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Cross-Pollination in the Gardens of Virtue

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The Cross-Pollination of Virtue: A Rationale

This chapter focuses on how spiritual and self-examination practices promote a number of virtues simultaneously, and demonstrates how there can be cross-pollination from one virtue to another within a person's character. The chapter covers both conceptual and practical ground, beginning by elucidating the theory behind the idea of cross-pollination, and then turning to two examples of this at work. The chapter will close with some suggestions as to how psychological interventions to promote strengths of character might be enriched by fostering mutually reinforcing strengths, rather than targeting virtues individually.

A recently published paper examines the rationale for why one might expect some virtues of character to be mutually reinforcing, and scrutinises existing psychological work that provides a degree of empirical support for this theorising (Gulliford & Roberts, 2018). The main contention of the paper is that virtues of character come in clusters. Virtues *within* the same cluster share family resemblances that distinguish them from virtues in other clusters. Gulliford and Roberts (2018) focus specifically on five virtues they label 'the allocentric quintet'. This cluster consists of generosity, gratitude, forgiveness, compassion and humility. The common ground shared by these virtues and their unifying feature is benevolence and, as the label 'allocentric' indicates, this benevolence manifests in an 'others-focused' well-wishing and well-doing.[1]

[1] The authors describe humility as a 'guest virtue' of the 'allocentric quintet'. 'Humility is not itself allocentric, but because the 'other'-orientation of the properly allocentric virtues *requires* some degree of humility, and because the allocentric virtues tend to promote humility, we include it as an honorary member of the quintet.'(Gulliford and Roberts, 2018, p. 217).

The authors explain how virtues within the 'allocentric quintet' reinforce one another. For example, compassion and humility are ingredients in forgiveness, and the experience of having been forgiven could be expected to give rise to gratitude, which one would expect to promote further instances of forgiveness of others in the future (see also Gulliford, 2017b, p. 72).[2] The benevolent regard for others is what characterises the virtues of the 'allocentric quintet' whereas virtues of willpower (such as perseverance) are, in contrast, unified by powers of self-management that can be motivated by both moral and non-moral concerns.

The relation of virtues to each other could be elucidated by means of the metaphor of a symphony orchestra, which is made up of different sections; strings, percussion, woodwind and brass. Each of the instruments in each of the sections is more similar to the instruments within its own section than the others. However, all sections consist of kinds of instrument, and often all four sections play as one to produce harmonious music. Thus the metaphor of the orchestra captures both the special sympathies some virtues have with one another and the overall unity of the virtues.[3]

The thesis of the 'unity of the virtues' goes back, in various permutations, to antiquity (see Gulliford and Roberts, 2018 for a sketch). The proposal is that all virtues are so integrated with one another that one cannot have one virtue without having them all. For Aristotle, the 'unity of the virtues' inhered in the virtue of practical wisdom (*phronesis*). When an individual possesses this fundamental excellence of character, he has all the other virtues by extension (1985, p. 171 [1145a1–2]). Since *each* virtue incorporates a kind of knowledge (practical wisdom), it is this knowledge that is essentially unified and common to all virtues. Thus all human excellences share common ground by virtue of *phronesis*. Returning to the metaphor of the orchestra, *phronesis* (for Aristotle) could be likened to the conductor (see Gulliford, 2017a).

[2] A number of chapters in this volume bear witness to the way gratitude gives rise to — or motivates — other virtues, such as generosity to one's own benefactors (see McConnell and Fenton) and to other people. Both Karns' and Callard's chapters address the latter kind of generosity, commonly referred to as 'paying it forward'.
[3] Gulliford and Roberts (2018) use the analogy of a healthy body consisting of many parts to elucidate the relationship of the virtues to one another.

