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## Virtue Epistemology and Developing Intellectual Virtue

Alan T. Wilson and Christian B. Miller

### INTRODUCTION

Virtue theorists have recently been focusing on the important question of how virtues are developed, and doing so in a way that is informed by empirical research from psychology. However, almost all of this recent work has dealt exclusively with the moral virtues.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, we present three empirically-informed accounts of how virtues can be developed, and we assess the merits of these accounts when applied specifically to intellectual (or epistemic) virtues.

### I. PRELIMINARIES

Before setting out the accounts, it is important to provide some clarificatory remarks about our aims, and about the concept of virtue. The aim of this paper is to consider some proposals on virtue development that have been put forward by theorists whose work is informed by psychology. Our intention is not to summarize the psychology literature on character development, but rather to outline and assess specific proposals regarding the development of virtue. Importantly, our interest is in whether these accounts can be plausibly applied to the development of *intellectual* virtues.

The discussion of intellectual virtues is complicated by the fact that epistemologists have historically been working with two different conceptions of intellectual virtue. On the outcomes-based, or *reliabilist*, approach, intellectual virtues are those features of an agent that reliably produce epistemic goods such as truth or knowledge. On the motivational, or *responsibilist*, approach, intellectual virtues must involve an intellectually valuable motivation, such as a motivation for truth, or for “cognitive contact with reality.”<sup>2</sup> The plausibility of different accounts of virtue development will likely differ depending on which conception of

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<sup>1</sup> There is a significant recent literature on how to *educate* for intellectual virtue. (See, for example, Battaly 2014; Baehr 2015.) Although related, the issue of educating for intellectual virtue is distinct from our focus in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> For more on this distinction, see Code 1984; Battaly 2015: ch 1-3. The notion of “cognitive contact” is most closely associated with Zagzebski 1996.

intellectual virtue we have in mind. For that reason, it is important to note that we will be focusing on the development of *responsibilist* intellectual virtues in this paper.

Intellectual virtues are typically thought to include traits such as open-mindedness, inquisitiveness, intellectual rigor, and intellectual humility. When these traits are intellectually virtuous, this is (in part) because of how they dispose the agent towards epistemically valuable states such as true belief, knowledge, and understanding. An intellectually virtuous agent will be motivated to achieve such states (both for herself and for those around her), and this motivation will be persistent and robust.<sup>3</sup> We can also expect an intellectually virtuous agent to be reliably successful in achieving these states. For example, a virtuously inquisitive agent is not only motivated to uncover important truths; she can also be reliably expected to succeed in doing so (in hospitable environments).

How can people actually develop such intellectually valuable traits? We will now consider three accounts of moral virtue development. The aim is to determine whether these accounts offer insights that can be applied to the development of intellectual virtues.

## II. EXTENDING LOCAL TRAITS TO GLOBAL VIRTUES

The situationist literature in psychology has had a significant impact on virtue theory. Situationists challenge the idea that our behavior is primarily the result of broad-based character traits that are consistently effective across different situations. Instead, they argue that our behavior is greatly influenced by features of the situation that we happen to be in, features that are not relevant to the trait in question.<sup>4</sup> For example, experiments cited by situationists reveal that helping behavior is greatly influenced by situational factors such as whether participants have recently found some loose change, or whether they have recently been offered a cookie (Isen and Levin 1972; for replication difficulties, see Miller 2013: ch 3). The situationists take these results to show that, based on empirical evidence, there is good reason to deny that people generally possess cross-situationally consistent character traits. In other words, we should deny the *empirical adequacy* of character traits that are cross-situationally consistent.

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<sup>3</sup> Requirements for a virtuous motivation are discussed in Wilson forthcoming.

<sup>4</sup> For a summary and discussion of experiments cited by situationists, see Ross and Nisbett 1991.

The problem for virtue theory arises when this evidence is used to also cast doubt on the empirical adequacy of virtues as traditionally conceived by virtue theorists. We would not expect virtuous agents to have their behavior influenced in the ways highlighted by the relevant experiments, and so those experiments raise serious questions about whether the virtues are instantiated in actual human beings. If people do not actually possess virtues, and if we have reason to think that virtue possession is an unrealistic goal for most people, then this might tell against constructing a normative theory in which the concept of virtue plays a fundamental role (see Harman 1999; Doris 2002).

