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# **Educating for Intellectual Virtues: From Theory to Practice**

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My concern in this paper is with two perennial questions in the philosophy of education and educational theory: What are the proper aims or goals of education? What are the most fitting ways of achieving these goals? The answers I defend draw heavily from recent research within virtue epistemology on intellectual character virtues like curiosity, open-mindedness, attentiveness, intellectual carefulness, intellectual courage, intellectual rigor, and intellectual honesty.<sup>1</sup> I argue that education should aim at fostering growth in these traits and provide some indication of what it might look to educate in this way.

I begin with a brief account of the basic structure of intellectual virtues. Next, I sketch three arguments for thinking that fostering growth in intellectual virtues should be a central educational aim. Finally, I entertain two objections to this claim. In response to the second objection, I also identify several educational practices and strategies aimed at fostering intellectual virtues. As this brief overview suggests, the paper is broad in scope and largely programmatic. The unfortunate but necessary result is that several details will have to be left unspecified and a number of questions raised but then set aside for future consideration.

## **1. The Basic Structure of an Intellectual Virtue**

There is broad agreement among virtue epistemologists (e.g. Montmarquet 1993, Zagzebski 1996, Roberts and Wood 2007, and Baehr 2011) that intellectual virtues exhibit a general two-tier structure. At a basic motivational level, all intellectual virtues involve

something like a “love” of epistemic goods. An intellectually virtuous person is one who desires and is committed to the pursuit of goods like knowledge, truth, and understanding. It is this intrinsic epistemic orientation that permits a distinction between intellectual virtues and what are typically thought of as moral virtues.<sup>2</sup>

While intellectual virtues share a common motivational basis, each individual virtue also has its own characteristic activity or psychology—an activity or psychology that is rooted in an underlying “love” of epistemic goods. Put formally, the idea is that for any intellectual virtue *V*, a subject *S* possesses *V* only if *S* is (a) disposed to manifest a certain activity or psychology characteristic of *V* (b) out of a love of epistemic goods.<sup>3</sup> A curious person, for instance, is quick to wonder and ask why-questions out of a desire to understand the world around her. An open-minded person is willing to consider alternative standpoints because he sees that doing so is helpful for arriving at an accurate grasp of those standpoints and of the matter at hand. And an intellectually courageous person is disposed to persist in beliefs or inquiries that she has reason to think will lead her to the truth despite the fact that doing so may put her in harm’s way.

## **2. Intellectual Virtues as an Educational Aim**

With this general structural model before us, I turn to a defense of the claim that fostering growth in intellectual virtues should be a central educational aim.

### **2.1. Thickening familiar educational goals**

It is a near platitude that education should aim at fostering “lifelong learning.” But for as often and pervasively as this goal is espoused in educational institutions at every level, exactly what it amounts to is far from clear. This is unfortunate, for it is plausible to think that ordinary usage of “lifelong learning” and related terms, while typically less than

very thoughtful and careful, nevertheless is an attempt to get at a reasonably substantive, determinate, and compelling educational ideal.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is worth trying to understand what this ideal might amount to, that is, to identify some of the specific psychological qualities, abiding convictions, ingrained habits, or essential skills distinguish the lifelong learner from the rest of us.

The notions of intellectual character and intellectual virtue are extremely useful in this regard, for we can think of intellectual virtues as the *personal* qualities or characteristics of a lifelong learner. To be a lifelong learner, one must possess a reasonably broad base of practical and theoretical knowledge. But possessing even a great deal of knowledge is not sufficient. Being a lifelong learner also requires being *curious* and *inquisitive*. It requires a firm and powerful commitment to learning. It demands *attentiveness* and *reflectiveness*. And given the various ways in which a commitment to lifelong learning might get derailed, it also requires intellectual *determination*, *perseverance*, and *courage*. In other words, being a lifelong learner is largely constituted by the possession of various intellectual virtues.

This claim is confirmed and illuminated by the two-tier structural model sketched in the previous section. According to the model, intellectual virtues flow from and are grounded in a firm and intelligent love of epistemic goods. Again, this orientation forms the psychological basis of intellectual virtues. This way of thinking about intellectual virtues makes good sense of the familiar idea, also noted above, that “lifelong learners” possess a firm and powerful commitment to the life of the mind. By providing a plausible way of understanding this aspect of the putative psychology of a lifelong learner, the structural

model lends further plausibility to the idea that intellectual virtues are the personal qualities or character traits of a lifelong learner.

