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A renewed character education following the pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine

Editors: José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín and Josu Ahedo

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1. Has the pandemic taught us anything?

A short time ago, at the beginning of September 2022, the Johns Hopkins University published a listing according to which there had been 580 million cases of Covid-19 worldwide and 6,4 million people had died as a result. These numbers are lower than the numbers of cases and deaths which really occurred; in fact, the OMS itself estimates that the real numbers could be two or three times the official figures, because there has been a notable lack of reliable tracking of the impact of the illness, in part for political reasons. We might bear in mind, as a basis for comparison, that all the Napoleonic wars — with which we Spanish are well acquainted — produced a total of between five and seven million deaths.

It would seem wise to reflect on what we have learned from this worldwide catastrophe and what effect it may have on matters of great importance, such as our concept of the human being, the measures in respect of research which should be taken in the future or our understanding of education after the pandemic.

If we analyze the many papers produced in the field of education because of the pandemic, it seems unfortunate that very few of them appear to address these basic issues. Worthy of mention is Curren's observation when he states that "Pandemic social distancing underscores the importance of asking whether direct and embodied interpersonal exchanges remain important to development and learning across the lifespan" (2022, p. 23). But to speak, as others have done, about ways of facing adversity, brings nothing

new to the debate; the same can be said of the secondary importance of studying ways to achieve a greater and better digitalization of teachers, students and teaching methods.

For our part, however, we feel that reflection on the pandemic in the field of education should lead us to the consideration that this disaster which has affected the whole world has manifested certain realities regarding human beings which many would prefer to ignore but which have regained their true importance, if we wish to devote our energies to the education of the younger generations.

We consider that there are five principal realities on which we need to focus.

In the first place, we need to remember that no education can be called authentic if it does not encourage the learner to reflect on the meaning of life. Indeed, a paper which appeared in this journal at the beginning of the pandemic alerted that the virus "is the source of numerous opportunities to ask ourselves, as Ivan Illich did shortly before his untimely death, whether we have lived as we should have " (Ibáñez-Martín, 2020, p. 182). We have witnessed the imposition of a culture which maintains that any type of life is as worthy as any other; as a result (and helped by internet), the most degraded forms of life have appeared, from people who offer themselves to be eaten by others, something which has actually happened, to young people who declare that they have *ni foi ni loi* (neither faith nor law), or singers such as Sabina who recently declared that in his youth his only thoughts were about "sex, drugs and rock and roll". This culture has not disappeared. But the unforeseen death of loved ones, of all ages, has led many to ask themselves about the type of life which is worth living.

Secondly, the vulnerability which characterizes the human condition has acquired a special notoriety. The *Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language* defines vulnerable as susceptible to wounds or injury, physical or moral. Traditionally, the need for protection from injury has always been recognized, whether the injury should come from crossing the street where we shouldn't or from celebrating the Nation's Day holding the wrong flag in an independence-minded neighborhood. But on some occasions reasonable protection is not enough. It is evident that in certain circumstances a person's vulnerability is greater; this is, for example, the case of a mentally handicapped person, who is simply not equipped to defend himself. Sellman (2005) is right when he presents nursing care as an answer to that greater vulnerability: the extra care must take into account the dignity of the person and his protection, avoiding any kind of paternalism, and giving careful consideration to the lines which must not be crossed.

That said, the pandemic has helped us to discover our profound dependence on Nature. The May 68 revolution produced the idea that the difference between man and woman was irrelevant. Later on, the idea began to circulate that we were going to live a thousand

years; that scientific progress would necessarily lead to a transhumanism which would allow us to overcome intellectual and biological limitations; genetic engineering would allow us first to choose the characteristics we wanted for our children and then to ensure a much longer life for them. But reflection on the pandemic has led many to think that it is a mistake to confront nature and ignore the limits which it places on us.

This question is related in its turn to that of the limits of human autonomy. Kant, known for his defence of autonomy, maintained that it is the property of the will by which it becomes its own law. The idea was taken up again by Rawls in his famous book *A theory of justice,* published in 1971, and quoted no fewer than 105,095 times; he states that "to act autonomously is to act according to principles which we would consent to as relational, free and equal beings" (p. 516). The evolution of these ideas over the last fifty years has led to the belief that, as a basic aim of education, it is necessary to defend autonomy understood as limitless freedom in which the wish (to do something) is the only principle to be followed. However, this is perhaps not the most accurate interpretation of the concept of human autonomy. Using Fukuyama's words, taken from his recent book *Liberalism and Its Discontents*, we would say that

> the reign of autonomy has expanded constantly over time, from the freedom to obey rules within an existing moral framework, to the invention of rules by oneself. But respect for autonomy was destined to guide and mediate in the competition between deeply rooted beliefs, not to replace those beliefs in their entirety. Not all humans believe that maximizing their autonomy is the most important objective in life or that to disregard all forms of authority is necessarily a good thing. (p. 152)

Fourthly, we find that the pandemic has shown with great clarity the evils of the individualism which permeates our present day society. Many philosophical schools have pronounced warnings against the error of forgetting that we are political and social animals, believing that we are isolated monads and insisting on presenting our own likes or interests as rights which should be recognized. Some years ago, Robert Putman became well known for an article he wrote entitled "Bowling Alone: America´s Declining Social Capital" (1995). In the article, Putman complained about the lack of participation in civic activities and that, although the number of people who bowled had increased, it was none the less true that many of those who played bowled alone; he considered this to be a symptom that there are more and more "virtual" friendships and fewer and fewer real friendships. It is also quite clear that the number of people who have died completely alone during the pandemic, either in hospital or at home, has been another cause for serious reflection. Which brings us to the fifth and final point.

Indeed, it is necessary to stress the degree to which the importance of solidarity and care has increased. The response of a large part of the world to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is an important manifestation of solidarity, which might not have happened in earlier times. That

solidarity is expressed even by bringing Ukrainian families with their children into people's homes without a thought about how they are going to be fed. And we have witnessed that solidarity in the fact that many doctors and nurses have lost their lives as a result of the attention they have given to Covid patients; many priests have also exposed themselves to grave risks in their attention to infected people in hospitals and at home. Another example of solidarity has been that many people decided to bring food to elderly neighbors and even to look after ill people with whom they had had very little prior contact.

As Christians we should remember the parable from the Gospel: my neighbor, who I should love as I love myself is anyone who is in need of help that I can give. It is, of course, quite clear that there are beliefs other than Christianity which express love of my neighbor. But it is evident that in the Incarnation and death of Jesus Christ we encounter a luminous account of the love which God has for men and which gives us the assurance that there is someone who loves me and that, as Benedict XVI states (2005, nª 17), doing a reference to the classics, that authentic love is to want the same thing and to reject the same thing, having common thoughts and desires. God loved us first and when we discover that love, we discover the meaning of our life, and we seek God's love and the exclusive and definitive love expressed in the marriage bond.

None of these ideas should be forgotten. On the contrary, they should form the basis of a renewed education of character which has learned lessons from the dramatic pandemic we have suffered. So let's continue by looking at how we could go about designing a sound education which rises to the challenges of our times

2. What can we ask of education today?

We have examined the relevant ideas which the pandemic has brought home to many, although there also may be some, even many, who would like to close their eyes to reality. In these circumstances, we are bound to reflect on the criteria which should be taken into account in respect of education, because up to now education has been limited to the areas of access to scientific knowledge, skills competencies or civics. By no means do we wish to disqualify these educational activities. Our aim is to emphasize the need to look for a renewed character education which will lead youth to attain the most profound development of their being.

This renewal has recently been the subject of study from a variety of different perspectives, and it would perhaps be useful as an introduction to indicate three areas of special interest at the present time.

In the first place, the best character education introduces the moral element into the field of education. This fact has three main consequences which have an important effect on the curriculum, on teaching practice and on the students.

a) The curriculum ceases to be, as Nodding's points out (2019), a mere accumulation of contents that must be learned. What's more, if the moral criterion is not present in the selection of contents, then the selection becomes arbitrary, circumstantial or, in the best of cases, simply an expression of the position of the majority. But experience has shown that majorities do not always respect human dignity (Nussbaum, 2012). Therefore, although the ethical element is also debatable, basically in respect of its essence, it should not be omitted in the selection of curricular content: a moral element should be present in the design of the curricula.

b) In today's world, the teacher acquires a renewed relevance for two reasons: it will no longer be sufficient for the teacher to transmit uncritically what is accepted by the majority or prescribed by others. He will cease to be a mere dispenser of the curriculum (Pring, 2016) and become a transmitter of culture, a promoter of critical thinking and a guarantor both quality of the content transmitted and of his ability to promote the rounded development of his students' personalities.

c) On their side, the students will have a different view of the teaching institution and of their teachers. These will no longer be simply places and agents who enable them to acquire knowledge which will help them to earn a living, but something of much greater importance — they will help them to find the meaning of their existence.