In response to the situationist critique, some virtue theorists have proposed a model of cross-situationally consistent character traits that they take to be consistent with the evidence.<sup>5</sup> Both Nancy Snow and Daniel Russell use the CAPS model of personality for this purpose (see Snow 2010: ch 1; Russell 2009: ch 8-10). Below, we briefly set out the account of character traits that the CAPS model suggests. We then explain and assess an account of virtue development that is compatible with that model.

*(a) Explaining the Account*

The CAPS model of personality is so-called because it views personality as a *cognitive affective processing system* (for a definitive explanation of the CAPS model, see Mischel and Shoda 1995). On this view, an agent's personality consists of various "social-cognitive units" (or variables), which include her "beliefs, desires, feelings, goals, expectations, values, and self-regulatory plans" (Snow 2010: 19). These units can be activated either by features of situations or by other social-cognitive units. For example, the feeling of fear might be activated either by the presence of a snake in one's environment, or by the mere imagining of a snake. Character traits can then be understood as social-cognitive units that have clustered together as a result of being repeatedly activated on similar occasions.<sup>6</sup> As Snow explains:

the trait is a structure or set of variables that have been frequently activated in response to stimuli. These variables are interconnected in the sense that the activation of one variable can set off or activate others (Snow: 20).

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<sup>5</sup> Whether this response also supports the empirical adequacy of *virtues*, as traditionally conceived, is a question that we will not discuss here. For a summary of other possible responses to the situationist critique, see Miller 2014: ch 8. For discussion of the impact of situationism in epistemology, see Alfano 2012; Olin and Doris 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Snow (2010: ch 1) mentions compassion, timidity, and aggressiveness as specific character traits when explaining the CAPS model.

On the CAPS model, then, a character trait is *not* conceived of as a mere disposition to act in the same way across different situations (just as virtues also ought not to be conceived of as dispositions to always act in the same way). Instead, character traits consist of clusters of social-cognitive units through which an agent interprets and responds to her environment. Any behavior resulting from such a trait will be importantly influenced by how the agent interprets the situation that she is in.

Snow and Russell appeal to the CAPS model in order to demonstrate the empirical adequacy of cross-situationally consistent character traits. Their claim is that the situationist experiments fail to pick up on this consistency because they focus on situations described in purely objective terms. What is required is to instead focus on situations from the point-of-view of the agents themselves (see Mischel and Shoda 1995: 250). Once we do this, the CAPS model predicts that people will act consistently across situations that they perceive as being similar, and act differently across situations that they perceive as being importantly different.

Of primary importance for our purposes is not whether the CAPS model provides a satisfactory response to the situationist critique of virtue ethics. Rather, we are interested in the account of virtue development that is suggested by this empirically-informed account of personality.

While the CAPS model suggests that people can (and do) possess character traits that are consistent across different situations, it is possible to possess a trait of this sort and fall short of the standards required for virtue. When will this be the case? CAPS traits result in consistent behavior across objectively different situations whenever those situations are taken to be relevantly similar by the agent in question. However, there is no guarantee that the agent's perspective will match that of a virtuous agent. As Russell explains: "one's consistent character trait [will] be a virtue just in case one's own standard of consistency where that trait is concerned is *also* an ethically good one" (Russell 2009:324, emphasis in the original). In other words, it is not sufficient for virtue that an agent's behavior is cross-situationally consistent based on that agent's own perspective. The agent's perspective must also be getting things *right*. When this is not the case, it will be necessary for the agent to make a conscious effort to improve.

In *Virtue as Social Intelligence*, Snow provides an example of how this process might work. In Snow's example, we are to imagine that she is consistently compassionate, but only towards small animals (Snow 2010: 33-34). Having reflected on this fact, and realized that it is incompatible with the goal of being a truly compassionate agent, it becomes necessary to work at extending this compassion outwards:

I work to become more aware of common human vulnerabilities. Perhaps through imaginative dwelling on the plight of those in need, I try to generate feelings of compassion... I educate myself to become more aware of compassion-eliciting circumstances, to pick up on cues from others that might reveal distress. I try to habituate myself to perceive these cues and react compassionately. This is not an easy process (Snow: 34).