The thesis of the 'unity of the virtues' has not gone unchallenged. In a well-known paper, Badhwar contests the notion of the fundamental unity of the virtues, and puts forward a modification which she calls the 'limited unity of the virtues' (LUV) thesis (Badhwar, 1996). She suggests that the virtues are disunited across different domains but united *within* domains. For Badhwar 'domains' refers to different spheres of human relationships. Her point is that 'a person (P) could be kind towards her friends and colleagues without being kind (or virtuous in any other way) towards acquaintances or strangers' (1996, p. 308). She argues that practical wisdom almost always is exhibited in *only some* domains of an individual's life (1996, p. 308, my italics).

While Badhwar (1996) proposes a thesis of the limited unity of the virtues based on their manifestation in specific domains of life, Gulliford and Roberts (2018) propose a modification of thesis of the 'unity of the virtues' that is based on virtue *types*. While the overarching thesis of the unity of all virtues may be a stretch, there do seem to be 'unities of allied virtues'. For example, the virtues of 'intelligent caring' including justice, compassion and truthfulness are unified by perceptive benevolence toward others, whereas 'virtues of willpower' (e.g. perseverance, self-control and patience) are those capacities concerned with the management of impulses. The commonality between virtues within a cluster makes for particularly mutually reinforcing relationships ('cross-pollination") between these associated virtues. This is not to say that *only* virtues within a cluster reinforce one another; virtues between clusters also interact with each other. A moral dilemma might call for the exercise of virtues from more than one cluster. However, there are special sympathies between virtues within a cluster that make cross-pollination between these virtues especially likely.

Having offered a theoretical rationale for the unities of allied virtues ('virtue clustering'), Gulliford and Roberts (2018) review a number of empirical studies that, to some extent, substantiate their reasoning about the mutually reinforcing nature of the virtues of the 'allocentric quintet'.[4] For instance, Bartlett and DeSteno (2006) showed that a laboratory-induced state of gratitude led participants to help a person who had previously helped them

[4] The review incorporates a critique of the limitations to which such techniques may be subject. For instance, Gulliford and Roberts (2018) recognise that laboratory-induced experiments may be poor imitators of real life.

(even when doing so was costly), demonstrating the mutually reinforcing nature of gratitude and generosity. For a close conceptual examination of the bond between the virtues of generosity and gratitude, illustrated by a novel by Charles Dickens, see Roberts (this volume). Karremans, Van Lange, & Holland (2005) reported that reflecting on past actions of forgiving others increased the probability of participants donating to and volunteering for charity, suggesting that forgiveness promotes generosity. Similarly, Exline and Hill (2012) found humility to be a robust predictor of generous behaviour, showing that humility may promote the virtue of generosity.[5] For the full analysis of how generosity connects to each of the other virtues of the 'allocentric quintet' see Gulliford and Roberts (2018, pp. 208-226).

Within the context of spiritual disciplines, the idea of pollinating one virtue from another has deep and well-established roots. In this chapter, the practice of *lojong* (from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition) and the exercises making up Twelve Step Programmes will be discussed to examine how they might be said to promote cross-fertilization of virtues.

Cross-Pollination of Virtues in Twelve Step Programmes: The Place of Humility

An example of the cross-pollination of virtues is Twelve Step recovery programmes where the virtue of humility seeds the development of other strengths of character targeted at later stages of recovery. The key role played by humility is at first more implicitly assumed within the programme, though it rises to prominence more explicitly as the programme progresses in Steps 5, 6 and 7.

Post, Pagano, Lee and Johnson (2016) describe Twelve Step programmes as 'one of the twentieth century's most successful social experiments in applied spirituality' (p. 10). As such, the programme is valuable to both addicts and non-addicts, for it is above all concerned with the development of good character, principally achieved by deflating the

[5] A degree of caution is required in interpreting studies where temporarily induced states are used to substantiate claims about enduring personal qualities.

ego and substituting self-centred wilfulness with other-focused willingness — a problem that can hardly be said to be unique to addicts!