The possession of intellectual virtues is not merely a matter of good epistemic motivation. According to the structural model, each intellectual virtue also involves a disposition to engage in a certain sort of cognitive *activity*—an activity that distinguishes that virtue from other intellectual virtues. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, the possession of an intellectual virtue also requires having good *reason* to think that the activity characteristic of the virtue in question will be useful for achieving one’s epistemic aims.<sup>5</sup> If these claims are correct, that is, if possessing an intellectual virtue involves being disposed to engage in a certain sort of cognitive activity that one has good reason think will be useful for achieving one’s epistemic ends, it follows that, in addition to the motivational component just identified, intellectual virtues also have a *competence* and a *rationality* component. This also fits well with the idea that intellectual virtues comprise the personal or characterological aspect of being a “lifelong learner,” for lifelong learners presumably are not merely those who love learning and knowledge; they are also *skilled* and *intelligent* in their pursuit of these ends.

We have seen that the language and concepts of intellectual virtue provide a plausible way of fleshing out the familiar but nebulous ideal of lifelong learning.<sup>6</sup> But what exactly follows about the proper aims or goals of education? Unlike the concept of lifelong learning, virtue concepts are “thick concepts.”<sup>7</sup> They have both a normative and a richly descriptive dimension. To say that Bob is open-minded, for instance, is to pick out something good or commendable or admirable about Bob; but it is also to convey something about what Bob is *like*—about what he is disposed to do, feel, think, say, and so

on. Given this rich descriptive dimension, one benefit of “educating for intellectual virtues” or of treating intellectual character growth as a central educational aim is that doing so provides a more *concrete* and *action-guiding* framework for making education about the formation of lifelong learners. Put another way, by thinking of lifelong learning in the relevant characterological terms, we set ourselves a clearer target and thus a target that we stand a better chance of hitting.

## **2.2. Rigorous and Personal**

In *The Child and the Curriculum*, John Dewey introduces a dichotomy between two familiar accounts of how and what students should be taught. According to one way of thinking, the content and structure of an academic curriculum should be derived strictly from the content and structure of the corresponding spheres of reality. It is the job of teachers and students to expand and conform their minds to these spheres, for this alone makes possible the kind of knowledge and understanding that are proper to education. On the other end of the spectrum is the view that curriculum should be determined entirely on the basis of the interests, inclinations, and abilities of students. Their psychology alone should dictate what is taught and how it is taught. This is essential, the argument goes, to inspiring genuine interest and motivation, which in turn are essential to genuine learning (1902: 7-15).

Unsurprisingly, Dewey treats this as a false dichotomy. He argues that while students generally are not equipped to dictate what and how they learn, curriculum should be formulated and presented in ways that are sensitive to their actual experience or psychology. Disciplinary knowledge must, as Dewey puts it, be “psychologized” (32).

My interest here is not with Dewey's positive view about how to balance "the curriculum and the child" but rather with the dichotomy itself. On one plausible understanding, this is a dichotomy between two fundamental educational values.<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, a good education ought to be *rigorous*: it ought to be demanding, stretch student thinking, and provide more than a short-term or superficial grasp of the material. On the other hand, a good education should also be *personal*: it should be attentive to and demonstrate care for who students are (e.g. their fundamental beliefs and values) and for the persons they are becoming.

A second compelling feature of an intellectual virtues approach is that it provides a plausible way of integrating or harmonizing these potentially conflicting values. We can begin to see how by being a bit more precise about the proper aim of intellectual virtues. As I have argued elsewhere, intellectual virtues aim at *deep explanatory understanding of epistemically significant subject matters*.<sup>9</sup> An intellectually virtuous person is relatively unmoved by trivial or frivolous subject matters. After all, intellectual virtues are personally admirable traits. And a love of "junk knowledge," for example, of the names listed in the Wichita phonebook under the letter "R" or the number of grains in a random cubic centimeter of the Sahara, is hardly admirable.<sup>10</sup> Nor is an intellectually virtuous person content with a *fleeting* or *superficial* grasp of epistemically worthy subject matters. Rather, her aim is deep and penetrating understanding: she is concerned with a firm personal grasp of basic principles, underlying causes, and how the various facts within a given domain hang together.<sup>11</sup>

The latter point in particular underscores an important connection between intellectual virtues and intellectual rigor. Deep understanding, which again is the proper

aim of intellectual virtues, is a significant and demanding cognitive achievement. For a subject matter or body of knowledge to admit of deep understanding, it must have a certain structural complexity a grasp of which requires sustained effort, reflection, concentration, persistence, and the like. For this reason, educating for deep understanding is necessarily a rigorous process.<sup>12</sup> And, since intellectual virtues aim at deep understanding, educating for intellectual virtues is necessarily rigorous as well. One cannot aim to promote significant growth in intellectual virtues in the absence of a serious commitment to rigor.

