Contemporary Social Work practice and education: a call for a re-examination of virtue ethics

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Abstract. In this paper, we will suggest that social work needs to recover its connection to the Aristotelian ethical tradition wherein, to be «virtuous» is a «practice». Virtue ethics, we argue, is holistic. It implies a strength of character within the polity. No one can live a good life by focusing only on a single «virtue» or dimension of character. Social work is a complex practice through which not only the client but the practitioner will be enhanced or transformed. In spite of the Kantian emphasis on duty, the behaviorists emphasis on «behavior», the professional association's emphasis on «codes» to control misconduct, and more recently the emphasis on risk management in social agencies, social work is still a «calling», a moral enterprise wherein excellence depends on the character traits or virtues of the practitioner. The article suggests paths for incorporating virtue ethics in the curriculum.
Keywords: Virtue ethics; Social Work practice; professional codes; Aristotelian principles.

[es] Trabajo Social contemporáneo, formación y práctica: una llamada a la revisión de la ética de la virtud

Resumen ampliado. Este artículo sugiere que el Trabajo Social tiene que recuperar su conexión con la tradición ética aristotélica, según la cual ser virtuoso es una práctica.
En la introducción se apunta que el Trabajo Social es una práctica compleja para la mejora y transformación no sólo de la persona que es objeto de intervención, sino también del o de la profesional.
La autora parte de que el Trabajo Social, a pesar del énfasis conductista en el comportamiento, del de las asociaciones profesionales que se refleja en los códigos para vigilar las malas prácticas profesionales, y recientemente, del énfasis en la gestión de casos en las instituciones sociales, sigue estando llamado a cumplir una empresa moral en la que una buena intervención profesional depende de la personalidad o la virtud del profesional. A partir de ello, se plantean los siguientes aspectos:

1. La ética de la virtud y la práctica del Trabajo Social
2. Los códigos éticos y la práctica basada en la virtud
3. La formación ética y el Trabajo Social
4. Las implicaciones para la formación en Trabajo Social

Con respecto a la ética de la virtud y la práctica autores, como Beauchamp y Childress (1994), distinguen la virtud intelectual de la virtud moral. Una virtud intelectual es un rasgo de la personalidad que es valorado socialmente. Una virtud moral es un rasgo de la personalidad que se valora moralmente. Por ejemplo, la amabilidad, la frugalidad o la puntualidad son rasgos de carácter que se valoran socialmente, mientras que la honestidad, la generosidad, la humildad y la caridad son virtudes que se valoran moralmente. Esto no quiere decir que una virtud valorada socialmente no pueda serlo también moralmente. En el Trabajo Social, por ejemplo, las virtudes no pueden ser simplemente dimensiones morales abstractas, sino que deben ser hábitos derivados de la toma de decisiones en el ejer-

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cicio y la práctica profesional a lo largo de los años; de este modo se indica que las prácticas y virtudes de las y los profesionales, al trabajar en las comunidades, calan en las personas con las que entran en contacto.

En lo que se refiere al segundo aspecto, se plantea que es un hecho la tendencia actual a codificar las conductas en documentos y códigos cuasi-legales que tratan de la práctica profesional. Los códigos profesionales, en general, ofrecen guías útiles para ayudar a los profesionales en un mundo de enormes dilemas, pero al mismo tiempo pueden convertirse en elementos de rigidez para la práctica profesional. Por ello, en este artículo se critican algunas teorías, como el conductismo, por considerar que tiende a ser estrechas y mecanicistas en la formas de respuesta profesional. Mientras que la ética de la virtud va más allá de las respuestas mecanicistas, hay una sutileza en la práctica que implica reflexión y compromiso. También se plantea que uno de los problemas de la implantación de la gestión de casos (o gestión del riesgo), que es muy común en la actualidad, es el hecho de que es más prescriptivo que dialógico. El estudiante o el profesional neófito no tienen la oportunidad de reflexionar y preguntarse posteriormente cuál podría ser la mejor decisión en la intervención que van a realizar. La decisión está prescrita, por lo que ciertamente supone menos riesgo, pero mayor rigidez en la respuesta a problemas complejos.

