



Enaction, relevance realisation and the development of wisdom-informed approaches to contemplative education

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Outline

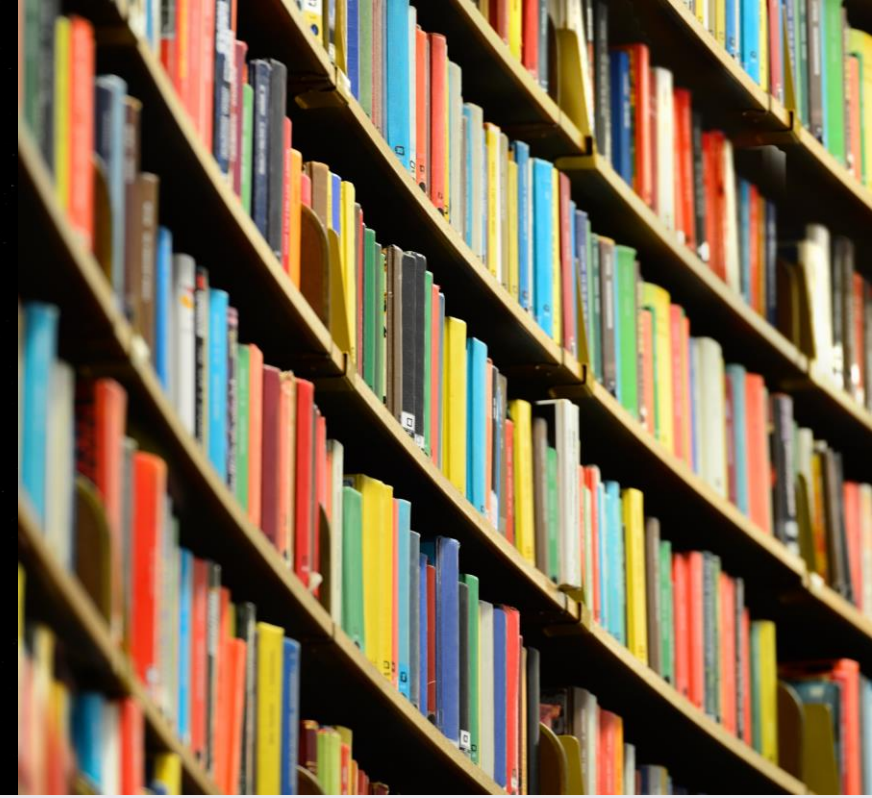
- Why this? Why now?
- Enactive approach and contemplative education
- Relevance Realisation
- What is wisdom?
- Developing wisdom - reframing and transcendence
- Summary and implications



An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide featuring a network of interconnected nodes and lines. The nodes are represented by small white and yellow spheres, while the connecting lines are thin, glowing blue and yellow strands. The background of this graphic is a soft-focus bokeh of red and blue light spots.

Why this? Why now?

- Growing exploration of contemplative pedagogy and education
- Frustration trying to explain the importance of contemplative practice
- Risks and benefits of contemplative practice in education settings
- Enaction, John Vervaeke's work and more recently that of Sebastjan Vörös and Evan Thompson (The Blind Spot)
- Importance of wisdom to address societal challenges (see Grossman et al. 2020) and the role of higher education



Enaction and contemplative education

- Groundless epistemological framing – forced to ‘...confront the lack of ultimate foundations’ (Varela 1991: 233)
- Understanding of self-world that offers an alternative to dualistic assumptions
- Cognition and meaning making embedded within embodied experience
- Knowing of the world as participatory and the importance of being



Relevance Realisation

- Cognitive process through which it becomes possible to identify what is meaningful, whilst avoiding combinatorial explosion
- Essential pre-conscious cognitive process concerning 'how you care about and care for information' (Vervaeke and Ferraro, 2013: 31)
- 'Agent-arena relationship' captures how the known world and our experience of it, is the outcome of self-organising dynamical processes through which agent and arena are related
- Resulting on a relatively consistent experience of the world but that can be 'reframed'

Relevance Realisation

'Cognition and cognitive processes are no longer seen as outside the environment but considered to emerge from nonlinear and circular causality of continuous sensorimotor interactions between brain, body, and environment. Cognition is regarded to be a temporal phenomenon and needs a dynamic system perspective (Thompson, 2007). Relevance realization is then the underpinning of cognition as the exercise of skillful know-how in situated and embodied action, not reducible to prespecified problem-solving.'