On this model, an agent will develop virtue by first reflecting on her existing character traits, some of which may already involve a starting point for virtue, such as compassion towards animals in Snow's example. Over time, and through conscious effort, it may be possible to extend this concern outward. In Snow's example, a restricted, or "local", concern only for small animals is extended to form the more "global" concern that is characteristic of virtuous compassion. This local-to-global approach to virtue development highlights the importance of reflection and perseverance on the part of the would-be virtuous agent.

This is compatible with comments on virtue development made by Russell, another major proponent of CAPS within virtue theory. Russell suggests that:

In any particular person, the development of virtue is always slow, laborious, and above all piecemeal. As a person develops in courage, say, he will develop it first in those areas in which he first begins to habituate himself, before expanding his responsiveness to reasons for being courageous to other areas (Russell 2009: 326).

We must begin with whatever concerns and values we happen to have, and then, through a process of conscious reflection and habituation, it may be possible to extend these values to encompass other areas of our lives (see also Webber 2016: 150). Through this process, the ultimate aim is to bring our values and concerns in line with those of a virtuous agent. This local-to-global approach to virtue development might be thought plausible by theorists with a

range of different views about the nature of character traits. The work of Snow and Russell is important for demonstrating that the local-to-global strategy is compatible with the empirically-informed CAPS model of character traits.

*b) Applying the Account to Intellectual Virtue*

How might this understanding of virtue development apply in the case of intellectual virtues? As an example, consider the trait of virtuous inquisitiveness. Just as an agent might find herself with a somewhat restricted form of compassion, so too might an agent find herself with a restricted form of inquisitiveness. Imagine an agent who is deeply motivated to ask questions and uncover truths only about some subset of topics, such as her favorite sports team or favorite television show. Such an agent might well possess a trait that is consistent (in the sense that she consistently seeks out information only about her chosen team), but she will not thereby possess the virtue of inquisitiveness.

It is possible that this restricted form of inquisitiveness could also be extended to a global virtue via the process described above. The first step will be for the agent to reflect on her current shortcomings, and to be motivated to extend her inquisitiveness so as to develop proper virtue. The agent might then spend time reminding herself about the value and importance of other forms of information, and perhaps also about the value of knowledge (or understanding, or truth). She will also take note of situational factors that discourage the asking of appropriate questions, and attempt to habituate herself so as to overcome these factors in the future. As with the moral virtues, this process might require a significant amount of time. But with continued effort and self-monitoring, it may be possible to develop intellectual virtue in this way.

*c) Assessing the Account*

Perhaps the most striking feature of this strategy of expansion is how demanding it is on the aspiring virtuous agent. The strategy is demanding in at least two ways. Firstly, it is cognitively demanding, in the sense that the agent must be able to accurately assess the nature of her current shortcomings, and successfully implement a plan of action for improvement. This will require an impressive level of self-awareness, as well as knowledge of the sort of techniques required to break out of old habits and develop new ones. The agent with restricted inquisitiveness will need to first realize this fact, correctly determine the areas into which her inquisitiveness ought to be expanded, and then successfully plan out and implement the process by which this could

be achieved. This is a demanding process, and it is reasonable to suspect that it will not be possible for everyone.

The local-to-global strategy is also demanding in the sense that it will only be possible for those who already possess an independent desire to be virtuous (either virtuous overall, or virtuous in the sense of possessing a specific virtue, such as inquisitiveness or open-mindedness). The aspiring virtuous agent needs to consciously strive to become virtuous, and this will not happen unless the agent actually *wants* to be virtuous. If the agent with restricted inquisitiveness has no particular desire either to be virtuous or to extend her inquisitiveness, then the process described here will simply never get off the ground.

This feature of the strategy not only means that it will be unavailable to those with no prior desire for virtue. It also raises a suspicion that the local-to-global strategy neglects the most important stage in virtue development. If we are interested in how people come to be intellectually virtuous, then a vital part of this will be how they come to develop their virtuous motivations, be those motivations for intellectual virtue in general or for the more specific motivational components of individual virtues (such as the motivation to uncover information, or to charitably assess different viewpoints). The local-to-global strategy does not tell us where this important motivational component comes from, only how it might be built upon and developed in an agent for whom it is already there. For this reason, the strategy does not provide a complete, or completely satisfying, picture of the process through which agents develop intellectual virtue.

