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Virtue from the Perspective of Psychology

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Abstract: It seems as if virtue, previously expunged from psychological vocabularies, is making a come-back. Yet various misgivings persist in psychological circles about a virtue-based agenda, and the rhetoric about a new flourishing ecumenism between philosophy and social science in this field may be premature, as explained in Section 1. Section 2 aims to bring to the fore some of the remaining psychological misgivings. Section 3 goes on to categorize the recent surge of interest in virtue within psychology by way of a taxonomy of different levels of engagement with virtue constructs. Section 4 moves the spotlight to potential psychological inputs into conceptual understandings of virtue and to residual philosophical doubts about that enterprise. The chapter closes in Section 5 with a prognosis of what the future may hold in store for virtue from the perspective of psychology.

1. Introduction: The need for a reality check

At the risk of sounding overly self-conscious, it may be instructive to rehearse some thoughts that surfaced when I was entrusted with the task of writing a chapter about psychological approaches to virtue. Philosophers pretend to have a license to poke their noses into everything. Yet assigning this particular task to a philosopher (and one particularly interested in the application of virtue constructs in the field of education[1]), rather than to an able and interested psychologist, seems a controversial move by. At any rate, it ineluctably sets the tone for the forthcoming discussion, adding to what was already a reflexive title, "Virtue from the perspective of psychology," an implicit second layer of reflexivity: "as seen through a philosophical lens." Moreover, the editor will know that I have in the past come down heavily on the side of "academic trespassing" between psychology and philosophy in the field of virtue ethics and its applications; hence, no one should expect a non-partisan account. Indeed, my personal sympathies are explicitly with those I characterize below as "integrators" and "mavericks."

All that said, I do take a slightly dimmer view of the current state of the courtship between philosophy and psychology in the virtue field than many of my colleagues on either side of "the great divide." The sunny view that the clash of the two academic cultures has already been transcended may stand in need of a *reality check* – and that is basically what I attempt in this chapter. While it is undoubtedly true that pockets of interest in virtue now exist within psychology where none were found before, and that a number of philosophers have adopted a more "experimental" mindset, true collaborations may still be less widespread and entrenched than they are sometimes made out to be. I offer that suggestion here not only as an historical working hypothesis – about the *de facto* state of cross-fertilizations between the two fields – but also as an indication of my suspicion that a formidable fence of conflicting

assumptions may still separate the two, a fence that requires something more than just time and patience to tear down.[2]

To perform the promised reality check, we are arguably best served by an exploration that prioritizes breadth over depth. Hence, considerable parts of the discussion that follows will be fast-paced and general, aiming at identifying trends and trajectories rather than fleshing out detailed arguments. Space does not allow me, however, to write the chapter in the form of an introductory piece. I assume from the outset that readers are *au fait* with terms such as "virtue," "character," "*hexis*," "*eudaimonia*," and "*phronesis*," or – more specifically – with those terms as they have been freighted with an Aristotelian or quasi-Aristotelian understanding in recently revived virtue theories and related accounts of character education.[3]

The most natural place to start an exploration of what appears to be the new ecumenism between philosophy and psychology on virtue is with the methodological approach that seems to be the driving force behind it. That approach is moral *naturalism* – a brand of moral *realism* which considers some or all moral properties as natural properties and sees all ethical theorizing as ultimately answerable to factual evidence. Animating virtue ethics, this naturalism and its corollary thesis that moral ideals (including virtue ideals) must be "psychologically real" for "creatures like us"[4] constitute the reason why many social scientists see virtue ethicists as a group of moral philosophers they can finally do business with.[5] Yet when Elizabeth Anscombe (re)launched virtue ethics with her famous edict that moral philosophy be laid to rest until we had a decent account of human nature, action, and flourishing,[6] there is little indication that she considered this best done by exploiting psychological evidence, gathered among "the many," as distinct from more rigorous philosophical insights about human psychology, uncovered in the armchairs of "the wise." Whatever Anscombe's view may have been, however, the standard interpretation by both philosophers and psychologists, currently active in this discourse, is that since it is an

empirical rather than a conceptual fact that people "need" the virtues, philosophical virtue ethics must be informed by a "bottom-up approach"[7] that settles moral questions by providing empirical evidence on what makes people tick. On this view, Aristotelian virtue ethics has to be aligned with experimental moral psychology in order to be viable and plausible.[8] The input of the psychological evidence is then ideally seen as happening on two levels: the *conceptual* level where philosophical theories of virtue are informed by conceptualizations of "the many" of what those virtues "mean for them," and the *normative* level where questions of the value of specific *hexeis* (virtues or vices) are settled by providing evidence of how they make actual people flourish or flounder.[9]

But there is more to virtue ethics than the naturalistic assumption. It comes with a whole repertoire of terms that are theoretically "thick": loaded with philosophical and folk-psychological assumptions. As we see in the following two sections, this is precisely the reason why many psychologists will rebuff any advances to partake in virtue discourses. One route to providing a focus for the new ecumenism will be to systematically unload (reinterpret or reconfigure) some of those main terms, in order to make them more palatable for mainstream social scientists. I shall briefly mention three examples of such endeavors here, if only in order to cast them aside as attempts to secure crossover work on the cheap.

The first example is of the praise bestowed upon Aristotelian virtue theory by the *enfant terrible* of moral psychology, Jonathan Haidt, who claims to love Aristotle's notions of "natural virtue," "habit," and "habituation," and who considers his own psychological offerings to bolster those concepts.[10] A quick look at Haidt's understanding of Aristotelian virtue theory reveals, however, that he systematically misreads its main terms in order to inject into it his own brands of sentimentalism, nativism, and automatism.[11] What we end up with is controversial psychological evidence underwriting a misbegotten Aristotelianism. The second example is of a recent attempt by social scientists Kesebir and Diener to provide

empirical evidence for the predictors (most notably, for present purposes, virtue predictors) of eudaimonic well-being or flourishing. Misconceiving the virtues as potential causes, rather than constituents, of *eudaimonia*, they assume that evidence of successful predictions of subjective well-being will suffice, as "the two concepts are sufficiently close, and subjective well-being can reasonably be used as a proxy for eudaimonic well-being."[12] Their account glosses over so many important distinctions, and betrays such an inadequate grasp of the virtue-ethics landscape, that it can scarcely be taken seriously as a contribution to an ecumenical enterprise. The final example is of a philosopher, Lorraine Besser-Jones, who argues unapologetically for the need to "scale back" the traditional ambitions of Aristotelian virtue ethics, in order to make it fully naturalized and amenable to social scientific input.[13] Besser-Jones understands "virtue" in instrumentalist terms simply as a state of character that reliably and predictably enables us to act well, in the sense of satisfying innate human needs. She rejects the notion of an intrinsic motivation to engage in virtuous activity as "psychologically implausible," and she does not think that even highly developed moral agents can be expected to derive flow-like enjoyment from such activity, any more than from eating broccoli, although they will be strongly extrinsically motivated to engage in it.

