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# Examining the constraints of moral knowledge in shaping ethical conduct in South Korean moral education: A critical analysis of Socrates' art of measurement in Protagoras

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**Abstract:** Socrates argues that individuals can continue to behave morally when trying to explore virtue, distinguishing between copying a moral person's actions and acting on the basis of virtue itself. This study proves the limitations of South Korea's moral education, which values moral knowledge as a driver of moral behavior, by analyzing the art of measurement presented by Socrates as a method of recognizing virtue. Consequently, Protagoras was examined to identify the characteristics of the art of measurement, and "all pleasure is good" and "knowledge directly drives action" was problematized. The study concluded that moral knowledge is not a decisive factor in guiding moral behavior in the right direction.

**Keywords:** limitations of moral knowledge; drivers of moral behavior; pleasure; art of measurement; Protagoras; moral beliefs

## 1. Introduction

Virtue ethics serves as the foundational framework for the Korean moral education curriculum. For example, Socrates' theory of knowledge was integrated into the Sixth Curriculum Period<sup>1</sup> (Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 31), and Aristotle's virtue ethics theory has been incorporated since the Seventh Curriculum Period<sup>2</sup> (Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 161). In the Sixth Curriculum Period, "meaning and importance, moral thinking and judgment, and practice" were selected as core elements based on Socrates' theory of knowledge. The curriculum also included the teaching methods of "presenting a problem situation, searching for norms related to a problem situation, searching for the meaning and validity of norms, practice of moral judgment, and reinforcement of motivation" (Ministry of Education, 1992, p. 30, 43). Compared to the Seventh Curriculum Period, the Sixth emphasizes cognitive elements. Socrates argues that for an individual to continue to practice moral behavior, recognizing virtue itself is necessary. Thus, according to Socrates, virtue itself is knowledge, and if moral knowledge is intact, the individual can behave in a morally correct manner. In other words, moral knowledge is the decisive driver of moral behavior.

However, in the real world, individuals do not necessarily behave morally based on moral knowledge alone. This is because while moral behavior stems from moral knowledge, it is influenced by other factors such as moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and implementation (Aristotle, 2009, pp. 1105a31–2; Narvaez and Rest, 1995). Therefore, Socrates' idea of moral knowledge as a decisive driver of moral behavior may be erroneous, which has led the Korean curriculum to shift its

academic basis away from Socrates' theory of knowledge and toward Aristotle's virtue ethics theory.

Two main factors influence change: external and internal. During the revision of the Seventh Curriculum, the integrated approach proposed by Lickona (1991) and neo-Aristotelianism were highlighted, leading to an emphasis on affective elements in the Korean moral education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 158). Based on these new research findings, Socrates' theory was comparatively reviewed, and the moral education curriculum was subsequently revised. However, efforts to identify problems through a critical analysis of Socrates' theory have been insufficient. Therefore, this study seeks to determine why the curriculum shifted from Socrates' theory to emphasize the affective element within the theory rather than external factors.

Educational goals, content, and methods are necessary for education to be successfully achieved. Educational goals refer to human objectives to be cultivated through education; educational content addresses the knowledge necessary to cultivate these human objectives; and educational methods specify the use of educational content to cultivate the desired human objectives. As an educational goal, moral education aims for learners to perform moral actions and grow into moral human beings. Accordingly, Socrates emphasizes the perception of virtue (Plato, 2009b, p. 98a), and his method of virtue education can be considered a way to recognize virtue. Socrates presents the art of measurement as a method to discover virtue by utilizing one's abilities (Sullivan, 1961, p. 25). By analyzing Socrates' art of measurement, this study aims to demonstrate the limitations of moral knowledge as a driver of moral behavior.

Socrates argues that education allows one to recognize knowledge when there is no knowledge in the soul, akin to how the blind eye recognizes sight through observation (Plato, 2007, p. 518b). In this context, knowledge refers to an idea of good. Recognizing knowledge means that the individual tries to recognize the idea of good on their own, and through these efforts, the soul assumes a great state. This state is referred to as virtue (Plato, 2007, p. 518d). Since the recognition of virtue brings a person to a great state (Plato, 2009b, p. 98a), virtue can be seen as a type of idea. Socrates presents the science of dialectic, a method for recognizing ideas, such as by grouping similar figures according to classes and finding the genus form, in a manner that aligns with human abilities (Plato, 1901, pp. 253c–d; Wegener, 1953, p. 94). The art of measurement has a property similar to the science of dialectic, as it helps humans recognize virtue through the pleasant as well as painful experiences of everyday life. Therefore, this study begins with an analysis of the art of measurement, comparing it with the science of dialectic.

Focusing on Sections 351b–358e of Protagoras, this study aims to understand the characteristics of the art of measurement as a moral education method as follows:

Characteristic 1: Good and bad are reduced to pleasure and pain.

Characteristic 2: The ability to recognize and do what is true without distortion of the senses due to knowledge.

Furthermore, this study aims to analyze the limitations of the art of measurement as a moral education method, raising two counterarguments to the aforementioned characteristics:

Counterargument to Characteristic 1: Is all pleasure good?

Counterargument to Characteristic 2: Is knowledge the only driver of moral behavior?

Through Counterargument 1, this study attempts to clarify the meaning of pleasure as a reduced substance of good and show that pleasure in the art of measurement cannot be the same as that in hedonism. In clarifying the meaning of pleasure, this study uses Philebus, which addresses the analysis of pleasure. Through Counterargument 2, this study intends to demonstrate why moral knowledge cannot be a direct driver of moral behavior and to identify the factors influencing moral behavior.