El tercer epígrafe defiende que el desarrollo de las virtudes es comparable con el desarrollo de la utilización de los sentidos y, por lo tanto, la formación se convierte en un elemento clave. Pero el tipo de formación que se considera prioritario es el de la supervisión y, por ello, se aboga por retomar la función de la supervisión que ha sido un pilar fundamental en la tradición del Trabajo Social. A través de la supervisión, la o el profesional debe reflexionar y analizar los pros y contras de una determinada acción. Se insiste en que uno de los problemas actuales de la formación en Trabajo Social es la disminución de la confianza en la supervisión y, por lo tanto, se han perdido los aspectos de reflexión sustantiva y significativa sobre la actuación práctica.

Por último, en las implicaciones de la ética de la virtud en Trabajo Social, la autora se muestra optimista con el retorno a la ética de la virtud como un tema de discusión en Trabajo Social, ya que representa un cambio importante para quienes creen que la profesión se basa en la fuerza de la personalidad de sus profesionales. Por ello, los futuros trabajadores sociales deben ser animados a reflexionar sobre los aspectos éticos de los problemas a los que tienen que enfrentarse, lo que conllevará un «entrenamiento» moral que les permitirá realizar aquellos juicios morales que implique la práctica de la intervención social.

Palabras clave: Virtudes éticas; prácticas de Trabajo Social; códigos profesionales; principios aristotélicos.

Summary: Introduction. 1. Virtue Ethics and Social Work Practice. 2. Codes of Ethics and Practice Based on Virtues. 3. Ethics and Social Work Education. 4. Implications for Social Work Education. 5. References.

Introduction

In an implicit critique of the current codes of ethics of professional social work organizations, Webb (2006) defined the «practice of value» as stressing «the importance of caring, virtue and recognition as antidotes to extreme individualism» (p. 18). This thinking, most would recognize, is based on the Aristotelian tradition. For Aristotle, the good life was a happy and virtuous life in the fullest meaning of the phrase. A full life was grounded on the reality that surrounds us — rather than on the Platonic world of ideas. A full life included the moral virtues, which, for Aristotle, are midway points between two extremes each of which is a vice, an excess or a deficiency (Magee, 2006; Hinman, 2013).

The selection of Aristotelian philosophy in a social work discussion is very natural. Social work is a practical endeavor, grounded on the world that surrounds us. As a philosopher, Aristotle was able to blend and interest in philosophy with an interest in science and research. He also believed, as do social workers, that happiness, not just duty, should be one of the guiding principles of human flourishing. «Aristotle's desire to know about the world of experience was like an unshakable lust. Throughout his life he poured himself into research with gargantuan passion and energy across an almost incredibly wide range» (Magee, 2006, p. 32).

Among Aristotle's classical virtues, extremely helpful in social work, are generosity, defined as the «mean between profli-

gacy and meanness»; justice and prudence, always associated with wisdom; courage, «between foolhardiness and cowardice» (p. 38), and self-respect, «between vanity and self-abasement» (Magee, 2006, p. 38). In other words, a full life includes the practice of the «golden mean.» Our selection of Aristotle and the virtues as a focal point in this discussion does not imply a rejection of the ethical traditions of the Enlightenment, including the British utilitarian philosophers, who are seminal in understanding the basis of American pragmatism in social work practice, and its curriculum.

According to MacIntyre (1984), Webb (2006), Barsky and others, practice and consequently social work practice is intrinsically related to character. Therefore, the moral dimensions of the worker matter. Practitioners «encapsulate virtue in their professional personae. They are not moral thinkers, but moral agents and beings» (Barsky 2010, n/p). Barsky further suggests that virtuous people are not simply motivated by rules or the fear of punishment but they act ethically because they are internally driven to do so.

When McBeath and Webb (2002), or Barsky (2010), or Webster (2011) or many others suggest a resurgence of «virtue ethics» in social work practice, they are referring to a fundamental paradigm change or a return to an ancient and long established tradition of helping and caring. For Webb (2006), virtue ethics is:

> A normative theory according to which all moral value is derived from the character of moral agents. In emphasizing a person's character and the way they [sic] reach judgements, it is often seen as running contrary to rule-bound, duty-bound or guiding conceptions of moral principles (...). Virtue ethics emphasizes an aesthetic of existence by stressing the importance of achieving a meaningful life (p. 22).

In this paper, we will suggest that social work needs to recover its connection to the Aristotelian ethical tradition wherein, to be «virtuous is a practice (...). It requires judge-

ment of what is a just measure of action commensurable with the situation» (McBeath & Webb, 2002, p. 1022). The practice of virtue ethics, as has been suggested, by many recent social work thinkers is measured action.