I bite my tongue not to lash out at the three above accounts. In any case, such response would be superfluous to present purposes; what I am flagging here is simply that my interest in this chapter is in psychological virtue research that is conducted *without* an assumption of the need to reject, beforehand, the theoretical baggage offered by traditional virtue ethics and to revamp its basic terms. It must be said that something of a rosy picture has been emerging of late of the courtship between this (more theoretically stringent) sort of psychology and (Aristotelian) virtue ethics, with *positive psychology's* explicit aim to pursue "the social science equivalent of virtue ethics" typically being offered as a case in point.[14] The standard narrative invoked is, then, of the historical "waxing and waning" and, at present, the "waxing

again" of virtue research in psychology, with more and more psychologists (even "almost everyone today"[15]) wanting to revise the early 20th century obliteration of character-and-virtue terms from their discipline.[16] According to this narrative, the exclusion of those terms made the discipline "narrower and shallower"; hence, it stands in need of "conceptual enrichment" – and this is exactly what the courtship with contemporary virtue ethics provides.[17] Conversely, engagement with actual social scientific evidence grounds and de-trivializes philosophical virtue ethics by transporting it away from mere armchair conjectures.[18]

My aim in this chapter is not so much to reject this happy-courtship narrative as to problematize some of its refrains. The marriage of virtue ethics and empirical psychology is not made in heaven, and their courtship is not free from tiffs and spats. For example, "autonomism" (aka "armchair traditionalism") is still rife in academic moral philosophy, probably more common than "integrationism."[19] Any news of the death of virtue skepticism in psychology is also exaggerated and untimely. For instance, in my own favorite neck of the woods – applied virtue ethics as education for character – whose "symbolic capital" depends on the close alignment of public, philosophical, political, and psychological assumptions, the psychological connection arguably constitutes the weakest link. Thus, frequent doubts tend to exist in psychological circles about the very idea of character education, and many of those doubts reflect more serious misgivings about "the science" behind virtue theories and the idea of education for virtue. I have gone so far as calling this weakness "the elephant in the room" of character education.[20]

The aim in the following section is to bring the more general, underlying psychological misgivings to the fore. I, then, go on in Section 3 to categorize the recent surge of interest in virtue within psychology by way of a taxonomy – hopefully illuminating, albeit slightly tongue-in-cheek – of four different levels of engagement with virtue constructs in the

field. Section 4 moves the spotlight to potential psychological inputs into conceptual understandings of virtue and to residual philosophical doubts about that ecumenical enterprise. I close in Section 5 with further reflections on the current state of play and a prognosis of what the future may hold in store for "virtue from the perspective of psychology."

2. Psychological misgivings about virtue

What holds psychologists back from adopting a virtue-based research agenda? What turns them into virtue skeptics or virtue abnegators? Psychologists rarely write papers with titles such as "Why I am not into virtue." When they consider a certain research agenda ruled out by their criteria of scienticity, they indicate that by quietly ignoring the agenda rather than by fulminating against it. My below distillation of ten common misgivings that psychologists (and often, by extension, other social scientists) harbor about virtue is, therefore, derived as much by picking up subtle cues in discussions with some of them as on a review of the relevant literatures. I try to gather objections from different subfields within psychology, such as personality psychology and social psychology, although those do not always coincide and are sometimes at odds with one another. While I have tried to rebut or at least mitigate some of those objections in the past, space does not allow any serious critical engagement here. I simply present the below misgivings as ones which need to be responded to satisfactorily if virtue is to gain a significant foothold in psychology.

First is the *problem of normativity and adjudication*. This is the most common misgiving, and the one which requires the lengthiest elaboration, although its basic idea is simple and compelling: Psychology is a science that trades in objectivity. Virtues, however, incorporate moral (as well as other normative) values, which are subjective and relative, and also entail prescriptions. Adopting a virtue-based agenda would turn psychologists into

moralists and rob them of scientific credibility, as they would blatantly be violating Hume's two famous laws: of the distinction between facts and values and the distinction between descriptions and prescriptions. To pile on the agony, conflicts between competing virtues (such as honesty versus considerateness) are common and stand, from a moral point of view, in need of *phronesis*-guided adjudication. Psychologists, however, cannot possibly become internally engaged in such adjudications (as distinct from viewing those from the outside) since that would demote them, for good, from their role as "disenchanted" scientists.[21]

The provenance of those misgivings is often told in the form of a – now familiar – narrative of how their recognition dawned on psychologists in the 1930s, when they assumed the mantle of Weber's *Wertfreiheit* (including moral anti-realism) agenda for all social science and, more specifically, when a clear distinction came to be made, post-Allport, between personality as "character devaluated" (a topic of respectable psychological inquiry) and character as "personality evaluated" (best left to moralists).[22] This distinction has persisted, and is still fiercely clung onto by the majority of personality psychologists, although repeated empirical surveys show that the criteria of individual difference laypeople are interested in – when performing such mundane tasks as looking for the characteristics of the ideal partner in dating agencies – are moral character traits, such as honesty, rather than, say, the famous Big-Five traits. Indeed, moral traits predominate in person perception and evaluation, although most psychologists do not want to touch them with a barge-pole.[23]

The allure of the problem of normativity and adjudication, with its prohibition of value judgments in science, comes clearest to the fore in the theory of the group of people who have been most vocal in retrieving the language of virtue in psychology: *positive psychologists*. While claiming, on the one hand, to be pursuing the social-science equivalent of virtue ethics (see earlier), they appear, on the other, to be extremely embarrassed and apologetic about their agenda[24] – qualifying it in various ways. Thus, instead of abandoning moral anti-realism

explicitly – for example, by arguing that value judgments describe the world of evaluation rather than evaluating the world of description[25] – they sit on the fence with regard to moral realism, by offering their account of the value of virtues in terms of mere empirical generalizations; and they refuse to tamper in the slightest with Hume's is–ought distinction, a distinction they see as ruling out any psychological involvement in adjudication debates.[26]

However attracted they are by the ubiquity of real-life virtue discourses, which seem to offer objective rather than merely subjective or relative takes on the virtues, positive psychologists share with their less virtue-oriented colleagues the fear of wholly abandoning Hume's fact–value distinction. After giving this fear some thought,[27] it seems to me that the sticking point must be the implicit assumption that the fact–value distinction and the is–ought distinction entail each other, so that by abandoning the former one is also forced to abandon the latter. The missing but implicit premise in this argument appears to be *motivational internalism*: the thesis that all moral judgments conceptually entail motivation and hence prescription. This is a radical – albeit a popular – thesis in moral philosophy; but we have good reason to assume that Aristotle did not believe in it and that committed contemporary virtue ethicists need not either.[28] One can, for example, pass factual judgments about the goodness of honesty without intrinsically implying "Be honest!" just as one can pass factual judgments about the badness of smoking without intrinsically implying "Do not smoke!" Psychologists avail themselves all the time of judgments about good or bad psychological health without worrying that, thereby, they have turned themselves into prescriptivists. Although this is rarely made explicit, they must be assuming a thesis about the *uniqueness of moral language* which somehow rules out the possibility of the sort of motivationally externalist use of moral judgments that is considered in order for health judgments.

The uniqueness thesis may come in different forms, but a strong, *meta*-version of it is often seen in social scientific writings about morality. According to this version,

psychologists who become internally engaged in virtue research – directly or obliquely challenging the fact–value distinction – are not so much guilty of a specific error of judgment as they are of committing a serious category mistake, by misidentifying the very "nature of morality" and moral language. The function of morality is *not* to determine truth, for example about good or bad character traits or flourishing lives, but rather to prescribe rules of behavior, guarded by sanctions. Morality is thus a system of social control where the rules and sanctions "wear the trousers (i.e. that carry the meaning)." [29] On this understanding, any serious psychological attempt to overcome the problem of normativity and adjudication involves succumbing to an anti-scientific teleological impulse. Rules are not true or false; and pontificating about good or bad moral precepts is not psychology.

