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Educating for Good Character: from Critical Thinking to Intellectual Character Virtues

ABSTRACT

Life in the 21st century has presented people with unprecedented appeals and ethical challenges which are nowhere more evident than in educational institutions as well as in the online space. A renewed interest in the character as one of the crucial ethical developments is gaining momentum today. Good character is based on the virtues one possesses. We argue that education focused on the cultivation of intellectual virtues such as curiosity, intellectual humility, intellectual autonomy, attentiveness, intellectual carefulness, intellectual thoroughness, open-mindedness, intellectual courage and intellectual tenacity are needed for individuals to lead fulfilling lives. At least, growing in intellectual virtues seems to be a valuable and desirable educational aim. This theoretical study strives to make a twofold contribution to the area of knowledge: firstly, it aims to contribute to the area of character and moral education through describing its forms and features; and secondly, it aims to contribute to virtue epistemology by identifying its nature and focus and outlining nine intellectual or epistemic virtues. Further to the second contribution, the study ends by arguing that the intellectual virtue approach and the critical thinking approach both help to cultivate intellectually virtuous critical thinkers.

KEY WORDS

Character Education. Moral Education. Virtue Epistemology. Intellectual Virtues. Critical Thinking.

1 Introduction to Moral and Character Education

Good character is not formed beyond one's control.¹ On the contrary – it evolves over time through a steady process of teaching, learning, and modelling virtues in real-life situations. Experts on moral education argue that education focused on the cultivation of character and moral virtues will guide us through the pitfalls and risks not only of cyberspace but also of life in the 21st century in general. Although the field of moral or character education is not new, a renewed interest in character and education to character, perseverance, resilience, tolerance, respect, or confidence has been observed in recent years. Actually, a desire to raise and educate moral individuals has existed for generations. At present, there are many approaches to forming and educating a moral and principled individual, among which moral education and character education have become the predominant formal approaches used in schools to offer advice and guidance for positive students' development. The concept of moral education has its roots in Piaget's constructivist theory of the development of children's moral reasoning in school settings.² Moral education is focused on values, "correct thinking" and recognizing good. From the educational viewpoint, more pedagogical approaches have been developed to foster youth's moral development. One of the fundamental pedagogical approaches is moral dilemma discussion, which involves peer-group discussions, in which students are exposed to different viewpoints of moral and ethical issues³ to advance their moral reasoning. The second approach, more complex and community-oriented, is the just community approach which, in addition to promoting students' moral development is aimed at transforming the moral atmosphere of the school into a moral community.⁴ However, in search of a critical postmodern perspective on moral education, some authors are in favour of a so-called narrative approach to moral education which helps young people "to tell their own moral stories, to speak in their own voices, and hence to authorize their own moral perspectives and experiences".⁵ In contrast to previous conventional approaches, this moral pedagogy is focused on real-life and everyday students' moral dilemmas thus grounding moral education in the experienced moral dilemmas of students.

Character education, in general, is an umbrella term for a wide range of approaches to moral education, outcome goals, and pedagogical strategies. Although there is a significant overlap between character education and moral education mainly in their goals, there are some crucial differences between them, most notably in the broadness of scope and richness of content, with character education having a comprehensive and diversified set of outcomes, content areas and a broad and varied range of pedagogical strategies.⁶ From the pedagogical standpoint, they tend to differ more in their grounding in different philosophical traditions as well as empirical strength rather than in practice. In terms of methods, character education is reflected for example in the whole brain teaching method, the most important aim of which

¹ See: PALA, A.: The Need for Character Education. In *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*, 2011, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 23-32.

² CUMMINGS, R., HARLOW, S.: The Constructivists Roots of Moral Education. In *The Educational Forum*, 2000, Vol. 64, No. 4, p. 300.

³ See: BERKOWITZ, M. W.: The Role of Discussion in Moral Education. In BERKOWITZ, M. W., OSER, F.: *Moral Education: Theory and Application*. Hillsdale, NJ : L. Erlbaum, 1986, p. 201; CUMMINGS, R., MADDUX, C. D., CLADIANOS, A.: Moral Reasoning of Education Students: The Effects of Direct Instruction in Moral Development Theory and Participation in Moral Dilemma Discussion. In *Teachers College Record*, 2010, Vol. 112, No. 3, p. 631.

⁴ POWER, F. C., HIGGINS-D'ALESSANDRO, A.: The Just Community Approach to Moral Education and the Moral Atmosphere of the School. In LUCCY, N. P., NARVAEZ, D. (eds.): *Handbook of Moral and Character Education*. New York and London : Routledge, 2008, p. 231.

⁵ TAPPAN, M. B., BROWN, L. M.: Envisioning a Postmodern Moral Pedagogy. In *Journal of Moral Education*, 2006, Vol. 25, No. 1, p. 106.