Rigorous educational approaches can, of course, prove intellectually stifling and oppressive. They can be excessively demanding or otherwise misaligned with the psychology or developmental stages of students. As a result they can extinguish a student's natural desire to learn. An intellectual virtues approach, by contrast, is particularly well positioned to avoid this kind of excess. For, if a teacher is attempting to nurture intellectual character growth in his students, he will pay very close attention to what his students are capable of and to their fundamental beliefs, attitudes, and feelings toward learning. His expectations of his students will be high, but this orientation will be constrained by an ongoing concern with the development of their intellectual character. In this way, an intellectual virtues educational model is poised to strike a sensible and attractive balance between promoting academic rigor, on the one hand, while also being sufficiently caring and personal, on the other.

Not every educational model can claim this advantage. The educational framework embodied in the well-known Summerhill School founded by A.S. Neill, for instance, evidently runs the risk of sacrificing intellectual rigor in an effort to be sufficiently personal. On the other end of the spectrum, certain approaches to "classical education"



favor a top-down, highly rigorous approach that threatens to neglect (if not extinguish) students' natural affinity for learning.<sup>13</sup>

To further illustrate the relative uniqueness of this advantage, let us compare an intellectual virtues approach with one that is more like-minded, namely, an approach aimed at fostering "critical thinking." Critical thinking educational models are a diverse lot. Some combine a focus on critical thinking skills with a focus on the "critical spirit" or good intellectual "dispositions" which are very much like (if not identical to) intellectual character virtues.<sup>14</sup> For our purposes, it will be helpful to consider an approach that focuses strictly on the development of critical thinking *skills* or *abilities*.<sup>15</sup> Let us stipulate that the approach in question is rigorous, demanding competence in complex forms of reasoning across a wide range of different content areas. While satisfying the desideratum of intellectual rigor, there is no guarantee that this approach will be sufficiently personal. The primary concern of a teacher on this model will be whether her students are developing the ability to reason in the relevant ways. She might be unconcerned with whether they are developing a motivation or inclination to think in these ways outside of class. And, even if she does have this concern, it will not (as such) be situated within a broader commitment to nurturing the intellectual character of her students, that is, to their becoming more curious, open-minded, fair-minded, intellectually courageous, persevering, and so on. In trying to impart the relevant skills, she might even be oblivious to such considerations.

A second good reason, then, for treating growth in intellectual virtues as a worthy educational aim is that doing so provides a very natural and compelling way of making education suitably rigorous *and* personal.

### **2.3. Educational meaning and purpose**

Many teachers enter the profession because they regard teaching as meaningful work. They expect it to bring significant purpose to their lives. They consider it their vocation. Similarly, most students can recount moments in which they experienced learning as meaningful, inspiring, and intrinsically rewarding. A worthy educational aim or framework ought to make sense of the putative meaning and purpose of teaching and learning. Specifically, it should give teachers and students a lively sense and a better understanding of the *value* of education.

Not all educational aims or approaches have this effect. Indeed, much that goes on in education today makes it difficult to see or feel the importance of teaching or learning. This is clearly the case where educational success is defined—even if just implicitly—in terms of high scores on standardized tests and where teaching is geared toward the achievement of such scores.<sup>16</sup> Conditions like these can make honest teachers wonder why they got into the teaching profession in the first place. They can make their initial pedagogical aspirations and expectations seem hopelessly naïve. They can also leave students doubting the value of their schooling. Similarly, at the post-secondary level, to the extent that the (implicit or explicit) aim of teaching is to disseminate information or knowledge proper to a range of academic disciplines (much of which can be accessed online at little or no cost) and academic excellence is closely associated with an ability to memorize and “regurgitate” this information, the value of a university education might reasonably be questioned, particularly when it comes with a price tag in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Conceiving of education as properly aimed at nurturing growth in intellectual character virtues provides a much better way of capturing the putative meaning and purpose of teaching and learning. Again, if a teacher is educating for intellectual virtues, his

aim will be to mold and shape his students as *persons*—to impact their fundamental orientation toward epistemic goods and the practices that facilitate these goods. He will be concerned with helping them understand *why* knowledge and learning are valuable.<sup>17</sup> He will also take measures aimed at getting them to *care* about these things. The value of such an impact is difficult to quibble with. Most of us desire—at least in our better moments—to be and to surround ourselves with persons concerned with knowledge and understanding and who are inquisitive, attentive, open-minded, intellectually honest, intellectually courageous, and the like. These are attractive and desirable qualities.