Having said this, few people today seem to be aware of the potential relevance of Twelve Step programmes to their own lives, seeing the advice contained therein as specific to people with 'addictive personalities'. This has not always been the case. Indeed, in the Foreword to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (1952), the relevance of the programme to non-members of AA was unambiguously highlighted:

> 'Though the essays which follow were written mainly for members, it is thought by many of AA's friends that these pieces might arouse interest and find application outside AA itself. Many people, nonalcoholics, report that as a result of the practice of AA's Twelve Steps, they have been able to meet other difficulties of life. They think that the Twelve Steps can mean more than sobriety for problem drinkers. They see in them a way to happy and effective living for many, alcoholic or not.'
>
> (Foreword, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 15-16).

It is the often misunderstood virtue of humility that is placed at the forefront of Twelve Step programmes and is identified by Post et al. (2016) as a 'cardinal virtue' in Alcoholics Anonymous. A close reading of the Twelve Steps shows that humility catalyses a change in terms of the relation of the self to others, potentiating a spiritual chain of events that leads to growth in other virtues, such as forgiveness, compassion, gratitude, generosity and service.

But what is humility? Humility involves a certain way of seeing oneself in relation to others. Humble persons do not place themselves at the centre of their world and do not deem themselves to be more significant than they really are. The etymological root of humility is *humilus* (Latin), meaning ground or earth. While this could have connotations of lowliness or being brought low (as in 'humiliation'), it could signify simply the opposite of loftiness or hauteur with no connotations of debasement or disgrace.

Erik Wielenberg (forthcoming) conceives of humility as having two core elements. On the one hand, humility consists of the ready acknowledgement of flaws and limitations shared by fellow human beings. These flaws include helplessness (being subject to forces outside one's control), fallibility (being subject to ignorance and error), and moral imperfection. From a Christian point of view, this moral imperfection would be labelled 'sin', though clearly the understanding that human persons are not morally perfect is not limited to religions.

The other broad aspect of humility lies in 'recognising one's relative insignificance in comparison with some aspect of reality distinct from oneself' (Wielenberg, forthcoming, p. 7). From a theistic point of view, this relative insignificance is perceived in relation to God, but God's place could be taken in a secular context by anything deemed a 'higher power' or, as Wielenberg argues, could be inspired by the feeling of awe for the natural world (Wielenberg, forthcoming, pp. 7-8).

Humility (like purity) can be understood primarily as an absence. Whereas purity is characterised by the absence of contaminants, humility represents the absence of vanity, arrogance and other vices of pride (Roberts, 2016; Roberts & Wood, 2007). These vices are all ways of being concerned about a misconceived kind of personal 'importance', a point echoed by Wielenberg; 'Misplaced pride can lead to an unwarranted belief that one deserves special treatment from others; when such special treatment is not forthcoming, indignation and anger can result.' (Wielenberg, forthcoming, p. 4). This distorted (and vicious) species of hubristic pride can be contrasted with an authentic and healthy pride in one's genuine achievements. As psychologists Carver, Sinclair and Johnson (2010) point out, authentic pride 'arises from a self-evaluation of 'doing', whereas hubristic pride arises from a self-evaluation of being' (Carver, Sinclair & Johnson, 2010, p. 698).[6]

[6] Daniel Telech, one of the editors of this volume points out, however, that there could be healthy forms of non-agential pride (ways of being proud for 'being' in a way that is not hubristic). He suggests that a person might be proud, in a non-arrogant way, of their heritage. Furthermore, an individual might suffer from hubristic pride arising from a self-evaluation of doing if they suppose that they deserve special treatment as a result of their accomplishments.

Post et al (2016) note that there are two predominant views of humility in Western thought (broadly Roman Catholic and Protestant), both of which have influenced the understanding of humility in Twelve Step Programmes (see Lobdell, 2004). The Catholic interpretation, dating back to Aquinas (which itself owes much to Aristotle's notion of the 'Mean'), takes humility to be keeping oneself within appropriate bounds, avoiding both excessive *and deficient* self-esteem (see ST II-II, Q. 161). This kind of understanding seems to be in mind in the following:

> 'If temperamentally we are on the depressive side, we are apt to be swamped with guilt and self-loathing. We wallow in this messy bog, often getting a misshapen and painful pleasure out of it. As we morbidly pursue this melancholy activity, we may sink to such a point of despair that nothing but oblivion looks possible as a solution. Here, of course, we have lost all perspective, and therefore all genuine humility. For this is pride in reverse.'
>
> (Step Four, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 46)

Thus the absence of humility can manifest in self-pity and unworthiness, as well as in grandiosity and vanity.