## **2. Characteristics of the art of measurement as a moral education method**

### **2.1. Science of dialectic as a way to recognize idea**

In The perception of existence is primarily divided into two aspects: 1) fully recognizing existence itself and 2) perceiving existence incompletely.<sup>3</sup> Socrates divides the world into two realms: one of idea, based on the perception of existence itself; and another of sense, based on an incomplete perception of existence (Plato, 2007, p. 509d). The realm of idea is used when trying to fully recognize existence or phenomenon. By contrast, the senses tend to perceive existence or phenomena incompletely because existence is an aspect of perception that can only be accessed through pure ideological thinking away from the influence of the senses (Plato, 2007, pp. 511b–c). However, humans cannot be free from the influence of the senses (Plato, 2007, p. 511a) because they think based on the aspect of perception obtained through the senses; their cognitive structure is formed through it, and they perform higher-order thinking with this structure (Piaget, 1970). Therefore, existence is not an aspect of perception that humans can achieve.

Nevertheless, existence is important because it is the basis for an incomplete perception of existence acquired through the senses (Plato, 1911, p. 100d). Even if we are incompletely aware of the existence of A, we can call this perception A because we have a vague perception of A itself. For example, the reason one identifies an apple by looking at pictures of apples drawn by young children is because the pictures feature a round red shape with a brown tip. Thus, the vague perception of existence is embodied as an essential characteristic of existence (Plato, 1911, p. 101c).

Socrates proposes the science of dialectic to abstractly recognize existence itself as the cause of existence. The science of dialectic is the process of determining what causes existence through the genus form, which encompasses common and essential characteristics of existence (Plato, 1901, p. 253d; Wolfsdorf, 2011, p. 69). For example, humans and cows can be categorized as animals in that they can generate energy by consuming food and moving by themselves. Animals and plants can be categorized as living things in that they generate energy in their way and grow, age, and disappear over time. Animals and living things are the genus forms of humans and cows, and animals and plants, respectively. By finding a higher-level genus form, we can identify what causes their existence. Thus, the science of dialectic helps find concepts that can be referred to by grasping the essential characteristics of existence through senses such

as observation. Therefore, it facilitates humans' recognition of ideas while acknowledging their limitations, since they have no choice but to recognize existence based on their senses (Wegener, 1953, p. 94).

## **2.2. Similarities in the relationship between idea and the science of dialectic and the relationship between virtue and the art of measurement**

Socrates mentions two causes of moral behavior: 1) based on right or true beliefs, and 2) based on knowledge gained from causal reasoning (Plato, 2009b, p. 98a). Simply imitating a moral person's behavior corresponds to the first cause. However, the second corresponds to the attempt to practice virtue after grasping, through causal reasoning, how it is inherent in moral behavior based on a moral person's behavior.

Indeed, the former is not inferior or less beneficial than the latter regarding the individual's behavior (Plato, 2009b, pp. 98b–c). Nevertheless, a qualitative difference exists between the two. According to Socrates, the first cause does not remain in the soul for the long term, while the second does (Plato, 2009b, p. 98a). This long-term presence indicates that moral behavior has been internalized in the individual owing to the perception of virtue. Several factors are needed for their behavior to be expressed morally. For example, Narvaez and Rest (1995) mentioned four factors that influence moral behavior:

- a) Moral Sensitivity: Recognizing whether the situation one encounters is moral and imagining the actions one can perform morally and their effects
- b) Moral Judgment: To judge whether an action is correct
- c) Moral motivation: Putting moral values above any values
- d) Implementation: Willingness to follow moral practice while overcoming carelessness and temptation

According to Socrates' style of thinking, when an individual perceives virtue, factors affecting moral behavior, such as moral sensitivity, judgment, motivation, and implementation, move in the right direction. However, Socrates insists that he tried to find virtue but instead discovered virtues, therefore emphasizing that he cannot find virtue (Plato, 2009b, p. 74a). Indeed, virtues are an incomplete form of virtue recognized by our senses, and virtue is not recognized by our senses. Regarding the relationship between virtue and virtues, Socrates argues that virtue is spread among virtues, noting that there is no difference other than large and small (e.g., gold and gold pieces) (Plato, 2009a, pp. 329d–e; Plato, 2009b, p. 74a). In other words, we recognize that virtues are a part of virtue.

This virtue has similar properties to the *idea* because *idea* is existence itself and cannot be recognized by our senses. Nevertheless, we perceive existence itself because it is the cause of the incomplete perception of existence acquired through our senses. That is, no matter how imperfect our senses are, we can see that the form of existence recognized by the senses is that of existence because of the idea.

Perceiving virtue, even in part, is important because our souls can move in the right direction based on virtue. Socrates argues that one can observe the integrity of virtue only when one begins to ask oneself what virtue is, in and of itself, before asking anyone how one can achieve it (Plato, 2009b, p. 100b). Therefore, it is necessary to

provide ways to make intellectual efforts so that each individual can perceive virtue, even if in part.

Socrates presents the art of measurement as a means to perceive virtue, even partially. This art examines the relative overflow, deficiency, and equality of pleasure and pain. The art of measurement is both a skill and form of knowledge, and according to Socrates, people are defeated by pleasure or pain because they have false beliefs and thoughts (Plato, p. 2009a, 357b, 358c). In other words, people mistake instant pleasure or pain for good or bad and act accordingly, which is wrong. Eventually, the right knowledge leads beliefs and actions in the right direction.

