Integrity as the Goal of Character Education

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in

Values and Virtues for a Challenging World
(Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement 92)
edited by Anneli Jefferson, Orestis Palermos, Panos Paris, and Jonathan Webber
Cambridge University Press, 2022

post–print

Abstract

Schools and universities should equip students with the ability to deal with an unpredictable environment in ways that promote worthwhile and fulfilling lives. The world is rapidly changing and the contours of our ethical values have been shaped by the world we have lived in. Education therefore needs to cultivate in students the propensity to develop and refine ethical values that preserve important insights accrued through experience while responding to novel challenges. Therefore, we should aim to foster the virtue of ethical integrity. This virtue is driven by a concern for ethical accuracy, which motivates and warrants respect for our existing ethical commitments as repositories of previous ethical reasoning, but equally requires recognition of our own falliblity and consideration of other people's reasoning. Ethical integrity thus comprises constancy, fidelity, humility, and receptivity, balanced and integrated by the aim of ethical accuracy. It is a kind of ethical seriousness, though it includes acceptance of some degree of ambivalence. It is an inherently developmental virtue distinct from the unachievable ethical perfection of practical wisdom. It is an Aristotelian virtue, even though Aristotle does not himself name it. The paper closes with an outline of what education for ethical integrity would look like.

Schools and universities should equip students with the ability to create new knowledge. This seems entirely uncontroversial. Not only is existing knowledge far from complete, but more importantly the world is always changing. If we treat education purely as a system for handing on information, then our collective knowledge will soon become outdated. We cannot prepare our students for the challenges they will face simply by telling them what we already know.

In this chapter, I argue that the same is true of the ethical dimension of education. Schools and universities should equip students with the ability to deal ethically with the challenges ahead and cannot do this simply by imparting specific ethical values. For the world is rapidly changing, both socially and physically, as a result of technological change, and the contours of our existing ethical values have been shaped by the world we have lived in. Ethical education therefore needs to cultivate in students an ability to develop ethical values that preserve important ideas and insights accrued through our collective experience yet respond to the novel challenges of a changing environment. I argue that this requires us to foster the ethical virtue of integrity.

The first two sections of this paper argue that responding to challenges in ways that promote worthwhile and fulfilling lives requires ethical virtues such as honesty, compassion, and justice, but also the virtue of reflecting critically on the contours of those virtues in relation to changing circumstances. The middle three

sections then argue that the virtue of ethical integrity provides this critical reflective framework, emphasising that integrity involves being receptive to the ideas of others while being resistant to mere social pressure. Ethical integrity is driven by a concern to get things right, or ethical accuracy, but includes an acceptance of some degree of ambivalence about whether this is achieved. The final two sections distinguish ethical integrity from practical wisdom and roughly sketch a programme of education for ethical integrity.

1. The Need for Ethical Virtues

Ethics is the inquiry into how to live worthwhile and fulfilling lives. It is broader than the specifically moral question of what we should and should not do, what is right and what is wrong, though it does include that. Ethics is concerned with how we can flourish as human beings. Its aim is to identify the best ways to live and the conditions required for living in those ways. In responding to the difficult challenges of climate change, viral pandemics, widespread misinformation, and political polarisation, our aim as individuals or as a society should not be merely to survive, except when we know that is the most that can be achieved. Our aim should be to respond to these challenges in ways that promote the conditions for human flourishing as much as possible. For that, our responses need to be informed and guided by reflection on the ethical values of the goals we are pursuing, our methods of achieving them, and the outcomes we might produce.

Character education programmes often emphasise two closely related character traits that enable the discovery of new knowledge and its deployment in changing the world: grit or tenacity in maintaining the effort required to achieve a long-term goal, and resilience in learning from mistakes and adapting to changed circumstances. Some of the papers in this volume recommend further character traits of this kind, such as creativity as a collaborative virtue aimed at generating innovative solutions to problems, hope as the ability to assess the importance and likelihood of achieving a goal in challenging circumstances, and epistemic forbearance as the ability to resist the temptation towards unjustified certainty about dangerous risks.[1]

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[1] Gaut, 'Group Creativity'; Mason, 'The Virtue of Hope in a Turbulent World'; Shackel, 'Uncertainty Phobia and Epistemic Forbearance in a Pandemic'.

Character traits of this kind are essential to responding effectively to the challenges of a rapidly changing world. However, they do not themselves promote human flourishing. They can be just as conducive to changing the world in ways that make no difference to our ability to live worthwhile and fulfilling lives, or indeed which make that more difficult. This is because they do not themselves embody any image of what would make a life worthwhile or fulfilling, never mind a picture of human flourishing that is at least roughly right. These character traits are valuable only because they enable us to prioritise between our existing ideas about what is important in life and to act in accordance with those ideas and priorities. This is why they are sometimes called 'structural virtues' or 'performance virtues'.[2]

If we are to respond to novel challenges in ways that promote human flourishing, we need firm commitments to the right substantive ethical values and the flexibility of mind to apply those values to the situations we face. We need an understanding of what matters in human life, what contributes to human flourishing, and how to secure those things. This will include commitments to such values as truth and fairness, for example, or the absence of pain and suffering. Firm commitments to these values for their own sake have traditionally been known as the virtues of honesty, justice, and compassion. Many other character traits have been promoted over the centuries as firm commitments to important values. Because this category of character traits is defined by their contribution to living a worthwhile and fulfilling life, we can label them 'ethical virtues'.[3]

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[2] For the concept of 'structural virtues', see Mason, this volume; Adams 2006, pp. 33-4. For the concept of 'performance virtues', see: Kristjánsson, this volume; Jubilee Centre 2017, pp. 1, 4, 5.