Riedl and Vervaeke (2022: 18)



Wisdom and Contemplative Education

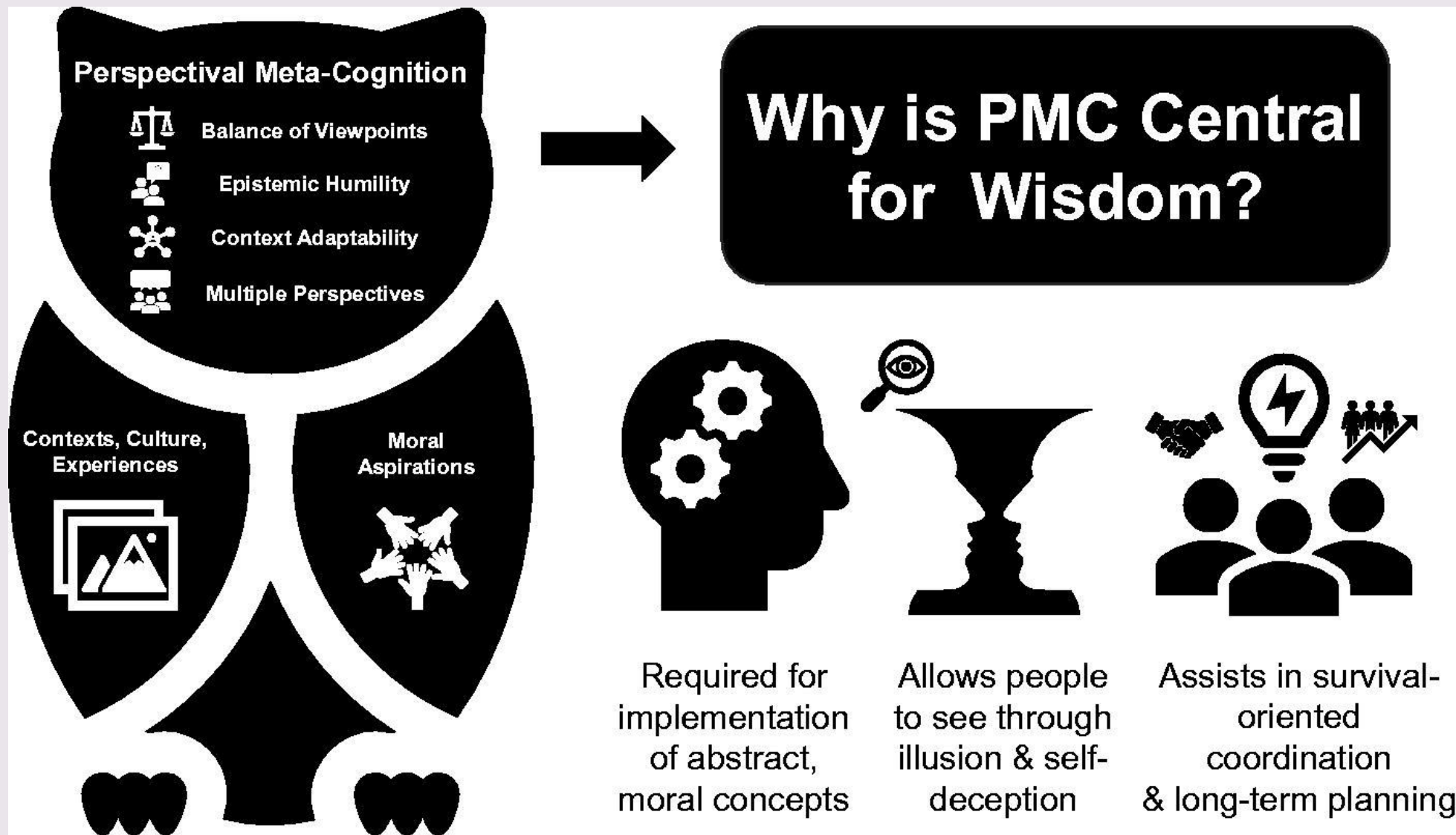
Failure to include students' own sense of meaning, which would enable them to '*exercise a sense of discernment about that meaning and the implications for the work are quite frankly horrifying*'
(Barbezat 2014)

'Violence of knowing' implying separation of knower and known

Cultivation of humanity has been forgotten 'for the sake of scientific simplification'
(Palmer 2010)

'Quiet revolution' of contemplative education - change in what is '...take[n] to be knowing and knowledge, in our very epistemology, methodology, and concept of comprehension.'
(Zajonc 2013)