⁶ BERKOWITZ, M. W., BIER, M. C.: *What Works in Character Education: A Research-based Guide for Practitioners*. Washington, D.C. : Character Education Partnership, 2005, p. 7.

is not to master academic skills but to make children and youth become virtuous.⁷ The term character education is mostly used in the USA since it is deeply rooted in the U.S. public school system. Over the past decades, schoolteachers and schoolmasters have been increasingly implementing character education programs in their schools and classrooms. In the Slovak environment, there has been an increased need for the creation of character education programs as well as for improvements in the theory of value-posture and character education.⁸

Moral and character education in Slovakia are not taught as autonomous subjects but take the form of activities focused on the development of various virtues within informal education or they take place within the framework of the subjects Ethics Education or Pro-social Education. Furthermore, experimental programs of stimulation of socio-moral development of younger pupils have been implemented in the education of lower primary school pupils. The subject Ethics Education has been implemented in the Slovak educational system since the 1990s in the 2nd grade of primary schools and at secondary schools, and since 2005 in the 1st grade of primary schools.

The contemporary character education movement in Slovakia has the exclusive form of informal educational practices focused on teaching values and moral virtues. There has been an increase in implementing various development programs aimed at developing students' skills and character traits for real life at Slovak schools and organizations; let us mention the *DofE Program (The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award)* which is currently running at 180 schools across Slovakia and Great Works Academy aimed at critical thinking and growing in virtues through exploring great works of world writers, painters and music composers which is currently running at 26 schools, *Školy, ktoré menia svet* [Schools That Change the World] program, *Cesta krajinou dobra* [The Road Through the Land of Good] primary-school program, or the *So vzdelaním k charakteru* [With Education to Character] program which is running at the English-Slovak School BESST in Trnava. In addition to emphasizing morality and character, educators have been gradually becoming keen on implementing the ideas of social and emotional intelligence in educational institutions. What is more, learning has been employed at schools that emphasize the skills, emotions, and attitudes necessary for appropriate social settings.

In many countries of the world, character education is reflected in education systems. It has been gaining increasing popularity and schools are convinced that focusing on this area brings significant improvements in pupils' behaviour, the school atmosphere and, last but not least, pupils' performance. In Great Britain, a separate subject Character Education is taught, the same is true for the United States. Great attention to character development is paid in Australia, China, and other countries. Its form and name differ from country to country but the basis is the same – working on a person's personality, developing their good character traits, developing life skills and well-being. When dealing with the topic of character in school, it should always be borne in mind that the subject alone is not enough but the whole idea must be implemented in the school culture. The subject or its systematically created place in the school curriculum has an important role in the fact that students, as well as teachers, must understand the terminology in the same way. There must be interplay and a common language. So when speaking, for example, about modesty, it is necessary to exactly define what it is, what it is not, where the boundaries are, what its forms are, when it can help, and also what place it has in the life of a school or an individual. This is consequently transferred to the daily life of the school and its values.

⁷ HOMOLOVÁ, M.: Metóda Whole Brain Teaching v primárnom vzdelávaní. In DUCHOVIČOVÁ, J., HOŠOVÁ, D., KOLEŇÁKOVÁ, R. Š. (eds.): *Inovatívne trendy v odborových didaktikách. Prepojenie teórie a praxe výučbových stratégií kritického tvorivého myslenia*. Nitra : UKF, 2019, p. 41.

⁸ ŠVEC, Š.: Súčasný pedagogický výskum na Slovensku. In *Pedagogická orientace*, 2010, Vol. 20, No. 2, p. 36.

Globally, a number of research studies have been published on this issue, let us mention, e.g. Pane & Patriana, Zopiatis et al.⁹ Research into the formation of character in tertiary (university) education in Slovakia is still in its infancy. Numerous studies provide evidence that university students' character formation is linked to the development of intellectual character virtues such as critical thinking. Different researchers have pointed to the interconnection of media literacy and "the formation of the historical, civic, and ethical awareness of the individual",¹⁰ the instillation of the value of critical thinking and research skills among university students,¹¹ the relation between media education and development of critical thinking competence,¹² or to increase the level of digital literacy to prevent fake news in order to critically approach media and their content.¹³ Gluchmanová suggests that teacher ethics should be applied in the training of future teachers at universities, which may offer opportunities for the implementation of appropriate ethical concepts in higher education.¹⁴

2 Virtue Epistemology

2.1 Introduction

Virtue epistemology is a fairly new stream and one of the prevalent directions in epistemology today. It represents a set of the latest approaches to the study of knowledge within which intellectual virtues play a central role. First, intellectual virtues are the characteristics and capabilities of a good thinker or knowledgeable person. Hence, a significant trait of virtue epistemology is the fact that it is directly focused on knowing the subject or agent.¹⁵