In response to Protagoras' question of why we should examine the public belief—that is, the opinion of failing to act appropriately because of pleasure—Socrates states that the art of measurement is concerned with other parts of virtue (Plato, 2009a, pp. 353a–b). The art of measurement is a means of perceiving virtue, even in part. In other words, it has properties similar to the science of dialectic—a method for perceiving ideas—even partially (Sullivan, 1961, p. 25).

### **2.3. Characteristics of the art of measurement**

#### **2.3.1. Characteristic 1: Good and bad are reduced to pleasure and pain**

Socrates mentions that there is no ultimate criterion for judging good other than pleasure and pain (Plato, 2009a, p. 354b); this notion arises as he asks whether there is reason other than that good results in the experience of pleasure or the release of pain. He states that when pleasure is bad, it takes away more pleasure than itself or contains more pain than itself; meanwhile, when pain is good, there is avoidance of greater pain, and it brings greater good than itself. Therefore, he argues that pleasure or pain cannot be called bad or good considering any other ultimate criterion (Plato, 2009a, pp. 354c–e). Accordingly, pleasure and pain serve as the basis for judging whether an action is good or bad.

Let us assume that *people lose to pleasure and do it while knowing it is bad*. Socrates says that if one is limited to the dichotomies of only pleasure, pain, or good or bad without acknowledging their distinct implications, then the nuanced truths of this sentence cannot be understood (Plato, 2009a, p. 355b). As Socrates argues, if the above sentence is to be expressed without mixing pleasure, pain, good, and bad, then it would need to be expressed in two statements as follows:

- (1) People lose to good and do it while knowing it is bad.
- (2) People lose to pleasure and do it while knowing it is painful.

Socrates argues that the two sentences should be viewed from the perspective of measurement. By analyzing statement 1 from the perspective of measurement, good can be divided mainly into greater (than bad) and smaller (than bad) good. Bad can also be divided into greater (than good) and smaller (than good) bad. Thereby, this statement can be re-expressed as follows:

- (1) People lose to the greater good and do it while knowing it is the smaller bad.
- (2) People lose to the smaller good and do it while knowing it is the greater bad.

In saying, *you lose to something*, something refers to something relatively bad. Therefore, from the perspective of measurement, the meaning of statement 1 can be seen as 1-2.

By analyzing statement 2 from the perspective of measurement, pleasure can be primarily divided into greater (than pain) and smaller (than pain) pleasure. Pain can also be divided into greater (than pleasure) and smaller (than pleasure) pain. Thereby, this statement can be re-expressed as follows:

- (1) People lose to the greater pleasure and do it while knowing it is the smaller pain.
- (2) People lose to the smaller pleasure and do it while knowing it is the greater pain.

Considering the meaning of lose, the meaning of statement 2 in terms of measurement is 2-2. When 1-2 and 2-2 are compared, good can be reduced to pleasure, and bad can be reduced to pain. Therefore, Socrates also expresses that pleasure and pain are good and bad things (Plato, 2009a, pp. 354c–e; Wilburn, 2016, p. 233).

### **2.3.2. Characteristic 2: The ability to recognize and do what is true without distortion of the senses due to knowledge**

Socrates argues that if the practice of right action depends on choosing a large quantity and avoiding a small one, then our salvation in life is not the power of appearance but the art of measurement (Plato, 2009a, p. 356d). Therefore, it is necessary to examine the difference between the art of measurement and power of appearance to comprehend the art of measurement. Our perspective perceives a given existence as small if it is far away and large if it is close. Likewise, our hearing perceives a sound as soft if it occurs from a distance and loud if it occurs close (Plato, 2009a, p. 356c). In other words, our senses distort our existence. Socrates' power of appearance refers to the phenomenon of distorting existence rather than perceiving it.

By contrast, the art of measurement neutralizes what is seen and facilitates perception of the real thing (Plato, 2009a, p. 356e). For example, let us assume students who have a class at 9 o'clock are very tired and want to sleep more. From the perspective of the art of measurement, the students should look at the amount of pleasure and pain they can feel when they are absent because they want to sleep more. The contents of pleasure and pain are summarized as follows:

- (1) Pleasure: They can sleep better.
- (2) Pain: Their attendance score will be reduced, they will be at a disadvantage in the exam for missing the class's content that day, and they will likely be branded as undisciplined students.

According to the power of appearance, 1 can be felt immediately, and 2 can be felt later, so even if the amount of 2 is larger, the individual will feel the amount of 1 as more. Therefore, the art of measurement puts 1 and 2 on the same line and compares them. If 1 and 2 are compared on the same line, distortion of the senses that may be caused by the difference in time can be prevented (Wilburn, 2016, p. 240). If the amount of 2—that is, the pleasure of being absent for sleep—is greater than the pain, they will have to sleep; conversely, if the pleasure is less than the pain, they will have to forsake sleep to attend class. Thus, Socrates argues that we should gather all the pleasant and painful elements and weigh them (Plato, 2009a, p. 356b). When the individual perceives the truly good and bad through this art of measurement, the perception will guide them to the right behavior, and they will act on that perception.

### **3. Critical analysis of the art of measurement in moral education methods**

#### **3.1. Counterargument 1: Is all pleasure good?**

This Socrates asks Prodicus to provide terms that can replace good by considering his intentions if he wants to define good as something other than pleasure (Plato, 2009a, p. 358a). However, when good and bad are called happiness and fear, respectively, it is equivalent to reducing good and bad into terms other than good and bad. Socrates, therefore, explains that pleasure and pain are good and bad things, respectively (Plato, 2009a, p. 357d). Consequently, academia compares the art of measurement to hedonism (Dyson, 1976; Sullivan, 1961; Wilburn, 2016; Zeyl, 1980). To confirm whether the art of measurement and hedonism are the same or different, it is necessary to examine whether the pleasure referred to in the art of measurement is the same as that discussed in hedonism.