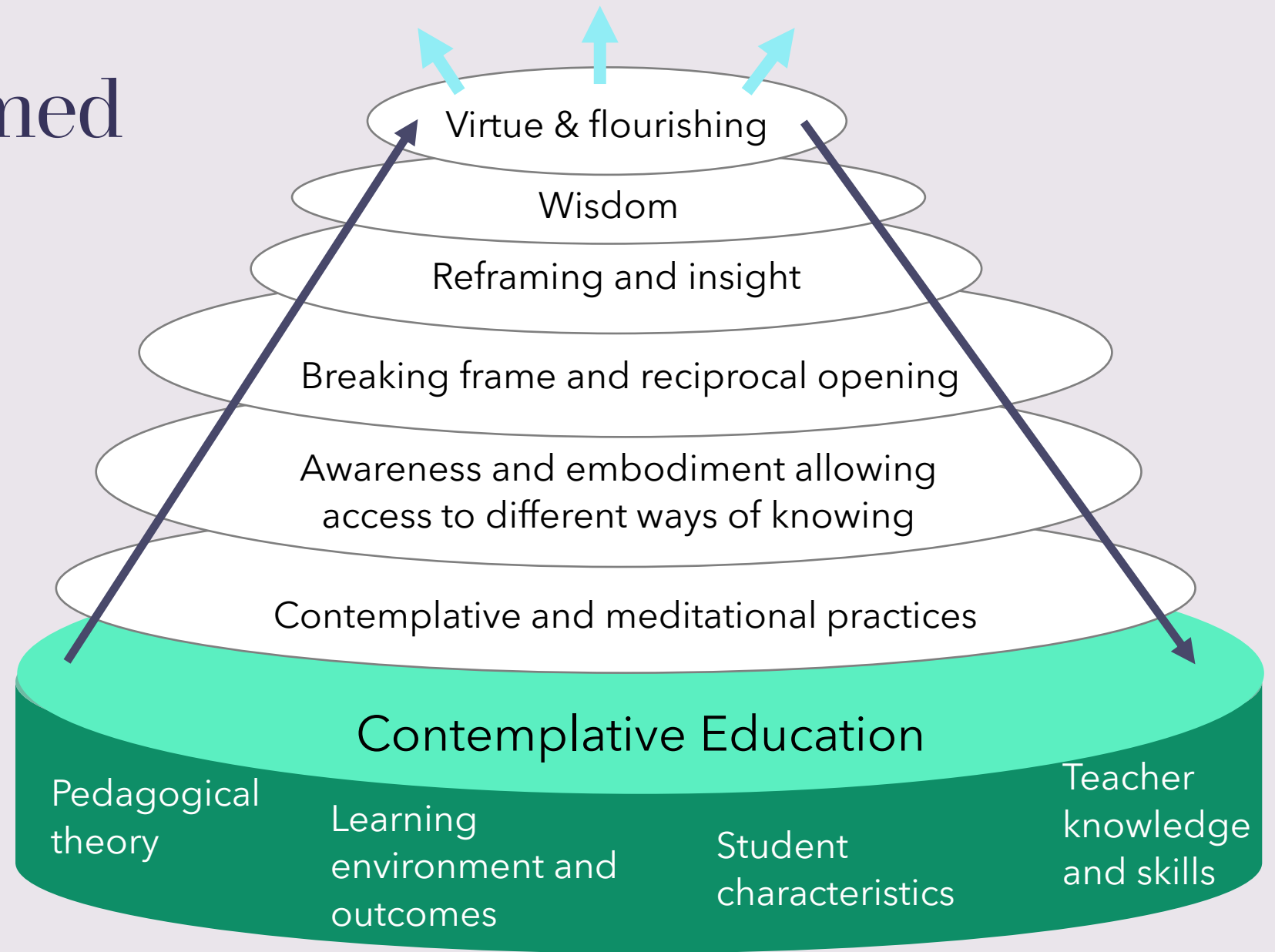
Developing wisdom (Grossmann et al., 2020: 110)



Becoming wiser - breaking frame and transcendence

- Coming to see possibilities, new affordances in our environment that were not possible previously given the world that we had enacted (Vervaeke and Mastropietro, 2021; Vervaeke, 2022)
- Possibility of new ways of being through breaking frame and reciprocal opening (Vervaeke and Ferraro, 2013)
- There is never a point where knowing is finished or complete – transcendence as naturalistic process
- *'...where a big part of the knowing is determined by the knower, and a smaller part by the known. This is an over-determining, and thereby limiting knowing.'* (De Jaeger 2021: 858)

Wisdom-informed approach to contemplative education



Summary

'Helping students come to terms with reality is a fundamental aim of higher education, an unattainable goal when the unexamined foundations of education, the 'hidden curriculum', are atomistic and competitive rather than interconnected and communal'

Palmer et al. (2010: 26)



References and further reading

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Thank you

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