On the other hand, the Protestant understanding of humility going back to Martin Luther is voluntarist - that is to say that it foregrounds the will (rather than the intellect) in human conduct. For Luther, humility is submission to the divine will, which supplants one's own self-will: 'Thy will, not my will, be done.' This understanding of humility seems particularly prominent in the earlier steps of the programme, though it remains a thread through to Step 12, as we shall see. These two understandings of humility (the intellectual more 'Catholic' strand, and the voluntaristic interpretation Post et al. (2016) label 'Protestant') map onto the two core features of humility identified by Wielenberg (forthcoming). Understanding one's flaws and limitations incorporates the *intellectual* element of humility, whereas acknowledging one's relative insignificance before a 'higher power' (however that might be conceived) serves as a recognition of the limits of the *will*.

Steps 1 -3 are characterised by Post et al. (2016) as 'Humility as complete defeat before a Higher Power'. In these stages, the Twelve Stepper must accept that life impelled by self-will has failed and he or she must turn his or her will over to God. Post et al (2016) note that this 'modulation' of humility in Twelve Step programmes (they identify three other such modulations or 'forms' of humility in recovery) 'verges on the *humiliation* of realizing that reliance on self in overcoming addiction has totally failed… Yet it is a necessary first step to radically reduce an inflated self-perception' (p. 6, my italics). A more palatable take on these initial steps might be described by the term 'letting go', as this conveys a sense of acceptance without the overtones of capitulation and dishonour inherent in humiliation.

In contrast, the more Catholic understanding of humility predominates in Steps 4 – 7, which are characterised by Post et al. (2016) as 'Humility as accurate self-appraisal'. This second modulation of humility sees the person in recovery dealing with the damage they have caused others. For that purpose, Twelve Steppers need to develop as truthful and undistorted a view about themselves as possible. At Step 4 the person in recovery conducts a 'searching and fearless moral inventory' which tackles the question of character flaws head-on.

Twelve Step programmes devote *most* of their time to the development of virtue and good character, recognising that it is not possible to proceed in this process until an addict has stopped using. Step One directly concerns the grip of addiction. The following steps describe a 'moral metamorphosis' that cannot begin *until* the Twelve Stepper is sober and clear-headed. Undergirded by an accurate sense of one's self and its limitations that is 'sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping' (AA, 1939/2001, p. 83), the person in recovery admits their defects to another person (Step Five), a stage which leads towards *forgiveness* – of others and oneself.

> 'This vital step was also the means by which we began to get the feeling that we could be forgiven, no matter what we had thought or done. Often it was while working on this step with our sponsors or spiritual advisors that we first felt truly able to forgive others, no matter how deeply we felt they had wronged us. Our moral inventory had persuaded us that all-round forgiveness was desirable, but it

> was only when we resolutely tackled Step Five that we inwardly knew we'd be able to receive forgiveness and give it, too.'
>
> (Step Five, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, 1952, p. 59)

Confiding one's defects in another trusted person engenders humility, which in turn lights the way to forgiveness and the possibility of a remedy for human failings: '…our first practical move toward humility must consist of recognising our deficiencies. No defect can be corrected unless we clearly see what it is' (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, 1952, p. 59). Thus both receiving forgiveness oneself and extending forgiveness to others is made possible by first implanting the virtue of humility (see Worthington, Jr. (1998)). In this connection, in one correlational study, Powers, Nam, Rowatt and Hill (2007) found that self-reported humility and a quality they called 'spiritual transcendence' correlated with the self-reported tendencies to forgive.