##### **3.1.1. Why the pleasure of the art of measurement cannot be the pleasure of hedonism**

The body can be dominated by two primary elements. One is the spirit that perceives reality—which is knowledge—and the other consists of feelings that differ from knowledge and do not perceive reality, such as pleasure, pain, love, and fear (Plato, 2009a, pp. 352b–c). The former prefers good and translates it into action, and it can be seen as appropriate in terms of true perception (Plato, 1909, p. 467b). Then, does the latter prefer bad instead of good and then act accordingly?

Socrates states:

“Obviously, then in these cases, when people don’t recognize something bad as bad, it’s not that they’re desiring something bad; they desire what they take to be good, even though in actual fact it’s bad (Plato, 2009b, pp. 77d–e).”

According to Socrates, people act without knowing that pleasure, pain, love, and fear hinder true perception (cf. Dyson, 1976, p. 34) because people mistake these for good, not bad. Therefore, they act, mistaking pleasure, pain, love, and fear for true perception. However, if they determine that these interfere with true perception, people will not act accordingly.

Socrates concludes that individuals cannot have contrasting psychological aspects simultaneously, as in the case of preferring bad while knowing what is good (Plato, 2009b, p. 77d). In other words, if an individual knows what is good, they will prefer good. We can divide good into two categories in this scenario. One is a certain kind of good—such as consideration, justice, and courage—and the other is a general good that encompasses all kinds of good. Socrates argues that virtues—such as justice and courage—are found in everyday life, but virtue is one (Plato, 2009b, p. 72c). Therefore, when Socrates mentions good, he is referring to good in general rather than a specific kind of good.

When offered a choice between good and bad, an individual must prefer good. Regarding good, moral behavior should be performed in favor of virtue—good as a whole—rather than of virtues—that is, a specific kind of good—such as consideration, justice, and courage. Therefore, Socrates rejected the pattern of individuals acting according to their preferences (Balaban, 1987, p. 380; Morris, 2006, p. 222).

### 3.1.2. The meaning of pleasure as a reduced substance of good in the art of measurement

Living beings are born, then grow and decline toward death. Even though this is not a macroscopic viewpoint, when a wound occurs, living beings go through the process of healing over time; when there is joy, they also traverse sadness. Socrates expresses pleasure as a process of recovery and pain as a process of destruction (Plato, 1897, pp. 32a–b). Pain is caused by a physical imbalance, similar to when an individual's leg is broken and they cannot walk properly. Living beings go through a process of recovery from this physical imbalance. Socrates argues that people feel pleasure until they return to the state of harmony—that is, to their original state—through the process of recovery. Just as the pain caused by the broken leg originates from the severe ache caused by the broken leg bone rather than the pain itself, the pleasure from the process of recovery is caused by external factors, such as comfort, which occur during the process of slowly escaping from the pain rather than originating from the pleasure itself. This kind of pleasure corresponds to physical pleasure (Fletcher, 2014, p. 116).

Just as the world is classified into a world of sense and a world of idea, pleasure can be divided into physical and mental pleasure. The circle we draw in everyday life cannot represent the circle itself, no matter how accurately we express it. However, the circle we imagine can succeed in expressing the circle itself. Thus, the world of sense is incomplete, and that of idea can move toward the real (Plato, 2007, pp. 509d–511e). From this viewpoint, physical pleasure is incomplete because it is closely related to the world of sense, while mental pleasure is complete because it is closely related to the world of idea.

However, the opinion that mental pleasure is good cannot be found in *Philebus*. Good refers only to what makes other things become something (Plato, 1897, p. 54c). Here, something is a category of things that cannot be exactly defined in terms of human ability but can point in the right direction. Just as excessive drinking can give a person ecstatic pleasure in the moment and cause mental pain such as abnormal thinking due to addiction and physical pain caused by liver damage, mental pleasure sometimes accompanies physical and mental pain. Thus, the following formula, *the relationship between mixed pleasure and pure pleasure = the relationship between physical pleasure and mental pleasure*, does not hold (Fletcher, 2014, p. 121).

The satisfaction offered by pure pleasure is felt by the senses, is pleasant, and is not mixed with pain, while pure pleasure wants are insensitive and painless (Plato, 1897, p. 51b). Socrates mentions the pleasure of learning as an example of the former (Plato, 1897, p. 52a) and the pure pleasure of sight and hearing as an example of the latter. People see many things through sight, but sometimes they see something that has perfect proportions or is perfect. In addition, humans perceive many sounds through their hearing, but sometimes they hear a perfectly harmonious sound (Plato, 1897, p. 51d).

Seeing and listening to something perfect is not limited to physical action. This is only possible if the mind is embedded in the sensory function. Thus, Socrates argues that perception occurs when the soul and body are affected by the same factors and move together (Plato, 1897, p. 34a). The pleasure of learning is possible only when



you feel that you are growing intellectually by acquiring knowledge through sensory organs such as sight and hearing. However, people sometimes associate learning with pain, such as when they discover their shortcomings by reflecting on themselves based on their acquired knowledge and suffer from it. In response, Socrates emphasizes that the pleasure of learning and the pain of looking back at oneself are not connected. This is because the source of pain in the above case is self-reflection, not learning (Plato, 1897, p. 52b).

