirical understanding so far of how practical wisdom as embodied ethical intuition might be directed or expressed within specific social configurations of virtue/ends mediated by the global market economy. The conceptualization of practical wisdom we offer in this paper, based on the dispositional dimension grounded in the social, could serve to inform and guide sociological explorations or investigations to develop such understanding. These explorations would need to be undertaken in specific social sites, with careful attention paid to how the socio-cultural and historical dynamics shape the unique construction of virtue/ends in these sites and how these socially specific constructions are internalized by the habitus/disposition. Crucially, constructions or content of virtue, ends, and so on must not be implanted from the outside nor subsumed under general categories such as common goal or human good. Doing this poses the danger of transporting the researchers' own

assumptions tied to a different social context into the site under study, and more so, transporting a dominant Western assumption as a universal instead of letting the local speak for itself.

Considering that most social worlds today exist under broader conditions of globalization, these conditions likely mediate traditional or historical conceptions of virtue/ends and modify how they are incorporated by the habitual disposition or the direction in which practical wisdom is intuitively channelled. This would be an interesting point of analysis in any sociological investigation of practical wisdom. The organization would seem to offer a rich context for such analysis as it essentially operationalizes the global stakes of market competition and also invests the habitus within its fold with the motivation to strive for the stakes. How does the habitus' traditional orientation towards virtue/ends pair with (likely conflicting) motivation to maximize self-advantage for the organization and oneself? To explore this in its relational complexity, it is important to locate the organization within a specific socio-cultural context, as this is key to understanding the habitus' received concept of virtue/ends which would differ depending on whether the organization is based in the UK or China or India. As Kavanagh (2012, p. 111) rightly posits, "If there was a deep commitment to situated studies then one would expect location to be identified in the title of published articles". From the practice-based perspective we take in this paper, the empirical focus must not be on the social or on the individual as separate entities but on how the dialectical interaction between the two produces a unique dispositional reference that gives practical wisdom its own intuitive direction in a specific configuration of virtue/ends. In other words, it is from the socio-cultural and historical site that the *phronimos* draws an incorporated concept of virtue/ends, and it is the dispositional orientation to virtue/ends that ultimately determines the direction in which *phronetic* intuition is channelled, one way or another.

Declarations

Conflict of interest Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest or financial ties to disclose.

Research Involving Human Participants and/or Animals Not applicable (Theoretical/Conceptual Paper).

Informed Consent Not applicable (Theoretical/Conceptual Paper).

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