Second is the *problem of intrinsic worth*. Essential to Aristotle's own, and any Aristotelian, virtue ethics is the idea that virtues are intrinsically valuable, irrespective of, or at least in addition to, their extrinsic benefits.[30] This idea is typically conveyed by specifying the virtues as a defining aspect of human flourishing – indicating both that they are *irreplaceable* by anything else and *objectively valuable*. It must be said that the point is lost on most psychologists; they simply do not get it. Their own "crier in the desert," Blaine Fowers, sees instrumentalism (couched in the common currency of subjective desire) as an article of faith in most of psychology – one that is considered beyond scrutiny – and he faults this "disguised ideology" for a lot of what is ethically wrong with the discipline as it is currently practiced. [31]

Positive psychology seemed to be breaking with this tradition when Peterson and Seligman posited, as one of their criteria of character strength, that it be "morally valued in its own right, even in the absence of obvious beneficial outcomes."[32] Yet, apparently oblivious to this assumption, most of positive psychology is conducted under the guidance of business-as-usual instrumentalism. For instance, Barbara Fredrickson treats gratitude simply as a positive

emotion that is valuable insofar as it "broadens and builds" personal resources.[33] This means that gratitude is, in principle, replaceable by any other means that happens to be more useful for this instrumental task – whereas gratitude *qua* quasi-Aristotelian virtue,[34] as presumably understood by Peterson and Seligman, would be an irreplaceable part of the flourishing life. It goes without saying that instrumentalism is also rampant in contemporary theories of character education, where "character virtues" are often understood simply as any performance traits that contribute to improved school attainment.[35]

Third is the *problem of situationism*. While the idea that human agents are swayed by the force of situational factors, rather than robust character traits, never achieved the same cult status in psychology as in philosophy[36] – and even seems to have gone into something of a remission there[37] – many psychologists (especially social psychologists) will consider virtue ethicists to be too cavalier about situationist findings. Notably, Aristotelian "dispositionists" have developed a standard and much rehearsed set of objections to situationism.[38] The most famous of those is the *anti-behavioristic objection*, according to which the mainstay of moral character does not lie in behavioral reactions – which may be panic-ridden and "out of character," especially if agents are placed in unfamiliar situations where experience-derived scripts do not kick in – but rather in (often retrospective) emotional reactions. In general, virtue is not supposed to be about correct behavior exclusively, or even essentially, but a multi-factored schema of perception, cognition, motivation, and reason-responsive emotion. While psychologists may acknowledge this objection, they will be quick to point out that the proposed stability and robustness of those additional factors (beyond behavior) then needs to be established through empirical research – a request that philosophers have typically spurned.

Another tack taken by philosophers is to argue that a lot of the situationist debate is conducted at cross-purposes, as the opposing camps simply operate with different sets of

conceptual understandings of the very notion of a "situation." So, whereas situationists focus on situations that are broad, passive, extraordinary, and subject to strong contextual pressures, dispositionists confine their attention to situations that are narrow, active, ordinary, and subject to weak pressures. [39] Some psychologists have contributed to this conceptual discourse; [40] yet the mainstream view in psychological circles is to be skeptical of any "solutions" to psychological quandaries that are meant to rely on mere conceptual maneuvers.

Fourth is the problem of *sentimentalism*. I use "sentimentalism" here as an umbrella term for a range of interrelated theories that Jonathan Haidt has chosen to call "the new synthesis" in moral psychology: [41] theories marrying hard sentimentalist ontology with nativism, social intuitionism, and modularism. The "new synthesis" draws, *inter alia*, upon state-of-the-art neuroscientific evidence, purported to show that in moral judgment, "intuition comes first, strategic reasoning second."[42] Findings about how our emotion-and-intuition-controlled "dog" simply wags its rational "tail" *ex post facto* are meant to demonstrate that the typical virtue-ethics view of the reflective and rational expression and development of moral traits is essentially misguided. [43] That said, quite a lot of the critique by Haidt and his colleagues of hard rationalist moralities will be music to the ears of Aristotelian virtue ethicists. After all, no other moral theory is as sensitive to the emotional construction of selfhood and morality. Yet virtue ethicists will consider the pendulum in this new sentimentalism to have swung too far away from reason, and they will in the end take no less serious an objection to Haidt than they do to Kant, seeing the former as representing the deficiency but the latter the excess of the golden mean of "soft" (emotion-imbued) rationalism.[44] But the sentimentalists remain unfazed, arguing – with some reason, it seems – that it is then incumbent on virtue ethicists to offer alternative explanations of the empirical findings in question. Implicit in this demand is also the charge that Aristotelian virtue ethics is seriously out of touch by not taking account of current neuroscientific research. The great

scientist Aristotle would probably be dividing his time between the philosophical armchair and the MRI-lab if he were alive today, but it is true that not many current virtue ethicists seem to share Aristotle's hard naturalist willingness to get his hands dirty.[45]

Fifth is the *problem of predictivism*. Virtue ethicists typically obsess with identifying the precise conceptual conditions of individual virtues and how they fit into specific spheres of human experience; consider for example Roberts's careful work on the virtue of gratitude.[46] Psychologists typically find this exclusive obsession with conceptual issues quirky or, at best, mildly amusing. What they will be looking for are broad dimensions of temperament that can offer "incremental validity" over and beyond the Big-Five traits. For example, Wood, Maltby, Stewart, and Joseph conceptualize gratitude as a broad, unitary personality trait involving "a life orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in the world."[47] There is no concern here with identifying features that are conceptually necessary for ascriptions of gratitude to be fitting (as distinct from other putative emotional virtues such as appreciation), nor with grounding this specification rigorously either in the judgments of the "many" or the "wise." What matters most for them is that this broad "new" trait seems to offer validity beyond any of the Big-Five ones in predicting significant life outcomes such as subjective well-being. This predictivism, which animates much of social science, is entirely foreign to the mindset of most philosophers and constitutes a major barrier to cross-disciplinary understandings and collaborations.

Sixth is the *problem of language*. In addition to previously explained concerns about the value-ladenness of virtue talk, many psychologists worry that the concepts of "moral character" and (especially) "virtue" are not proper objects of scientific study in modernity, either because they have fallen largely out of everyday use, or because they carry unfortunate connotations in laypeople's current language (as religious, conservative, old-fashioned/Victorian, etc.). The empirical evidence here seems to be mixed. While some

sources record a decline in the use of virtue concepts in popular texts of late,[48] other sources indicate that ordinary people, even children, have no difficulties in relating to the language of the virtues in much the same way that philosophers would and without any of the anticipated biases.[49] However, those conflicting findings aside, it must be said that philosophers are in general much more sanguine than psychologists are of the possibility of retrieving and making salient to ordinary language-users philosophical content, embodied in classic language, that may have become dissipated in everyday parlance.

Seventh is the *problem of prosociality*. When psychologists discuss morality, they commonly do so in terms of "prosociality":[50] a term rarely used by moral philosophers in general or virtue ethicists in particular. Further, when psychologists think of prosocial traits, it seems to me that what first springs to their mind are the attributes of empathy and sympathy, which undisputedly benefit other persons and, arguably, society at large. Virtue ethicists typically have a much more nuanced view of the morally well-rounded life: namely, a life with a proper admixture of virtues. Among the virtues that they are likely to foreground are some that seem to have very scant connections to "prosociality," or may even appear inimical to it. Examples of the former sort of virtues are the self-regarding ones such as pride. Examples of the latter are desert-based virtues such as Aristotle's "satisfied indignation": the virtuous pleasure at another person's deserved bad fortune.[51] Most psychologists will fail to distinguish between this presumed "virtue" and simple *Schadenfreude*, which can hardly count as "prosocial." I mention this here as a special problem for psychologists in adopting a virtue-based perspective, for although "prosociality" is not a word that falls easily from the lips of utilitarians and Kantians either, the problem is compounded in virtue ethics, which defines "morality" in terms of flourishing – and can easily make do not only without the word "prosocial" but also the word "moral" which was not part of Aristotle's vocabulary.