In conclusion, pleasure is divided into good and bad, but mental pleasure should not be classified as good pleasure, and physical pleasure should not be classified as bad pleasure. Socrates explains each characteristic by dividing pleasure into impure and pure (Plato, 1897, p. 52c). Just as a habitual smoker falls into the temptation of cigarettes knowing that cigarettes are bad, the former is a pleasure that has the potential to be combined with pain while recognizing instantaneous or relatively beautiful things (Plato, 1897, p. 51c). Just as smokers can regain their healthy appearance through smoking cessation treatment, the former's subject of recognition needs the help of others and always wants something (Plato, 1897, p. 53d). As in the case of being heavily addicted to cigarettes and unable to live without them, the former includes unlimited or infinite pleasure (Plato, 1897, p. 52c). The former is bound by the link between destruction and generation—such as resuming smoking or finding and consuming other addictive substances—even if a person regains their health through treatment (Plato, 1897, p. 55a).

The latter is a perception of the beauty of form—that is, what is beautiful by nature—just as one realizes the world's principles through study and feels beauty while perceiving perfection (Plato, 1897, p. 51c). Therefore, the latter's recognition object is self-existent (Plato, 1897, p. 53d). The latter is recognized by a well-educated and academically competent philosopher and is closely related to the three forms of good: beauty, proportion, and truth (Plato, 1897, p. 65a). The latter recognition object refers to proportion as an essential characteristic that makes them clear in all areas of beauty and virtue, and this proportion can be recognized by measure (Plato, 1897, p. 52c, 64e). Therefore, the impure pleasure that leads humans to corruption comes from a life in which pleasure is not mixed with intellect, and the pure pleasure that leads humans to righteousness comes from a life in which pleasure is mixed with intellect.

From the perspective of a moral rationalist such as Kant (1785/2006), pleasure and pain themselves have no standard of good and bad, so there is no objective standard. Therefore, if pleasure is equated with good and pain with evil, there remains no objective measure for evaluating whether it is a greater good, a smaller good, a greater evil, or a smaller evil. However, one important aspect of this argument is often overlooked: pleasure and pain reflect the individual's past experiences. When they feel pleasure or pain in a situation, it is because they felt good or bad in similar past experiences. In the end, the individual's past experience becomes the basis for their emotional reaction to a situation.

In the absence of brain disorders such as brain damage, an individual's emotional reactions and thoughts regarding a situation are aligned. Since individuals live in a societal context, they can be conscious of how others perceive their emotional reactions or thoughts and in turn can consider others' perspectives (Haidt, 2012, pp. 57–58; Slote, 1995, pp. 93–96). Except in cases like psychopathy, an individual may

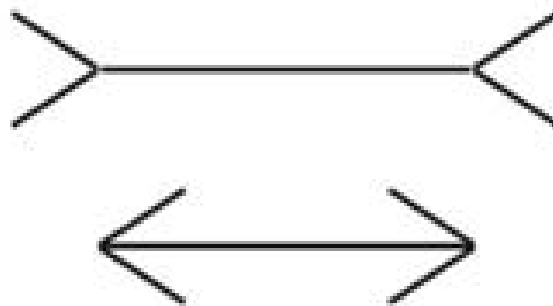
feel discomfort with others' negative judgments or thoughts and may question whether their reactions are appropriate. Further, human experiences are not limited to their personal encounters alone. Since humans live in society, interactions with others are included in experiences. Therefore, experience cannot be considered subjective, as humans can obtain objective standards through interactions with others.

The greater pleasure Socrates refers to is the advantage gained when reflecting on one's life through objective standards obtained through interactions with others. However, the challenge lies in the fact that not everyone possesses perfect knowledge of virtue (Plato, 2009b, p. 74a, 89e). Therefore, no matter how objective a standard is obtained from others, the standard is objective only from a relative, not absolute, perspective. Consequently, Socrates emphasizes the need for continuous effort to achieve virtue (Plato, 2009b, p. 100b). Additionally, he suggests a practical method, namely the art of measurement, to help humans access absolute intellectual virtue, acknowledging the perfect knowledge of virtue is not universally attainable (Plato, 2009a, pp. 351b–358e).

### **3.2. Counterargument 2: Is knowledge the only driver of moral behavior?**

Humans perceive proximity as louder, but human senses tend to distort existence (Plato, 2009a, pp. 356c–e). Socrates argues that before making comparisons, we should first consciously acknowledge what looks large or sounds loud as being close and what looks small or sounds quiet as being far away. In other words, we must view existence itself without the distortion of the senses.

To eliminate distortion from the aspect of perception that comes through the senses, this aspect must be associated with the rationality to look at existence itself. Therefore, good pleasure comes from a life that combines pleasure with rationality. The first question here is whether pleasure can be combined with rationality. **Figure 1** shows the optical illusion of Müller-Lyer (1889, p. 263).



**Figure 1.** The optical illusion of Müller-Lyer.

The optical illusion of Mueller Liar refers to a phenomenon in which two lines of the same length appear to be different in length due to the bending direction at both ends of each line. The optical illusion of Mueller Liar shows that in reality, the intuition that the lengths look different takes precedence over the rational judgment that the lengths are the same.

When examining Müller-Liar's optical illusion, our reaction is as follows:

- 1) Upon seeing the two lines, we perceive their lengths differ.
- 2) However, when measured using a ruler, the lengths are the same.
- 3) Nevertheless, our eyes continue to perceive the lengths of the two lines as different.