1. Virtue Ethics and Social Work Practice

Virtue ethics, in the Aristotelian tradition, is holistic. It implies a strength of character within the *polity*. No one can live a good life by focusing only on a single «virtue» or dimension of character. The virtuous character interweaves those attributes that are appropriate to achieving or living in a particular way, without touching the extremes. Consequently, based on virtue ethics, a generous practitioner will weigh or judge an appropriate point between profligacy and meanness. A courageous one will not advise foolhardy risk taking but neither would he/she suggest cowardice. This is what in general social workers have done in their practice. As Murphy (1999) suggested, «virtue requires balance rather than being "holier than thou" or taking any quality to the extreme.» (p. 123).

In relation to the issue of balance and its counterpart, good judgement in professional practice, it is of interest to review MacIntyre's (1984) definition of practice. For MacIntyre, practice is «a coherent and complex form of socially established, cooperative human activity. The goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the achieving of the standards of excellence which are appropriate and partially definitive of that form of activity (...)» (p. 187, slightly edited). To illustrate the matter on a very light vein, MacIntyre remarks that planting turnips is not a practice but that farming is. Farming is holistic and artistic in nature; it is inspirational and embedded in a way of thinking and a tradition that respects the earth at the same time that it uses it; that thinks about the consequences of planting as well as about the product itself; that uses judgement rather than prescription in decision making. In a practice that depends on virtue ethics, it is not only that the practice will result in excellence but also that the practitioner will

be enhanced or transformed. One can become a technically excellent piano player without ever achieving the status of «virtuoso», who enhances not only the audience but himself/herself with each performance. For excellence means doing one's best but it also means being transformed by the practice.

It is important to note that for MacIntyre (1984) excellence can only be realized within a practice community and in the case of social work, it could be said that the cannons and traditions of the profession give the practice of moral reasoning guidance and direction. As Kallenberg (1997) put it, «human life is for living in resonance with our community's stockpile of stories about moral heroes» (p. 364). Thomas Chalmers, Jane Addams, Mary Richmond, Bertha Reynolds, and many others can offer such examples. For Meara, *et al.* (1996), the ideals and virtues are set forth as standards or goals for the professionals and are expectations held by the public, for which, if not upheld, the professionals can be criticized (p.26).

As a starting point, virtue ethics in the social work profession is not necessarily required of the client but definitely of the professional. The professional is the one expected to develop character and the virtues contingent to it. Beauchamp and Childress (1994) distinguish an intellectual virtue from a moral virtue. An intellectual virtue is a trait of character that is socially valued, and generalizable within the context of a whole community. A moral virtue is a trait of character that is morally valued. For example, graciousness, thriftiness, punctuality are all traits of character that are socially valued while honesty, generosity, humility and charity are virtues that are morally valued. That is not to say that a socially valued «virtue» cannot also be morally valued. In social work, for example, virtues cannot just be abstract moralistic dimensions but should be habits derived from intellectual and practical decision-making through the years. Because professionals are agents within communities, their practices and virtues permeate the people they contact. The virtues of the professional illuminate the behavior of the client. Most social work virtues

are also socially valued. As Bellah, *et al.* (1985) put it in the title of his book, they are *Habits of the Heart.*

The practice of virtue ethics, whether in art or social work, is attached or dependent on an agent. The social worker or the artist who embodies the virtues will offer examples of the good life. It is the agent, the social worker, who must develop and show justice, prudence, moderation, etc. It is the social worker who must illustrate for the client how these virtues can be practiced and can attain the desired results. In the same way that a master painter shows his student how color can create pictures and emotions, the social work artist can evoke the appropriate emotions and cause change in the client. The artist does not just apply techniques mechanistically, but brings to bear the dimensions of his/her character intrinsic to the practice. The true artist may know the rules of painting but is not enslaved by them. He/she has learned from the past and has accepted traditions proved useful without making them the only path. The virtuous social worker respects, for example, practice wisdom, the cumulative accomplishments of the professional past but uses prudence in its application. The virtues are inspiring and guiding rather than prescriptive. The virtuous social worker knows the principles of the practice but is not always bound by them. He/she confronts a situation and uses practical experience, reflection and circumspection in making virtuous decisions. This capacity for change through good judgement explains how in Aristotle's time slavery may have been condoned but in today' polity will not. The elements of practical experience, reflection and circumspection are an integral part of the holistic view of a practice based on virtue ethics. They are also elements of the art of social work. Payne (2002) states:

> Any situation may need us to develop and change our guidelines, responding to new aspects of the work and social circumstances that we meet. We must look underneath the surface relationship and events which are presented to us. At any time we may need to think again and think differently. Because this kind of flexibility is the essence of dealing

with any human being and being effective (p. 126).