Eight is the problem of *anti-self-realism*. Paragons of virtue in Aristotle's system are not only "really worthy" of great things; they also "think" themselves worthy of them.[52] In psychological jargon, good character is thus not only about "selfhood" but also "self-concept" or "self-identity": the beliefs we harbor about our "selves" and the characteristics we attribute to them. Yet in virtue ethics, the emphasis has remained firmly on character *qua* actual moral selfhood. This jars, however, with much of contemporary social psychology, which is typically anti-self-realist – namely, rejects the ontological existence of any underlying, actual self beneath all the self-attributions, or at least deems this putative self to be epistemologically impenetrable.[53] Notably, this "cult of identity" in social psychology distinguishes itself as markedly from the "cult of personality" in personality psychology as it does from the "cult of character" in virtue ethics. One might presume that focusing exclusively on (socially constructed) self-identity rather than any deep underlying structures would at least facilitate efforts at character education. That is not the case, however, as social psychologists claim to have discovered a certain need people have for self-confirmations of existing identities – a need that typically trumps the need for self-enhancements.[54] Moreover, even if self-concept can be enhanced (e.g. by boosting self-esteem), such interventions can be more psycho-socially hazardous than leaving well alone.[55] In general, social psychologists will question virtue ethicists' "naïve self-realism" and their optimistic view about the transparency of the self and its amenability to change.[56]

Ninth is the *problem of measurement*. While it is perhaps not a problem for pure theorists in virtue ethics that the constructs of "virtue" and "character" are difficult to measure, this problem is an acute one for applied virtue ethics, such as character education in schools, as proposed interventions in practical settings will not be taken seriously, either by social scientists or policy makers, if no methods exist to measure impact. It must be admitted that efforts at measurements in this area have so far been either non-existent – relying instead

on anecdotal evidence – or lame: relying on proxies for character such as moral reasoning skills, mere behavioral change, or self-concept development, none of which amounts, however, to exploring what virtue ethicists themselves understand by the cultivation of character. A recent large conference on this problem revealed the disarray and, to some extent, the despair in the field.[57] Many psychologists will consider the sad state of character measurement as a reason for sidestepping the field altogether.[58] Others react differently, either suggesting that mere self-reports can after all do the trick,[59] or embarking on a journey to help character educationists find better ways to measure what they want to measure.[60]

Tenth is the *problem of education*.[61] This problem has both a theoretical and a practical side. The theoretical side of it is that while contemporary accounts still rely heavily on educational methods proposed by Aristotle, his descriptions of those methods are neither sufficiently detailed nor fully coherent internally.[62] Moreover, as psychologists will be quick to point out, the Aristotelian staples have rarely been brought up to date in light of current empirical findings. The practical side is closely related to the above problem of measurement: Character educationists have been successful in demonstrating the effectiveness of interventions to enhance (a) "virtue literacy" (cognitive understanding of virtues and ability to apply them to new, relevant contexts),[63] and interventions to improve (b) virtuous (looking) behavior.[64] However, to demonstrate that an improvement in real virtue (on a virtue ethical understanding) has taken place, it needs to be shown not only that (a) and (b) co-occur but also that (a) causes (b). Failure to show that so far will – not unreasonably – be seen as a chink in the armor of applied virtue ethics by many psychologists.[65] Another large group of psychologists – behaviorists and quasi-behaviorists – will take a different tack, however, by simply questioning what all this fuss concerning virtue and causality is about if the interventions really make kids behave better.

3. Retrievals of virtue in psychology – a taxonomy

As I have now paid due respect to the anti-virtue catechisms – misgivings in psychology that bespeak various sorts of skepticism about incorporating virtue in psychological research – it is time to turn to what is often referred to as the *retrieval*, or at any rate the recent *surge of interest*, in virtue within the discipline. While it is true that a crowd of psychologists seems to have gathered around the construct of virtue of late, a crowd is not company, at least not when it is as divided as the one in question here. My doubts that a major retrieval of virtue is underway in psychology – as distinct from scattered, individual exercises in retrieval – will be expressed below by dint of a light-hearted taxonomy. To cut a long story short, from what I can see, the group of current psychologists who have made efforts to take on board virtue-and-character-related insights can be divided into four broad camps – of what I call the "dabblers," the "reconceptualizers," the "conciliators," and the "mavericks." None of those is, however, front-of-house or mainstream in contemporary academic psychology, and of the four, only the "mavericks" can be counted as rabid converts to the cause.

Characterizing the *dabblers* is that they have identified a niche for virtue within mainstream psychology but – erroneously supposing their hands to be clean of philosophy – have done so without engaging with the concept in a theoretically profound way. I see positive psychologists as the prototypical dabblers. With a few individual exceptions within the movement, its grasp of virtue theory is perfunctory; and it is not clear how the ingredients of Aristotelian virtue and "flow" are meant to blend with Stoic resiliency, Buddhist mindfulness, and hedonist pleasure into a uniform soup. Hence, virtue ethicists need a long spoon to sup with positive psychologists.[66] On a more positive note, there is no denying that positive psychologists have stuck their necks out in spearheading recent moves to "reclaim the study of character and virtue as legitimate topics of psychological inquiry";[67] and there is much to admire in Peterson and Seligman's epoch-making 2004 work, not least its consistent

focus on virtues as "the bedrock of the human condition."[68] The authors do argue skillfully throughout, and with considerable chutzpah, that bringing virtue into the fold of psychology provides it with "richer psychological content and greater explanatory power."[69] Their empirical research into the universality of common virtues and character strengths also does much to rebut the widespread cultural relativism about virtues in psychological circles, crystallized in Kohlberg's famous dismissal of any "bag of virtues" theories.[70] Yet there still exists in their work the fatal and unfounded prejudice that fully relinquishing Hume's fact–value distinction will mean abandoning his is–ought distinction (see previous section), thus turning psychology into prescriptive moralism. They have also failed to grasp the Aristotelian point that offering a theory of virtue education without a virtue adjudicator (such as *phronesis*) is doomed to be a self-defeating, futile endeavor.[71]

Furthermore, although Peterson and Seligman's work seems to indicate an understanding of the intrinsic value of virtues in a flourishing life, most of their fellow positive psychologists still understand virtue exclusively in instrumentalist terms, as already noted. This disharmony within the movement will be put to a serious test in the forthcoming launch of a large international initiative on "positive education" (the educational incarnation of positive psychology). The current mission statement of positive education strikes a delicate balance between a non-instrumentalist flourishing agenda and an instrumentalist efficiency-and-positivity one.[72] Future developments of positive education will decide whether positive psychologists will want to advance from, or remain at, the level of dabblers in virtue.