Secondly, character education allows us to deal with some of the historical problems, both theoretical and practical, which have beset moral education. Let's look at three of those problems.

a) Perhaps we can begin with the one which has proved to be the most difficult: while many teachers recognize the importance of helping their students to become good people, they admit their inability to approach the task for two reasons. On the one hand, they are afraid of falling into illegitimate indoctrination. On the other, they are afraid of entering into the sphere of family education or they have received no specific training in that area. In this sense, character education allows for a clear and accessible language on moral questions, and through the teaching of virtues it is possible to make moral learning operative and adapted to specific everyday situations and in a way which is shared by students' families.

b) Secondly, character education draws attention to the behavior of the teachers themselves, not only in what is commonly termed their professional duties, that is their commitment to fulfil the terms of their work contract, but also in respect of the manner of being of the educator in a wider sense. The reason is that no individual can teach others what he himself does not understand, and it is not possible to fully understand virtues if they are not practiced (Carr, 1991). The idea that being a good educator is

related to being a good person (Martínez, Esteban, Jover, & Payá, 2016), is upheld by the theory of behavioral transfer, which posits that educators cannot establish strict limits between their professional and their personal lives. It also upholds the dignity of the profession itself and the enormous influence, which is characteristic of the teaching profession, in that inadequate behavior would affect a number of young people whose process of maturity could be seriously compromised (Ibáñez-Martín, 2017).

c) Finally, the renewed character education will allow educators to overcome the dichotomy of cognitivism-emotivism which has paralyzed moral education and divided researchers and educators. Kohlberg's model was questioned on the grounds of its excessive Kantian based rationalism and its universalism to the detriment of the particular, and also because of its inherent inability to promote moral behavior. On the other hand, the proposals of the emotivist inheritors of Hume, which first arose in response to intellectualist models, suffered from excessive subjectivity and were opposed to the identification of objective criteria as references for full human development. The proposals for character education can overcome these problems since they contemplate both rational and affective criteria in determining the moral response (Carr, 2005), which must take circumstances into account and be moderated by the virtue of prudence.

These are the ideas which are at present under discussion in the field of character education. We believe that the emerging proposals in character education are opening hopeful new horizons for an education which will be truly comprehensive and facilitate formation in the widest sense of the word. Every father, mother or teacher is well aware of the difficulty of providing a good education for their children or students, and it is likely that their deepest concerns are not limited simply to achieving good grades at the end of the school year, something which on occasion is used by those in political power, supposedly to save itself problems; but also, and more importantly, they would like to be able to say that the younger generation are well formed people, who are not carried away by passing fashions, who are capable of using their intelligence and managing their emotions. Fully aware that every individual is responsible for his or her own life, we cannot, as educators, close our eyes to the difficulties which many are facing today - those who find it difficult to discover what it means to be male or female currently and in view of their own circumstances. It is therefore important to offer scenarios which propitiate ways and means to achieve the plenitude to which we all aspire, the full development of personality which is required of education by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It is evident that character education does not have the key to resolve all educational problems. We believe, however, that without it we would simply not be facing up to and trying to solve some of the most worrying issues of our times.

Naturally, one monograph in a journal cannot claim to address all the problems which character education attempts to solve. Therefore, we are going to offer a summary of the various articles which we have published, from very varying viewpoints and countries.

This issue begins with an article by Professors Aurora Bernal Martínez de Soria and Concepción Naval on "Flourishing as the aim of character education". The objective of this article is to investigate whether human flourishing is the aim of character education. The authors analyse publications on flourishing and moral education in the Anglo-American area and conclude that not every concept of flourishing is an aim of education, and that character education is insufficient to promote human flourishing in a most clearly moral sense.

Next there is a paper by Randall Curren on "Overcoming what divides us: Global Civic Friendship and 'Full development of the Human Personality'". Professor Curren states that character education is not solely a question of cultivating virtues; it should also promote global civic friendship through the formation of educational communities and friendships. This formative work requires the participation of the whole school; it should respect justice and promote contacts and friendship between different groups.

Professors Edward Brooks and Jorge L. Villacís, from different countries, are the authors of an article entitled "To educate citizen and citizen-leaders for our society. Renewing character education in universities". The authors propose a renewal of character education with the aim of educating leaders who can materialize what the SDG4 proposes in respect of enhancing citizen ethics, while respecting sustainable development and the building of global citizenship. They propose a return to the cultivation of virtue in character education since education in values and attitudes is an essential component of education for global citizenship and leadership.

The following article, written by Francisco Esteban Bara and M.ª Carmen Caro, is entitled "The cultivation of critical thinking through university tutoring: A new opportunity after Covid-19". The authors indicate that the reality of the pandemic has produced a suggestive revision of the university tutorial which reexamines its usefulness; because it had become an exclusively academic tutorial at the present time, its usefulness is questioned. The authors propose that the meetings between the tutor and the tutored student should prioritize character education, helping them to think and encouraging them not tire of seeking the truth and to concentrate their search on the common good. The authors also contribute some practical suggestions on how to cultivate the spirit through the promotion of critical thinking.

This monograph would be incomplete without an article on character education in the classical world. Professor David Hernández de la Fuente analyses this aspect of the subject in "Educational reforms for a crisis. On the education of character in Plato and

Aristotle". The author analyses the crisis which our society is suffering and affirms that the solution it demands is character education; he would like to see a recovery of what Plato and Aristotle stated in respect of how to develop and strengthen good character through the discharge of civic obligations. Through an analysis of the principal texts on character education of the two thinkers, the author suggests solutions to improve education in this turbulent world in which we must live.

Professor José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín entitles his paper "The plural concept of good character", in which he illustrates the differences between the English meaning of *good character* and the diverse meanings of *buen carácter* (good character) in Spanish, pointing out the different qualities which identify these meanings. To this end, he carries out a philological, philosophical, and psycho-pedagogical analysis. After, he defends the importance of the good literature in character education and proposes a transcended reading of *Don Quixote (The Ingenious Knight Don Quixote of La Mancha),* as a relevant expression of Spanish culture, to study the principal human qualities of good character to be found therein.

Doctor Juan Luis Luis Fuentes and Jorge Valero-Berzosa write on "New digital virtues or virtues for the digital context. Do we need a new model of character education?" The authors wish to address the question of why technology has colonized our lives. The article attempts to answer the question of whether it is necessary to elaborate a new template of virtues for the new digital world, which would require, as a solution to the evils of the digital paradigm, the promotion of critical thinking. They conclude that a substantial change to the classical pattern of virtues is not necessary, but they stress the special need to foment critical thinking, responsibility, and the safeguard of privacy.

Professors Zaida Espinosa Zárate, Josu Ahedo Ruiz and Miguel Rumayor address the subject of "Friendship and character education: A systematic review"; they attempt to answer the question of whether friendship can be useful in the development of virtues. This systematic review of scientific articles published between 2007 and 2021 endeavors to identify what type of relationship exists between character and friendship. A psychological focus is predominant in the articles reviewed, but the cultivation of friendship requires a philosophical-moral focus which underlines the humanizing potential of friendship, given that it is a good in itself.

Hailing from different continents, Professors Juan P. Dabdoub, Aitor R. Salaverría and Marvin W. Berkowitz write about "Identifying practices to promote character development in university residential settings: The case of Colegios Mayores". The authors wish to answer the question of whether it is necessary to integrate training programs of character education in university halls of residence. Through the answers to a questionnaire given by 19 directors of Halls of Residence (Colegios Mayores) in

Spain, they investigate how the six educational practices proposed by Étienne Wenger have been put into effect.