Intellectual virtues also have several important *practical* payoffs. To see what some of these are, note that the traits in question manifest themselves most obviously and centrally in good *thinking*. Accordingly, by educating for intellectual virtues, teachers are equipping their students with the skills and supporting beliefs, attitudes, and feelings that dispose them toward good thinking. As such, they are preparing them for at least two important kinds of success outside of the classroom.

First, they are helping prepare their students for successful careers. There are few jobs or professions in which the disposition to think in open, careful, critical, or innovative ways is not prized. Indeed, many have observed that given the centrality of technology to present-day economies, a good portion of the technical skills and knowledge currently taught to students will be obsolete or nearly obsolete by the time these students enter the workforce. For this reason, employers today are placing a premium on so-called “soft skills,” which are “personality traits, goals, motivations, and preferences that are valued in the labor market, in school, and in many other domains” (Heckman and Kautz 2012). While soft skills are not the same thing as intellectual virtues, they include such virtues as

curiosity, attentiveness, perseverance, open-mindedness, and creativity. Thus by educating for intellectual virtues, teachers are helping prepare their students for success in the workplace.

Second, good thinking is often a precondition for morally responsible action, which in turn is critical to living well or flourishing as a human being.<sup>18</sup> In many instances, acting responsibly requires effective *deliberation*: it requires thinking carefully and thoroughly, evaluating options in an open and honest way, and maintaining the courage of one's convictions. In other words, it requires thinking in a manner characteristic of many intellectual virtues. While the ability to deliberate well is not sufficient for acting well, it is one essential ingredient. Therefore, educating for intellectual virtues involves nurturing qualities that are central to human flourishing.

We have seen that by conceiving of intellectual character growth as an important educational aim, teachers can have a positive impact on the personal formation of their students and equip them with abilities and other qualities that will benefit them substantially in the workplace and other areas of life. In this way, the aim in question is capable of illuminating for *teachers* the putative value of education.

It is also capable of having a similar impact on the experience and understanding of *students*. We can approach this point by identifying a few additional features of an intellectual virtues educational model. First, as we have already seen, educating for intellectual virtues is an inherently *personal* process: it involves thinking of students, not merely as potential "high achievers" on standardized exams or the post-secondary equivalent thereof, but as "whole persons" or as persons whose basic beliefs, attitudes, and feelings about knowledge and learning also matter critically to the quality of their

education. This is very unlikely to escape the notice of students. Indeed, it is likely to make them feel respected and cared for as persons. Second, an intellectual virtues approach to education is necessarily *social* or *relational*. Personal change and growth occur most readily in the context of trusting and caring relationships.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, teachers educating for intellectual virtues will place a premium on developing such relationships with their students.<sup>20</sup> This is also likely to be evident to students and to enhance the felt quality of their educational experience. Third, an intellectual virtues approach to teaching is also *reflective*. It involves reflecting on and discussing with students the value of thinking and learning—both in general and with respect to the particular concepts, topics, and material at hand. In other words, it involves regularly pausing to identify or reflect on the *significance* of what is being taught. This is also likely to give students a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the education they are receiving.

In this section, we have seen, first, that a good educational aim, when appropriately pursued, will give teachers and students a lively sense and better understanding of the value of education, and second, that the aim of growth in intellectual character virtues scores very well relative to this standard.

### **3. Objections and Replies**

We have considered three arguments in support of the thesis that growth in intellectual virtues is an important educational aim. I turn now to consider two objections that might be raised in connection with this discussion.

#### **3.1. Intellectual virtues *or* academic standards?**

The first objection is practical. To some, the idea of placing a premium on nurturing intellectual character growth in students might seem like a nice idea in principle, while

nevertheless seeming untenable in reality. Teachers at every level are responsible for delivering content to their students. These demands are especially pressing where educational funding is tied closely to performance on standardized exams that measure competence in various academic standards. It might, then, be thought that teachers today must choose between teaching for intellectual virtues and teaching for required academic content and skills. And given the grave consequences of failing to do the latter, it might be thought that any serious concern with educating for intellectual virtues must be sidelined.