2. Codes of Ethics and Practice Based on Virtues

In today's world of codification, duty and risk management— (an ethos Kant would have appreciated), the integrative and moderating aspects of virtue ethics are an added bonus for practice. A social worker whether or not practicing virtue ethics, knows he/she should be guided by a code. Typically, it is the professional code of the country's association but the social worker cannot be inflexible in adhering to it. Take for example, autonomy. The virtuous social worker knows that according to the code, client autonomy should be respected. The practitioner, however should assess when and how far. The social worker who reflects or even counsels a client on a bad time to take a particular decision (e.g.: get married or change a job) is using prudence to moderate his/her respect for autonomy. The moment the social worker enters into such conversations with a client, he/she is using prudence in relation to autonomous behavior.

Another case in point is confidentiality. In most situations, confidentiality as a rule binding principle must be tempered by the specific situations. There is always a judgement call involved for the worker. An obvious example in the U.S.A. relates to child welfare practice and the issue of «duty to report». The legal mandate trumps confidentiality but even if it did not exist, the social worker would be faced with a prudential decision on the meaning and extent of confidentiality. The application of any principle cannot be mechanistic. The examples just cited have implications not only for professional practice but also for social work education for it is in that process that the development of character and the habits related to virtue ethics will occur.

Discussing the development of professional ethics, Bright *et al.* (2014) offer a brief historical review that is very applicable to the development of codes of ethics in social work.

By the 19th century, the virtue and character- focused approach had fallen out of favor, particularly in scientifically oriented secular circles. In Victorian England, the term «virtue» had lost much of its original meaning... coming to more narrowly connote a life of chastity or abstinence. In the early 20th century, as the social sciences rose in prominence, there was an explicit effort to suppress considerations of virtue-oriented perspectives (...) because of perceived concerns about maintaining the secular, objective values of the scientific method (p. 447).

In the U.S.A, after the Flexner critique of social work of 1915, the profession worried not only about its secular nature, but also about de-coupling the «ought to» implied in the Kantian tradition of moral duty from the objective reality of social work. However, as we have said, there is no contradiction between a «moral» virtue and a socially valued character trait or «virtue» even if it is called duty. MacIntyre (1984) argued that there was no division between the «ought to» and the requirements of excellence in the practice of social work. It has been well recognized, as Adams (2009) suggested, that «social work as a profession has a *telos* in that it serves primarily the good and well-being of the client, as the good of the patient is agreed to be the primary end and *telos* of medicine» (p. 91). The raison d'etre of social work, which is the commitment to the welfare of others, has been found to echo not only the Judeo-Christian traditions of the West but also the ancient philosophies of the East, whether Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or others.

But traditions alone do not appear to be enough in modern times. In discussing codes and virtue ethics, we must recognize the influence of the Kantian categorical imperative primarily in the development of professional codes in the English speaking world. The central role of duty in ethics was an important theme of Enlightenment ethics but the duty bound philosophy of Kant has been criticized for ignoring that a well-developed inner character can be a forceful foundation for the good life. For Kant, you do your duty because you must, not because your inner voice tells

you but because a universal law tells you so. Duty is disengaged from character. The perspective of value ethics is that the professional does well for others and the client not only because he/she «must» but because of «who» he/she is.

It is a fact that the tendency of modernity has been to codify behaviors into quasi-legal documents and codes that address professional practice at the same time that they offer guidelines—oftentimes rigid ones— for the enforcement of sanctions. The NASW Code of Ethics as well as the many others that followed its model have played and often emphasized such a role. However, it must be remembered that, as Reid and Billups (1986) state, «the current code of ethics does not constitute a system of thought that is applicable as a tool of [ethical] analysis... for the typical sort of problems that social workers face» (p. 7). Other authors have agreed with this perspective. Reamer (1982) has also argued that the code is of limited value in guiding the actions of practitioners when confronted with an ethical dilemma. Rather, professional codes generally offer useful guideposts to help professionals in a world of daunting dilemmas. As Adams (2009) has described, «the collapse in the twentieth century of the most widely used and longest lasting [code]... that of Hippocrates, suggests both the difficulty of the task and the need to rebuild the moral philosophy of the professions on a different basis (p. 91). In other words, modern times require the social worker to move beyond the code.