Step Seven is unequivocal about the central importance of humility in recovery. It focusses specifically on fostering this virtue, offering its most thorough treatment of all the steps of the programme. This is not the species of humility-as-submission encountered in Steps One to Three:

> 'Where humility had formerly stood for a forced feeding on humble pie, it now begins to mean the nourishing ingredient which can give us serenity. This improved perception of humility starts another revolutionary change in our outlook. Our eyes begin to open to the immense values which have come straight out of ego-puncturing.'
>
> (Step Seven, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pp. 75-6)

Humility seems to seed the first fruit of change within a person's values and character, though this humility needs to be accompanied by a searing *honesty* about oneself and one's faults. It might be argued that it is impossible to have genuine humility *without* honesty. The close tie between the virtues of humility and honesty is implicitly acknowledged in Lee and

Ashton's (2004) HEXACO model of personality, wherein 'honesty-humility' constitutes one of six overarching personality factors alongside emotionality, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. Moreover, in order for a humble person to have a truly *accurate* assessment of their worth, humility would need to be seasoned with honesty as Flanagan (1990) contends against Driver (1989; 2001).

Forgiveness is one of the values to emerge from this deflation of the ego. The virtue of humility, however, remains a constant and appears to be the taproot of self-transformation and spiritual growth as it is conceived within Twelve Step Programmes:

> '…we should pause here to consider what humility is and what the practice of it can mean to us. Indeed, the attainment of greater humility is the foundation principle of each of AA's Twelve Steps. For without some degree of humility, no alcoholic can stay sober at all. Nearly all AA's have found, too, that unless they develop much more of this precious quality than may be required just for sobriety, they still haven't much chance of becoming truly happy.'
>
> (Step Seven, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, p. 71)

The voluntaristic view of humility as submission of the will, necessary for an addict to admit his or her powerlessness over addiction, is 'required for sobriety'. However, it is acknowledged that there is a humility that is somehow beyond this that is essential to happiness ('the attainment of *greater* humility', my italics). The non-addict does not require the species of humility that submits to powerlessness over addiction *in particular*, but he or she must accept the limits of his or her existence in other more general respects.

The idea and associations of submission and dependence sit uncomfortably with a great many of us. They compromise our sense of personal agency and autonomy. However, there are adaptive and maladaptive forms of dependence. One clearly maladaptive form is the dependence of substance abuse, but another equally pernicious one is evident in the adult child who has been unable to separate himself from his parents, and is incapable of making

key life decisions on his own or who is still inappropriately financially dependent on others, This latter species of pernicious dependence, coupled with the complete absence of humility, is epitomised by the character of Harold Skimpole in Dickens' novel, *Bleak House* (see Roberts, this volume). This particularly vicious manifestation of dependence is an extreme type, though there are plenty of individuals who, to a lesser degree, seem to believe other people can (and should) solve their problems for them – financial or otherwise.

In contrast, there is an appropriate sense of dependence on others that recognises that since we are all vulnerable to life's ups and downs, we can trust and rely on other people to be there for us when the going gets tough, without assuming our own helplessness in the matter. We could call this adaptive kind of dependence 'inter-dependence' in recognition of the fact that it is based on mutual aid, rather than in an imbalanced or co-dependent type of helping behaviour, which sees one side providing all the help for another (e.g. the parents of the dependent adult child). It should be acknowledged, however, that the ideal balance of being inter-dependent could be severely disrupted by early life experiences – and heavily influenced by caregivers whose own patterns of behaviour fell to either one or other side of this ideal.

The privileging of autonomy over an appropriate sense of dependence on others could be labelled 'hyper-autonomy'. This tendency conceives of the human person as independent and autonomous, minimizing an appropriate degree of dependence on others. Virtues are construed as privatised 'inner resources' rather than being sustained in participation with others (Gulliford, 2011). For instance, forgiveness, while it has been identified as a virtue in Peterson and Seligman's VIA taxonomy (2004), seems to be interpreted in a way that emphasises the autonomous individual forgiving in the strength of his or her own resources. In addition, the focus is very much on what forgiving other people does for *one's own wellbeing*. This has led to forgiveness being construed as something that is primarily 'dispensed' to others - a capacity that people possess (or do not). There is no sense of mutuality and participation in a power in which individuals are caught up interdependently as *both givers and receivers* (Gulliford, 2011, p. 59).