It is important at this juncture to draw a distinction between “*intellectual* character education” and character education *simpliciter* or character education in its more familiar manifestations. Traditionally, efforts at character education have tended to focus on fostering moral or civic virtues like compassion, respect, tolerance, and integrity.<sup>21</sup> While I think it is possible to wed academic instruction with character education understood in these ways, the present point is that this challenge is considerably less pressing when it comes to educating for intellectual virtues like curiosity, wonder, attentiveness, intellectual thoroughness, reflectiveness, or intellectual perseverance.<sup>22</sup> As indicated above, intellectual virtues express themselves in *intellectual actions* like thinking, reasoning, interpreting, analyzing, reflecting, questioning, and so on. Thus engagement with academic content or standards provides a very natural opportunity for *practicing* a wide range of intellectual virtues, which in turn is critical to the formation of these traits. In short, one important way of fostering intellectual virtues is through active and reflective engagement with academic content. Indeed, by contrast with attempts to foster most moral or civic virtues, it is difficult to imagine a systematic program aimed at fostering intellectual virtues that did not involve something like this form of intellectual engagement.<sup>23</sup>

### 3.2. Intellectual virtues: an *explicit* goal?

A second objection acknowledges intellectual character growth as a worthy educational goal but questions the extent to which this goal should be made explicit, immediate, or deliberate. It might be said that good education will have—indeed always has had—the effect of making students more curious, open-minded, intellectually rigorous, intellectually courageous, and the like. However, it doesn't follow that a concern with such growth should be an immediate or explicit focus of teachers or students. Indeed, it might be argued that by making this goal explicit, or by allowing virtue concepts or language to pervade the learning process, educators are likely to trivialize or otherwise undermine the willingness or ability of students to pursue the very goal at issue.<sup>24</sup>

My response to this objection is mixed. On the one hand, I acknowledge that some who attempt to educate for intellectual virtues in a more explicit or deliberate way may be drawn to methods or resources that threaten to trivialize or subvert their objective, for example, to the sorts of posters, pencils, slogans, t-shirts, bracelets, and other trinkets that have found their way into some character education curricula.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, I reject the idea that the way to nurture intellectual character growth is through repeated exhortations to “try to be curious” or “to show open-mindedness.” As noted in the previous section, intellectual virtues come about through active engagement with ideas, claims, problems, narratives, arguments, and the like. These things—not the broader goal of becoming intellectually virtuous—are more likely to occupy the immediate focus of teachers and students operating within an intellectual virtues framework.

On the other hand, there is something *prima facie* odd and questionable about the suggestion that while growth in intellectual virtues is a worthy educational goal, educators

need not concern themselves with this goal in any very explicit, deliberate, or systematic way—that, for instance, they need not offer any direct instruction in intellectual virtues, incorporate the language and concepts of intellectual virtue into their teaching and assessment practices, or think systematically about how the various elements of their courses might be related to the intellectual formation of their students.

The question, it seems to me, is whether there exists an approach to intellectual character education that incorporates an explicit and systematic focus on intellectual virtues while avoiding the kind of trivialization and clumsiness noted above. In the remainder of the paper, I briefly describe seven plausible and interrelated measures for fostering intellectual character growth in an educational setting.<sup>26</sup> Taken together, they suggest an affirmative answer to our question. They also provide a more concrete idea of what an intellectual virtues approach might look like in practice.

The first measure is predicated on the idea that intellectual character growth in students is not merely a function of interactions that occur between them and their teachers in a classroom. *A supportive institutional culture* also plays an important role.<sup>27</sup> A school culture that promotes intellectual character growth will be one in which the commitment to educating for intellectual virtues is a critical part of the school's identity. This commitment will figure prominently in how the school conceives of itself and how it presents itself to the world. Thus it will bear upon the school's official mission, hiring and support of faculty, development and review of curricula, public relations and fund-raising campaigns, the stump speeches of top administrators, admissions standards, recruitment efforts, the speakers and other outside voices that are invited to campus, and so on. Institutional support may not always be overt or explicit. It might be reflected, for instance,



in a school's deliberate focus on teaching for understanding (vs. the short-term memorization of isolated bits of knowledge), critical thinking, or intrinsic motivation.<sup>28</sup>