[3] I intend this use of the term 'ethical virtues' to cover every character trait that includes a commitment to a substantive value that contributes to human flourishing. This is broader than the phrase 'moral virtues' used by Kristján Kristjánsson in this volume, if 'moral' is understood in the narrower sense of relating specifically to right and wrong action, to what one ought or ought not to do. Valuing wit and good humour, for example, contributes to a worthwhile and fulfilling life without generating moral requirements. It is also broader than the phrase 'motivational virtues' used by Cathy Mason in this volume, which she defines in terms of responses to perceived goods or evils in the world. Not all ethical virtues are reactive in this way. The ethical virtue of integrity, for example, is founded on a general commitment to ethical accuracy, as we

In order to equip students with the ability to respond well to the challenges of the future, where this means responding in ways that preserve and promote human flourishing, schools and universities need to foster in students the development of ethical virtues such as honesty, justice, and compassion, as well as structural or performance virtues such as creativity, hope, and epistemic forbearance. Doing so is really nothing more than taking explicit control of something educational institutions anyway cannot avoid doing. Educational theorists often emphasise that character traits are 'caught' from classroom practice, the school ethos, and the 'hidden curriculum' even when they are not explicitly taught in the formal curriculum.[4] Since educational institutions inevitably shape the characters and values of their students, they should design their environments, policies, and curricula to ensure that they do so in a way that contributes to those students and the people around them living worthwhile and fulfilling lives.

2. The Need for a Critical Reflective Ethical Virtue

Although every ethical virtue enshrines a commitment to some value that contributes to flourishing, ethical character education cannot simply aim to foster each of those values. The virtue of honesty, for example, involves a commitment to the value of truthfulness for its own sake. The honest person is averse to deception, whether that is through lying or other kinds of deceptive speech, through covertly violating agreements or cheating in other ways, or through theft or other varieties of falsely treating something as

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will see. Finally, some ethical virtues in this broad sense can also be labelled 'epistemic virtues', where this phrase denotes character traits conducive to the development of knowledge or true belief. A good example is curiosity as described by Lani Watson in this volume, which she defines as a motivation to acquire worthwhile epistemic goods (see also Watson 2018: 301-4). At least some epistemic goods — and maybe all of them — are worthwhile precisely because they contribute, directly or indirectly, to human flourishing. This concept of ethical virtues therefore encompasses the overlapping categories of moral virtues and motivational virtues, at least some of the category of epistemic virtues, and some virtues that do not fit any of those three categories.

[4] For example: Ryle 1972, pp. 445-7; Warnock 1977, pp. 135-6; Lickona 1997; Noddings 1997, p. 10; Arthur 2003, pp. 117-21; Gross 2011; Jubilee Centre 2017, pp. 9-10.

one's own. But this does not mean that the honest person will never do any of these things. For example, there are clearly times when it is right to withhold secrets so that they cannot fall into enemy hands or, less dramatically, to boost someone's confidence by giving a more positive response to their work than you really think it merits. Aristotle famously argued that each ethical virtue is opposed not by one vice, but by two. Being insufficiently truthful is not the only way of failing to have the virtue of honesty. One can also be too truthful.

However, this 'doctrine of the mean', that every ethical virtue stands between a vice of deficiency and a vice of excess, is really only a very schematic approximation of Aristotle's view. No sooner has he said it than he clarifies that there are in fact a great many ways of going wrong, 'for single and straight is the road of the good; the bad go bad every which way' (Aristotle, 1106b35).[5] To possess a virtue is to feel and act on its characteristic motivation 'when one should, towards the things one should, in relation to the people one should, for the reasons one should, and in the way one should' (Aristotle, 1106b21-23). There are five different categories of potential failure listed in that phrase and within each of those categories there are many ways of failing. We might disagree with Aristotle over some of the details here, but his point does seem essentially right. Valuing truthfulness in itself is not enough for possessing the virtue of honesty. A sophisticated understanding of how and when to be truthful is also required.

It might be thought that the solution is to teach people a range of values including truthfulness, compassion, fairness, loyalty, and so on. The occasions when people should not be truthful are the ones when they should instead act on one or more of these other important values. However, this multiplies the problem rather than solving it. To have more than a vague and amorphous notion of the value of truthfulness, compassion, fairness, loyalty, or any other ethically important quality requires understanding its relation to the features of the situations one encounters. A nebulous understanding of truthfulness cannot be made more sophisticated by combining it with equally nebulous understandings of other values. What is required

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[5] This is the most lyrical translation of Aristotle's dictum 'ἐσθλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἁπλῶς, παντοδαπῶς δὲ κακοί' that I have seen, but Harris Rackham's more telegraphic 'Goodness is simple, badness manifold' in the Loeb Classical Library edition seems the most literal.