This issue closes with a paper by María José Ibáñez Ayuso, who presents another perspective in respect of the halls of residence and shows that character education does not terminate at the end of the secondary school cycle. The title of the article is "The Spanish Colegios Mayores: The pedagogical value of a longstanding institution"; it stresses the need to revalue the importance of the formation received by the students in the halls of residence. Working from an interpretive viewpoint and centering on character education, the author concludes that the halls of residence are spaces which generate innumerable opportunities to cultivate character, to foment critical thinking in search of truth and to experience a synthesis of knowledge and an encounter with tradition.

To all the above, our most sincere gratitude.

José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín and Josu Ahedo
Editors

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Studies

Flourishing as the aim of Character Education

El florecimiento como fin de la Educación del Carácter

Aurora BERNAL MARTÍNEZ DE SORIA, PhD. Associate Professor. Universidad de Navarra *(abernal@unav.es).*
Concepción NAVAL, PhD. Full Professor. Universidad de Navarra *(cnaval@unav.es).*

Abstract:

Human flourishing is a term that relates to the full development of people and societies, something we all long for, especially in times of crisis. It is widely accepted that education is an indispensable resource to promote human flourishing. The main aim of this article is to investigate whether human flourishing can be considered as the aim of character education in the virtues development approach. Publications on the subject of flourishing have proliferated in recent years. For this study we select ones that link flourishing and the aim of moral education from the perspective of the philosophy and theory of education, developed in the Anglo-American field. Assertions by David Carr (2021) and Kristján Kristjánsson (2020) on the subject of flourishing and character education provide a starting point and guide for the discussion that mainly revolves around the following questions. What notion of flourishing can be theoretically sustained as an educational goal? Why is character education not considered sufficient to promote flourishing? Why is it not considered necessary either? We conclude by underlining the value of educational theory based on a realistic view of flourishing as an attainable aim of character education. Some essential components of flourishing and moral education are absent from the theories reviewed.

Keywords: moral education, moral development, moral values, educational aim, educational philosophy, educational theory.

Resumen:

El florecimiento humano es un término relacionado con el desarrollo pleno de personas y sociedades, algo anhelado por todos, especialmente en tiempos de crisis. Es aceptado globalmente que la educación es un recurso imprescindible para promover el florecimiento humano. El objetivo principal de este artículo es indagar sobre si se puede plantear como fin de la Educación del Carácter, con el enfoque de desarrollo de las virtudes, el florecer humano.

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Las publicaciones sobre el tema del florecimiento han proliferado en los últimos años. Para este estudio seleccionamos aquellas que relacionan florecimiento y fin de la educación moral desde la perspectiva de la filosofía y teoría de la educación, desarrolladas en el ámbito anglo-americano. Algunas afirmaciones de David Carr (2021) y Kristján Kristjánsson (2020) sobre el tema del florecimiento y de la educación del carácter, son punto de partida y guía de la discusión que gira principalmente sobre las siguientes cuestiones: ¿qué noción de florecimiento puede sostenerse teóricamente como fin educativo?, ¿por qué no se considera a la educación del carácter suficiente para promover el florecimiento?, ¿por qué tampoco se aprecia necesaria? Concluimos subrayando el valor de la teoría educativa fundamentada en una visión realista del florecimiento como objetivo alcanzable de la educación del carácter. En las teorías revisadas, falta considerar algunos componentes esenciales del florecimiento y de la educación moral.

Descriptores: educación moral, desarrollo moral, valores morales, objetivo educativo, filosofía educacional, teoría educacional.

1. Introduction

The central subject of this study is a question that is considered in the area of the philosophy and theory of education in current discussions about flourishing as the aim of moral education that are taking place in the Anglo-American sphere. *Florecimiento* (flourishing) is not commonly used as a term in Spanish for discussing educational objectives. The words *desarrollo* (development) and *crecimiento* (growth) are closest in meaning to flourishing in pedagogy. Nonetheless, the influence on this topic of studies written in English has meant that flourishing is being used as a concept more often in pedagogical research in Spanish. Human flourishing includes the development of people and the development of societies: people cause and need the prosperity of societies, and societies improve if their members have the capacity and commitment to contribute to social development. For this reason, we pay special pedagogical attention to the importance of human action in flourishing (Meirieu, 2021; Pérez & Millán, 2021).

We focus on studies into character education, which is a part of moral education (Arthur et al., 2016) that centres its attention on promoting virtues. Other character-education focuses that do not consider the virtues merit a separate study owing to the importance of their contributions, but to do so would go beyond the limited scope of this article. For more information about these different approaches, see Naval et al. (2017). Our principal aim is to answer this question: Can character education have flourishing as an aim?

The words of two distinguished authors from the field of character education guide the path of this study. The thesis of Carr (2021) holds that the concept of flourishing is useless and there is no point presenting it as an aim of education in

virtues. Therefore, in the second section of this article we ask which concepts of human flourishing play a role in influencing character education, and in the subsequent section we consider whether the notions of flourishing that the authors propose as an objective of education have sufficient consistency from the perspective of educational theory.

Kristjánsson (2020a, 2020b) is the author of two ideas that have also surprised us and to which we dedicate the fourth and fifth sections of this article. These are: education for flourishing is not the same as character education; and character education is neither sufficient nor necessary to drive education towards human flourishing.

We consider psychology's contributions to this topic. The impact of psychology on education, and currently on character education and moral education as well, has not gone unnoticed in studies of the philosophy and theory of education given that they reflect the discussions taking place among theorists of psychology and philosophy on educational topics, such as human flourishing (Bauer et al., 2018; Fower, 2016; Annas et al., 2016; Narváez, 2018; Curren, 2020; Wright et al., 2021).

These interdisciplinary exchanges have a common note, the influence of neo-Aristotelianism. There are constant references to Aristotle with different purposes: seeking inspiration in him, working creatively on applying his theory to new questions, and procuring a hermeneutics that is faithful to his thinking. While we do take this philosophical framework into account, it is not the aim of this study to observe the scope of the inspiration, interpretation, and creativity of Aristotelian ideas in these authors' statements. While the production is very broad, we can only consider a selection of publications and we focus on those that are most closely related to the questions we intend to answer.

2. Flourishing as an educational objective

The surprising question that David Carr uses as the title of one of his recent publications (2021) has motivated the task of understanding the scope of how the concept of flourishing is used as the object of analysis in educational theory. This title is: *Where's the educational virtue in flourishing?* He answers by saying: "(…) that the currently vaunted notion of flourishing is trivial to the point of vacuity and can therefore serve no useful (theoretical) educational purpose" (Carr, 2021, p. 391). Carr shows his disagreement with the approach to the concept of flourishing that is currently used in the fields of the ethics of virtues, character education, and moral psychology. His reflection leads us to ask: To what notion of flourishing do theorists of education turn? What notion of flourishing can be theoretically useful?

2.1. Concepts of human flourishing used in education

Flourishing as a concept used in the social sciences and health sciences is synonymous with happiness and well-being. Use of the expressions flourishing, optimal, fruitful, successful, and good life is more

common. Understanding what produces well-being in life has added more content to what was previously thought, and we have found various focuses and theories of the flourishing life (Alexandrova & Fabian, 2022). This identification between flourishing and well-being is the one that is present in the debate about flourishing as an educational objective.

Studies into well-being or flourishing make a basic distinction between hedonic well-being (the well-being of a pleasurable life) and *eudaimonic* well-being (the well-being of a good, valuable, meaningful life) (Vittersø, 2016). At the same time, we find the categories of subjective well-being and objective well-being. The former refers to what people perceive and express as well-being, normally established by applying evaluation tools. Objective well-being is a notion through which an effort is made to identify the elements that comprise well-being for all people because they are human (VanderWeele, 2017; Kristjánsson, 2020a, 2020b).

The concept of flourishing in the theoretical discussion that we consider corresponds with the conception of happiness as *eudaimonia* and to *eudaimonic* well-being; scholars of this topic are part of the current of neo-Aristotelianism, and, as a reference concept, turn to the idea of *eudaimonia* from Aristotelian philosophy. Fower's explanation (2016), which we present below, introduces the ideas of *eudaimonia* that are commonly at play when flourishing is presented as an objective of education. The Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia* is an ethical notion because it means a type of life, a good life, the best life that people can achieve insofar as it depends on them, on what they choose to do, and actually achieve. Life is action, it comprises and proceeds through the exercise of a variety of activities and achieving goods, in accordance with the human, animal rational, and political (social) mode of being. *Eudaimonia* is hoped for from a complete life, over the course of one's lifespan, it is desired and wanted for itself, without expecting anything more or greater than it, which is why it is called the ultimate aim.