Before being combined with rationality, as in 1, the senses distort existence. However, using rationality, we recognize existence itself, as in 2. Following Socrates' argument, we must put our perception of existence itself into action. However, reality tends to continuously distort existence, as in 3. Thus, knowing existence itself through rationality does not lead to pleasure in existence itself. To combine pleasure with rationality to traverse a good path, something other than pleasure and rationality is necessary.

Socrates asks Prodicus to consider his intentions and decide if he wants to define good as something other than pleasure (Plato, 2009a, p. 358a). This implies that pleasure is not inherently equivalent to good itself but is used to reduce good. Therefore, something is required to reduce good to pleasure which does not signify good. In the process of reducing good to pleasure, we choose pleasure as an alternative term for good and adhere to this choice, confident it is not wrong (Morris, 2006, pp. 201–202). Ultimately, the need to reduce good to pleasure is not the fact that pleasure means good but the belief that we should reduce good to pleasure. Similar to Müller-Liar's optical illusion, the reason we know what reality is but perceive existence differently from reality and resist changing this perception is the same reason we know what good is but perceive something other than good and want to maintain it. This is not because we do not know what good is but because we do not have the belief that we should do good.

Socrates explains virtue in the art of measurement, arguing that virtue is knowledge (Plato, 2009a, p. 357b). While distinguishing between rightness arising from right and true beliefs and rightness arising from knowledge by causal reasoning (perception of virtue itself), he emphasizes that righteousness can be continuously practiced if the individual tries to perceive virtue itself (Plato, 2009b, p. 98a, 100b). Socrates argues that virtue, knowledge, and righteous behavior are closely linked and that knowing can lead to the right behavior. In other words, he believes that knowledge has the power to guide individuals in the right direction (Dyson, 1976, p. 37) and that they cannot simultaneously have contrasting psychological aspects. However, in reality, people can know good and believe in doing something other than good. Therefore, knowledge is not a direct factor in guiding behavior in the right direction compared to beliefs (Penner, 1990, pp. 69–70), and as Socrates argues, virtue is knowledge; thus, virtue is also not directly guided by moral behavior (Plato, 2009a, p. 357b).

“I have here in this container a sterilized cockroach. We bought some cockroaches from a laboratory supply company. The roaches were raised in a clean environment. But just to be certain, we sterilized the roaches again in an autoclave, which heats everything so hot that no germs can survive. I'm going to dip this cockroach into the juice, like this [using a tea strainer]. Now, would you take a sip? (Haidt, 2012, p. 48)”

Rationally, the cockroaches in the above case are in a clean state. However, many people refuse to drink juice that contains cockroaches (Haidt, 2012, p. 49) because the

intuition about cockroaches worked prior to rational thinking. A newborn baby has no experience with cockroaches, so he touches them without hesitation. The intuition about cockroaches comes from the experiences people have in their lives.

Applying a moral rationalist point of view like Kant (1785/2006), desire has subjective value and is therefore not rational. Rationality comes from logic, and an action is made possible by fulfilling the determination to do something. At this time, the decision to do something becomes the goal of the action, and the method of action becomes the means to achieve that goal. Subsequently, the means are rational based on whether it is appropriate to achieve the goal. From this point of view, drinking cockroach juice can be seen as a means to fulfill a goal. If the goal is to relieve thirst, one would assess whether juice filtered through a cockroach filter is suitable for achieving this goal. If good alternatives, such as drinking bottled water, exist, drinking cockroach juice, even without a risk of negative reactions, cannot be deemed an appropriate means to achieve this goal. Thus, the rejection of juice filtered through a cockroach filter should not be regarded merely as an adverse reaction but as a reasonable response.

However, this moral rationalist perspective overlooks a significant aspect: Most actions in everyday life are not driven by certain goals. Of course, while some actions are performed with clear objectives in mind, many are done unconsciously in familiar situations to avoid cognitive overload (Eggen and Kauchak, 2012, p. 303). This suggests that as adults, a substantial number of our daily actions are guided by unconscious processes. Unconscious processing manifests as moral intuition. Ultimately, moral intuition in a given situation can be seen as the result of an individual repeating numerous similar past experiences.

Experience arises not only from direct encounters with a certain existence or phenomenon but also from situations where an individual's thoughts and feelings, originating from a certain existence or phenomenon, are shared with and evaluated by others. Particularly when individuals are evaluated by others, they can confront their own thoughts and emotions by applying a universal perspective, that is, a point of view that many people can agree upon. Of course, moral intuition is not an action based on rationality because it does not arise from a goal or a means to achieve a goal. However, it should not be dismissed as simply subjective if an individual shares a universal point of view based on interactions with others, which has then been internalized through numerous experiences, manifesting as moral intuition. Moral intuition should also be considered objective to the extent that it is grounded in a commonly accepted perspective.

In this way, individuals develop subjective perspectives based on their past experiences. However, through interactions with others, they encounter and evaluate a relatively universal perspective, which helps them reconcile differences between their own views and the relatively universal perspective. The viewpoints formed through this process have a crucial impact on shaping their values. Consequently, intuition can be understood as including underlying beliefs (Roeser, 2015, p. 215). For example, accumulated experiences of observing cockroaches in unsanitary environments contribute to the belief that "cockroaches = dirty beings." This belief leads to the intuitive reaction of avoidance upon encountering the term "cockroach."