is regular experience of applying the value. One's decisions in each situation will then define contours for that value and reflection on those decisions will refine those contours.[6]

It is a familiar point that virtues, like skills, are developed through practice. One aspect of this development is that it embeds the virtuous motivations into the individual's cognition so that they become habitual or automatic. Another is that in so doing these motivations become strong enough to take precedence over any desires or habits that favour less virtuous action.[7] But it is equally important that practice is what provides the detailed content of the virtue, the specific motivations built up in response to the situations that the individual encounters. The motivations that constitute a particular virtue, such as honesty for example, will therefore vary between people whose environments differ physically or socially in significant ways, even when those people are succeeding in only being truthful in the right ways and on the right occasions. Likewise, these contours of each virtue might vary between people in different positions within the same physical and social environment. And those contours are likely to vary across a person's lifetime as their environment and their social position change.

Schools and universities therefore cannot equip students with the ability to deal ethically with their situations just by imparting specific ethical values such as truthfulness and fairness. For these can only be vague and amorphous ideas until their content is defined through application in each individual's situation. To enable students to develop ethical virtues such as honesty and justice, character education needs to foster the attitudes and skills required for shaping the contours of those virtues in relation their own

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[6] Aristotle claims that 'if those who have learned something for the first time can string the words together, they don't yet know what they have learned — because they have to assimilate it, and that requires time' (1147a21-2). Actually knowing something requires more than having been taught it, since it also requires integrating this information into one's general outlook through experience. His contrast between knowledge and merely stringing words together suggests that he considers this process of assimilation to be essential for understanding the detailed content of what has been taught, the real meaning of those words.

[7] These two aspects are central to Aristotle's account. See, for example, 1103a15-b25, 1147a10-35, 1147b9-19, 1152a25-33. For a more recent version of these ideas grounded in experimental psychology, see Rees and Webber 2014.

situations. To enable students to draw on these virtues to respond to novel challenges across their adult lives, character education needs to cultivate the traits required for continual reconsideration of the details of those virtues in relation to changing circumstances. In short, the fundamental aim of ethical character education should be to produce a virtue of critical reflection on one's own ethical commitments.

3. Constancy, Fidelity, and Integrity

The virtue that is required is ethical integrity. However, this virtue is often misunderstood. It is often confused for a certain kind of independence of mind and resilience of commitment. The person of integrity will not be swayed by majority opinion, will not simply follow current trends, and will not succumb to peer pressure to behave in ways that are not in line with their own ethical judgment. From this observation, it is sometimes concluded that the person of ethical integrity makes their own decisions based on their own ethical commitments irrespective of the opinions of other people.[8] This confuses a regular manifestation of ethical integrity for the core nature of the virtue. Indeed, it is a mistake to think that someone impervious to the opinions of other people can be virtuous at all. Resistance to some kinds of social pressure needs to be combined with the recognition that other people may raise important points that need to be taken into consideration. Without that, it would merely be ethical arrogance.[9]

Similarly, the person of ethical integrity is often thought to be someone whose words and deeds are consistent over time, either because their motivations are well integrated into a coherent outlook on life or

[8] Calhoun 1995. See also note # below.

[9] More precisely, this ethical arrogance can take either of two different forms. People who are ethically arrogant might consider themselves superior to other people in their ability to decide on the best course of action. This would be a form of what Alessandra Tanesini calls 'superbia' and can be manifested in treating other people as ethically inferior to oneself (2021, pp. 13-14, 98-100). A purer form of ethical arrogance is considering oneself to be entirely ethically self-reliant, so that one's own ethical judgments could never be improved by listening to other people's responses to one's ethical reasoning. On this form of arrogance, other people's reasoning is evaluated by the extent to which it concurs with one's own (Tanesini 2021, pp. 14, 106-7).

because their own sense of meaning and purpose is grounded in a set of fundamental commitments. It is sometimes concluded that ethical integrity is nothing more than consistency of one of these kinds.[10] This too is mistaken. Someone can display great integrity in changing their mind, especially where doing so requires them to admit that their previous judgments or actions had been wrong after all. Ethical integrity involves a kind of responsiveness to new considerations that may require revising deeply held commitments or disrupting a previously harmonious ethical outlook. In the absence of that responsiveness, a person with deep or well-integrated commitments is simply intransigent, stubborn, or pertinacious. Their consistency is a symptom of an ethical vice, rather than a manifestation of integrity.

Ethical integrity, therefore, does involve making up one's own mind about what one should do, but also requires giving due consideration to other people's ideas in doing so. Ethical integrity can be manifested in deep commitments or in a well-integrated outlook, but these must be susceptible to revision when there are sufficiently strong reasons to revise them. The characteristics of independent-mindedness and resilience of commitment form the trait of constancy, not the virtue of integrity. Constancy is the quality of being resolute in some commitments despite difficult circumstances that might undermine them. Similarly, acting on one's own deep or well-integrated motivations is the trait of fidelity to one's own commitments. Constancy and fidelity are aspects of the virtue of ethical integrity but are not themselves virtuous unless combined with a continuing responsiveness to reasons that might require revising one's commitments. The virtue of ethical integrity combines constancy and fidelity with this kind of respect for reasons.[11]

What is required to ground that respect for reasons is a concern for ethical accuracy. It is a concern for trying to act in ways that actually promote worthwhile and fulfilling lives, rather than simply acting in ways that might seem worthwhile or fulfilling at the time. Indeed, without this concern there is no justification

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[10] For the view that integrity consists in having a coherent and integrated ethical outlook, see Taylor 1981. For the view that it consists in having a sense of meaning and purpose grounded in fundamental commitments, see Williams 1973 and Williams 1981.