Aristotle's concept of *eudaimonia* has also inspired the presentation of *eudaimonic* well-being as an educational goal. This expression places the accent on well-being, that is to say, on the satisfaction that people sense that they achieve in their lives, which is closely related to the experience of each individual. With the adjective *eudaimonic*, the authors note that people encounter well-being in the realisation of a variety of activities, not just the pursuit of pleasure in their lives. *Eudaimonic* well-being is not just hedonic well-being.

Eudaimonic well-being can be identified with subjective well-being (people report that they are satisfied with the components of *eudaimonia*) and with objective well-being (the components of *eudaimonia* common to all human beings are described), or with a combination of both. Kristjánsson (2020b) gives Seligman's latest theory as an example of the fusion of objective and subjective well-being. This provides the foundations and focus for interventions and research from the

perspective of positive psychology that seek to promote happiness and well-being. To flourish, according to Seligman it is necessary to strengthen these elements: "Positive emotion (…) Engagement (…) Relationships (…) Meaning (…) Achievement" (2011, p. 24). People who have these elements in their lives perceive that they are happy and feel satisfied. Positive education, which is based on positive psychology, has as its goal the promotion of well-being in schools and helping students to flourish.

Another example of fusion between objective and subjective well-being with reference to *eudaimonic* well-being is the concept of flourishing or psychological well-being used in self-determination theory (Ryan & Martela, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2017): to flourish, it is necessary to satisfy basic psychological needs and develop an optimal psychological functioning.

Optimal psychological functioning can be regarded as the objective dimension of flourishing and recalls Aristotle's (2009) argument that the properly human activity or action is a good that forms an essential part of the good life or *eudaimonia*. But it is no more than a slight similarity. In general, theories of psychological well-being regard as good a psychological functioning that makes it possible to live with health and lead the life that each person chooses, achieving the proposed targets. Moral goods or values are not explicitly presented as components of a good life (Haybron & Tiberius, 2015; Miller, 2017), and yet it is precisely because of this absence of the moral that this dimension of flourishing proposed as an objective of education is accepted without reservations by a majority of theorists and educators.

One example of a more complete vision of flourishing is the proposal by VanderWeele (2017), director of the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University, the centre of reference in research into flourishing. He adds the moral dimension to the other components described in the conception of flourishing from positive psychology or self-determination theory. VanderWeele proposes five domains to evaluate the extent of people's well-being: happiness and satisfaction with life, physical and mental health, meaning and purpose (in life and activity), character and virtue, and intimate or close social relations. These domains satisfy two criteria: they are aims in themselves and are universally desired. Both criteria evoke the Aristotelian concept of *eudaimonia* as the ultimate goal of human life (Aristotle, 2009). This more objective, complete, and generalisable vision of flourishing enables educational theory to understand that it is reasonable to propose flourishing as an aim of education.

The conceptions of flourishing used in psychology and which are being proposed as an educational aim, could be summarised thus:

> (…) a natural process of personal maturation and socialisation culminating in the achievement of a satisfying psychosocial identity, and as driven by various psychosocial needs—for self-esteem, for self-actualisation and personal growth, for affiliation and intimacy, and for mastery and achievement. (Miller, 2017, p. 786)

The most widely used concept of flourishing in educational theory is identified with the actualisation of human potential. Are these concepts of flourishing sufficiently substantial for it to be presented as an aim of education?

3. The theory of flourishing as objective of education

The theory of education casts light on how to educate in view of the educational aim or aims. The theory that argues for the meaning of education for flourishing, must explain a conception of it that can be used as an educational objective (Wolbert et al., 2019). Flourishing understood as the development of human potential in the performance of meaningful and excellent activities, is theoretically, for Carr (2021), a "poorly specified objective"; it does not serve to direct education as a practical activity. Nonetheless, authors who elaborate a conception of flourishing that can be presented as an educational aim, understand that is theoretically useful to embody an idea that is objective enough to be universally accepted, as happens when flourishing is identified with something as broad as developing human potential.

The need to promote good psychological functioning through education in order to lead a good life is something that is obvious to educators (Curren, 2020). Specifying the elements of flourishing so that they can be translated into concrete objectives that mark a direction for educational practices is a reflection that should be done in a second moment, based on a broad and general concept of flourishing, and it requires us to bear in mind the social and cultural contexts and other personal characteristics of the learners.

Wolbert, De Ruyter, and Schinkel (2019) believe that any conception of human flourishing must combine the following criteria if it is to be suggested as an objective of education: its content can be regarded as inherently valuable and refers to the actualisation of human potential; it comprises a full life; it consists of a dynamic status; and it presupposes objective goods. According to these criteria, his own definition of flourishing could be given as an example: "(…) living an optimal life, in which people are free enough to make their own choices, fill their time with meaningful and successful activities and relationships, and feel happy or satisfied with that" (Wolbert et al., 2021, p. 699). On the same lines, Kristjánsson proposes this notion, adding the moral dimension of human flourishing:

> Human flourishing is the (relatively) unencumbered, freely chosen and developmentally progressive activity of a meaningful (subjectively purposeful and objectively valuable) life that actualises satisfactorily an individual human being's natural capacities in areas of species-specific existential tasks at which human beings (as rational, social, moral and emotional agents) can most successfully excel. (2020a, p. 1)

Throughout the history of education, the ideal has been maintained that each person will become the best person he or she can be and will enjoy the best life, an ideal that is realistic, achievable, and shared, in the words of Wolbert et al.

(2019). This idea of flourishing that serves as a horizon for education has two more references, one more elevated and undefined, and another more realistic and particular. The more elevated one is the "idealised" ideal of flourishing of the human being and of a flourishing life; it is the "more ideal" one because it displays characteristics that are not fulfilled completely by any person. Its "utility" in education is as encouragement to support continued growth; it serves as inspiration, despite being a utopian, ultimate ideal of unachievable perfection, in the words of Wolbert et al. (2019). The more concrete one is the flourishing people can achieve in their lives taking into account their individual conditions and potential (capacity, age, time of life, opportunities, health, social support, etc.) and their social and cultural setting.

The three levels of conceptualisation of flourishing are necessary to establish a theory of it as an objective of education, but an ideal that is realistic, objective, achievable, and common to all people is especially essential as is an ideal that is objective, realistic, and fitted to the opportunities and characteristics of the people to whom the educational help is directed. So for example, the concept of human flourishing theoretically fits early childhood so that it can serve as an objective for basic education at school and in the family (Wolbert et al., 2021).

Therefore, the concepts of flourishing that have the greatest impact in education, which we review in this section, have sufficient content to be put forward theoretically as an educational aim, even if it is necessary to establish more delineated objectives, adapted to the circumstances of the learners at a later stage. This said, in these conceptions of human flourishing, we miss the consideration of the moral and transcendent dimensions. As Carr (2021) notes, even when reference is made to moral excellences, such as the virtues, these are mainly understood at a psychological and functional level.

4. The role of character education in promoting flourishing

Education for flourishing involves helping to actualise the intrinsic orientation of human nature (Joseph et al., 2020); it contributes to the development of people's internal capabilities (Mollvik, 2021). If we keep the concept of human flourishing as the actualisation of human potential so that each person leads a good life, character development is one of the facets of this realisation of the human being; furthermore, good character is the "heart" and "head" of human potential and of the process of actualising it.

Activity that is specifically human is characterised by being directed by reason, the guide that sets aims and seeks means. Human beings think about what they desire and they plan the continuum of activities all through their lives. Conceptions of flourishing as psychological well-being centre on the development of certain capacities such as competence, social relationality, and autonomy that are necessary for self-determination, in other words, the deployment of the rational direction of

human action that becomes meaningful to unfold the integrity (the consistency of being and doing) and the meaning of life (Ryan & Deci, 2017). This conception feeds many educational programmes that have human flourishing as their objective (Kristjánsson, 2020b).