Similarly, positive psychological approaches to the virtue of hope locate the ground of confidence in individuals' self-control and self-belief (Gulliford, 2011, p. 169). Yet our most fundamental sense of hope is kindled by *other people*. The developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson proposed that the first stage of psychosocial development in infancy is to negotiate the conflict between basic trust and basic mistrust. Hope ultimately stems from trust that an infant can *depend* on his or her caregivers to meet basic needs. Thus hope can be sustained where a person has been able to learn that he or she can *depend* on others. The psychoanalyst and priest William Lynch (1974) observed that hope is kindled *between* people — for instance, in the alliance between patient and therapist — or between sponsor and sponsee in AA. Bressan, Iacoponi, Candidi de Assis and Shergill (2017) acknowledge that hope may be one of the most powerful therapeutic aspects of the doctor-patient relationship.

The limits of the individual will to solve our deepest problems is readily recognised within the AA literature; 'By now, though, the chances are that he has become convinced that he has more problems than alcohol, and that some of these refuse to be solved by all the sheer personal determination and courage he can muster' (TSTT, Step Three, p. 40). Through the transformative virtue of humility and its acceptance of an *appropriate* human dependence, a person begins a spiritual transformation which potentiates growth in the virtues of forgiveness, compassion, gratitude and service.

Steps Eight and Nine are characterised by reflecting on how one has harmed other people and on making amends. Being able to confront one's own moral failings in a spirit of humility inevitably leads one to reflect on the failings of others and the possibility of forgiveness:

> 'We shall want to hold ourselves to the course of admitting things we have done, meanwhile forgiving the wrongs done to us….'

(Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Step Eight, p. 84)

What is clearly discernible in all the steps is an emphasis on ongoing character development and the cultivation of virtues that are intrinsic to a flourishing life. 'Self–searching' needs to become a regular habit (p. 90). The Steps implicitly acknowledge that many people may only begin to address character flaws as a result of facing up to substance abuse; 'Seldom did we look at character-building as something desirable in itself' (Step 7, p. 73). Only after the fog has begun to lift do 'we reluctantly come to grips with those serious character flaws that made problem drinkers of us in the first place...' (Step 7, p.74).

As a result of a journey through the steps, beginning with the humility to accept powerlessness over addiction, people experience 'a spiritual awakening' (Step Twelve, p. 109) which reaches a recurring end in service to others (Step Twelve, p. 128):

'We heard story after story of how humility had brought strength out of weakness…'[7]

(Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Step 7, p. 75)

Certainly, Post et al. (2016) cast humility in this foundational role, though it would be interesting to see how this relates to Twelve Steppers' own experience. Some individuals may feel a different virtue flowered first for them, with other virtues coming into bloom

[7] The idea of 'strength from weakness' is redolent of a passage from St Paul's second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:9). The apostle reports that the Lord said to him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness". Twelve Step programs have Christian roots (Pittman, 1988). Although the interpretation of the 'Higher Power' is not restricted to a theistic one - many Twelve Steppers might interpret this as the power of the group itself - there can be no doubt that the program has been heavily influenced by the Christian worldview underlying it. As such, it is not surprising that the virtues of forgiveness, gratitude and humility which are all central to the cultivation of Christian character in the New Testament are foundational to the personal transformation envisaged in the program.

later in the day.[8] Another form of spiritual transformation which sees virtues being potentiated by other virtues is the Buddhist practice of *lojong*, to which attention is now turned.