In addition to its demandingness, there is a further worry for this approach. As presented, the view focuses on what agents can do to increase their own levels of virtue. The process of conscious reflection and habituation makes no mention of the ways in which broader environmental and societal factors impact the potential for virtue development. This omission is understandable if our concern is only with what we, as individual agents, can do to extend our problematically local traits. But if we are interested more generally in how virtues develop, and in the related question of what can be done to *encourage* virtue development, then it will be important to also think about the ways in which environments can be structured to support the acquisition of virtue. This ought to be kept in mind when we consider any proposed account of virtue development.



These worries about the local-to-global strategy do not tell against its viability in all cases. However, the level of demandingness alone does suggest that not many people will achieve virtue in this way. One possible lesson from this is that: if the local-to-global strategy is the only way to develop intellectual virtues, then we should not expect many people to possess actual virtues. Another possibility is that the local-to-global strategy is (at best) just one of the ways in which it is possible for us to develop intellectual virtues. It is worth considering alternative strategies, in order to provide a more complete picture of the available options.

### **III. VIRTUE DEVELOPMENT AS SKILLS DEVELOPMENT**

A second account of virtue development has gained traction in the recent debate concerning moral virtues. Both Julia Annas and Matt Stichter have defended the idea that virtues are importantly similar to practical skills, and that this is especially true in terms of how the virtues are developed (Annas 2011; Stichter 2007, 2011, 2013). While Annas and Stichter disagree over the correct conception of skills (and of virtue), they agree that the development of virtue will involve progression through various stages of expertise, and that it will require an important motivational component.<sup>7</sup>

#### *(a) Explaining the Account*

According to both Annas and Stichter, the development of virtues and skills, as opposed to mere ‘knacks’ or natural tendencies, occurs in stages. We start out at the level of novice; the ultimate aim is to achieve the level of expert. Stichter explains this progression with reference to the “Dreyfus model” of skill development, based on the work of Hubert and Stuart Dreyfus (Stichter 2011: 70-72; Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991).

According to the Dreyfus model, the novice begins by learning a few simple rules to be followed at all times. For example, a novice chef will tend to rely on basic instructions from a cookbook regarding how to prepare certain ingredients, and at what temperature they ought to be cooked. As an agent gains more experience, she will become comfortable using more complicated rules, some of which may be context-sensitive. A more experienced chef may follow different rules for cooking the same ingredients, depending on whether the accompanying dishes will be sweet or savory, or depending on the taste preferences of any guests. As the rules become more complex, it may be necessary for the agent to make a

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<sup>7</sup> One area of disagreement concerns Annas’s claim (2011: 19-20) that possession of a skill requires that agents are able to understand and articulate their reasons for acting as they do. Stichter (2007: 186–188) denies this.

conscious decision about how to interpret the situation, and about which rules ought to be followed. The willingness to make this choice, and to accept responsibility for the outcomes, is a significant stage in the development process. As Stichter explains:

These outcomes provide the feedback that a person needs in order to improve her skill. The feedback, if positive, reinforces making that choice again in a similar situation. The feedback, if negative, prompts the person to make a different choice in that situation (Stichter 2011: 78).

Through gaining more experience and repeatedly receiving feedback on her choices, a skilled agent may no longer make those choices consciously. The chef who has prepared a particular dish alongside a particular accompaniment on many occasions will no longer need to reflect on which rules to follow. Instead, she will instinctively perform whatever actions have led to positive feedback in the past. Through exposure to significant levels of experience and feedback, it will be possible for an agent to develop into “an expert who sees intuitively what to do without applying rules and making judgements at all... [who] spontaneously does what has normally worked and, naturally, it normally works” (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1991: 235, quoted in Stichter 2011: 77). At this point, the agent will have achieved the level of expert.

Stichter suggests that this account of skill development is also plausible in the case of virtue development. On this account, a novice in virtue will start out by following simple rules. Perhaps the beginner in honesty will learn “Don’t lie” as a simple rule, before moving on to more complex and context-sensitive variations. She will learn that lying is not the only way of being deceitful, and that other ways ought to be avoided also. She may even learn that the wrongness of lying varies from context to context. On encountering more complicated situations, it may be difficult to work out how best to exemplify the virtue of honesty in the specific circumstances. Ultimately, the agent will have to make a decision about how to act, and the feedback she receives will form the basis for other decisions in the future. Upon reaching the level of an expert in honesty, the agent will be able to instinctively work out the appropriate honest behavior across a range of different situations.