Within virtue epistemology, there are two main varieties – virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism – each of them offering distinct conceptions of intellectual virtues. The idea of intellectual virtue in modern epistemology was first introduced by Ernest Sosa. However, philosophers are not uniform in defining intellectual virtues. In general, *virtue reliabilism* understands the performance of intellectual virtue as the application of reliable and well-functioning cognitive abilities (faculties) such as vision, reason, memory, or introspection. They are called *faculty-virtues*.¹⁶ In other words, Sosa as an advocate of virtue reliabilism perceives intellectual virtues as being affected by several external factors which can influence the performance of these virtues. As Sosa sees it, "an intellectual virtue is a quality bound to help maximize one's surplus of truth over error".¹⁷ Other philosophers explain intellectual virtues as traits of cognitive character that are

⁹ See: PANE, M. M., PATRIANA, R.: The Significance of Environmental Contents in Character Education for Quality of Life. In *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2016, Vol. 222, p. 244-252; ZOPIATIS, A. A., KRAMBIA-KAPARDIS, M.: Ethical Behaviour of Tertiary Education Students in Cyprus. In *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2007, Vol. 81, No. 3, p. 647-663; NAKAYAMA, O.: Actualizing Moral Education in Japan's Tertiary Section. In *Journal of Character Education*, 2015, Vol. 11, No. 1, p. 39-50.

¹⁰ KAČINOVÁ, V.: The Topic of Media-Disseminated Mis-Information and Dis-Information as an Integral Part of General Education in Slovakia. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 22.

¹¹ PAGLINAWAN, W. M. C.: University Students Engagement with and Disengagement from Fake News. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 78.

¹² See: PETRANOVÁ, D.: Rozvíja mediálna výchova v školách kritické kompetencie žiakov? In *Communication Today*, 2011, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 66-83.

¹³ See also: HOSSOVÁ, M.: Fake News and Disinformation: Phenomenons of Post-Factual Society. In *Media Literacy and Academic Research*, 2018, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 27-35.

¹⁴ GLUCHMANOVÁ, M.: Učiteľská etika a mravná výchova. In *Mravná výchova v školách na Slovensku a v zahraničí. Zborník príspevkov z medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie*. Banská Bystrica : PF UMB v Banskej Bystrici, 2009, p. 73.

¹⁵ BAEHR, J.: *Virtue Epistemology*. *New Catholic Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. [online]. [08-06-2021]. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=phil_fac>.

¹⁶ KING, N. L.: Erratum to: Perseverance as an Intellectual Virtue. In *Synthese*, 2014, Vol. 191, No. 15, p. 3783.

¹⁷ SOSA, E.: *Knowledge in Perspective: Selected Essays in Epistemology*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 225.

acquired, and these virtues are also called *character virtues*. Lorraine Code supports the theory of *virtue responsibilism* by arguing that a focus on solid intellectual virtues and predispositions like intelligence, wisdom, or prudence is more beneficial and these virtues constitute very important character traits.¹⁸ Zagzebski¹⁹ advanced this view by developing a list of intellectual character traits including humility, autonomy, courage, perseverance, courage, fairness, open-mindedness, and thoroughness. Nonetheless, for virtue epistemology to be fully-fledged and fruitful, both faculty-virtues and character virtues need to be incorporated in it.²⁰

Philosophical foundations of contemporary character ethics can be traced back to Ancient Greece including the philosophers Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. According to Aristotle, moral virtues are character traits which are evolved during one's lifetime. In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle gives an account of the development of character, morality, and virtue in a person. In particular, he claims that any moral virtue is inborn and it arises from habit. He promotes the thesis that virtue is acquired through activity or by getting used to some activity. Therefore, virtue is dependent on repeated activity (1103a19-26).²¹ This leads us to believe that moral and character education is at least worth talking about and integrating into schools' curricula or implementing into schools' cultures.