[11] For a more detailed analysis of the nature of constancy and fidelity and their relation to integrity, see Rees and Webber 2013.

for respecting one's own existing commitments. If those commitments have themselves been formulated and refined through trying to act in ways that promote human flourishing, then they are effectively repositories of reasoning about how best to behave. Rather than continually rehearsing the same sequences of reasoning, we should accept the conclusions of our prior reasoning, except where we seem to be presented with new reasons to take into consideration. Commitments that are the repositories of ethical reasoning do indeed deserve our respect. By contrast, respecting one's own motivations where these are not the result of reasoning about how best to behave would be merely self-indulgent.[12]

A concern for ethical accuracy therefore grounds and delineates the virtuous forms of constancy and fidelity. This explains why ethical integrity is often manifested in independent-mindedness, resilience of commitment, depth of some core commitments, or the integration of commitments. It is ultimately the concern for ethical accuracy that produces each of these regular and salient features of ethical integrity. This same concern can lead to the disintegration of one's commitments or the abandonment of a deeply held commitment, either in response to reasons given by other people or through entirely independent reconsideration. The same concern that grounds the commonly observed features of ethical integrity, therefore, can also motivate thought and behaviour that seems on the surface to be contrary to those

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[12] Bernard Williams argued that integrity would only be self-indulgent if it involved valuing one's own motivations purely because they are one's own. He proposed that integrity therefore consists solely in acting on one's deepest commitments without specifically valuing those commitments as one's own (1981, p. 49). However, it still seems self-indulgent to act on one's deepest commitments without regard for any good reasons to do otherwise. Cheshire Calhoun suggested that acting on one's own deepest commitments could itself be valuable either because it is integral to being an autonomous and responsible person or because it is essential to living a worthwhile and fulfilling life (1995, p. 255). However, unless those deepest commitments were themselves arrived at by reasoning and continue to be responsive to further reasoning, it is difficult to see why they should be integral to autonomy and responsibility or essential to a worthwhile and fulfilling life. Ultimately, it is because ethical integrity involves respecting and responding to reasons that it is not merely a self-indulgent concern for one's own preferences.

features. The deep structure of ethical integrity is not a kind of self-indulgence at all, but rather a kind of ethical seriousness.[13]

4. Accuracy, Humility, and Receptivity

At the heart of ethical integrity, then, is a concern for ethical accuracy that grounds a respect for one's own ethical commitments to the extent that they are products of reasoning about how to live worthwhile and fulfilling lives. This concern for accuracy produces the characteristic features of integrity that can be summarised as the traits of constancy and fidelity, but also produces thoughts and behaviours that run counter to those features. This is because a genuine concern for accuracy will not produce the arrogant attitude that one's own independent ethical reasoning is the best guide to behaving well. It will rather recognise one's own fallibility. The concern for ethical accuracy therefore produces a further feature of ethical integrity, which is ethical humility.

As a virtue, ethical humility is not merely the absence of the vice of arrogance. Rather, we can see it as lying in a mean between two vices. Ethical arrogance is the trait of being overly confident in one's own ethical reasoning and insufficiently aware of one's limitations in this regard. The opposite vice would be to underestimate the quality of one's own ethical reasoning and overestimate one's limitations in ethical reasoning. As with the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean generally, this is only a rough sketch of the true picture. Ethical humility is the virtue of correctly assessing the strengths and limitations of one's own ethical reasoning. Given the complexity of ethical reasoning about how best to behave in any given situation, there

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[13] Calhoun points out that integrity involves not simply acting on one's own judgment, but acting on one's own *best* judgment (1995, p. 257). However, she does not explain what makes a judgment one's best. If we understand one's best judgment as that resulting from a genuine concern for ethical accuracy and we understand ethical integrity as driven by that same concern, then it is clear why ethical integrity involves acting on one's best judgment.

are many ways in which one's reasoning can go wrong, and therefore many ways in which one can fail to correctly assess the quality of one's ethical reasoning.[14]

Recognition of the limitations of one's own ethical reasoning entails some respect for other people's ideas. This is why ethical integrity does not require being impervious to persuasion. But a refusal to listen is not the only vice opposed to virtuous receptivity. For it is also possible to be too easily swayed by other people. Keep an open mind, as the old adage goes, but not so open that your brain falls out. Here too there are many ways in which one might fail to be properly receptive to the ideas of others, which are only very roughly clustered together as ways of being excessive or deficient in this regard. A more important way to cluster them is to distinguish between unreasoned social pressure and genuine ethical reasoning offered by other people. Ethical integrity does indeed require resistance to the former, but equally requires rational responsiveness to the latter, though even here the right response could be fairly swift if the reasoning only invokes considerations that one has already taken into account or that are not especially important.