Stichter and Annas agree that the process of virtue development will also require an important motivational element. An agent is unlikely to seek out the necessary experience, or to take note of the positive and negative feedback, unless she cares about improving her virtue (or skill).

Stichter (2011: 80-81) includes virtues among those “subtle skills” which require the agent to also possess a motivation, such as the “motivation continually to improve”. Annas (2011: 16-19) also acknowledges the importance of motivation on the part of the learner, saying that the development of virtue requires a “drive to aspire”. If an agent possesses this important motivation, and if she is able to gain the experience necessary to work through the various stages of development, then it will be possible for her to become an expert in virtue.

*(b) Applying the Account to Intellectual Virtue*

It is also possible to apply this account of virtue development to intellectual virtues, such as intellectual humility. Plausibly, intellectual humility involves being able to recognize and respond appropriately to one’s cognitive limitations.<sup>8</sup> A novice at intellectual humility might start out by adopting a general rule of constantly questioning herself and deferring to the opinions of others. But a truly virtuous possessor of intellectual humility is not one who over-attributes limitations to herself. Instead, the learner of humility will, through experience, gain an understanding of when and in what way it is appropriate to be attentive to and own her limitations. This deeper understanding might initially take the form of a more complicated set of rules, such that the agent will aim to be on-guard about her judgements regarding some matters, about which she knows very little, but not about matters in which she is experienced. For example, an experienced physicist might, as a general rule, admit that she lacks knowledge about (e.g.) ancient Greek theater, without doubting her knowledge of physics.

If the “virtues-as-skills” approach is correct, then the expert in intellectual humility will need to do more than rely on even very complicated and context-sensitive rules. Over time, it will be necessary to gain further experience about what tends to bring success.<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, the agent with intellectual humility will no longer need to consciously reflect on how best to proceed. She will instinctively be able to recognize when to be confident in her strengths, and when to be attentive to (and own) her limitations. Getting to this point will not be easy, and so the development of intellectual virtue on this model will require the same important motivational component as in the case of practical skills. The novice in intellectual humility will need to possess the “drive to aspire” (and/or the “motivation to continually improve”) if

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<sup>8</sup> For discussion of intellectual humility, see Roberts and Wood 2007: ch 9; Whitcomb, Battaly, Baehr, and Howard-Snyder 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Presumably, the success conditions here will be the attainment of valuable epistemic states, such as truth, knowledge, and understanding.

she is to successfully move through the various stages of development. When this motivation is present, progression to the level of expert may be just as possible for intellectual virtues as it is in the case of moral virtues.

*(c) Assessing the Account*

The idea of virtue development as skills development is similar to the first approach considered here, in that it requires conscious effort and deliberate cultivation on the part of the agent. In order to develop intellectual virtue in this way, agents will need to possess a pre-existing motivation for intellectual virtue. That is, they must be motivated either to be intellectually virtuous in general, or else have the specific motivations for each particular virtue. On this model, the development of intellectual virtue will require the possession of something akin to Annas's "drive to aspire."

This means that the virtues-as-skills approach has many of the same potentially worrying features as the local-to-global strategy. First of all, the account will be demanding in the sense that it will not be generally available to all people. Instead, this form of intellectual virtue development will only be effective for those who are already motivated to be virtuous. Secondly, and relatedly, there is a concern that this approach therefore misses an important stage in the process of how an agent comes to be virtuous. In order to fully explain the development of intellectual virtue, it will be necessary to find out how an agent comes to have the relevant virtuous motivation (or the "drive to aspire"). And the idea of virtues-as-skills does not provide the required details on this issue.<sup>10</sup> Those who are interested in the practical question of how we can *encourage* the development of intellectual virtue in those who do not necessarily possess a pre-existing motivation for virtue, will need to go beyond the virtues-as-skills approach. It will be necessary to engage in further research about how motivations are formed, and about what can be done to influence the development of motivations in an intellectually virtuous direction.