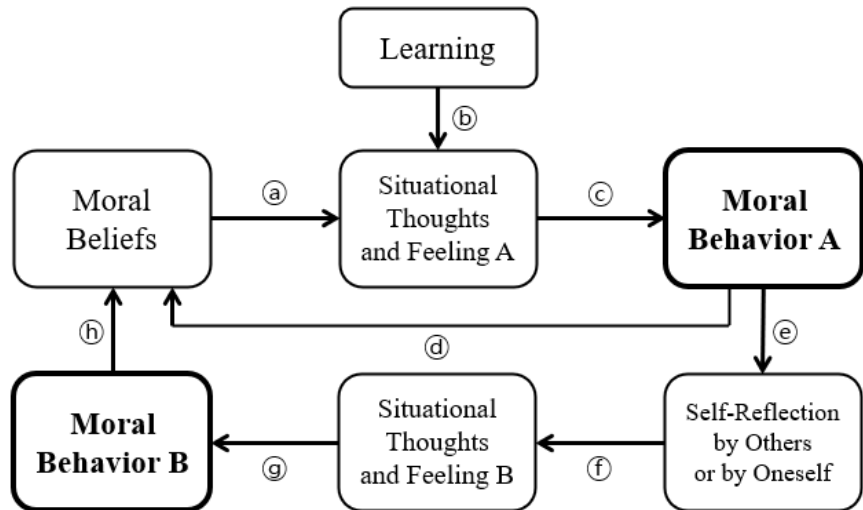
However, this study does not regard beliefs as a decisive factor in behavior. As discussed, beliefs are shaped by an individual's subjective experiences, interactions with others, and reflective thinking, and they can be changed by future thoughts and emotions, interactions with others, and reflective thinking (cf. Haidt, 2012, pp. 57–58; Slote, 1995, pp. 93–96). Actions do not occur conclusively as the result of any one factor; humans are not passive beings responding to principles or causal relationships in the natural world. If a particular factor is viewed as determinant to an action, it would imply humans have no freedom of choice because they must act only when the factor occurs (McDowell, 2000, pp. 66–86).

It is equally incorrect to view knowledge as a decisive factor in behavior. According to Socrates' logic, humans can act right if they have moral knowledge. In reality, however, one can find 1) people who behave right but lack moral knowledge and 2) people who have the right knowledge but behave immorally. Of course, for the former, Socrates argues that the individual's behavior itself that is shown to us is no different from that of the person who acts right because he has moral knowledge (Plato, 2009b, p. 98c). However, contrary to Socrates' argument, there is no reason to judge a person who acts right despite a lack of moral knowledge as a person of low moral level (Plato, 2009b, p. 99c) because moral knowledge is not an absolute measure of moral level. Furthermore, according to Socrates, a person who lacks moral knowledge cannot act right because in his view, moral knowledge is a factor that results in moral behavior. Regarding the latter, Socrates argues that people mistake false knowledge for correct knowledge and follow it (Plato, 2009b, pp. 77d–e). However, in reality, some people behave immorally according to their choices despite knowing what is really morally right or wrong. According to Socrates, this is because they do not know what the real right knowledge is (Plato, 2009a, pp. 352b–c). However, as Socrates acknowledged, everyone cannot recognize the right knowledge itself (Plato, 2009b, p. 74a). Consequently, people make moral judgments with incomplete moral knowledge and act accordingly. Hence, Socrates' argument falls into the contradiction that there are only people who cannot have moral knowledge itself, but only when they have moral knowledge itself can they perform high-quality moral behavior; thus, everyone acts at a low level.

Therefore, it is necessary to break away from the way of thinking in which knowledge and behavior are viewed as necessary and sufficient conditions by linking knowledge and behavior in a 1:1 ratio. Several factors influence behavior, and as confirmed in the cockroach case, several factors are concentrated into beliefs. The human consciousness tends to make assessments unconsciously in situations that are easy and simple to judge to avoid information processing overload (NamGung, 2022, p. 8). In practice, unconscious judgment is guided by intuition, which is an expression of beliefs based on the outcomes of an actor's response to numerous experiences in their life. These experiences include knowledge learned through learning, emotions and thoughts associated with objects and situations, right and wrong realizations achieved through interactions with others, and general attitudes that people develop about objects and situations (Reid, 1969, p. 540).

If we have to focus on something as a factor in eliciting moral action, it is moral belief, not moral knowledge, such as virtue. Belief does not derive action in all situations. However, the focus should be on belief in situations where action needs to

be corrected for the following reasons: The individual relies on their experience in most situations, except for those in need of consideration; in particular, whether the judgment is objectively right or wrong in everyday life is the next issue, as well as the vast majority of cases of acting unconsciously handled by instantaneous judgment (when knowing what is the right thing and maintaining the wrong belief; cf. Palmer, 1981, p. 38). **Figure 2** shows the factors that influence moral behavior.



**Figure 2.** Factors influencing moral behavior.

Note: Moral judgment in everyday life occurs when an actor unconsciously feels and thinks about a situation because of the moral beliefs formed by similar experiences. The actor performs moral behavior by comprehensively considering these thoughts and emotions. After all, moral behavior is not entirely achieved by moral knowledge.

- a. When an actor encounters a moral situation, their moral beliefs are embodied in their thoughts and feelings about the situation.
- b. Acquiring knowledge through learning influences the thoughts and feelings associated with the situation.
- c. Acting morally by comprehensively judging the thoughts and feelings of the situation.
- d. Influencing one's moral beliefs by internalizing moral behavior that one thinks is appropriate for the situation.
- e. Reflecting on moral behavior that one thinks is inappropriate for the situation. At this time, one should consider other people's reactions to one's actions or reflect on one's own actions.
- f. Feeling the need for correction through reflection and expressing new thoughts and feelings related to the situation.
- g. Making new moral actions by comprehensively assessing new thoughts and feelings related to the situation.
- h. Internalizing new moral behaviors and influencing moral beliefs.