A second measure is *direct instruction* in intellectual virtue concepts and terminology. Research on character education also underscores the importance of this strategy.<sup>29</sup> The suggestion is that a rich and informed understanding of the nature and value of intellectual virtues can assist teachers and students alike in their attempts to embody or impart the traits in question. Thus, a teacher attempting to educate for intellectual virtues might begin the year or semester with a brief series of instructional lessons on what intellectual virtues are, their basic structure, what they look like in practice, their value within education and beyond, and how they differ both from other cognitive strengths like hard-wired cognitive abilities and intellectual skills as well as other character strengths like moral and civic virtues. If supported by brief explanations and illustrations over the course of the semester, this initial introduction need not consume a great deal of class time.

*Self-reflection and self-assessment* are also important strategies for fostering intellectual virtues. They can be used to challenge students to apply their knowledge of intellectual virtues to how they understand their own intellectual character. This might involve the use of an intellectual character self-assessment tool or other exercises that invite students to reflect in honest and concrete ways about their own intellectual character strengths and weaknesses. Such methods could be employed in class, as homework, or as part of a broader advisory or mentoring program. The overarching goal would be a kind of robust self-knowledge that encourages students to begin thinking of themselves in light of intellectual virtue concepts and categories.

A fourth strategy involves *making explicit connections between the course material and intellectual virtues and vices*. These connections can be divided into two broad categories. The first includes connections that arise from the content of the material itself. Suppose, for instance, that a history or science teacher has committed to emphasizing and helping her students grow in three particular intellectual virtues. When it comes to studying certain events or figures in science or other areas, she might draw attention to and invite reflection on ways in which one or more of these virtues are manifested (or lacking) in these contexts. Similarly, a literature professor might use the concept of intellectual character as a “through line” for an entire course. He and his students might approach each narrative with an eye to the presence and significance of intellectual character traits or through the lens of a pre-established subset of intellectual virtues or vices. The second category includes connections that arise, not from the content being studied, but from demands associated with the mastery of this content. In the midst of an especially challenging unit, for instance, a teacher might pause to remind her students of the overarching personal or characterological goal of the course and of how the present challenge is related to that goal. Similarly, she might pause to specify which virtues—whether perseverance, open-mindedness, intellectual carefulness, or otherwise—are especially relevant to acquiring a deep understanding of the material. It is important, of course, that the connections themselves be “organic” and that they be made by teachers in a way that is authentic and natural. Where this is accomplished, students will be in a better position to see and understand, not just themselves, but also the world around them in rich and informative virtue-relevant terms.<sup>30</sup>

The foregoing strategies are mainly ways of facilitating a certain kind of knowledge: they involve helping students understand what intellectual virtues are and why they matter, what their own intellectual character strengths and weaknesses are, and ways in which intellectual virtues are relevant to what they are learning and encountering in the world. This orientation by itself is a significant pedagogical and educational achievement. But it is no guarantee that students will actually begin to manifest the relevant traits in their intellectual activity. The final three measures are aimed at making some headway along this dimension.

At least as far back as Aristotle, philosophers and other writers concerned with character development have maintained that character virtues (and vices) are formed through the practice or repetition of virtuous (or vicious) actions. As already noted, intellectual virtues express themselves in actions like reasoning, interpreting, analyzing, judging, evaluating, and so on. Accordingly, a fifth way of facilitating growth in intellectual virtues involves providing students with frequent *opportunities to practice the actions characteristic of intellectual virtues*.<sup>31</sup> This might happen in class through activities or modes of interaction that require students to adopt standpoints other than their own, use their imagination to extend or apply their knowledge, give reasons in support of their claims, or ask thoughtful and well-formed questions. Such activities offer practice in virtues like open-mindedness, creativity, reflectiveness, intellectual rigor, and curiosity. Similar requirements can be built into exams, papers, and other written assignments. For instance, a teacher might encourage his students to strive for the end or goal proper to intellectual virtues by requiring them to demonstrate a firm personal *understanding* (as opposed to a mere restatement) of the material. Or he might stipulate that any time a student defends a

position, the student must attempt to identify the best possible arguments against this position and then respond to these arguments in ways that are intellectually charitable and fair.<sup>32</sup>

A closely related strategy involves *integrating virtue concepts and standards into formal and informal assessments*. At an informal level, one important practice involves calling attention to and praising intellectually virtuous actions as they occur. Particularly where students have an understanding of what intellectual virtues are, and have come to appreciate their value, such feedback can have a powerful motivational effect. At a more formal level, if an exam, paper, or other assignment has been designed to encourage students to practice certain intellectual virtues, this ought to be reflected in the criteria or rubrics used to evaluate these assignments. Incorporating virtue concepts and standards into assessment in these ways is a further way of facilitating the practice of intellectual virtues.