Cross-Pollination of Virtues in the Practice of Lojong: Creating Interdependence through Gratitude

Lojong is a Tibetan Buddhist mind training practice that was developed between 900 and 1200 CE. The originator is thought to be Atisa (982 – 1054 CE), though the aphorisms in their current form were composed by Chekawa Yeshe Dorje (1101 – 1175 CE). The basic meaning of *lojong* is 'thought transformation' or 'mind training' (*lo* translates as mind and *jong* as transformation). The kind of change promoted by the practice is radical and profound and brings about a complete 'transformation of subjectivity' (Ozawa-de Silva, Dodson-Lavelle, Raison & Negi, 2012). Its overarching goal is a complete reorientation from self-centredness to other-centeredness — a completely new way of seeing oneself in relation to other persons.

The practice has recently been incorporated into cognitively based compassion training (CBCT) programmes (see Ozawa de Silva, & Dodson-Lavelle, 2011; Reddy, Negi, Dodson-Lavelle, Ozawa-de Silva et al., 2013; Dodds, Pace, Bell, Fiero et al., 2015). This form of mind training establishes preconditions for the cultivation of compassion by foregrounding the virtue of gratitude. Just as the virtue of humility pollinates other virtues within Twelve Step programs, this more ancient spiritual exercise uses reflection on the kindness of other people (to promote gratitude) as a means of propagating compassion for all beings.

The premise of *lojong* is that in the natural and normal (unenlightened) state, individuals are only capable of a biased form of compassion that does not extend to all people equally. In

[8] A cautionary note ought perhaps to be sounded about the overall success of Twelve Step Programmes. Peer reviewed studies place the success rate at between 5%- 10% (Dodes & Dodes, 2015) though this contrasts markedly with AA's own internal surveys.

order to cultivate a universal form of compassion, practitioners are instructed to recollect the kindness of other people, beginning with a reflection on all the benefits bestowed on them by their mother. Having generated gratitude and loving kindness towards their mother, practitioners reflect on the kindness of their father and other relatives, then strangers and finally enemies (see Ozawa-de Silva, 2003, p. 116). The thinking behind the process is that all beings have been kind to oneself and are fundamentally involved in creating a fully interdependent life. Reflecting on these benefits in gratitude offers a magnifying lens through which to behold one's interconnectedness with other beings.

While the original *lojong* practice envisages the mother as the matrix from which a sense of gratitude emerges, secularised meditation practices (such as CBCT) that are inspired by *lojong*, may not include this specific meditation, though they distil its central insight that compassion can be kindled by gratitude. There could be good psychological reasons for this; first, it cannot be assumed that all people enjoy an unproblematic relationship with their mother! If this is the case, this specific reflection advocated in *lojong* may be unhelpful and fundamentally unconducive to growth. Nonetheless, gratitude (towards other people) can be used to promote compassion, an insight that has found its way into modern forms of meditative practice like CBCT.

Cognitively-based compassion training (CBCT) is a secular practice, developed at Emory University in 2004 by Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi. It is informed by both the *lam rim*[9] and *lojong* traditions of Tibetan Buddhism (see Ozawa-de Silva & Dodson-Lavelle, 2011). CBCT has been used in a range of contexts including schools and prisons and also incorporates mindfulness techniques and social and emotional learning (SEL) skills. The CBCT programme consists of eight sessions focusing on eight topics which are presented sequentially. After meditative preliminaries to foster the ability to attend to one's inner states, the fifth stage is the point in the programme's path where appreciation and gratitude are developed to engender a sense of interdependence; the recognition that we are all, to a *healthy* extent, dependent on others. This in turn promotes affection for those others and empathy.

[9] *Lam rim* (literally 'graduated path') is a textual form for presenting the stages of the path to enlightenment.

Practitioners come to appreciate how they have received a host of benefits from other people, which stimulates them to wish to repay these benefits. Thus the practices of *lojong* also help individuals come to an awareness that, in the words of the poet John Donne, 'no man is an island entire of itself.'