The *reconceptualizers* engage with virtue concepts in more theoretically nuanced ways than the dabblers, adopting Aristotelian insights and making a sustained attempt to disabuse their colleagues of misunderstandings. They also explain and justify the role of character *qua* "personality evaluated" on psychological agendas. However, the reconceptualizers have typically either not (yet) teased out the practical implications of their

theoretical retrievals, or they are just beginning to subject their notions to empirical scrutiny. A research group at Wake Forest University, comprising William Fleeson, R. Michael Furr, Eranda Jayawickreme, and others, represents typical reconceptualizing. In an enlightening overview article, they chart the advantages that a character-based approach can bring to the study of moral behavior, and they propose an ambitious research agenda, on which psychologists and philosophers could collaborate.[73] In another article, they make practical use of their budding reconceptualizations through a novel contribution to the situationism debate – by characterizing virtue traits as "density distributions of personality states."[74] As opposed to the dabblers, the reconceptualizers are distinctly "upwardly mobile" with regard to their understanding and application of virtue constructs.

The *conciliators* have gone further down the line of making practical use of virtue ethical insights. However, they typically try to combine those with other paradigms through intrepid fusions or elaborate syntheses. Darcia Narvaez and Dan Lapsley count as prototypical conciliators. While suggesting that academic fence-mending may sometimes be more reasonable than fence-crossing – and preferring "psychologized morality" to "moralized psychology"[75] – they have made significant strides in fusing virtue ethical insights with neo-Kohlbergianism, as well as with recent moral-identity theories, into a multi-faceted social-cognitive approach to personality.[76] Moral character is then understood in terms of the (chronic) accessibility of moral schemas for social information-processing; and on this understanding such schemas (rather than traits) carry our dispositions.[77] Of the two authors, Narvaez seems to be the even greater conciliator, as she also draws on evolutionary theory to identify basic ethical orientations (issuing in what she calls Triune Ethics Theory[78]) and, more recently, she has added a version of moral primitivism, based on early-life neurobiology, to the pack.[79] Difficult as it is to keep up with Narvaez's ever-expanding syntheses, the virtue

elements continue to be seen as complementary "add-ons" in this enterprise rather than its "core"; hence, it is not apt to designate it as a full retrieval of virtue.

Two other recent conciliatory efforts deserve a mention here. Damon and Colby continue to expand their impressive research agenda on moral exemplarity, drawing on classic, virtue-ethics sources no less than recent work on moral identity and their own empirical findings.[80] Moreover, in a surprising twist, proponents of Self-Determination Theory – a powerful and widely applied model of human well-being – have recently teamed up with an Aristotelian educational philosopher, Randall Curren, to strengthen the Aristotelian elements in STD-research,[81] thus defying the challenge that this model has typically been considered non-virtue-relevant and even amoral.

All these conciliatory efforts can be seen as genuine exercises in virtue retrieval. Yet only in the case of the *mavericks* will the terminology of "full retrieval" be credible. The mavericks have disposed of the fact–value distinction altogether and argue that in order to make sense of people's actual psychology, we need to apply an Aristotelian conceptual repertoire to it. Blaine Fowers is the maverick *par excellence*, and his 2005 book, *Virtue and Psychology*, must count as the unofficial bible of virtue-based psychology. At once tough-minded and invigorating, Fowers is more than just conversant in virtue; he accommodates it explicitly into his very understanding of what psychology *is* (or rather *should be*) about, and also suggests an essential role for the virtues in the professional ethics and education of psychological practitioners.[82] Most significantly, he is actively engaged in addressing, one by one, the remaining misgivings in psychology about virtue that I reviewed in the previous section;[83] and in his latest contribution, he attempts to square his virtue-based psychology with the latest research in evolutionary psychology and neuroscience.[84] While perhaps slightly more optimistic than I am about the Sesame of academic psychology opening up to

virtue talk, he does rue that the current "psychological literatures on the topics of virtue and the good life are extremely fragmented."[85]

Another notable maverick is Barry Schwartz who has done more than anyone else to correct positive psychological misapprehensions about the role of *phronesis* as an adjudicating meta-virtue, and to explain how an understanding of this role is compatible with our state-of-the-art knowledge about the working of the nervous system.[86] At the extreme end of the scale is, then, Svend Brinkmann who, in spelling out his bold claim that psychology "is a moral science and psychological phenomena are moral phenomena,"[87] disposes not only with the fact–value distinction but also with the is–ought distinction – a daring if perhaps an overly ambitious move.[88] Only in the case of these mavericks can we profitably speak of the full alignment of the elements that make up a comprehensively virtue-sensitive psychology. However, as the mavericks only constitute a small minority of *outliers* and *gatecrashers* in today's psychology, it is premature to consider them to have turned the tide of the mainstream or, indeed, assuaged the worries that I delineated in the previous section.

4. Specifying virtue concepts – integrators versus traditionalists

I have so far concentrated on controversies regarding the role of psychology in substantive debates about virtue. There is another level, however, where many theorists see a role for psychology, namely in helping identify the meaning of virtue terms. Received wisdom has it that psychologists and philosophers go about specifying the "grammar" or conceptual contours of open-textured, naturalistic concepts[89] – for example concepts designing virtues such as gratitude – in radically different ways. While philosophers rely on their own armchair intuitions about the nature and scope of such concepts, psychologists aim at specifications that are social scientific "all the way down" to the conceptual common ground, thus eliciting the views of "the many", rather than just "the wise," about what concepts really mean.

We need to resist having such rigid stereotypes foisted upon us, however, as a close examination of actual conceptual methodologies reveals that psychologists are no less prone than philosophers to relying on their own intuitions or *argumentum-ad-verecundiam* nods to supposed authorities in the field.[90] To be sure, a distinction can be made between "armchair traditionalists" and "integrators" in conceptual studies, but that distinction (a) is not clear-cut but exists on a sliding scale, and (b) cuts across the psychology–philosophy divide, although the firmest digging-in of theoretical heels against integrationism usually comes from philosophers.[91] Psychologists are in general more likely to find "mere" conceptual controversies too trivial to enter into; hence the standard philosophical complaint about psychology as a field of "conceptual sloppiness" where language has gone "on holiday."[92]

The *integrators* will typically ground their approach in evidential naturalism, according to which eliciting laypeople's beliefs about a given concept – say, gratitude – constitutes the natural "first word" of teasing out the grammar of the concept, if not necessarily the "last word,"[93] as people may be conceptually confused and need (re)education. This qualification will be particularly apt in the case of children where an education towards "literacy" in a virtue such as gratitude will involve teaching them the proper application of the relevant virtue term.[94] If however, say, 80% of people disagree in the end with a given philosophical elucidation of a concept, this creates a presumption *against* that elucidation; it becomes incumbent on the philosopher to provide a strong justification for disrespecting ordinary language.[95] This is what it means to take laypeople's beliefs as "the first word," for if the philosopher subsequently wants to use the given specification to make normative claims about the given virtue – in order to sway people one way or another – those claims will miss the mark if the virtue term means something radically different to the public than to the philosopher. Notably, many psychologists who either resent or remain agnostic about psychology's role in normative debates about virtues will be sympathetic to psychology's role

in helping explore people's conceptual understandings of virtue terms – and they may even be open to ecumenical collaborations with philosophers in this area.[96] They will be wary, however, of philosophers assuming the role of "amateur experimentalists" – imitating badly what psychologists can do well.[97]

As already noted, although many psychologists covertly assume the position of *armchair traditionalism* in conceptual studies, only philosophers typically argue for it overtly.[98] What they will point out is that conceptual analysis is philosophers' traditional stock in trade – and since it has worked pretty well in the past, philosophical cobblers had better stick to their last. This does not mean fighting shy altogether of empirical evidence about actual concept use, but rather accepting that such evidence can only be of *marginal* relevance. The main reason is that performance errors are common in laypeople's use of terms. For example, "loose talk" is ubiquitous, where people apply concepts to referents that fulfill some (perhaps subsidiary) criteria of proper application but lack crucial necessary features. What the philosopher is interested in, however, is proper and coherent concept use; hence the need to "trim the ragged edges" of ordinary use. On this view, the likelihood that any social scientific surveys of language use provide useful insights into virtue concepts is low. As Kauppinen puts it: "The odds are that either the outcome is easily anticipated from the armchair, or one or another distorting factor intervenes to produce results that merit no weight in conceptual analysis."[99]

As suggested above, armchair traditionalism and integrationism are extreme ends of a spectrum. Thus, Robert C. Roberts has amended his elucidation of the conceptual contours of gratitude slightly in light of empirical evidence, showing that only 1–2% of people, young or old, subscribe to the view that a proper application of the term "gratitude" requires the benefactor to have gone above and beyond the call of duty in creating a benefit for the beneficiary.[100] However, although now having relaxed his previous "supererogation

condition" on gratitude, Roberts remains within the camp of traditionalism through his clear separation of philosophical and empirical considerations in the field of conceptual studies.