A final measure is also related to epistemic motivation. It consists of the natural and authentic *modeling of intellectual virtues* by teachers and other school leaders. The experience of being taught by an exemplar of intellectual virtue can be an extremely powerful invitation to the life of the mind.<sup>33</sup> Witnessing how such a person reflects on, communicates, and feels about her subject matter can have a profound impact on a student's fundamental beliefs and attitudes toward thinking and learning. Indeed, it is plausible to think that a teacher's other efforts at fostering intellectual character growth will be strongly amplified or diminished to the extent that he models or fails to model intellectual virtues in his own intellectual activity. Accordingly, an indispensable part of

trying to educate for intellectual virtues involves exemplifying these virtues in one's teaching and other interactions with students.<sup>34</sup>

We have considered seven strategies for fostering growth in intellectual virtues. Our purpose has been to determine whether there might be a way of educating for intellectual virtues that is deliberate, explicit, and systematic, but that avoids the worries about trivialization and browbeating noted above. I take it that, when considered as a whole, the strategies just sketched warrant some optimism on this score. While far from exhaustive, they represent a multi-faceted but well-integrated approach to educating for intellectual virtues—one that includes many explicit appeals to intellectual virtue concepts but that is also thoughtful and sophisticated enough to avoid trivializing the goal intellectual character growth or otherwise undermining the willingness or ability of students to pursue this goal.

Is such an approach likely to be *successful*? This depends in part on how exactly one thinks about "success." If the question is whether, after several semesters or years of being educating in the forementioned ways, most students will graduate as paragons of intellectual virtue, then success may not be very likely. Suppose, however, that success is understood in terms of "meaningful progress" relative to the goal in question, that is, in terms of whether the strategies in question are capable of making an impact on the intellectual character of students significant enough to justify their use. While this remains largely an empirical matter, I take it that the discussion in the present section also justifies some optimism on this point.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This conception of intellectual virtues differs significantly from that of other historical authors like Aristotle, for whom intellectual virtues are closer to cognitive powers or abilities than they are intellectual character traits. See Zagzebski (1996) for a discussion of For some recent treatments, see Battaly (2008), Roberts and Wood (2007), Zagzebski (1996), and Baehr (2011). For a recent treatment on the relevance of virtue epistemology to issues in the philosophy of education, see Macallister (2012).

<sup>2</sup> "Typically thought of" is significant, since there may be a sufficiently broad notion of the moral or morality according to which intellectual virtues are a subset of moral virtues. For

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more on the relationship between intellectual virtues and moral virtues see the appendix of my (2011).

<sup>3</sup> For a development of this point, see Chapters 6 and of my (2011). There I note that the present formulation holds only for “active” virtues, which, unlike “passive” or “negative” virtues, have an active dimension.

<sup>4</sup> Henceforth I use the term “lifelong learner” to refer to the putative character of this state or ideal. Thus my aim in this section is to offer a more specific account of (at least one central part of) what teachers, administrators, and others have in mind when they uphold the value of “lifelong learning” or trying to make their students into “lifelong learners.”

<sup>5</sup> See my (forthcominga). As I explain in that work, “passive” virtues present exceptions to each of the two requirements just noted. Passive virtues are manifested in the *absence* of certain concerns or actions. Such exceptions present no problem, however, for the broader point being made here.

<sup>6</sup> Similar arguments could be made about related notions like “critical thinking” or the “education of the whole person.”

<sup>7</sup> See Williams (1985). For a recent application of this notion to epistemology and education, see Kotzee (2011).

<sup>8</sup> It is, in fact, quite difficult to pin down exactly which two desiderata Dewey had in mind, if indeed there really are only two (the details seem to vary from description to another).

Thus my interest here is perhaps best understood as two desiderata that are at least in the immediate vicinity of what Dewey had in mind.

<sup>9</sup> See my (forthcomingb).

<sup>10</sup> See (Roberts and Wood 2007: 156-59) or Alston (2005: 32).