Ethical integrity therefore has a social dimension. This explains a further feature of this virtue that is sometimes remarked upon: that it involves a willingness to articulate and defend one's own judgment of what should be done, or more broadly of what makes life worthwhile and fulfilling. Although there can be situations in which integrity requires keeping quiet about these matters, or at least not volunteering one's thoughts unsolicited, there are also situations in which keeping one's own ethical judgments to oneself

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[14] This analysis is modelled on Tanesini's description of intellectual humility as combining modesty about one's epistemic strengths with acceptance of one's epistemic limitations (2021, pp. 12-13, 74-84). Tanesini distinguishes four traits that I have here categorised together as arrogance, which she calls superbia, arrogance, narcissism, and vanity (2021, p. 12-15). She also distinguishes four traits that I have categorised together as the opposing vice, which she calls servility, self-abasement, fatalism, and timidity (2021, p. 12-15). I do not disagree with these distinctions. Indeed, they illustrate the point that the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean is only a rough sketch. Moreover, given that the first category can be described as excessive in self-confidence and deficient in appreciation of one's limitations while the second category can be described in the opposite terms, either category could be described as the 'vice of excess' or as the 'vice of deficiency'. The occasional cases where these traditional Aristotelian labels can be swapped around is another symptom of the doctrine of the mean being only a rough sketch.

would evidence a lack of integrity, especially when explicitly asked about them.[15] This openness about one's own ethical reasoning is essential to being receptive to other people's ethical reasoning. For it is only in response to the articulation of one's own perspective that other people can present a careful critique of that perspective. People who possess the virtue of ethical integrity explain their reasoning not simply to persuade others to agree with them, but to engage in the collaborative deliberation required by their ethical humility and their responsiveness to further reasons.

Conversely, the person of ethical integrity will actively seek out other people's reasoned ethical advice in some situations. This is partly because their own ethical reasoning is grounded in their own experience, which is limited and partial. Important insights into some difficult ethical problem might well only be available from somebody else's experience. It is also partly because ethical reasoning itself seems to be shaped by cognitive personalities, which differ from person to person. Listening to somebody else's perspective on a situation can help to counteract any biases or other cognitive structures shaping one's own reasoning.[16] In doing so, the person of ethical integrity is not merely seeking out the ethical judgments that other people make. What matters most is the reasoning in support of those judgments. In considering this reasoning, the person of ethical integrity not only works towards resolving their current ethical quandary. Equally importantly, they continue to shape the contours of their ethical outlook more generally.[17]

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[15] Calhoun describes this public articulation and defence of one's own ethical ideas as 'standing for something' and considers it 'central to the meaning of integrity' (1995, p. 253). However, she overlooks its reciprocity, describing other people only as obstacles to integrity and understanding ethical humility only as the recognition that other people should not be coerced (1995, pp. 258-60). This entails that integrity involves expecting that other people might learn from your ideas while denying that you yourself might learn from their ideas, which is a form of arrogance. More fundamentally, Calhoun does not consider *why* 'standing for something' is often characteristic of ethical integrity. The reason is that it evidences the same concern for ethical accuracy that ought also to motivate receptivity to other people's reasons.

[16] For an important elaboration of this idea, see Jefferson and Sifferd this volume.

[17] Scherkoske argues that the value of integrity lies partly in the person of integrity being willing to offer reasons for their convictions and to be held accountable for them, which provides other people with the assurance that their judgments and reasons are credible grounds for belief and action (2013, pp. 34-5, 149-77). We should add that this credibility is partly demonstrated through taking other people's ideas seriously

5. The Virtue of Ethical Integrity

The virtue of ethical integrity is therefore composed of constancy and fidelity in relation to one's own ethical commitments, driven by a concern for ethical accuracy that both justifies trusting in those commitments as products of prior ethical reasoning and requires reconsidering them when presented with reasons to do so. The virtuous forms of constancy and fidelity both display the classic Aristotelian structure: constancy lies between the vice of having no ethical commitments produced by prior reasoning and the vice of treating one's commitments as immune to further consideration; fidelity lies between the vice of failing to act on one's existing commitments and the vice of refusing to ever act against them. There are many ways of failing to exhibit these virtues. When one does possess them, it is because one's ethical reasoning is driven by a concern for accuracy. Constancy and fidelity, then, are only virtuous when subsumed into the virtue of integrity.

A genuine concern for ethical accuracy entails two further virtues, humility and receptivity. Humility lies in a mean between underestimating the quality of one's own ethical reasoning and overestimating it. Receptivity lies in a mean between considering oneself ethically self-sufficient and being too easily persuaded. In both cases, there are many ways of going wrong. The question of how best to succeed in humility and receptivity is itself one for the person of integrity to answer, motivated by their concern for ethical accuracy. This concern is therefore the core of ethical integrity. This is not to say that the person of ethical integrity is an obsessive ethical perfectionist. That would be a failure to live a worthwhile and fulfilling life, as anyone interested in ethical accuracy would soon realise. The concern for ethical accuracy must therefore also motivate and limit the extent to which the person of integrity allows that concern to rule their life.[18]

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as potential reasons to revise one's own commitments, without which one's assurances would merely be arrogant condescension. Receptivity is therefore essential to this social value of ethical integrity.