All in all, while the study of virtue concepts is an area where psychological and philosophical research could potentially run in beneficial adjustments to one another, it is still moot to what extent such collaborations will materialize in years to come and prove useful.

5. Concluding remarks

The theoretical case for academic ecumenism between psychology and philosophy in researching virtue is strong. It is difficult to see how philosophical musings that are not compatible with social scientific evidence can have real-world traction, especially in applied areas of virtue ethics, such as character education. It is also difficult to see how psychological research into laypeople's beliefs or understandings of virtue can make do without taking account of the conceptual and normative work that philosophers – dating back to the ancient Greeks – have conducted on virtue, work that often informs those very beliefs and understandings, tacitly or explicitly. Moreover, as laypeople understand individual differences substantially in terms of character-and-virtue differences, it seems to go against the very grain of a social scientific mindset to ignore this understanding.

Interdisciplinarity is an ideal to which lip service is commonly paid nowadays; yet it is notoriously hard to achieve. I have argued in this chapter that despite honorable efforts from both sides, it is still too early to say whether interdisciplinary co-operations between psychologists and philosophers in the area of virtue are edging closer to what could be truly called a collapse of an academic fence. At any rate, it is clear that, just as Valerie Tiberius has argued in the case of objective accounts of well-being,[101] virtue-based accounts of personality are still on the fringes of psychological work. Criers in the desert, such as Blaine Fowers, are being swamped by more domineering voices; recall Section 3. Section 2 indicated that

mainstream psychologists will need to abandon a number of long-held convictions for a full retrieval of virtue to emerge – as virtue constructs cannot be grafted onto alien stems. Moreover, Section 4 reminded us that skepticism about ecumenism in this area is not limited to psychologists; many philosophers fear that they would be spreading their energies too thin, or even importing foreign elements to their theorizing, if they failed to keep a secure distance from raw empirical evidence about how people use virtue terms. Questions of possible co-operations are also not only *academic* questions; they relate to *power relations* between individuals and disciplines. Even the essentially ecumenically minded psychologists Lapsley and Narvaez find it hard to conceptualize such co-operations in terms that do not reflect potential power conflicts between "psychologized morality" and "moralized psychology."[102]

While not the most motivated critic of "integrators" and "mavericks," I have tried in this chapter to produce as even-handed a reality check as possible. Mitigating the somewhat pessimistic conclusions that I may seem to have reached must be the historical point that a much-hoped-for "new ecumenism" between psychology and philosophy on virtue would be anything but "new." Rather, it would resume a thread from the Enlightenment and pre-Enlightenment past when most, if not all, moral philosophers considered it obvious that their philosophy should be called before the tribunal of psychology, which at that time, of course, was still pursued as part of philosophy. It was not so much that psychology abandoned philosophy, then, as the other way around: Moral philosophers (especially Kantians) pulled up the drawbridge on empirical evidence. Subsequently, they found themselves in the peculiar position of having surrounded themselves by a moat drained of water.[103] Some of them – virtue ethicists in particular – have now dared to cross this moat again, but the question remains if psychologists are ready to meet them half-way, or if they continue to consider it more sensible to keep a safe distance, following the principle that good fences make good neighbors.[104]

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[1] Cf. David Carr's contribution to this volume.

[2] See K. Kristjánsson, *The Self and Its Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), chap. 3.

[3] For an overview, see e.g. J. Annas, *Intelligent Virtue* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); K. Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education* (London: Routledge, 2015), chap. 1.

[4] O. Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 32.

[5] See e.g. D. Lapsley and D. Narvaez, "'Psychologized Morality' and Its Discontents, or, Do Good Fences Make Good Neighbours?" In *Getting Involved: Global Citizenship Development and Sources of Moral Value*, edited by F. Oser and W. Veugelers (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008): 279–292.

[6] G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33(1) (1958): 1–19.

[7] L. Besser-Jones, *Eudaimonic Ethics: The Philosophy and Psychology of Living Well* (London: Routledge, 2014), 5.

[8] See e.g. M. Ferkany and B. Creed, "Intellectualist Aristotelian Character Education: An Outline and Assessment," *Educational Theory* 64(6) (2014): 567–587, esp. p. 571.

[9] See e.g. L. Gulliford, "Psychology's Contribution to Ethics: Two Case Studies." In *Dual-Process Theories in Moral Psychology: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Theoretical, Empirical, and Practical Considerations*, edited by C. Brand (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2015): in press.

[10] See J. Haidt and C. Joseph, "Intuitive Ethics: How Innately Prepared Intuitions Generate Culturally Variable Virtues," *Daedalus* 133(4) (2004): 55–66, esp. pp. 61–62; J. Haidt, "Out-take from *The Righteous Mind*: Virtue Ethics" (2012). Available at: http://righteousmind.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Righteous-Mind-outtake.virtue-ethics.pdf.

[11] For a critique, see K. Kristjánsson, "The 'New Synthesis in Moral Psychology' versus Aristotelianism: Content and Consequences." In *Dual-Process Theories in Moral Psychology*, in press.

[12] P. Kesebir and E. Diener, "A Virtuous Cycle: The Relationship between Happiness and Virtue." In *The Philosophy and Psychology of Character and Happiness*, edited by N. E. Snow and F. V. Trivigno (London: Routledge, 2014): 287–305, p. 288.

[13] Besser-Jones, *Eudaimonic Ethics*, 27.

[14] C. Peterson and M. E. P. Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 89.

[15] Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues,* 5.

[16] See B. J. Fowers, "Placing Virtue and the Human Good in Psychology," *Journal of Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology* 32(1) (2012): 1–9, p. 4.

[17] B. J. Fowers, *Virtue and Psychology: Pursuing Excellence in Ordinary Practices* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2005), 3–4.

[18] See e.g. A. Higgins and A. Dyschkant, "Interdisciplinary Collaborations in Philosophy," *Metaphilosophy* 45(4) (2014): 372–398. My discussion in this chapter is almost entirely confined to social scientific evidence from *psychology*; a corollary chapter could be written, however, about the alleged retrieval of virtue in sociology; cf. A. Sayer, *Why Things Matter to People: Social Science, Values and Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[19] See e.g. A. Kauppinen, "Ethics and Empirical Psychology – Critical Remarks to Empirically Informed Ethics." In *Empirically Informed Ethics: Morality between Facts and Norms*, edited by M. Christen (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014): 279–305.

[20] Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education*, chap. 8.

[21] For a clear statement of this position, see e.g. H. H. Kendler, "Psychology and Ethics: Interactions and Conflicts," *Philosophical Psychology* 15(4) (2002): 489–508.