This leads us back to contrasting virtue ethics in practice with other contemporary approaches such as behaviorism. Professional virtues are not present only as enforcers of behavior but as merits of the person's character in his/her own right. As Bright *et al.* (2014) commented, «from a virtue ethics perspective» a behaviorally based account of virtue is a weak theory of virtue» (p. 445). Behaviorism in the strictness sense proposes the Skinnerian principle of *behavior is what behavior does;* it tends to be narrow and mechanistic. While virtues might be manifested in behavior, they go beyond mechanistic responses; there is a

subtlety in the practice that implies reflection, commitment and a calling to care. When virtues have been apprehended by the practitioner, the professional is truthful not because of potential sanctions but because of his/her personal commitment to truthfulness. This is not to deny that regulations or codes do not play a role in the formation and refinement of character, but they are not necessarily a substitute for character. Holmstrom (2013) argued that a focus upon the moral character of the professional can be heightened through regulatory changes. Nevertheless, in his assessment of current concerns, the focus should be less upon competence or conduct but more upon the inner character of the individual or what is generally understood as a virtue ethics perspective.

The current call for a reinstatement of a more holistic approach based on virtue ethics is not related to a rejection of duty but rather based on an awareness that many of the problems faced by practitioners are not answered solely by rules, regulations, mandates or codes of behavior but rather by careful reflection of positions that in essence represent the virtues between deficiency and excess. If anything can be said about the pitfalls of current risk management practices, for example, is that every action of the practitioner is regulated by actuarial principles of risk calculation leaving very little room for the practitioner's use of his/her own moral compass. The character of the professional appears to be always in question giving the impression that emphasis has not been placed on its development.

3. Ethics and Social Work Education

Having discussed the importance of character in social work, the selection of novices for the profession, that is, of candidates for programs, should be associated with an assessment of the applicant's capacity to develop virtues that result in integrity and flexibility of character. To quote McBeath and Webb (2002):

> The development of the virtues is rather like the development of the use of the senses.

We have an inborn capacity to use our senses but we can still be trained to use them effectively. We can be given guidance as to how we might see things better if we stand here rather than there and so on (p. 1031).

In the struggle for defining virtue among virtue ethicists, the Aristotelian guiding principle of a virtue being the point between extremes is quite compelling. As Houston suggests in a recent critique, virtue ethicists point us to the development of moral intuition, of looking deeply within ourselves and examining our intentions, for then we will «hear the small voice that tells us what is right» (Houston, 2003, p. 820). Most virtue ethicist concur that our moral compasses require training in the same way that appreciating art requires tutoring. Kallenberg (1997) states:

> I want to suggest that the practice of moral reasoning or ethics, requires the same sort of tutored struggle as one's induction into the practice of art appreciation. All of us require our moral taste to be cultivated and our moral eyesight sharpened. Thus, a course in ethics ought to aim at changing precisely these aspects of our character. But, be forewarned there are no shortcuts on this journey (p. 362).

Most authors agree that virtues in social work, though probably easily identifiable through practical reasoning, have not received a great deal of attention.

> Practical reasoning is something that we undertake from within our shared mode of practice by asking, when we have good reason to do so, what the strongest and soundest objections are to this or that particular belief or concept that we have up to this point taken for granted (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 157)

In academic terms, the Socratic method of meaningful dialogue between the master artisan and the novice can then be followed. The role of the supervisor or mentor, in sound social work tradition, becomes pivotal. A learner must reflect and then inquire the merits and de-merits of a particular action within the community's tradition. One of the problems of social work education today is that the reliance on the wise mentor or much practiced supervisor has decreased and thus the lessons of substantial and meaningful practical reasoning have been lost.

> We can be shown how to judge and we come to realize that this basic virtue can be used in any number of cases. This is a dialogical enterprise with peers and supervisors alike, not to find out how *this* case could have been handled better but to explore how one might go about thinking, judging, reasoning, reflecting, imagining, feeling about the aspects of social work (McBeath and Webb, 2002, p. 1031).

One of the problems of risk management which is prevalent today is the fact that it is prescriptive rather than dialogic. The student or novice does not have the opportunity to reflect and then ask what might be the best direction to take. The direction is prescribed by what is the least risky. But risk calculations do not always represent the greatest wisdom or are embedded in the greatest virtues of the profession.