#### **IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF "FOLK" VIRTUES**

In recent work, Nancy Snow has proposed an alternative route to virtue (Snow 2010: ch 2; forthcoming). This alternative account is intended to explain how virtue can develop in those

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<sup>10</sup> Annas (2011: 24) does mention that young children can have the drive to aspire, while the "ethically lazy" do not. This suggests that the drive to aspire is not universal, although it is possible at an early age.

ordinary “folk” who do not have a pre-existing desire to become virtuous. The account begins with the development of what can be called “folk virtue”.

*a) Explaining the Account*

Snow’s account of folk virtue appeals to work from psychology on automaticity. *Automatic* cognitive processes are contrasted with *controlled* cognitive processes. Of most interest is a sub-set of automatic processes that are goal-directed. The idea here is that agents possess chronically-held goals (goals that are persistent over time) and these goals can be activated by situational factors, resulting in goal-directed behavior. If the chronically-held goal is activated regularly, then this activation may become automatic, and occur outside of the agent’s conscious awareness.<sup>11</sup> For example, if Anne has a chronically-held goal to drink coffee, then this goal might be activated when walking past a coffee shop every morning on her way to work. Over time, and with repeated activation, Anne’s goal-directed behavior of stopping to buy coffee may become automatic. She will no longer make the conscious choice every morning, upon seeing the coffee shop, to stop and buy coffee. Instead, the goal-directed behavior will become a habit that no longer needs to be reflected upon.

In this manner, chronically-held goals can result in automatic, habitual behavior. Importantly, Snow does not think that these goal-directed automatic actions will be mindless, or invulnerable to conscious control. Instead, she appeals to empirical work to show that an action being habitual is compatible with it being both flexible and intelligent in responding to environmental cues (Snow forthcoming; 2010: ch 2). This factor is important when considering the possibility of *virtuous* habitual actions.

Snow highlights the possibility of chronically-held goals that are relevant to the virtues:

A virtue-relevant goal is a goal which, if the agent had it, would under the appropriate conditions, result in the agent’s performing virtue-expressive, that is, virtuous, actions. Deliberative as well as non-deliberative, habitual virtuous actions can result from an agent’s having a virtue-relevant goal (Snow 2010: 53).

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<sup>11</sup> Snow relies on the work of John Bargh. For details, see Snow 2010: 40-45.

Just as a chronically-held goal to drink coffee can result in habitual, coffee-seeking actions, so too can a chronically-held, virtue-relevant goal result in the habitual performance of virtuous actions. Examples discussed by Snow include the goals of “being a just person” and of “equity in social exchanges”, as well as the (perhaps more common) goals of being a good parent, a good citizen, or a good friend (2010: 53, 44). An agent with the virtue-relevant goal of being a good friend may have this goal regularly activated through repeated interactions with her friend. Over time, she will no longer reflect on whether or how to perform an action that is in-keeping with this goal. Instead, she will come to perform those actions in an automatic, habitual way. Given the virtue-relevance of the goal, this will also mean that she is performing virtuous actions in an automatic, habitual way. This is how ordinary folk, who do not possess a conscious desire to be virtuous, might nevertheless develop habits of virtuous behavior.

Snow’s appeal to research on automaticity may explain how ordinary agents can come to perform virtuous actions. However, this is not the same as explaining how such agents develop actual virtues. Virtue possession involves not only consistently acting in virtuous ways, but also doing so for the right reasons. A virtue-relevant goal that has been regularly activated might be enough to ensure the habitual performance of virtuous actions. But how can an ordinary agent develop virtue proper, such that she consistently acts for the right reasons? What is required, according to Snow, is that the agent come to value virtue for its own sake. In more recent work, Snow provides an illustration of how someone who starts out with a virtue-relevant goal might come to value virtue for its own sake, and so make the transition from “folk virtue” to actual virtue.

Snow’s prime example (Snow forthcoming) focuses on how an agent with a specific virtue-relevant goal might develop the virtue of patience. Sam is a young parent with the goal of being a good father. We can expect Sam to already have an idea of the kinds of things that a good father might do; Snow refers to this as Sam’s “schema” of “good father”. This schema might involve being patient when trying to get his child to perform a particular task, or to learn a new skill. As Sam acts in this way, it is possible that he will come to realize that what he is doing is “being patient”. It is also possible that Sam will realize that acting in this way helps him to succeed, such as when successfully convincing his child to eat healthily. In this way, Sam becomes aware of the *instrumental* value of patience. In so doing, on Snow’s view, he has taken the first step to developing this virtue.