Further, the roots of contemporary virtue ethics lie in ancient Greek philosophy. It is therefore obvious that modern scholars have adopted three fundamental concepts derived from it: "*arête (excellence or virtue), phronesis (practical or moral wisdom) and eudaimonia (usually translated as happiness or human flourishing)*".²² The Aristotelian concept of virtues as states of character rather than passions can be transformed into the online environment as the development of cyber-virtues, above all cyber-wisdom. Eudaimonia (flourishing) can therefore deviate from its primary meaning of hedonistic happiness or short-term pleasure and be replaced by cyber-flourishing. Harrison goes far beyond these basic definitions by extending them to the online environment or cyberspace. Thus, the three fundamental components of a character-based approach in the online environment are cyber-flourishing, cyber-virtues, and cyber-wisdom.²³ Building upon Aristotelian *phronesis, cyber-wisdom* in its most basic form helps us to do the right things at the proper time and in the proper manner.²⁴ How can the concept of wisdom or practical wisdom be transformed into the cyber-environment? When taking into account that we are daily confronted with moral dilemmas in the online and other digital environments, being cyber-wise means thinking through a battle of virtues, make a decision and consistently carry out the chosen procedure adopted to deal with the dilemma. However, this does not happen overnight – on the contrary, it requires active trying and learning from trying. In view of this assumption, it can be concluded that cyber-wisdom is a cognitive or intellectual virtue as it requires our thinking before taking action. Dennis and Harrison further point out that although cyber-wisdom is an intellectual virtue, it is more than just an intellectual virtue, "*it is the quality of knowing the acceptable course of action in any given online situation*".²⁵ It is a meta-virtue

¹⁸ CODE, L.: Toward a 'Responsibilist' Epistemology. In *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 1984, Vol. 45, No. 1, p. 29-50. [online]. [08-06-2021]. Available at: <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2107325?origin=crossref>>.

¹⁹ ZAGZEBSKI, L.: Intellectual Motivation and the Good of Truth. In EDWARDS, D. (ed.): *Truth a Contemporary Reader*. London : Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019, p. 345.

²⁰ KING, N. L.: Erratum to: Perseverance as an intellectual virtue. In *Synthese*, 2014, Vol. 191, No. 15, p. 3783.

²¹ RACKHAM, H. (ed.): *Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics*. [online]. [08-06-2021]. Available at: <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0054%3Abekker%20page%3D1097b>>.

²² HURSTHOUSE, R.: *Virtue Ethics*. [online]. [09-09-2021]. Available at: <<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-virtue/>>.

²³ HARRISON, T.: Cultivating Cyber-phronesis. In *Journal of Pastoral Care in Education*, 2016, Vol. 34, No. 4, p. 239.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ DENNIS, M., HARRISON, T.: Unique Ethical Challenges for the 21st Century: Online Technology and Virtue Education. In *Journal of Moral Education*, 2021, Vol. 50, No. 3, p. 6.

that harmonizes other intellectual character virtues such as critical reasoning, open-mindedness, or sound and independent judgment, while at the same time requiring their good application in online or digital communication. Moreover, implementing morally correct conduct in online interactions enhances the level of behaviour online in general.

The issue of ethical dilemmas and the process of ethical decision-making in the digital environment, in particular in digital games, is dealt with by Magová.²⁶

2.2 Intellectual Virtues

Intellectual virtues are cognitive character traits leading to honesty and truth as well as the minimization of erroneous decisions.²⁷ They can also be described as character strengths motivated by an interest to reach good goals such as truth and understanding. Some authors like Zagzebski²⁸ see Aristotle's classical moral virtues such as kindness, compassion, friendliness, truthfulness, justice, or temperance as the focal point for the shaping of intellectual virtues. Baehr²⁹ goes on to argue that each intellectual virtue encompasses a tendency to perform a certain cognitive activity which differentiates the specific virtue from other intellectual virtues. In summary, an intellectual virtue may either be an implementation of cognitive abilities like introspection and vision memory, or the implementation of acquired cognitive character traits like open-mindedness, curiosity and honesty. In general, the most fundamental aim of intellectual virtues is to reach the final goal of enhancing human understanding by looking for or understanding truth. And this paramount aim of truth is also what distinguishes intellectual virtues from moral ones.

Thinking of intellectual virtues within a virtue responsibilist framework, we now provide a classification of foundational intellectual virtues as elaborated by Baehr.³⁰ And with this common model before us, we turn to a concise description of these virtues. Further to the virtues identified by Baehr, some authors add other intellectual virtues and character traits which are also included in the following classification.

1. Curiosity – people who are curious have an intrinsic motivation to ponder and learn new knowledge. In other words, curiosity replaces the motivation to learn. Unlike perceptual curiosity which depends on auditory, visual, or other kinds of stimulation, by intellectual curiosity we mean epistemic curiosity relating to searching for opportunities for intellectual engagement and learning new facts.³¹ Watson uses the term *inquisitiveness* as a foundational intellectual virtue to educate students for while characterizing it as the "... *question-asking virtue*".³² While inquisitiveness motivates people to initiate an intellectual inquiry, asking good questions is an intellectual skill and the result of such inquiry. Therefore, intellectual curiosity or inquisitiveness is, alongside individual differences in cognitive abilities and intelligence, a decisive factor in academic achievement.

²⁶ See: MAGOVÁ, L.: The Development of Ethical Education through Digital Games: The Butterfly Effect Implementation. In *Acta Ludologica*, 2020, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 32-44.