[18] There are also restricted varieties of integrity, such as artistic integrity, personal integrity, and professional integrity. It is an important question how these are related to ethical integrity, but a full answer would take us far beyond the concerns of this paper. My view is that there is only one kind of integrity, which can be

All of this shows that ethical integrity is a genuinely ethical virtue. It is founded upon a substantive value that contributes to human flourishing, the value of ethical accuracy.[19] The exact scope and limits of this value are in question for the person of ethical integrity, but the same is true of the substantive values at the heart of other ethical virtues. Indeed, ethical integrity is essential to developing the precise contours of those ethical virtues too. The honest person is committed to the substantive value of truthfulness, for example, which contributes to human flourishing, but the shape of this value depends on the changing demands of the situation. The commitment to ethical accuracy at the core of ethical integrity is essential to developing the contours of that commitment to truthfulness as one's situation changes. The same is true of the other ethical virtues, such as compassion and justice. Ultimately, this is why ethical integrity is essential to responding ethically to the unforeseen challenges of a rapidly changing world.

We can see clearly how ethical integrity operates if we consider one of the examples often discussed in philosophical literature on this topic. George has recently completed a PhD in chemistry, has a family to support, and has been offered a highly paid job developing biological and chemical weapons. George is opposed to this use of chemistry, but also knows that the job will otherwise go to someone who will be very diligent and successful. George has been finding it extremely difficult to get a job, due to an over-supply of people with PhDs in chemistry. George is here faced with reasons to revise one of his

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applied to different domains: ethical integrity encompasses every aspect of life; artistic, personal, and professional integrity are restricted to the aspects of life their names indicate. If this view is right, then educating for ethical integrity as described in this paper would also foster the restricted varieties of integrity.

[19] Williams argues that integrity is not a virtue, since virtues are founded on characteristic motivations and integrity would be mere self-indulgence if it were founded on the motivation to preserve the projects and values one already has (1981, p. 49). Taylor concurs (1981, pp. 151-2). Scherkoske agrees with this as a claim about moral virtues but adds that epistemic virtues do not need characteristic motivations, since any stable cognitive trait that leaves its possessor in a good epistemic position is an epistemic virtue, and integrity fits that description (2013, esp. pp. 83-90). These arguments overlook that the constancy and fidelity involved in integrity are grounded in the concern for ethical accuracy that also drives humility and receptivity. This basic motivation makes ethical integrity a genuinely ethical virtue. However, this is perfectly compatible with it also being an epistemic virtue (see n. # above).

commitments, which his friends may well point out.[20] He would display ethical integrity by considering those reasons, perhaps partly by actively seeking ethical advice on this difficult problem. It makes no difference whether doing so leads him to abandon his original commitment, revise it in some details, or reaffirm it entirely, so long as he has genuinely exercised the humility and receptivity required by a serious commitment to ethical accuracy.

Having made the decision, George may well find some ambivalence about the way his life then continues. The humility involved in ethical integrity can mean that one retains the concern that one's decision was indeed mistaken. However resolute one may be in acting on that decision, the thought that one is not infallible in one's judgments should indeed remain. It is not only in response to reasons provided by other people that ethical integrity can lead to ambivalence. For there are likely to be tensions within one's own set of ethical ideas and commitments. The concern for ethical accuracy does not entail the aim of removing all sources of ambivalence from one's own ethical outlook. A genuine concern with how to live worthwhile and fulfilling lives will soon uncover the quixotic nature of such perfectionism. Ethical integrity therefore does not rule out continuing to feel the force of reasons against decisions one has taken, reasons recognised in one's own set of motivations.[21]

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[20] Williams created this example in his critique of utilitarianism (1973, pp. 97-8). He argues that what matters most here is that George's opposition to this use of chemistry is one of his deepest commitments, one of the projects that his life is all about, which should not be subjugated to an overall calculation of what would be best given everyone else's projects (1973, pp. 116-7). Calhoun, by contrast, argues that what is at issue here is whose judgment should rule George's life: his own opposition to biological and chemical weapons, or other people's judgments that he should take the job (1995, p. 251). Taylor argues that whichever way George decides he will lose his integrity either by behaving inconsistently with either his commitment to his family or his opposition to using chemistry in this way, or by changing one of these for the sake of convenience (1981, p. 151). Williams and Calhoun are both mistaken to isolate George's integrity from the reasoning presented by other people. Taylor has overlooked that George might rationally revise his commitments in response to the reasons presented by this situation.

[21] Calhoun is right, therefore, to emphasise that ambivalence is compatible with integrity, because integrity involves some humility about one's own powers of judgment, which itself includes recognising the deliberative abilities of people who have come to different conclusions to one's own (1995, pp. 240-1). But

6. Ethical Integrity and Practical Wisdom

Ethical integrity is a virtue founded on the substantive value of ethical accuracy. Where other ethical virtues are manifested in specific features of behaviour, so that honesty is manifested in acting and speaking truthfully, for example, or justice is manifested in promoting fairness, ethical integrity is manifested in the reasoning that leads to one's actions generally: the concern for ethical accuracy drives a respect for one's own prior ethical reasoning balanced with receptivity to other people's ethical reasoning and an awareness that both might be challenged by new situations. Through this distinctive approach to ethical reasoning, the virtue of ethical integrity defines its own contours and shapes the individual's other ethical virtues, such as honesty, compassion, and justice. All of this might make ethical integrity sound rather similar to the Aristotelian virtue of practical wisdom, or phronesis (φρόνησις), which is often emphasised in discussions of ethical virtue.