Human flourishing does not set out or culminate, with any of the aims that are the goal of self-determination nor with any content with which the integrity and purpose of life is achieved (Besser, 2014; Naval, 2020). Ensuring that self-determination is directed towards a meaningful life requires a stable disposition towards an aim and for this aim to be appropriate, for which education in virtues that help to guide the morality of the purpose is important (Han, 2015). For this reason, people also need a moral character, capacities to know which purposes are good, which activities are good, what a good life is, beyond the good pertaining to an optimal psychological functioning (VanderWeele, 2022). This author identifies character with a moral or virtuous character insofar as it contributes to each individual's own well-being and to the well-being of others, an idea found in many cultures, traditions, and religions.

The influence of the ethics of virtues and of neo-Aristotelianism can be appreciated in the theories of character and of character education, which either only consider character as moral character or the moral aspect when highlighting the different dimensions of character (performance, ethical, intellectual, civic) that they regard as central for flourishing (Lickona & Davidson, 2005; Arthur & Kristjánsson, 2022). As Berkowitz (2022) explains: the purpose of character education is to nourish the flourishing of human goodness, and morality is the most important aspect of character:

> character comprises a series of characteristics that motivate and make it possible for one to act as a moral agent (moral character), do one's best work (performance character), collaborate effectively in shared spaces to promote the common good (civic character), and enquire effectively into knowledge and truth and pursue them (intellectual character). These domains are not isolated but overlap. (Berkowitz, 2022, pp. 53-54).

Most of the approaches that emphasise moral character underline one of its components: the virtues. The virtues are the good or excellent actualisation of human capacities, essential for human flourishing (Miller, 2017; Wolbert et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2021). The development of moral character is a constituent of human flourishing and is not just a means to achieve a good life; therefore, the virtues contribute to other aspects of flourishing at the same time as being an essential part of the flourishing that is achieved (VanderWeele, 2022).

Kristjánsson refers to the virtues only implicitly in proposing a conception of flourishing as objective well-being as an aim of education, as shown in the definition given in the previous section (2020a, p. 1). This lack of emphasis, which is striking if we take into account the importance this author places on the virtues in character

education (Arthur & Kristjánsson, 2022), is consistent with his thesis that education for flourishing is not the same as character education (Kristjánsson, 2020a, 2020b) and with the less important role he recognises for the virtues: "flourishing involves a broader objective than the cultivation of character (…). Specifically, full development of the human virtues is neither necessary nor sufficient for flourishing" (2020b, p. 24).

On this basis, it could be deduced that character education centred on the development of the virtues is neither sufficient nor necessary for human flourishing. We will examine the scope of these claims, starting in the next section with the thesis that character education is not sufficient for flourishing.

4.1. The sufficiency of character education for achieving flourishing

In a *eudaimonic* concept of human flourishing that includes the process of achieving a life that is happy, full, successful, and complete, having a good character is not sufficient to flourish. To flourish, people need, as well as a good character, goods that do not depend on their activity and the direction they give to their lives. On the contrary, the possibility and opportunity of their activity depends on these goods, among which education stands out. This idea, which was present in the Aristotelian philosophy of *eudaimonia*, is reiterated by numerous authors who describe human flourishing (White, 2011; Kristjánsson, 2020a). In this sense of flourishing, it is reasonable to maintain that character education, whether or not it centres on education in virtues, is not sufficient to achieve flourishing. Furthermore, not even a complete education is enough for flourishing. If this prepares people to achieve a flourishing life, the educational process that learners undergo in the present cannot foresee everything they will need in their future lives (Carr, 2021; Wolbert et al., 2021).

Assuming that character education is not sufficient for flourishing leads us to ask whether it is also insufficient when directed at a central dimension of human flourishing, namely, when we consider the growth of human capacities and the unfolding of the activities that comprise a good and fulfilled life. Is character education sufficient as an educational focus centred on the promotion of the virtues? Kristjánsson answers no to this question and, at the same time, his pedagogical proposal for school education to expand the dimensions of students' flourishing points at expanding character education itself.

He gives the impression that he combines two questions in his arguments about the sufficiency of character education for flourishing: one referring to the objective, which is flourishing itself, and the other relating to the suitability of certain methods. We could answer the first question — is promotion of virtues sufficient for this vision of flourishing as personal growth? — by noting that an integrative vision of the virtues that comprise character is lacking in character education models or programmes (Wright et al., 2021). Kristjánsson (2020a) proposes as capacities that should be developed in the school, virtuous emotions such

as wonder, awe, surprise, and the capacity to undertake self-transcendent activities. In other words, what is lacking is the introduction of concrete objectives in character education for flourishing, such as the development of virtues and virtuous emotions that are not contemplated in school education programmes.

Regarding the second question — are the methods of character education sufficient? — various criticisms and problems are presented in view of the pedagogical methods used in character education centred on the development of virtues, such as: the inefficacy of lessons and instruction about virtue; the uninteresting and unappealing activities with which the development of virtues is attempted; the loss of formative opportunities when not taking advantage of interpersonal relations in school, family, and other social spaces; and doubts about the effect of the good example in self-motivation to act well.

As an alternative, Kristjánsson (2020a) proposes introducing opportunities at school for experiences of epiphany and peak experiences that inspire emotions before great ideals and consequently drive the development of self-transcendent activities. We will now consider this topic to attempt to understand whether they are something that is juxtaposed with character education or they could be integrated into this educational focus seeking to promote the flourishing of people.

4.2. Experiences of epiphany, self-transcendence, and transformative education

The notion of flourishing in psychological and philosophical theory entails some form of self-transcendence (Miller, 2017). Transcendence is overcoming, through activities and commitments in accordance with reason, the perspective of the self, which is centred in the satisfaction of one's own desires and appetites. Self-transcendence is the manifestation in human activity of the spiritual dimension of flourishing. Kristjánsson (2020a) emphasises this dimension of flourishing recalling the inspiration of Aristotle and Plato: human beings flourish to a greater degree when able to satisfy their inclination towards transcendence, towards the true, the beautiful, and the good.

His line of argument presents an education in which teachers inspire students' aspiration towards transcendent realities through experiences of epiphany in the school. These experiences change the students, they make them feel in a way that inspires them to take an interest in and value aspects of reality for which it is worth the trouble to do something meaningful in life. But what exactly are experiences of epiphany? Are experiences of epiphany transformative? Are they educational experiences? Do they contribute to character education?

The experience of epiphany awakens emotionally — feeling admiration, surprise, awe, joy, shock, horror, fear — the value that something everyday or extraordinary in life or the world acquires for a person. In a certain sense, this type of experience elevates and changes the person (Fuentes, 2021). In philosophy, these experiences of ecstasy relate to the transformation of people in various di-

mensions: moral, intellectual, aesthetic, religious (Kristjánsson, 2020a). Humanist psychology, particularly Maslow and Rogers, describes peak experiences as those where the richest emotions of the spirit are produced when encountering beauty (Mercado, 2022) and which we can understand as experiences of epiphany.

Yacek and Gary (2020) refer to the epiphany as a sort of transformative experience that is characterised by being disruptive in that it causes a change in everyday activity, and it is also constructive, as it awakens an aspiration to integrate the value that is uncovered or revealed into one's own life. Experiences of epiphany are transformative experiences. The transformative experience leads to epistemological and personal changes, the acquisition of something that was not previously possessed. These changes, which are the result of discovering something, occur in fields such as personal preferences, psychological attitudes, values, and beliefs. They are profound changes that are produced by the imprint an experience leaves, thus becoming a personal transformative experience (Paul & Quiggin, 2020). Drawing on experiences of this type in education is what characterises transformative education.

Transformative education is not a novel proposal. The idea of transforming human capacities has been a constant in the history of education in the West from Plato to Dewey (Yacek et al., 2020). What is innovative about transformative education is that it draws attention to how educational objectives and media are conceived. The term transformative emphasises one objective of education, of teaching and learning, which Yacek (2021) describes as producing a profound and existentially meaningful change in relation to what we can be and do. Furthermore, the word transformative underlines an educational medium, the activities that provoke transformative experiences.

Not all of the educational focuses that are grouped under the category of transformative education follow the same objectives and methods, nor are they directed at the same groups of people as learners, but one thing they do have in common is that the intended personal changes have an impact on human flourishing and, more specifically, on personal capacities to act, in other words, on the character (Lee et al., 2021). Miller (2017) gives as an example, two types of transformative experiences to induce a personal moral transformation that includes the acquisition of virtues: adventure education and service learning. Another example is Yacek's (2021) project for educational centres, which basically entails creating an "aspirational" school classroom with the objective of boosting moral and intellectual growth through peak experiences or experiences of epiphany.