According to Snow's story, the next stage in Sam's development will be to realize that being patient is not only instrumentally valuable, but also has *constitutive* value. Being patient does not simply *enable* Sam to achieve his parenting goals and to have a good relationship with his child. Rather, being patient *is part of* what it is to have that good relationship. And having now realized the instrumental and constitutive value of patience, it will be entirely possible for Sam to take the final step of also realizing the *intrinsic* value of patience as a character trait. Snow explains how this might occur:

Suppose [Sam] encounters a day in which his patience with his child just doesn't work, or even an extended period in which this happens (perhaps the teenage years). If Sam believes that it was better to have tried the patient tack and failed than to have succeeded by proceeding brusquely or with impatience, he has come to recognize the intrinsic value of patience, for he realizes that patience is valuable even when it doesn't advance his goals nor, during a certain time period, is constitutive of the quality of his life (Snow forthcoming: 9-10).

At this point, Sam will have moved beyond the habitual performance of virtuous actions that stemmed from his initial virtue-relevant goal. Sam will now also be performing those actions for the right reasons. He realizes the intrinsic value of patience, and acts for this reason.<sup>12</sup> Importantly, Sam has gotten to this stage without possessing a pre-existing desire to be virtuous or to develop the specific virtue of patience, as was required by other strategies. The process Sam undergoes requires a series of realizations, all of which are arguably available to those who do not start out with a desire for virtue. By explaining how we might come to habitually perform virtuous actions, and how this might develop into the possession of actual virtue, Snow provides an account of how moral virtue could develop among ordinary "folk".

#### *b) Applying the Account to Intellectual Virtue*

It is fairly straightforward to see how this account would apply to the development of intellectual virtues. Just as agents might possess goals that are relevant to moral virtue, so too might they possess goals that are relevant to intellectual virtue. For example, we can imagine an agent who possesses the goal of being a good teacher, and whose schema of "good teacher" involves acting in a particular way, such as being intellectually charitable towards students. If

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<sup>12</sup> As Snow acknowledges, we should not expect Sam to necessarily use technical terms like "intrinsic value" when thinking about patience.

regularly activated, the chronically-held goal of being a good teacher might lead to the habitual performance of intellectually charitable actions. From there, the process to virtue will mirror that of Sam's development of patience.

Suppose that Simon has the goal of being a good teacher, and that this, coupled with his schema of "good teacher", leads him to charitably interpret points raised by his students in class. When a student gives an answer that is not exactly correct, Simon will make an effort to reconstruct the student's reasoning in order to uncover what merit there might be to the suggestion, and he will avoid immediately dismissing the student's point. Because this behavior helps Simon to successfully instruct his class, he may come to realize that what he is doing is being "intellectually charitable", and that doing so has instrumental value in his life.

The remaining stages of Simon's development would also mirror those of Sam. Simon might come to realize that intellectual charity not only helps him to work towards his goal of being a good teacher, but that being intellectually charitable is also partly constitutive of what it *is* to be a good teacher, and thus that being intellectually charitable is also of constitutive value. Eventually, Simon may come to accept that it is better to be charitable towards his students even in cases where he is not ultimately successful in his goals. At this point, Simon will have accepted the intrinsic value of intellectual charity, and he will be acting charitably for the right reasons. This is what Snow's story of the development of folk virtue to actual virtue would look like when applied to an intellectual virtue such as intellectual charity.

### *c) Assessing the Account*

A potential worry for this account is analogous to one that was raised for the other strategies. While the previous strategies were dependent on the agent's desire to work on developing her virtue, the "folk virtue" account is dependent on the possession of virtue-relevant goals. However, if the concern here is whether we can expect people to actually possess such goals, then this will be less of a concern for the folk virtue approach. Even if we are skeptical about the widespread possession of a desire to "be virtuous", it does seem likely that people will (and do) possess some virtue-relevant goals, such as to be a good parent, a good doctor, or a good friend. While the approach will not be open to everyone, it will at least be open to those who possess the more widely-held goals of this sort.