²⁷ HEERSMINK, R.: A Virtue Epistemology of the Internet: Search Engines, Intellectual Virtues and Education. In *Social Epistemology. A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy*, 2018, Vol. 32, No.1, p. 2.

²⁸ ZAGZEBSKI, L.: Intellectual Motivation and the Good of Truth. In DePAUL, M., ZAGZEBSKI, L. (eds.): *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 153-154.

²⁹ BAEHR, J.: *Cultivating Good Minds: A Philosophical and Practical Guide to Educating for Intellectual Virtues*. 2015. [online]. [2021-09-16]. Available at: <<https://www.ivalongbeach.org/academics/master-virtues>>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ VON STUMM S., HELL, B., CHAMORRO-PREMUZIC, T.: The Hungry Mind: Intellectual Curiosity is the Third Pillar of Academic Performance. In *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2011, Vol. 6, No. 6, p. 577.

³² WATSON, L.: Educating for Inquisitiveness: A Case against Exemplarism for Intellectual Character Education. In *Journal of Moral Education*, 2019, Vol. 48, No. 3, p. 304.

2. Intellectual humility – the virtue of intellectual humility means being aware of one’s intellectual limitations and owning cognitive weaknesses. On the other hand, some authors³³ argue that humility stems from low self-esteem. From this perspective, intellectual humility lies in a sort of underestimating of one’s cognitive strengths and being realistic about the intellectual and cognitive limitations which represent one’s weaknesses while being able to admit not to know everything. The vices, which stand in contrast to the intellectual virtue of humility, include arrogance, pride, snobbery, impertinence, self-ambition, or narcissism. Roberts and Wood conclude that humility as an intellectual virtue not only demands unconcern with one’s desire to appear faultless and without weakness to others, but it is also a mixture of other positive virtues such as self-confidence.³⁴
3. Intellectual autonomy – the virtue of intellectual autonomy can be described as an ability to autonomously and independently think and reason for oneself. Being intellectually autonomous, however, does not require stubbornly sticking to one’s beliefs; on the contrary – it involves reliance and outsourcing, e.g., on other individuals or technologies. It is nevertheless important to balance between intellectual autonomy and intellectual humility by admitting that one is not an expert in something and depends on others when necessary. The term *intellectual autonomy* bears similarities with the term *critical thinking*. Critical thinking is a competence essentially meaning ‘thinking out of the box’ and further considering or re-considering something that is widely accepted, and at the same time undertaking personal development, evaluating things from various angles, verifying and checking facts. Baehr elaborates this point further by comparing an intellectual virtues approach and a critical thinking approach in education. The latter combines a concentration on critical thinking skills with a concentration on the critical spirit or intellectual properties which are very close to intellectual character virtues.³⁵
4. Attentiveness – being intellectually attentive means being attentive to details while focusing on the cognitive task performed. Attention is drawn to all necessary details and nuances which are then dealt with adequately. An attentive student notices small details in texts, likes to look closely at things, and tends to see details in texts that other students overlook.
5. Intellectual carefulness – means sensitivity to avoiding intellectual faults and mistakes on one hand and, and acquiring true beliefs on the other. Heersmink points out that to be able to avoid mistakes, a basic comprehension of a knowledge area concerned as well as critical thinking skills are essential.³⁶
6. Intellectual thoroughness – a person who is intellectually thorough has an ability to take an interest in and seek explanations for problems. They look for a deeper explanation and understanding of phenomena, being unsatisfied with easy and shallow interpretations. The virtues of intellectual thoroughness and carefulness are thus crucial in determining the trustworthiness of sources. Gálik and Gáliková-Tolnaiová warn that the long-term use of digital media may cause digital superficiality that will replace the depth of intellectual work necessary for learning.³⁷
7. Open-mindedness – a person who is open-minded is able to consider other opinions and perspectives and, based on this, they will be more willing to change and correct their beliefs and views. Bugeja insists that an individual as an epistemic agent should be aware

³³ WHITCOMB, D. et al.: Intellectual Humility: Owning Our Limitations. In *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 2015, Vol. 94, No. 3, p. 518.

³⁴ ROBERTS, R. C., WOOD, W. J.: Humility and Epistemic Goods. In DePAUL, M., ZAGZEBSKI, L. (eds.) *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 261.

³⁵ BAEHR, J.: Educating for Intellectual Virtues: From Theory to Practice. In *Journal of the Philosophy of Education*, 2013, Vol. 47, No. 2, p. 253.

³⁶ HEERSMINK, R.: A Virtue Epistemology of the Internet: Search Engines, Intellectual Virtues and Education. In *Social Epistemology*, 2018, Vol. 32, No. 1, p. 4.