Consequently, it is reasonable to think that character education is a type of transformative education, given that its aim is to ensure people change in their capacities to the point of being able to steer their lives towards valuable achievements that have an effect on the development of the world and of others.

5. The need for character education to achieve flourishing

What leads Kristjánsson to assert that the development of virtues is not necessary to flourish? Kristjánsson (2015, 2020a), following Aristotelian ethics, sees character virtues as something intrinsic to the flourishing life; they form a good life and are not just something that leads to it. He does not note the fact that this idea is barely recognised in the theories of flourishing. The flourishing life is not at the end of life as a result or sum of successful days, but rather it emerges every day with valuable and good activities that contribute to improving the human being and at the same time his or her life in all of the improvable dimensions. That said, it should be concluded that education for the development of virtues is necessary for flourishing. Nonetheless, Kristjánsson does not perceive this need, and uses the expression full development of the virtues.

We believe that the concept of virtue that Kristjánsson upholds, interpreting Aristotelian ethics literally, leads to a rejection of the need to promote virtues to achieve flourishing because it is an inaccessible ideal of virtue. The ideal of virtues contains two impossible aspects of what full development (Kristjánsson, 2020a) entails: achieving the perfection of the virtue that is identified with the name of excellence (*areté*) and achieving the unity–integration of the virtues. The theory of the unity of the virtues describes how acquiring one virtue does not happen without acquiring all of the virtues at the same time, and so it claims, for example, that a person cannot be prudent without being moderate or cannot be moderate, strong, and just without prudence. From this perspective, Kristjánsson, among other authors, does not believe that promotion of the virtues is necessary in order to flourish, but does conclude that people who have flourishing lives do not actually have a complete virtue. Instead they possess some virtues in particular areas or have simply acquired sufficient habit or skill to do an activity well (Miller, 2017; Curren, 2020; Kristjánsson, 2020a).

However, two replies to this argument occur to us. One starts from how these authors conceive flourishing as an objective of education. The other opens up the possibility of interpreting Aristotelian ethics differently. Wolbert et al. (2019) argue that aspiring to flourishing as an ideal objective does not exclude the possibility of striving to achieve particular goods that are thought to comprise flourishing, as though these goods were goals. This orientation is applicable to character education. The ideal of virtue as objective does not rule out doing virtuous activities and acquiring basic virtues, something that is a constituent of flourishing and leads to the fullest flourishing that can be achieved, the development of virtues.

In other words, Kristjánsson (2020b) argues that flourishing is conceived as an ideal objective, explaining that it is a threshold concept and so it is not necessary to achieve the highest possible degree of excellence to be considered as flourishing. Taking this idea further, it is reasonable to think of the ideal of virtue as an objective of education. The acquisition of

virtues should not be renounced because one does not expect to achieve the highest perfection in the possession of the virtue. In this sense, a broader hermeneutics of the Aristotelian theory of virtues is needed, such as the one developed by Pieper (2018). We underline three theses on the basis of which character education for flourishing can be understood as necessary and possible.

The virtues are stable dispositions and habits of human capacities to know, feel, desire, and act well. They are stable but not fixed. They can grow and can be lost, that is to say, they admit degrees of goodness in accordance with the mode of the human being.

We differentiate between virtues considering a variety of criteria. The principal criterion is to name the virtue according to the type of activity to which it predisposes. For example, we distinguish moral virtues from intellectual ones, or social ones from civic ones. The theory of the unity of the virtues is applied to the basic virtues — moderation, strength, prudence, and justice — which are acquired with different levels of perfection. So, a person with a sufficient degree of moderation can be strong and prudent or even, above all in this latter case, be more prudent than moderate.

Finally, in this section, we should reflect on the hierarchy that Aristotle (2009) identifies to arrange the goods that make up a flourishing life and to understand the realistic touch that it gives to comprehend a good and complete life, achievable insofar as it depends on the liberty of people. On this point, we return to the ideas about human beings' inclination towards transcendent ideals. For Aristotle, human life as a contemplative activity is unachievable, and yet it drives us to seek justice and friendship in political life.

The virtues as goods are not the only goods of human flourishing, but they are important for individual flourishing, as they prepare people to overcome egotistical motivations and foster a civilised society in which citizens have a strong sense of justice and benevolence (Miller, 2017). Character education is necessary in order to achieve a flourishing life but it must be complemented with activities that present and move transcendent ideals, which include benevolent love.

Although for Kristjánsson (2020a), love is too ideal for the world, it is the ideal that all people should pursue because it is a necessary ingredient in a good human life. It is a complete but imperfect activity because it depends on people: it is intrinsically good, it can be pursued for itself, it can be actualised throughout one's life and it requires the basic virtues.

6. Conclusion

The conceptions of flourishing that theorists of education present serve to define them as an objective of character education. A greater level of specification of objectives and of the content of human flourishing demands a reflection that is adapted to the reality of the learners. In the *eudaimonic* sense, flourishing is a fulfilled life

made continuously all through one's life in response to a rational project based on personal and social conditions. Moral virtues are necessary because it is only from a stable impulse structure that the human being is in a position to choose and pursue the purpose of his or her life (Spaemann, 1991).

Character education is not in itself sufficient to achieve flourishing as an objective, as we have found in our analysis of the principal arguments that support this idea. The argument that character education and, in particular, the promotion of virtues are not necessary to stimulate human flourishing, presents some problems and contradictions. In our view, if there is an aspiration to people being able to steer their lives proposing and seeking a good life then the concepts of flourishing that we have studied and the belief that an educational impetus to develop virtues is not needed to achieve this growth both fail to recognise the central value of justice, friendship, and the love of benevolence.

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Authors' biographies

Aurora Bernal Martínez de Soria is Associate Professor of Theory and History of Education in the Faculty of Education and Psychology of the Universidad de Navarra. Her research interests are character education, moral education, and family education. She is a researcher in the *Character Education Leadership Program for Mexican Public Schools* project, funded by the *Templeton World Charity Foundation* (ID:0510).

http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1246-1803

Concepción Naval is Professor and Dean of the Faculty of Education and Psychology at the Universidad de Navarra. She has been Oliver Smithies Lecturer at the University of Oxford and Visiting Professor at Teachers College, Columbia University. She directs the journal *Estudios sobre Educación* and the Research Group "Education, Citizenship and Character". Her research centres on citizen education and social participation, character education, and educational innovation in higher education.

http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5927-9398

Overcoming what divides us: Global Civic Friendship and 'Full Development of the Human Personality'

Superar lo que nos divide: la Amistad Cívica Global y «El pleno desarrollo de la Personalidad Humana»

Randall CURREN, PhD. Professor. University of Rochester *(randall.curren@rochester.edu).*

Abstract:

This paper defends the ideals of education for human flourishing and global friendship announced in Article 26, § 2 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It argues that character education is an essential component of education for human flourishing and global friendship, and that character education must do more than teach general principles and cultivate virtues of character. It must also confront the mistrust, resentments, and myths that divide societies by facilitating the formation of school communities and friendships that bridge the chasms of 'us' and 'them' group identities. The paper outlines the role of just school communities in character education, the importance of civic friendship, the psychological research on intergroup contact, and the fostering of global civic friendship. It concludes that character education adequate to today's challenges can only succeed through a whole-school approach that is need supportive, just, and promotes friendly intergroup contact in the interest of global civic friendship.

Keywords: character education, flourishing, civic friendship, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, basic psychological needs, just school communities, intergroup contact.

Resumen:

Este trabajo defiende los ideales de la educación para el florecimiento humano y la amistad cívica global enunciados en el Artículo 26 §2 de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos de 1948. Sostiene que

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la educación del carácter es un componente esencial de la educación para el florecimiento y la amistad global, y que la educación del carácter tiene que hacer más que enseñar principios generales y cultivar las virtudes del carácter. También debe combatir las desconfianzas, los resentimientos y los mitos que dividen las sociedades por medio de la formación de comunidades y amistades escolares que hacen puente sobre los abismos de las identidades de grupo de 'nosotros' y 'ellos'. El trabajo perfila el papel de las comunidades escolares justas en la educación del carácter, la importancia de la amistad cívica, la investigación psicológica sobre los contactos intergrupales y la promoción de la amistad cívica global. Concluye que una educación del carácter a la altura de los retos de hoy en día solo puede tener éxito por medio de un planteamiento que abarque todo el colegio y que apoye las necesidades, respete la justicia y promocione los contactos de amistad intergrupales en aras a fomentar la amistad cívica global.