#### 4. Conclusion

Previously, the Korean moral education curriculum focused on moral knowledge to instill moral values in students' actions, in accordance with Socrates' theory of knowledge. Subsequently, the moral education curriculum was altered to emphasize

other factors influencing moral behavior as per Lickona's (1991) integrated approach and neo-Aristotelianism. However, these changes primarily addressed external factors by identifying the limitations of Socrates' theory of knowledge through comparisons with other theories. This study thus aimed to examine the limitations of moral knowledge as a driver of moral behavior, focusing on the internal weaknesses of Socrates' theory of knowledge that were overlooked during the curriculum's modification.

There are two main categories of perceptions of existence: first, to fully perceive existence itself, and second, to incompletely perceive existence. One cannot fully perceive existence itself because of one's senses. However, one should be aware of existence itself—even partially—because existence itself is the basis for the senses, that is, the incomplete perception of existence. In this respect, the science of dialectic is a means of facilitating the perception of existence itself, even if imperfectly.

Socrates claims he attempted to find virtue but found virtues, concluding he could not find virtue. In other words, through our senses, we can only recognize virtues, a type of virtue, not virtue itself. However, we need to be aware of virtue itself—even partially—because recognizing virtue itself is important to sustain the right behavior. The art of measurement helps us perceive virtue itself, even in part. Therefore, the relationship between virtue and the art of measurement is similar to that between idea and the science of dialectic.

The art of measurement has two characteristics: first, the reduction of good and bad into pleasure and pain. Here, it is necessary to explore the other expression of good: pleasure. First, the pleasure mentioned here is not of the same nature as that mentioned in hedonism. Socrates views all virtues as a type of virtue, implying that all virtues must inherently contain virtue. Socrates argues that only by perceiving virtue itself can the right behavior be sustained. Therefore, the pleasure he refers to is not the pleasure of choosing a specific good according to one's preference—like in hedonism—but the pleasure of practicing the good, that is, virtue with a sense of duty.

Based on this, what is the meaning of pleasure as a reduced substance of good? In general, pleasure is divided into physical and mental, and there is a tendency to perceive that physical pleasure is bad and mental pleasure good. However, mental pleasure—like being drunk—can sometimes cause physical pain, such as liver damage, and can accompany mental pain. Therefore, the relationship between mental pleasure and physical pleasure should not be viewed as a relationship between good and bad. According to Socrates, good pleasure can be felt in proportions—an essential characteristic that makes existence clear in all areas of beauty and virtue—and this proportion is recognized by measure. Therefore, good pleasure comes from a life that combines pleasure with intellect.

The second characteristic of the art of measurement is that knowledge allows individuals to perceive and perform what is true without distortion of their senses. The counterargument that can be presented here is whether "knowledge is the only factor that leads to moral behavior". As observed in Müller-Liar's optical illusion, individuals tend to perceive by distorting what they want to see—that is, existence—no matter how much they know the truth (being itself). According to Socrates, if individuals know what the right behavior is, they must execute it; however, they tend

to execute the wrong behavior. Therefore, it is possible that Socrates' argument that individuals will do the right thing if they know better is not necessarily true.

In the art of measurement, good is reduced to pleasure, but pleasure does not mean good. Pleasure is simply a substitute for good. Therefore, what individuals need when they reduce good to pleasure is not the fact that pleasure means good. Rather, the action of choosing pleasure as a term that can replace good and the belief that the action will be maintained until the end is required. Likewise, as in Müller-Liar's optical illusion, the reason people know the facts but perceive them differently is not because they do not know the facts but because there is no belief that they will recognize it until the end as they know it. Therefore, knowledge is not a direct factor in guiding behavior in the right direction.

According to Socrates, virtue is knowledge. However, virtue alone cannot guide an individual to behave morally. For this to occur, they must have a belief in themselves that they should act morally according to virtue. Therefore, this study's findings lead to important implications for educational practice. First, education requires educational goals and content, as well as educational methods that join the two. This study demonstrates that the art of measurement corresponds to the educational methodology in Plato's virtue education based on its similarity with the science of dialectic. While the art of measurement is mentioned in Protagoras, it does not define which pleasure is good, which is central to this concept. This study addresses this gap by identifying what constitutes good pleasure through an analysis of Philebus.

This study also contributes to the discussion of moral beliefs by highlighting the limitations of moral knowledge as a driver of moral behavior and emphasizing the importance of moral beliefs. It opens avenues for future research on various aspects of moral beliefs, including their nature, how they arise, the factors influencing them, their role in moral behavior, their persistence despite challenges, and methods for correcting false moral beliefs.

**Conflict of interest:** The author declares no conflict of interest.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> The Sixth Curriculum Period refers to the national curriculum implemented in Korea from 1992 to 1997.
- <sup>2</sup> The Seventh Curriculum Period refers to the national curriculum implemented in Korea from 1997 to 2007.
- <sup>3</sup> 'Existence' is a term that appears when Socrates explains the science of dialectic. This study uses "existence" to refer to the object itself as well as the essential aspects of the life of an animal or person. In particular, when emphasizing the object itself and the essential aspects of an animal or person's life, the expression "existence itself" is used, and the objects, animals, and people we perceive through our senses are expressed as "perception of existence."

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