However, ethical integrity does not fit Aristotle's description of practical wisdom. Aristotle understood practical wisdom not simply as an intellectual virtue that regulates other virtues. He saw it as the perfection of practical rationality, a single unified trait whose manifestations in relation to different aspects of life can be described in the language of specific virtues. The sophisticated understanding of how and when to be truthful can be described as the virtue of honesty, but can also be described as practical wisdom in the domain of truthfulness. Justice can equally be described as practical wisdom in relation to fairness. This is ultimately because Aristotle defines the correct understanding that constitutes each ethical virtue by reference to practical wisdom: any specific virtue requires consistently acting on the reasons that the person of practical wisdom would act on (1106b36-1107a2). Since situations are complicated, one cannot fully possess any one virtue without possessing them all; each virtue is essentially an aspect of the single quality of practical wisdom (1144b24-1145a1-2). Practical wisdom, as Aristotle understands it, entails complete possession of all the virtues, whereas ethical integrity aims to promote worthwhile and fulfilling lives by

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we should also recognise that ambivalence rooted directly in one's own motivations is compatible with integrity.

balancing one's existing ethical commitments with new reasons presented either by novel situations or through other people's perspectives.

Recent work on character education has used the terms 'phronesis' and 'practical wisdom' to describe the quality of drawing on an overall image of living well to discern the ethically relevant features of a situation, prioritise between them, and be motivated to act in line with this decision. Although this is derived from Aristotle's own concept of practical wisdom and inherits its name, this recent concept does not entail that the person who possesses this quality cannot be mistaken about ethical values, the relevant features of the situation, or their relative prioritisation. It is not the Aristotelian ideal. It is instead an eminently achievable quality that we could describe as 'ethical sensitivity' or 'good sense'. Rather than trying to develop such ethical virtues as honesty, compassion, or justice individually, according to this line of thought, programmes of character education should foster these virtues together through a continuous training of this intellectual quality that integrates and applies them.[22]

Despite the similarities between ethical integrity and this recent concept of practical wisdom, there remain two important differences. Fundamentally, ethical integrity is driven by a concern for ethical accuracy. The person of ethical integrity may well have a rough image of human flourishing, even if this is merely implied by their range of nuanced ethical commitments rather than something they have ever explicitly reflected on, but ethical integrity itself makes this image continually open to significant revision, even in profound and wide-ranging ways. Moreover, this concern for ethical accuracy entails humility about one's own ethical reasoning and receptivity to other people's reasons, which itself requires openness about one's own. Ethical integrity is an intrinsically social virtue. This essential dimension of good ethical reasoning is obscured by the recent concept of practical wisdom, which is focused entirely on the integration and application of the individual's own ethical outlook.

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[22] Jubilee Centre 2017, pp. 4-5; Darnell et al 2019, esp. pp. 118-20; Kristjánsson et al 2021; Kristjánsson and Fowers 2022; Kristjánsson this volume; compare Masala 2016, pp. 244-5.

This is not to say that ethical integrity is opposed to the Aristotelian understanding of ethical virtue. Indeed, the structures of ethical integrity are all present in *Nicomachean Ethics*, even though Aristotle never draws them together as aspects of a single character trait. To develop ethical virtues, according to Aristotle, one must be responsive to reasoning about the nature of worthwhile and fulfilling lives (1095a6-11). This requires already being attracted by 'the fine' (τὸ καλὸν) and repulsed by 'the shameful' (τὸ αἰσχρόν), which entails being concerned with ethical accuracy (1179b29-31). With these conditions in place, one will be suitably receptive to other people's ethical reasoning (1095b4-13) and will develop through rational reflection the detailed contours of ethical virtues such as honesty, compassion, or justice (1105a28-b18, 1144b8-14).[23] This cluster of traits forms an inherently developmental virtue, which distinguishes it from Aristotle's perfectionist concept of practical wisdom, just as its fundamental concern with ethical accuracy distinguishes it from the recent concept of practical wisdom.

Ethical integrity is therefore a distinct Aristotelian virtue, even though Aristotle did not describe it in this way.[24] It does not fit either of his two categories of 'natural' virtue, where one is committed to the right value but has only a nebulous understanding of it, and full virtue, where one has perfect practical wisdom (1144b2-17). If we want to promote worthwhile and fulfilling lives then we should aim for a mean between these two extremes: we should foster virtues that embody values with sophisticated and revisable contours, but should not allow ethical perfectionism to preclude our own flourishing.

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[23] Myles Burnyeat provides a careful analysis of these and other passages of *Nicomachean Ethics* to make clear the role of reasoning, its social dimension, and its relation to pleasure and emotion in the development of the virtues (1980, esp. pp. 75-79). But he stops short of identifying a single trait that integrates these features of reasoning.