³⁷ GÁLIK, S., GÁLIKOVÁ-TOLNAIOVÁ, S.: Influence of the Internet on the Cognitive Abilities of Man. Phenomenological and Hermeneutical Approach. In *Communication Today*, 2015, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 7.

of their personal biases the consequences of which can be alleviated by exercising the intellectual character traits like intellectual carefulness and open-mindedness.³⁸

8. Intellectual courage – means a readiness to face a potential loss or harm, including fear and embarrassment when communicating or presenting one’s view. Baehr notes that there is some overlap in the intellectual traits of curiosity, open-mindedness, and courage by putting forward that an epistemic agent only possesses an intellectual virtue if he or she demonstrates a certain activity that has its root in “love of epistemic goods”.³⁹ Zagzebski concludes by adding that it is the virtue of intellectual courage that is included in the motives behind searching for truth.⁴⁰
9. Intellectual tenacity – can also be described as intellectual perseverance. This virtue embraces a readiness to take on intellectual challenges and stay persistent. An important presumption is that an intellectually tenacious individual does not give up on solving problems; he or she stays curious until epistemic goals have been achieved.

For each virtue, there is a vice that is associated with it and is the opposite of virtues. A vice is a weakness that has developed during the intellectual life of an epistemic agent. Baehr notes that intellectual vices are deformities of intellectual character such as intellectual apathy, intellectual laziness, narrow-mindedness, arrogance, neglect, carelessness, or indecisiveness.⁴¹ Further, he notes that there is an asymmetry between intellectual virtues and intellectual vices. He concludes that defective judgment and defective epistemic motivation are enough to form an intellectual vice – more precisely, in order to be intellectually vicious, one does not need to be defective in all main features of intellectual virtue. Zagzebski goes on to argue that vices and virtues are a category of one’s qualities to be ascribed to a person after their death, thus defining a person more precisely than any other category of qualities.⁴²

3 The Intellectual Virtue Approach and the Critical Thinking Approach

Making use of the abundant scholarship on virtue epistemology, see, for example,⁴³ it can be stated that there is a strong relation between intellectual virtues and satisfactory education, so the development of intellectual virtues seems to be a valuable educational aim. A person or student who is intellectually virtuous has an intrinsic desire for generally recognized goods such as love of learning, truthfulness, and understanding. In this context, a question of the

³⁸ See: BUGEJA, M. J.: *Living Ethics: Across Media Platforms*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2008.

³⁹ BAEHR, J.: Educating for Intellectual Virtues: From Theory to Practice. In *Journal of the Philosophy of Education*, 2013, Vol. 47, No. 2, p. 249.

⁴⁰ ZAGZEBSKI, L.: Intellectual Motivation and the Good of Truth. In DePAUL, M., ZAGZEBSKI, L. (eds.): *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 153-154.

⁴¹ See: BAEHR, J.: The Structure of Intellectual Vices. In KIDD, J. I., BATTALY, H., CASSAM, Q. (eds.): *Vice Epistemology*. London : Routledge, 2020.

⁴² See also: ZAGZEBSKI, L.: *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1996.

⁴³ See: WATSON, L.: Educating for Inquisitiveness: A Case against Exemplarism for Intellectual Character Education. In *Journal of Moral Education*, 2019, Vol. 48, No. 3, p. 303-315; BAEHR, J.: Is Intellectual Character Growth a Realistic Educational Aim? In *Journal of Moral Education*, 2016, Vol. 45, No. 2, p. 117-131; HEERSMINK, R.: A Virtue Epistemology of the Internet: Search Engines, Intellectual Virtues and Education. In *Social Epistemology*, 2018, Vol. 32, No. 1, p. 1-12; DENNIS, M., HARRISON, T.: Unique Ethical Challenges for the 21st Century: Online Technology and Virtue Education. In *Journal of Moral Education*, 2021, Vol. 50, No. 3, p. 251-266; AMBROŽOVÁ, P., KALIBA, M.: Educational Counselling in Czech Educational Settings from the Perspective of Primary School Pupils. In CHOVA, L. G. et al. (eds.): *EDULEARN19: International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies*. Palma, Spain : IATED, 2019, p. 3445.