Descriptores: educación del carácter, educación para el florecimiento, amistad cívica, la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos, necesidades psicológicas básicas, comunidades escolares justas, contacto intergrupal.

1. Introduction

Article 26, § 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights holds that:

> Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (United Nations, 1948)

As we approach the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948, we should consider what it would mean for education to fully honor the terms of this provision. What would it mean for education to be 'directed to the full development of the human personality'? How should it endeavor to strengthen 'respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms'? How should it promote peace and 'understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups'?

The wording of this provision implies nothing less than education for human *flourishing* and making education for *global civic friendship* and justice a centerpiece of education for human flourishing. It implies that a rights-respecting and globally focused form *of character education* is part of what every person needs, has a right to, and owes one another.

Section 1 of Article 29 articulates this relationship between *needs*, *rights*, and *duties*: 'Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and

full development of his personality is possible'. This presupposes as self-evident that:

1. 'Free and full development of [one's human] personality' is what all human beings would choose for themselves. It signifies free and full development of a person's *potential*, or, in other words, thriving, flourishing, living well, or living a flourishing life.

2. It is not possible for human beings to flourish — to experience the free and full development of their personality — except as members of a community that provides what they need to live well. A community that does this by securing fundamental interests or basic needs is implicitly equated with one that respects the human rights enumerated in the Declaration and is to that extent *just*.

3. The function of human rights and a just world is to secure the fundamental interests or basic needs that are foundational to living well.

4. The benefits of justice inevitably entail corresponding duties — a correlativity of *rights* and *duties*, in the service of securing fundamental interests or basic *needs*.

These are cornerstones of the idea of a just world in which people can live well.

Yet, today human rights and democracy are in retreat as authoritarian nationalism reasserts itself (Müller, 2016; Ignatieff, 2017; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Sadurski, 2022), as global education policy — led by the OECD, World Bank, and PISA — is distracted from educating the whole person and citizen by promises of continuous economic growth (Blum, 2023; Tamir, 2023), and as the heat, drought, and fires of a growing climate emergency fuel wars and mass migration (Hammer, 2013). UNESCO has recently reaffirmed the spirit of the 1948 affirmation of education for the 'full development of the human personality' in reports on flourishing as an aim of education (e.g., de Ruyter et al., 2020), but flourishing remains a contested idea. This is primarily because critics often see it as culturally specific in a way that disqualifies it as a public or shared educational ideal or makes 'imposing' it on students a violation of their autonomy (e.g., Siegel, 2015; Hand, in press). Character education is contested on these grounds and others too numerous to mention.

My purpose in what follows is to outline a conception of how to fulfill the vision of education announced in Article 26, § 2 of the Declaration. In doing this I will address an urgent concern that is often overlooked by character educators: the dangerous polarization of public life in countries, such as

the United States, where authoritarian nationalist and radical right populist movements are threats to human rights and democracy. These movements exploit the erosion of civic friendship — the domestic and global civic friendship to which the Declaration is committed — and directly attack what is left of it, in the interest of consolidating authoritarian power (Müller, 2016; Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018; Curren, 2019; Sadurski, 2022). My central thesis is that in these circumstances, it is not enough for character educators to teach general principles and cultivate virtues of character. It must also confront the mistrust, resentments, and myths that divide us (Cramer, 2016; Hochschild, 2016; Wuthnow, 2018; Kruglanski, 2021; Curren, 2023c, in press). An essential aspect of this is facilitating the formation of school communities and friendships that bridge the chasms of 'us' and 'them' group identities.

I will begin by addressing education for flourishing and why character education is an essential aspect of it. I will then outline the role of just school communities in character education, the importance of civic friendship, the psychological research on intergroup contact, and the fostering of global civic friendship.

2. The role of character education in education for flourishing

The Declaration's reference to facilitating the 'full development of the human personality' evokes the idea, familiar to educators, of helping young people fulfill their potential. There are different ways to think about the kinds of fulfillment of potential that would benefit people or be good for them, but in the context of the Declaration the phrase 'full development of the human personality' implies fulfilling all of the relevant forms of human potential in ways that are good both for the individual and for society. The educational development of potential must be sufficiently well-rounded, good for the individual — including subjectively or from an experiential perspective — and admirable. When educators speak of helping students fulfill their potential, they take for granted that this fulfillment would be 'positive' or make some contribution to a flourishing society. They also take for granted that it would be personally rewarding or good for the students. So it is understood that fulfillment of potential, the activities in which this fulfillment occurs, and the resulting life, should all be good in the two-fold sense of being both good for the individual and good for the society. This is implicit not only in the Declaration's provisions concerning education, but also in the conception of liberal education descending from Aristotle (Curren, 2023a).

A question that has not been easy to answer is what forms or aspects of a person's potential must be fulfilled well in order for the fulfillment to be sufficiently well-rounded or constitute '*full* development of the human personality'. Must every child become skilled or

knowledgeable in a sport, music, practical arts, writing, and science, to experience adequate development of their potential?

My answer to this question relies on well-established findings in the science of well-being, specifically in Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT), a key explanatory component of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2017: Ryan, in press).[1] Grounded in many hundreds of studies across the world, BPNT posits the existence of three universal psychological needs: for *autonomy* (experiencing self-directedness congruent with personal values and sense of self), *relatedness* (experiencing a supportive social climate and affirming relationships), and *competence* (experiencing oneself as capable). The satisfaction and frustration of these needs is linked to fulfillment of potential, and the related forms of potential can be categorized as *intellectual* or *agentive* (the potential for rational self-determination), *social*, and *productive* (the potential to create and do things) (Ryan et al., 2013; Curren, 2023a, 2023b [in press]). A key cross-culturally replicated finding is that the satisfaction of all three of these basic psychological needs through fulfillment of related potentials is essential to and predictive of happiness and other aspects of personal well-being.

An implication of this is that we can define a baseline of adequately 'full development of the human personality' in terms of education that allows all children to fulfill their intellectual, social, and productive potential in ways that enable them to meet their needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. The satisfaction of those needs is predictive of happiness and gives children a foundation of experience in making progress in their lives on which they can build. This rests on cross-culturally replicated science and is compatible with cultural pluralism and personal self-determination in how the relevant forms of potential are fulfilled and needs satisfied.

There is, thus, no basis for the criticism that education for flourishing is *inherently* incompatible with diversity and personal autonomy. Harvey Siegel's version of the criticism is predicated on a defense of children's autonomy that many defenders of cultural self-determination in education would reject, but the basic response to both is the same. Siegel (2015) argues that making flourishing an aim of education would violate students' autonomy by imposing on them an aim they may not have for themselves — a 'presupposed understanding of well-being' that may not 'correctly characterize[e] *their* well-being' or be 'worth having' from their perspective (Siegel, 2015, p. 121). My response to this is that many possible conceptions of education for flourishing would be vulnerable to this criticism, but this one is not. Siegel seems to assume that nothing of educational significance could be objectively known to be essential to

students having good lives, except that they need to develop autonomous critical rationality 'enabling them both to envision possibilities and to evaluate their desirability intelligently' (122). We know far more than this, however. To be able to envision desirable possibilities *for themselves* and have any chance of achieving them, children need to experience gratifying progress in their own lives by becoming capable, positively connected, and self-determining. They need opportunities to discover what they can be good at, enjoy, and find meaningful, since neither they nor the adults in their world will know in advance what is best for them. Insisting that educators be more focused on enabling children to experience such progress in psychologically need supportive settings is not an imposition on them; it is foundational to meaningful autonomy.