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<sup>11</sup> As this suggests, the kind of understanding sought by an intellectually virtuous agent is indeed *factual* or *true*. The point is that truth or true belief is not the only aim proper to intellectual virtues. For more on what it looks like to teach for deep understanding, see Perkins (1993) and Wisdke (1997).

<sup>12</sup> Thus I think of rigor in this context as partly a function of the content being taught and partly a function of the sorts of demands it places on learners.

<sup>13</sup> Each of these approaches clearly has its strengths. My point at present is that the value instantiated by each one needs to be constrained or complemented by a value instantiated by the other, and that educating for intellectual virtues provides a natural way of integrating both values.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Siegel (1988), Ennis (1985), and Dewey (1916).

<sup>15</sup> If all critical thinking programs were to incorporate an additional focus on intellectual character, then an intellectual virtues approach would not have the advantage I am suggesting. But neither would this tell in favor of a critical thinking approach vis-à-vis an intellectual virtues approach. Indeed, if the attention to intellectual character development were sufficiently strong and central, the approach in question might not differ in any important way from an intellectual virtues approach, for as indicated earlier in the paper, intellectual virtues have a skill or ability component that requires competence in at least many of the skills proper to “critical thinking.”

<sup>16</sup> See Siegel (2004).

<sup>17</sup> Ben Kotzee has suggested to me that belief in the value of one’s education is partly *constitutive* of a good education. Assuming this is right, it follows that an intellectual virtues approach—focusing as it does on, among other things, students; perception and

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understanding of the value of thinking and learning—easily satisfies one important requirement on any plausible educational model.

<sup>18</sup> For an account of the relationship between intellectual virtue and morally responsible action, see Montmarquet (2003).

<sup>19</sup> See Siegel (2001). As Ben Kotzee has suggested to me, intellectual (and other character) virtues may be social or relational in an even deeper sense, for it may be that such traits can be fostered only in the context of a community. For present purposes, I shall leave this an open question.

<sup>20</sup> This is not, of course, an advantage entirely unique to an intellectual virtues approach. The point is rather that an educator operating within this framework will have an additional strong reason to form trusting and caring relationships with her students, the reason being, again, that doing so is critical to the formative goal of an intellectual virtues approach.

<sup>21</sup> See Lickona (1992).

<sup>22</sup> For ways in which educating for moral character can be combined with academic instruction, see Lickona (2001) and Elgin (2011).

<sup>23</sup> For a related point, see Hare (1995).

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Oakeshott (1967: p. 176).

<sup>25</sup> For a critique of these approaches to character education, see Kohn (1993); and for an alternative approach, see Berkowitz and Bier (2005).

<sup>26</sup> These are not at all exhaustive. I propose them as a kind of basic framework that could easily be added to. See Ritchhart (2001) for several additional strategies. And see Berkowitz and Bier's treatment (2007) of traditional or moral character education for

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several strategies and principles that have also application to *intellectual* character education. Seider (2012) is also instructive in this regard.

<sup>27</sup> This is one of the findings in Berkowitz and Bier (2007).

<sup>28</sup> For a discussion of the latter see Stipek (2001).

<sup>29</sup> See Berkowitz and Bier (2007 and 2005).

<sup>30</sup> For additional examples along these lines, see Battaly (2006).

<sup>31</sup> Here as well see Battaly (2006). Ron Ritchhart's discussion of "thinking routines" in his (2001) also sheds valuable light on what might look like to give students frequent opportunities to practice various intellectual virtues. See especially pp. 85-114.

<sup>32</sup> Of course, this is something that many good teachers already do. This underscores the way in which an intellectual virtues framework can provide educators with the concepts and language to better understand, articulate, and practice much of what they already value and are trying to accomplish with students.

<sup>33</sup> See e.g. (Oakshott 1967) and (Walker 2002).

<sup>34</sup> This points to what I take to be the greatest challenge involved with educating for intellectual virtues, namely, the adequate training and formation of teachers and other school leaders. Much of the work of William Hare (e.g. 1993) sheds valuable light on how this challenge might be addressed. While Hare's focus tends to be the focus of open-mindedness in particular, much of what he says applies to the full range of intellectual virtues.

<sup>35</sup> I am grateful to Ben Kotzee, Dan Speak, William Hare, Michael Pace, an anonymous referee, and an audience at Chapman University in the fall of 2012 for helpful feedback on earlier drafts of this paper or related material.