educational significance of character and virtues in school environments arises. According to Baehr, the essential aim of education is to cultivate intellectual virtues such as open-mindedness, attentiveness, curiosity, courage, carefulness, and intellectual honesty.⁴⁴ Watson adds that the fundamental intellectual virtue to educate for is the intellectual virtue of inquisitiveness as it acts as a motivating intellectual virtue that initiates the intellectually virtuous inquiry.⁴⁵ It is, however, worth mentioning that promoting intellectual virtues is the only valuable aim in education. An intellectually virtuous student in tertiary education should display virtues like fairness, open-mindedness, courage, attention, carefulness, honesty, humility, autonomy, tenacity, patience, and diligence.⁴⁶ Kotzee et al. point out that when comparing other educational aims, such as knowledge and critical thinking, with the intellectual virtue aim, the latter should have priority.⁴⁷ On the other hand, however, they pose a question of whether intellectual virtues can be taught properly. The pedagogical challenge of the intellectual virtue education envisages the successful organization of educational activities around it, effective maximization, and its importance over other teaching methods and activities.⁴⁸ Advocates of the intellectual virtue approach in education, such as Baehr,⁴⁹ Orona & Pritchard,⁵⁰ Croce & Pritchard⁵¹ propose the cultivation of intellectual virtues like curiosity or intellectual courage rather than reliable faculties like memory or eyesight. The value of intellectual values education is reflected in the modern economy by placing emphasis in the job environment on soft skills and competencies that are based on intellectual virtues such as perseverance, curiosity, open-mindedness, autonomy, and carefulness. Gerstein & Friedman point out that in skills-based education, any content subject may be enhanced by delivering not only content but also skills and intellectual virtues.⁵² Furthermore, the coherence between the approaches deployed by educators and divergent skill strategies has also been examined.⁵³ Moreover, the aim of intellectual character development in an educational environment has the capacity to add a refining and intrinsically motivating dimension to the educational process.⁵⁴ As a consequence, there is a broad discussion among scholars about the acquisition of intellectual virtues. The contemporary image of the way the intellectual virtues are acquired builds upon Aristotelian habituation. Zagzebski's exemplarist theory of virtue acquisition is grounded in exemplars of moral goodness, i.e. people who are admirable and inspiring as possessing particular moral or non-moral virtues.⁵⁵ Based on this belief, the intellectual virtues can thus also be learned through admiration of the exemplar of intellectual goodness (see, e.g., Battaly).⁵⁶

⁴⁴ BAEHR, J.: Educating for Intellectual Virtues: From Theory to Practice. In *Journal of the Philosophy of Education*, 2013, Vol. 47, No. 2, p. 253.

⁴⁵ WATSON, L.: Educating for inquisitiveness: A Case against Exemplarism for Intellectual Character Education. In *Journal of Moral Education*, 2019, Vol. 48, No. 3, p. 307.

⁴⁶ LeBLANC, S.: *Good Students: Intellectual Virtues in Higher Education*, 2019. [Dissertation Thesis]. Fredericton, NB, Canada : University of New Brunswick, 2019, p. 113.

⁴⁷ KOTZEE, B., CARTER, J. A., SIEGEL, H.: Educating for Intellectual Virtue: A Critique from Action Guidance. In *Episteme*, 2021, Vol, 18, No. 2, p. 189.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ BAEHR, J.: Educating for Intellectual Virtues: From Theory to Practice. In *Journal of the Philosophy of Education*, 2013, Vol. 47, No. 2, p. 256.

⁵⁰ ORONA, A. G., PRITCHARD, D.: Inculcating Curiosity: Pilot Results of an Online Module to Enhance Undergraduate Intellectual Virtue. In *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 2021, p. 6.

⁵¹ CROCE, M., PRITCHARD, D.: (Forthcoming). Education as the Social Cultivation of Intellectual Virtue. In ALFANO, M., KLEIN, C., de RIDDER, J. (eds.): *Social Virtue Epistemology*. London : Routledge.

⁵² GERSTEIN, M., FRIEDMAN, H. H.: Rethinking Higher Education: Focusing on Skills and Competencies. In *Psychosociological Issues in Human Resource Management*, 2016, Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 111.

⁵³ ROŠTEKOVÁ, M., PALOVÁ, M.: Curricular Internationalization in Higher Education in Slovakia through the Integration of Content and Language – Experience with Teaching in French In *XLinguae*, 2020, Vol. 13, Issue 1, p. 215.

⁵⁴ BAEHR, J.: Is Intellectual Character Growth a Realistic Educational Aim?. In *Journal of Moral Education*, 2016, Vol. 45, No. 2, p. 124.

⁵⁵ ZAGZEBSKI, L.: *Exemplarist Moral Theory*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 2017.

⁵⁶ BATTALY, H.: Teaching Intellectual Virtues. In *Teaching Philosophy*, 2006, Vol. 29, Issue 3, p. 197.