[22] G. W. Allport, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (New York: Holt, 1937), 52. For the story of this sea change, see e.g. K. Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices in Positive Psychology: A Philosophical Critique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), chap. 3.

[23] G. P. Goodwin, J. Piazza, and P. Rozin, "Moral Character Predominates in Person Perception and Evaluation," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 106(1) (2014): 148–168; cf. Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices*, chap. 3.

[24] As Peterson and Seligman freely acknowledge, they constantly looked over their shoulders, "fearing that we would be criticized as politically incorrect or insensitive," *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 58.

[25] This is the position taken in J. Kovesi's classic, *Moral Notions* (London: Routledge, 1971).

[26] See esp. M. E. P. Seligman, *Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfillment* (New York: Free Press, 2002) and Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*. For a critique, see Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices*, chap. 2.

[27] See Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices*, chaps. 4–5.

[28] See Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices*, chap. 5. For the opposite view, see C. Strandberg, "Aristotle's Internalism in the *Nicomachean Ethics*," *Journal of Value Inquiry* 34(1) (2000): 71–87.

[29] See e.g. M. L. Fein, "Social Science and Morality: An Empirical Analysis," *Society* 51(5) (2014): 452–463.

[30] Notably, one need not subscribe to any form of virtue ethics, narrowly understood, to grasp the idea of the intrinsic value of the virtues; this was for example the conception of the utilitarian John Stuart Mill, see J. Driver, "Mill, Moral Sentimentalism, and the Cultivation of Virtue." In *Cultivating Virtue: Perspectives from Philosophy, Theology, and Psychology*, edited by N. E. Snow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 49–64.

[31] B. J. Fowers, "Instrumentalism and Psychology: Beyond Using and Being Used," *Theory and Psychology* 20(1) (2010): 102–124.

[32] Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 19.

[33] B. Fredrickson, "Gratitude, Like Other Positive Emotions, Broadens and Builds." In *The Psychology of Gratitude*, edited by R. A. Emmons and M. E. McCullough (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004): 145–166.

[34] Even if Aristotle himself did not acknowledge gratitude as a virtue (a contested issue), Aristotelians can. See K. Kristjánsson, "An Aristotelian Virtue of Gratitude," *Topoi* 34: in press. doi:10.1007/s.11245-013-9213-8.

[35] See e.g. P. Tough, *How Children Succeed: Grit, Curiosity, and the Hidden Power of Character* (London: Random House, 2013). For a critique, see Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education*, chap. 1. Cf. also Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, *Framework for Character Education in Schools*. Available at: http://jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/other-centre-papers/Framework..pdf.

[36] See e.g. J. Doris, *Lack of Character: Personality and Moral Behavior* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and, even more radically, G. Harman, "No Character or Personality," *Business Ethics Quarterly* 13(1) (2003): 87–94.

[37] On this remission, drawing on W. Mischel and Y. Shoda, "A Cognitive–Affective System Theory of Personality: Reconceptualizing Situations, Dispositions, Dynamics, and Invariance in Personality Structure," *Psychological Review* 102(2) (1995): 246–268, see E. Jayawickreme, P. Meindl, E. G. Helzer, R. M. Furr and W. Fleeson, "Virtuous States and Virtuous Traits: How the Empirical Evidence Regarding the Existence of Broad Traits Saves Virtue Ethics from the Situationist Critique," *Theory and Research in Education* 12(3) (2014): 283-308; G. T. Lefevor, B. J. Fowers, S. Ahn, L. Cohen and S. Lang, "On the Necessity and Sufficiency of Situational Influences on Helping Behavior: A Meta-Analysis," manuscript in preparation. For a philosophical elaboration, see N. E. Snow, *Virtue as Social Intelligence: An Empirically Grounded Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010).

[38] See Kristjánsson, *The Self and Its Emotions*, chap. 6.

[39] See Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices*, chap. 6.

[40] See e.g. Y. Yang, Y., S. J. Read, and L. C. Miller, "The Concept of Situations," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 3(6) (2009): 1018–1037; H. T. Reis, "Reinvigorating the Concept of Situation in Social Psychology," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 12(4) (2008): 311–329.

[41] J. Haidt, "The New Synthesis in Moral Psychology," *Science* 316 (18 May) (2007): 998–1002.

[42] J. Haidt, "Moral Psychology for the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Moral Education* 42(3) (2013): 281–297, p. 286.

[43] J. Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment," *Psychological Review* 108(4) (2001): 814–834.

[44] See Kristjánsson, "The New Synthesis."

[45] Yet see O. Flanagan and R. A. Williams, "What Does the Modularity of Morals Have to Do with Ethics? Four Moral Sprouts Plus or Minus a Few," *Topics in Cognitive Science* 2(3) (2010): 430–453.

[46] R. C. Roberts, "The Blessings of Gratitude: A Conceptual Analysis." In *The Psychology of Gratitude*, 58–78.

[47] A. M. Wood, J. Maltby, N. Stewart, and S. Joseph, "Conceptualizing Gratitude and Appreciation as a Unitary Personality Trait," *Personality and Individual Differences* 44(7) (2008): 621–632.

[48] See e.g. P. Kesebir and S. Kesebir, "The Cultural Salience of Moral Character and Virtue Declined in Twentieth Century America," *Journal of Positive Psychology* 7(6) (2012): 471–480.

[49] See e.g. J. Arthur, T. Harrison, D. Carr, K. Kristjánsson, and I. Davison, *The Knightly Virtues: Cultivating Good Character through Literature.* (Birmingham: Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, 2014). Available at: http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/KV%20New%20PDF/KnightlyVirtuesReport.pdf. Cf. D. Walker, R. Curren, and C. Jones, "True Friendships among Children: A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation," submitted manuscript.

[50] Sometimes the even blander term, "positive relationships," is used.

[51] See K. Kristjánsson, *Justice and Desert-Based Emotions* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), chap. 3.

[52] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. T. Irwin (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1985), 97 (1123b2–4).

[53] Interest in self-concept *qua* identity is obviously not limited to social psychology. Not to mention whole schools of thought in sociology (e.g. Bourdieu and his followers on *habitus*), a number of philosophers have offered penetrating analyses of the psycho-moral organizing role of self-concept(ions); among them thinkers otherwise as distinct as Harry Frankfurt and Charles Taylor. Yet self-concept is typically not high on virtue-ethics agendas, with the exception (perhaps) of Alasdair MacIntyre on narrative selfhood. For references and a discussion, see Kristjánsson, *The Self and Its Emotions*, chap. 2.

[54] See W. B. Swann, Jr., *Self-Traps: The Elusive Quest for Higher Self-Esteem* (New York: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1996).

[55] See R. F. Baumeister, J. D. Campbell, J. I. Krueger, and K. D. Vohs, "Does High Self-esteem Cause Better Performance, Interpersonal Success, Happiness, or Healthier Lifestyles?" *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 4(1) (2003): 1–44.

[56] Not much of this alleged optimism can be found in Aristotle himself, however, see Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education*, chap. 5.

[57] All the contributions are available at: http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/485/papers/conference-papers/can-virtue-be-measured-papers.

[58] Harking back to Allport, *Personality*.

[59] The VIA-surveys, used in positive psychology, utilize simple self-reports. See Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*. Seligman seems now to be getting cold feet about this methodology, however, see further in Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education*, chap. 3.

[60] See e.g. B. J. Fowers, "Toward Programmatic Research on Virtue Assessment: Challenges and Prospects," *Theory and Research in Education* 12(3) (2014): 309–328.