Social work education has been focusing primarily on the intellectual capacity and potential academic success of the practitioner. But Holmstrom, for example argues that «it is now timely to refocus upon the character of student social workers» (p. 452). Such a focus, she believes, is not competing with intellectual perspective but takes it into account together with sound judgment and wisdom. If a future social worker is selected with the idea that character is an important component of the training, training will make character a «stable reference point» for the practitioner. «This is not to deny the importance of outcomes for individuals or organizations, for clearly, virtue or character alone is not sufficient for effective social work practice. Further, rules and principle remain important given the fact that not all practitioners will become virtuous» (p. 454).

4. Implications for Social Work Education

One of the current issues of social work training in the U.S.A is the emphasis on the generating of numbers of registrants in many social work programs in academic institutions.

The economics of social work training tend to be more favorable to institutions than the economics of training, for example, of other health related professions such as nursing, which are by far more expensive. This has tended to encourage administrative leaders to take short cuts in relation to the most important aspects of character formation and consequently, to raise among professors a «righteous ire» about even bothering selecting with care the applicants to the programs. Additionally, with open admissions, many programs cannot or do not select applicants based on criteria other than grade point average. Interviews preceding admission are often non-existent; careful mentoring in beginning courses, where character traits can be cultivated more than technological learning are cut short, and finally, field supervision, the true test of acquired «virtues» is left often to chance. These aspects have always been central to professional training in social work and they remain so if we are to cultivate virtue ethics among new recruits.

There is also the issue of understanding an assessing character. Identifying character to be developed is not the same as offering arbitrary judgments on part of selection committees. When faced with people who are diverse and might reveal their character traits in many different ways, selection committees cannot rely on simplistic or naïve understandings of virtues. This has been a challenging issue in social work, particularly because a commitment to diverse populations is part of the core of the profession and committees are concerned about making erroneous judgements. Candidates reveal the virtue of compassion or a zeal for justice in different ways. Those responsible for making selections rely on the «mean», but we know that even Aristotle's «golden mean» (though the virtuous point between extremes), has been criticized for its allegiance to the status quo. Change often requires exaggerated passion, which calls upon another virtue, courage or fortitude, and in some instance, can over-ride prudence. This situation, in Webster's (2011) terms should lead educators to develop a model «that stresses character» and relies on

virtues, that is, is cognizant of the seminal Aristotelian four: prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude, remembering that this is not a hierarchy of virtues, but rather, a composition. Not all cardinal virtues will have the same importance all of the times. One or another will be salient according to a reasoned assessment of the action required.

> If we use reason well, we live well as human beings; or, to be more precise, using reason well over the course of a full life is what happiness (flourishing) consists in. Doing anything well requires virtue or excellence, and therefore living well consists in activities caused by the rational soul in accordance with virtue (Kraut, 2007, p. 4).

The return to virtue ethics as a topic of discussion in social work represents a welcome change for those who believe the profession was built on the strength of the character of its exemplary practitioners. Schools of Social Work in particular need to spend time discussing with their applicants some of the classic questions social workers encounter. Applicants should be encouraged to ponder on: How do I expect to fulfil the ethical calling social workers in history felt?». We have suggested that our moral compass requires training. Reflections on these questions develop into a form of moral training and practice in making moral judgements that each professor and mentor, not just those who teach practice related subjects must attend to.

Schools of Social Work will find that students are varied in their motivations to enter the profession. While some of them will be technically inclined, many more will want to right the wrongs they see around them and render to individuals their due rights. In other words, they are called by a form of virtue ethics in which justice is preponderant. It is apparent that social work education could follow many paths in the re-calling of virtue ethics as a curricular theme. One would be to capitalize on righteous indignation of professors and novices as a way to enter the ethical dialogue. Another path would be to capture the students' and professors' sense of generosity or magnanimity and even another develop patience

(temperance and moderation) as virtues in solving problems in social work practice. Inevitably, if these paths were to be followed at the start, the curriculum and the instructional processes will center on the virtuous life, on the inter-relatedness of the cardinal virtues. For Aristotle the aim was always to achieve a rich and balanced. In the same way, for the social worker embedded in virtue ethics, the goal is to arrive at the good life, at e*udiamoni*a or happiness for worker and client through moving towards worthy ends.

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