By contrast, the critical thinking approach teaches students how to think critically, why critical thinking is good and why thinking uncritically is not good. By good is meant good “*from the epistemic point of view*”,⁵⁷ i.e. thinking which provides reasons and evidence and thinking that avoids deceptions and other fallacies in reasoning. Siegel argues that critical thinking is not merely an intellectual virtue – on one hand, it embraces dispositions and habits of mind, but on the other, it outranks intellectual virtues in that its component of assessing reasons entails the abilities necessary for assessing reasons in epistemically respectable ways.⁵⁸ The critical assessment component includes dispositions such as disposition to seek reasons and evidence or to request reasons and justifications for arguments, or attitudes and character traits such as a refusal of being partial or inconsistent, and an obligation to evaluate relevant evidence objectively as well as to value good reasoning and objectivity of judgment. In terms of ‘good thinking’, thinking in logical terms confers a benefit compared with thinking in virtue terms in that the former is completely exact and explicit. Kotzee et al. conclude that the intellectual virtue approach in education should be supported; however, there are not enough tools to do so in real teaching. In practical terms, if students are to be taught intellectual virtues, these virtues should not be only modelled but an understanding of the reasons and the abilities necessary for reasoning must be taught properly.⁵⁹ Byerly⁶⁰ discusses a proposal to include teaching and learning activities aimed at fostering intellectual virtues into the logic or critical thinking classes. He reveals a need to create further pedagogical resources in addition to the existing ones. Vrabec and Rigo⁶¹ provide an analysis of different forms of standardized assessment tools focused on critical testing. Elder and Paul⁶² discuss critical thinking competence standards which are fundamental to teaching and learning because they go further than the development of skills to the advancement of fundamental intellectual virtues.

4 Conclusion

Educators’ focus on the development of character and morality is not new. It has been of interest to philosophers, moral theorists, and educators since classical antiquity. This interest in ‘good character’ was translated into education systems worldwide in the form of moral and character education. It can be concluded that character education is the intentional struggle to cultivate virtues. A central theoretical principle is that of Aristotle’s meaning that virtues are developed by accomplishing virtuous actions. Following this principle, character educators strive to encourage students to carry out nice, polite, and self-controlled acts continually – until it becomes customary and self-evident for them to do so and natural to avoid doing the opposite. A person’s character is built upon several (often overlapping) dimensions, each of them having a distinctive set of virtues and vices – performance, moral, civic, and intellectual. This model of personal character is relevant for the implementation of character education practices in all types of educational institutions. Surprisingly, an approach to character education that is aimed

⁵⁷ KOTZEE, B., CARTER, J. A., SIEGEL, H.: Educating for Intellectual Virtue: A Critique from Action Guidance. In *Episteme*, 2021, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 20.

⁵⁸ SIEGEL, H.: Critical Thinking and the Intellectual Virtues. In BAEHR, J. (ed.): *Intellectual Virtues and Education. Essays in Applied Virtue Epistemology*. New York : Routledge, 2015, p. 99.

⁵⁹ KOTZEE, B., CARTER, J. A., SIEGEL, H.: Educating for Intellectual Virtue: A Critique from Action Guidance. In *Episteme*, 2021, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 181.

⁶⁰ BYERLY, R. T.: Teaching for Intellectual Virtue in Logic and Critical Thinking Classes: Why and How. In *Teaching Philosophy*, 2019, Vol. 42, No. 1, p. 12.

⁶¹ See: VRABEC, N., RIGO, F.: Possibilities of Evaluating Critical Thinking Through Standardized Tests. In ČÁBYOVÁ, L., BEŽÁKOVÁ, Z., MADLEŇÁK, A. (eds.): *Marketing Identity: New Changes, New Challenges*. Trnava : FMK UCM v Trnave, 2021, p. 730-742.

⁶² ELDER, L., PAUL, R.: Critical Thinking: Competency Standards Essential to the Cultivation of Intellectual Skills, Part 4. In *Journal of Developmental Education*, 2012, Vol. 35, No. 3, p. 30-31.

at the cultivation of intellectual virtues, particularly in tertiary education, is scarcely investigated in the literature and remains unexplored. We support the responsibilist approach to virtue epistemology that places emphasis on the epistemic significance of intellectual character virtues like intellectual humanity, intellectual autonomy, curiosity, intellectual carefulness, intellectual thoroughness, open-mindedness, attentiveness, intellectual courage, and intellectual tenacity. Assuming that a good learner is a good thinker and thus possesses intellectual virtues, the promotion and fostering of intellectual virtues should undoubtedly be implemented in educational theory and practice. Nevertheless, the intellectual virtues approach does not have powerful and elaborated pedagogic tools for intellectual virtues to be acquired as a crucial aim of education. Contrary to the intellectual virtues approach, which is more model-based, the critical thinking approach thus proves to be more practical in providing tools for thinking critically, analysing arguments, structuring arguments, creating argument schemes, etc. If we conclude that good character should be a primary goal of education, then the mutual overlapping of critical thinking and the fostering of intellectual virtues may be conceived of as educationally ideal.

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