[24] Kristjánsson argues that we can find a different concept of integrity within Aristotelian virtue ethics, since the trait possessed by self-controlled people, who bring themselves to do what they think is right despite strong desires to do otherwise, is a form of integrating their behaviour with their own best judgment (2019, p. 111). Given that integrity is not merely integration of motivations and behaviour, but is a respect for ethical reasoning driven by a concern for ethical accuracy, perhaps a better name for this trait of self-controlled people, which is also distinct from the 'self-regulation' described by Kathleen Murphy-Hollies (this volume), would be 'self-control'.

7. Educating for Ethical Integrity

If we are to equip students with the ability to deal with a rapidly changing world in ways that promote worthwhile and fulfilling lives, then, we need to foster the trait of ethical integrity. We cannot predict the ethical challenges that will be posed by such interrelated and multidimensional challenges as climate change, viral pandemics, widespread misinformation, and political polarisation. This means not only that we should not simply impart our own ethical ideas, but also that we should cultivate in our students the tendency to continually develop their ethical outlooks in response to new reasons, rather than to apply their existing commitments to each new challenge or neglect the ethical dimension of the decisions they need to make. Educating for ethical integrity should encourage the virtue's core commitment to ethical accuracy, which is a kind of ethical curiosity.[25] In doing so, it should aim to develop the skills and motivations central to this virtue.

Ethical integrity requires a proper respect for one's existing commitments as repositories of prior ethical reasoning. Even commitments that have been inherited from the surrounding culture through upbringing, rather than arrived at independently, can be repositories of a communal tradition of ethical theorising. Education for ethical integrity should therefore include a programme of what has become known as 'Social and Emotional Learning' (SEL), which teaches students not to act on their immediate emotional or intuitive responses, but rather to think more slowly and critically, drawing on a wider range of their existing beliefs and values. Studies have found these programmes to have lasting positive effects on both behaviour and academic achievement across the age range of compulsory education and across the range of student needs and backgrounds.[26] The same programmes also foster one central aspect of ethical integrity.

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[25] For some details on how to encourage curiosity in general, which can be applied to encouraging a commitment to ethical accuracy, see: Watson 2018, pp. 296-304.

[26] Durlak et al 2011; Belfield et al 2015; Taylor et al 2017.

However, the concern with ethical accuracy requires balancing this respect for one's own commitments with humility about the quality of one's own ethical reasoning and receptivity to other people's ethical reasoning. These can be fostered through communities of ethical inquiry, where groups of students collaborate to address ethical questions together. These discussions should focus on distinguishing genuine ethical reasoning from three corruptions of ethical discourse that encourage and strengthen polarisation. One is mere peer pressure, especially allied with group identification. A second is the use of mere rhetoric, especially in the form of reasoning designed to support a conclusion already chosen in advance. A third is the widespread presence of misinformation within public ethical and political discourse, especially on social media.[27] Communities of ethical inquiry should aim to cultivate genuinely open-minded reasoning, which requires learning methods of identifying and resisting peer pressure, mere rhetoric, and misinformation.[28]

Through combining SEL with communities of ethical inquiry, we should aim to foster tolerance of some degree of ethical ambivalence. We need to resist the temptation of aiming for ethical certainty, not only because an obsessive pursuit of ethical perfection is incompatible with living worthwhile and fulfilling lives, but also because the desire for certainty itself can corrupt ethical reasoning. We need to remain open-minded even after a decision has been made, though of course in aiming to make the best decision we can with the information and time available we are aiming to reduce our ambivalence.[29] In learning how and

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[27] For some thoughts on how to develop a sensitivity to misinformation, see Matthews this volume. For an argument that this approach is insufficient without regulating the design structures of social media, see Tanesini this volume.

[28] This approach to ethical deliberation is the antithesis of the formal debate structure that has often been employed for discussing moral and political issues in educational settings. In a formal debate, students are assigned to one of two adversarial teams to develop and articulate arguments in favour of the conclusion assigned to their team. Usually, an audience vote at the end determines which team has been most successful. This crude gamification of ethical discourse positively incentivises peer pressure, mere rhetoric, and misinformation as techniques for 'winning' at the expense of genuine ethical inquiry.

[29] The tolerance of ethical ambivalence required for ethical integrity seems to me a species of what Nicholas Shackel calls 'epistemic forbearance'. For the attractions and dangers of unwarranted certainty, and why epistemic forbearance is necessary, see Shackel this volume.

when to tolerate ethical ambivalence, students will also be learning to identify the times when it would be good to seek out ethical advice or collaborative deliberation and the times when it would not.

This is just a rough sketch for a programme of educating for ethical integrity.[30] The details of how best to combine SEL and collaborative ethical inquiry to foster this virtue will depend on the experiences and interests of each institution's students. It may also need to be tailored for different cognitive personalities. The pedagogical question of how to cultivate a commitment to ethical accuracy that grounds and integrates respect for one's own ethical commitments, appropriate receptivity to other people's ethical reasoning, and tolerance of some degree of ethical ambivalence, therefore, cannot be given a detailed general answer. Even so, the need for responses to the challenges of a rapidly changing environment to be shaped by the virtue of ethical integrity cannot be met unless cultivating such a commitment becomes the fundamental goal of ethical character education.[31]

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