[61] Cf. David Carr's contribution to this volume.

[62] For a discussion and possible amendments, see Kristjánsson, *Aristotelian Character Education*.

[63] See e.g. Arthur et al.*, Knightly Virtues*; cf. D. Carr and T. Harrison, *Educating Character through Stories* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2015).

[64] See various examples in M. W. Berkowitz and M. C. Bier, *What Works in Character Education: A Research-Driven Guide for Educators* (Washington, DC: Character Education Partnership, 2006). Available at: http://www.specialneedsbsa.org/OrgHeaders/2523/What%20Works%20in%20Character%20Education.pdf.
Notably, Berkowitz – one of the most prominent advocates of virtue-based character education in the U.S.A. – is a life-span developmental psychologist himself by training and might thus seem to constitute a counter-example to the bleak picture drawn in the following section. However, most of his recent work would count as "educational" rather than "psychological," narrowly understood.

[65] Obviously, causality is a tricky notion in both philosophy and psychology. Some psychologists take co-occurrence as a proxy for causality in a more robust sense, or even *as* causality. Others may simply argue that if observed behavioural changes follow immediately upon the heels of the invocation of a programme of virtue education – aimed at changing states of character – then an inference to the best possible explanation will ascribe those behavioural changes to changes in character.

[66] This is an overarching point argued in Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices*.

[67] Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 3.

[68] Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 4.

[69] Peterson and Seligman, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, 88.

[70] L. Kohlberg, *Essays on Moral Development,* Vol. 1*: The Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper and Row), 184. Apart from some efforts from the neo-Kohlbergians mentioned later in this section, scant attention has been given, by positive psychologists and other psychologists, to the developmental aspects of virtue acquisition. The task of reconstructing a Kohlberg-like theory of virtue development has thus fallen to philosophers, doing so mainly from the armchair, see e.g. W. Sanderse, "An Aristotelian Model of Moral Development," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 68 (2015): in press. For a notable exception to the lack of interest in virtue in developmental psychology, see R. A. Thompson, "The Development of Virtue: A Perspective from Developmental Psychology." In *Cultivating Virtue*, 279–306.

[71] See B. Schwartz and K. E. Sharpe, "Practical Wisdom: Aristotle Meets Positive Psychology," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 7(3) (2006): 377–395; cf. Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices*, chap 7.

[72] Available at: http://www.ipositive-education.net/movement/.

[73] W. Fleeson, R. M. Furr, E. Jayawickreme, P. Meindl, and E. G. Helzer, "Character: The Prospects for a Personality-Based Perspective on Morality," *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 8(4) (2014): 178–191.

[74] Jayawickreme et al., "Virtuous States and Virtuous Traits."

[75] Lapsley and Narvaez, "'Psychologized Morality'." For an opposite view, see D. Carr, "Moralized Psychology or Psychologized Morality? Ethics and Psychology in Recent Theorizing about Moral and Character Education," *Educational Theory* 57(4) (2007): 389–402.

[76] See e.g. D. Lapsley and D. Narvaez, "A Social-Cognitive View of Moral Character." In *Moral Development: Self, and Identity*, edited by D. Lapsley and D. Narvaez (Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2004): 189–212. Other prominent neo-Kohlbergians, such as Steve Thoma, have begun to explore virtues, but they typically see them as forming an intermediate level of moral judgment between thin "bedrock schemas" and thick, contextualized codes of conduct, see e.g. S. Thoma, P. Derryberry and H. M. Crowson, "Describing and Testing an Intermediate Concept Measure of Adolescent Moral Thinking," *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology* 10(2) (2013): 239–252.

[77] D. Lapsley and D. Narvaez, "The Having, Doing, and Being of Moral Personality." In *The Philosophy and Psychology of Character and Happiness*, 133–159, p. 141.

[78] D. Narvaez, "Triune Ethics: The Neurobiological Roots of our Multiple Moralities," *New Ideas in Psychology* 26(1) (2008): 95–119.

[79] D. Narvaez, *Neurobiology and the Development of Human Morality: Evolution, Culture, and Wisdom* (New York: Norton, 2014).

[80] A. Colby and W. Damon, *Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment* (New York: The Free Press, 1992); W. Damon and A. Colby, *The Power of Ideals: The Real Story of Moral Choice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[81] See R. M. Ryan, R. R. Curren, and E. L. Deci, "What Humans Need: Flourishing in Aristotelian Philosophy and Self-Determination Theory." In *The Best within Us: Positive Psychology Perspectives on Eudaimonia*, edited by A. S. Waterman (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2013): 57–75.

[82] Fowers, *Virtue and Psychology*, 217.

[83] See e.g. his various pieces of work that have been cited in this chapter.

[84] B. Fowers, *The Evolution of Ethics: Human Sociality and the Emergence of Ethical Mindedness* (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2015).

[85] Fowers, "Placing Virtue," p. 1.

[86] B. Schwartz and K. E. Sharpe, *Practical Wisdom: The Right Way to Do the Right Thing* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010).

[87] S. Brinkmann, *Psychology as a Moral Science: Perspectives on Normativity* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), 145.

[88] For a critique, see Kristjánsson, *Virtues and Vices*, chap. 4.

[89] Those are typically contrasted with the *closed* concepts of logic and mathematics where necessary and sufficient conditions for an item's falling under a concept can typically be given.

[90] See examples in L. Gulliford, B. Morgan, and K. Kristjánsson, "Recent Work on the Concept of Gratitude in Philosophy and Psychology," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 47(3) (2013): 285–317.

[91] See e.g. Kauppinen, "Ethics and Empirical Psychology."

[92] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1973), §38, 232.

[93] The rhetoric of the "first word" and "last word" comes from J. L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses." In *Ordinary Language*, edited by V. C. Chappell (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1964): 41–63, p. 49. Yet many would consider Austin himself to be closer to the armchair traditionalists.

[94] See e.g. B. Morgan, L. Gulliford, and D. Carr, "Educating Gratitude: Some Conceptual and Moral Misgivings," *Journal of Moral Education* 44 (2015): in press.

[95] For an argument along those lines, see B. Morgan and L. Gulliford, "Measuring Virtuous Gratitude," Conference Presentation, *Varieties of Virtue Ethics* Jubilee Centre Conference (2015). Available at: http://www.jubileecentre.ac.uk/userfiles/jubileecentre/pdf/conference-papers/Varieties_of_Virtue_Ethics/Gulliford_LizandMorgan_Blaire.pdf. See also Higgins and Dyschkant, "Interdisciplinary Collaborations," 385.

[96] See Higgins and Dyschkant, "Interdisciplinary Collaborations."

[97] See Higgins and Dyschkant, "Interdisciplinary Collaborations," 389.

[98] See e.g. Kauppinen, "Ethics and Empirical Psychology."

[99] Kauppinen, "Ethics and Empirical Psychology," 285.

[100] Compare Roberts, "Blessings of Gratitude," with his "The Normative and the Empirical in the Study of Gratitude," *Res Philosophica* (2015): in press, available at: http://www.baylor.edu/philosophy/doc.php/207932.pdf, and how he has been inspired by findings reviewed in Morgan and Gulliford, "Measuring Virtuous Gratitude."

[101] V. Tiberius, "Well-Being: Psychological Research for Philosophers," *Philosophy Compass* 1(5) (2006): 493–505, p. 495.

[102] Lapsley and Narvaez, "'Psychologized Morality'."

[103] For this metaphor and a more detailed historical narrative, see K. A. Appiah, *Experiments in Ethics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 21.

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