One exercise used to promote gratitude and interconnection is reflecting on all the people who have had a hand in creating one's clothes or other objects. Participants in CBCT interventions are encouraged to reflect on all the beings that contributed towards producing the item; 'Practitioners begin to see that directly and indirectly, consciously or inadvertently, these other beings contributed something of benefit to each CBCT participant.' (Parrish Florian, 2014, p. 17; Ozawa-de Silva & Dodson-Lavelle, 2011, pp. 1-3). This exercise helps to break down the 'hyper-autonomous' view of selfhood we encountered in the previous section; 'Our default modes of thinking mistakenly assume a level of personal independence that is not borne out by the kind of cognitive analysis taught in Week 5 of CBCT.' (Parrish Florian, 2014, p. 16).

The recognition of an appropriate degree of dependence on others as the natural state of humanity is therefore just as crucial to spiritual growth in CBCT (and *lojong*, upon which it is based) as it is in AA. Whereas in AA, a healthy degree of dependence on others is realised by foregrounding the cardinal virtue of humility, in CBCT (and *lojong*) this interdependence is brought about by means of gratitude. However, the recognition of human (inter)dependence is not the end-point of either AA or CBCT. The goal of both practices is a spiritual transformation which heightens feeling for and promotes service to others:

> 'CBCT teaches concepts such as interdependence and gratitude to foster a sense of connectedness and equality with others that then yields cognitive changes which allow a more encompassing and more powerful sense of love and compassion for others.'

(Ozawa-de Silva & Dodson-Levelle, 2011, p. 12)

We have seen how certain spiritual practices presuppose that the development or intentional foregrounding of one virtue can have powerful 'ripple effects' on other virtues. While it might, in principle, be possible to isolate and target individual virtues for promotion, it seems that some virtues might be better cultivated 'indirectly' by fostering allied character strengths.

The spiritual exercises we have been examining are clearly predicated on the understanding that related virtues prepare or reinforce one another; '…a key feature of CBCT … is its analytical, logical flow. Each step of the sequence – equanimity, gratitude, affection, love/compassion, resolve – is profoundly *primed* by what precedes it and foundational for what follows' (Parrish-Florian, 2012, p. 75, my italics). Similarly, in AA cultivating the virtue of humility makes it possible to deflate the ego sufficiently to allow space for other virtues of character to be promoted.

Cross-Pollinating Virtues in Educational and Therapeutic Interventions

In recent years there has been a flowering of interest in strengths and virtues brought about by the resurgence of virtue ethics in philosophy and by the increasing popularity of positive psychology. As a result of the theoretical turn towards examining positive aspects of human functioning, psychologists have taken practical steps to promote strengths and virtues, such as resilience, optimism, forgiveness and gratitude and have devised interventions in both educational and therapeutic contexts to cultivate these desirable strengths of character.

Much of this research has examined strengths in relative isolation from one another and while schools and other establishments may take an additive approach and target a number of virtues in turn, very few of the methods that have been devised capitalise on the insights illuminated by the two sets of practices we have been examining here — namely, that virtues might more fruitfully be developed simultaneously, since there are theoretical and

empirical grounds that support the view that certain strengths of character reinforce one another. This may be particularly true of strengths that build up an appreciation of our human interconnectedness with, and benevolent regard for, one another. The virtues of the 'allocentric quintet', consisting of generosity, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion are unified by an 'other-focused' well-wishing and well-doing. Cultivating any of the virtues in this cluster strengthens this common core and helps other virtues within the cluster to flower as a result.

From a practical point of view, current positive psychological interventions to promote strengths and virtues would benefit from the insights these disciplines bring to light. Such studies could be used to further test the hypothesis of the mutually reinforcing nature of virtue clusters. For instance, in a recent neuroscientific study, Karns, Moore III and Mayr (2017) found evidence to support the association between gratitude and altruistic (generous) motivations, and showed that the practice of keeping a gratitude journal for three weeks increased neural measures of pure altruism recorded in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex relative to controls. This sort of empirical work serves to corroborate what many of the world's spiritual practices have implicitly understood — namely, that the 'flowering' of virtue proceeds by a process of cross-pollination among allied character strengths.

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