And yet, the mere possession of a virtue-relevant goal will not be sufficient for this approach to be successful. It is also necessary that the agent have an accurate “schema” of what it means to satisfy her virtue-relevant goal. Simon’s path to intellectual charity is dependent upon his schema of “good teacher” involving things like not immediately dismissing the ideas of his students. It is also necessary that Simon have an accurate view of how close he is to satisfying the requirements for being a good teacher. Simon won’t continue to improve his teaching if he falsely believes that he has already met all of the requirements. Having either an inaccurate schema, or an inaccurate view of how closely one resembles that schema, will cause an agent with a virtue-relevant goal to nevertheless fail to achieve actual virtue.

Snow considers this possibility in the case of Sam’s virtue-relevant goal of being a good parent, and offers the following response:

If Sam consistently refuses to take the advice of others and/or ignores evidence of lack of caring, we can question whether he genuinely wants to be virtuous. In other words, the desire to be virtuous entails constitutive desires, such as the desire to know when, how, and why one is failing in virtue, and the desire to improve. If someone lacks these constitutive desires, this is *prima facie* evidence that she doesn’t really want to be virtuous (Snow forthcoming: 16).

As it stands, this response is puzzling. A major motivation for considering the folk virtue approach was to uncover a path to virtue development that is available for those who do not possess an initial desire to be virtuous. It would be problematic, therefore, if the only way for an agent’s virtue-relevant schema and self-assessment to be accurate is via the support of an independent desire for virtue.

However, it is possible to rephrase this passage from Snow so as to refer simply to the desire to be a “good teacher” (or a “good parent”) rather than to be virtuous. Perhaps the goal of being a good teacher entails constitutive desires, such as to have an accurate schema of what a good teacher is like, and to have an accurate sense of how close one is to achieving this goal. If an agent consistently fails to pick up on the fact that she has an outlandish view of what a good teacher is like, then this provides some reason to doubt whether she truly has the virtue-relevant goal in the first place. When the goal is present, we can expect it to provide some defense

against the agent going too far astray in terms of either her self-assessment or her understanding of the requirements for achieving the goal.

It is important to note that this response builds more in to what is involved in possessing a virtue-relevant goal. If we accept the response, the goal of being a good teacher will not count as a virtue-relevant goal unless it also involves a desire to have an accurate understanding of what a good teacher is like, and an accurate sense of how close one measures up to that standard. We might worry that this increases the demandingness of the account, and lessens the extent to which people can be expected to possess virtue-relevant goals.<sup>13</sup>

We might also worry about the likelihood of ordinary “folk” going through the series of realizations that Snow describes for Sam. In particular, the moves required in realizing the constitutive value of virtue, and then realizing the intrinsic value of virtue, appear potentially challenging. Even if agents are not expected to use technical terms when making these realizations, more work may be required to determine just how likely, and just how demanding, such a process will be. As with the other accounts we have considered, the more demanding the folk virtue approach is, the less reason there will be to think that people actually become virtuous in this way. This will either suggest that we should not expect many people to possess the virtues, or it will suggest that alternative routes to virtue need to be considered.

Despite these worries, Snow’s folk virtue approach does appear to offer a possible explanation of virtue development in those who do not possess a pre-existing desire to be virtuous. Whether or not a given agent will actually succeed in following this route will depend on the strength of her goal, the accuracy of her virtue-relevant schema, and her ability to correctly interpret any evidence that might suggest she has gone astray. Theorists who are interested in actively *encouraging* the development of intellectual virtue will have good reason to focus on how people develop the schemas and goals that they do, and on what steps can legitimately be taken in order to influence these.

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<sup>13</sup> Of course, failure will still be possible even when an agent does have a virtue-relevant goal in this sense. This will be possible in cases where an agent’s inaccurate schema is not outlandish enough to be corrected by experience, or where an agent is simply unfortunate in the feedback that is received.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have outlined three accounts of how virtues can be developed, all of which have been proposed by theorists whose work is informed by empirical psychology. In each case, we have highlighted future areas of research that we think will be required for anyone interested in intellectual virtue development, or in the practical topic of how to *encourage* virtue development. These are very early days for discussions of intellectual virtue development at the intersection of philosophy and psychology, and we eagerly await future work in this area.<sup>14</sup>

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