The next step in seeing what this picture of adequate fulfillment of potential requires of education is to realize that fulfilling intellectual, social, and productive potential requires education that enables students to *understand* many aspects of their world, cultivates moral, intellectual, and other *virtues*, and builds the *capabilities* needed to regularly experience competence. Psychologists refer to 'social competence' as what is needed to experience 'positive' relatedness to members of one's communities, but from a philosophical perspective what is essential is *valuing* one's fellow human beings or being virtuously motivated (Curren & Ryan, 2020). Relating to others in positive ways involves affirming their value. Reliably satisfying any of the three basic psychological needs also requires competence in making decisions, so an adequate education in virtues would also recognize the complexity of the contexts and decisions that people must make, hence the importance of education in the forms of understanding and thinking essential to good judgment (i.e., *phronesis* or practical wisdom) (Curren, 2014). An adequately well-rounded education must therefore include character education in moral and intellectual virtues.

Valuing human beings involves valuing what is important to their well-being, hence their fundamental interests, basic needs, or human rights. An education in valuing one's fellow human beings should thus include strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. This could involve requiring students to study the Declaration and engaging them in discussions of the rights it enumerates. Meaningful discussions of the basis and implications of these human rights are not easy to lead, but children are quite capable of engaging with enthusiasm in the kind of inquiry involved.[2] And educators surely *owe* students the opportunity to have a strong practical understanding of the rights they have as children and will have as adults. Indeed, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) *requires* educational authorities to ensure that all children receive comprehensive and systematic education concerning their own rights (United

Nations, 1989).[3] Teaching for deep understanding of the rights and freedoms enumerated in the UDHR would be an important aspect of strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, but it is surely not sufficient.

3. Just school communities

Character education has not only curricular and pedagogical aspects, of course. It takes place within a social setting that may be more or less suitable in how it functions as a community. One key aspect of this is how *need supportive* the setting is, meaning the extent to which it provides students with acceptable ways to regularly meet their basic psychological needs. These needs play key roles not only in well-being but in learning, through the regulation of students' motivation and their internalization and integration of values and goals. In a need supportive environment, students are likely to accept the good values modeled and explained for them as their own, and the substantive compatibility of these values with the satisfaction of their basic psychological needs makes it possible for them to fully integrate those values into their identities. Values and goals that are not compatible with the satisfaction of one or more of the three basic psychological needs may be impossible to fully integrate into a motivationally coherent identity or self.

A central aspect of having good character is being appropriately moved by what is ethically significant in the world one encounters, and fully integrated valuing of this kind is an equally central aspect of good character education. Spontaneity of appropriate valuing is something very different from being controlled by external rewards and punishments or by related forms of 'introjected' motivation, such as fear of failing or being rejected (Curren & Ryan, 2020). Being valued for ourselves is something we all want and need (Demir et al., 2011), so it is quite natural that we would value personal attributes that embody such valuing as virtues or elements of good character (Walker et al., 2016). Less obvious, but well established in SDT research, is that our valuing of others is essential to our own well-being (Martela & Ryan, 2019; Prentice et al., 2019; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010).

A need supportive school community should also function as a *just school community* in ways that are related to the Declaration's Article 29.1 provision that, "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible". Lawrence Kohlberg's original model of just school communities envisioned giving students direct democratic control of their schools — and thereby responsibility for how well their schools function — so they could experience justice in ways that would encourage its internalization (Power, 1988). Kohlberg's developmental theory did not offer an account of the motivational dynamics of such

identification, but within a few years the just school community model was modified to rely on Basic Psychological Need Theory and give less emphasis to students playing roles in school governance (Power & Hart, 2005). In my own work on the just school community model I have emphasized the role of need support, the importance of students having opportunities to use and develop their capacities of rational self-governance, and the importance of schools operating not only on just principles in their internal affairs but with respect to students' opportunities to make progress in living good lives beyond the school (Curren, 2020).

The development of capacities of rational self-governance are a fundamental aspect of moral development and character education, yet it is not unusual for schools to adopt the mindset of criminal justice systems designed for mature adults when they should instead adopt a developmental and educative mindset in how they respond to behavioral problems in schools. A problem-solving approach to student failures to meet behavioral expectations can strengthen students' capacities of self-regulation and good decision-making, while building the positive relationships within schools that students and teachers both need (Greene, 2018; Curren, 2020). A great merit of the Just School Community model is that it adopts a whole school approach to character education, giving students roles in disciplinary practices that greatly enhance the educational value of those practices. Adding a developmental perspective on self-governance and a problem-solving approach to the Just School Community model adds even more value for character education.

My further update to the Kohlberg model has been to argue that it is not enough for the internal affairs of schools to operate on just principles that allow children to directly experience the inherent correlativity of rights and duties. Kohlberg seems to have regarded a just school community as a child-sized version of a just society, but there is a difference. Adults live and must find their way in the society, but children live and must find their way both in their school *and* in the society. A school should thus be both internally just *and* just in the way it enables students to make their way in living good lives beyond the school. From an educational perspective, students need to experience progress in their lives both within and beyond the school.

From a civic perspective, it is helpful, whenever possible, for students to be educated in just school communities in which they can encounter and befriend peers who are as diverse as the wider civic communities to which they belong. From the standpoint of the Declaration, this would mean having opportunities to make friendly connections to peers as diverse as the peoples of the global human community to which we all belong. Schools can only approximate this by degrees, but it is the most powerful way in which education can facilitate

intergroup friendship and valuing of all human beings.

4. Civic Friendship

The personal and civic benefits of educating diverse students together can be substantial, if they interact as equals, in cooperative, non-competitive, and rewarding ways, and persist in this long enough to form friendships. Friendships that bridge the chasms of trust and cooperation in polarized societies can sustain the hard conversations that are essential to changing minds. The ideal, described by Elizabeth Anderson, sees the integration of different groups within societies as occurring in four stages (Anderson, 2010, p. 116):

1. *Formal desegregation* (the abolition of legal separation).

2. *Spatial integration*, or "common use on terms of equality of facilities and public spaces by substantial numbers of all [groups]".

3. *Formal social integration*, involving cooperation in accordance with ground rules that require equal treatment.

4. *Informal social integration*, involving substantial intergroup friendships, trust, and cooperation that go beyond what the ground rules of formal integration require.

The hope in establishing formal social integration in schools, colleges, and elsewhere, is that the intergroup contact it requires will enable members to learn that they like and can trust, rely on, and be at ease with members of other groups. It will be helpful to consider an example of the power of civic friendships among college students before addressing some key aspects of the theory and research on intergroup friendship.

4.1. The Derek Black Story[4]

Derek Black is the son of Don Black, the founder of *Stormfront* (a leading online platform of the white nationalist (WN) movement in the United States) and a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). His godfather is his father's best friend, David Duke, who is also a former KKK Grand Wizard, Neo-Nazi, and leader of the WN movement in the United States. Derek grew up in the WN movement and had never dated anyone who had not grown up within it. He was the de facto leader of the movement by the time he began college in 2010, having invented as a teenager the preposterous but passionately held WN doctrine that 'white' people in the United States are victims of racial 'genocide' perpetrated by a global Jewish conspiracy. He promoted that Latinx and Jewish people are not 'white' and advocated the forcible expulsion of all 'non-white' people from the United States. During his first year of college he secretly broadcast his WN radio show from the New College campus, in Florida, while also coming to know, respect, and like a Peruvian immigrant, Juan, and an orthodox Jewish

classmate, Matthew. He dated a Jewish classmate, Rose.

In the spring of his first year of college, Derek was exposed by a classmate as a leader in the WN movement, triggering both outrage and soul searching on the New College online student forum. Should Derek be ostracized? Could friendly engagement with him change his beliefs? Should solidarity with the victims of white nationalist hate crimes be prioritized? Would those who remained friends with him be suspected of sympathizing with his views and be called out for it? Would it be unethical to treat him as a friend in the interest of trying to change him? Many of Derek's classmates at New College did shun and ostracized him, but Matthew invited Derek to his weekly Shabbat dinners where their friendship deepened, and others learned to trust Derek enough to befriend him and sustain conversations that changed his mind. A growing friendship with another friend, Allison, helped convince him that his advocacy of WN ideas caused harm for which he should make amends. The strength of their friendship also gave him the acceptance and courage he needed to face the profound rupture of his pre-college relationships that would likely occur if he renounced his WN ideology.

Derek did eventually renounce his WN ideology and did so very publicly in an effort to apologize and make amends for the harm he caused to countless people. Even some of his most vocal critics at New College acknowledged his integrity and courage in doing this, and the Southern Poverty Law Center removed him from its list of extremists who promote ideas that inspire racially motivated murders and other hate crimes. As he anticipated, his family and WN friends were outraged by this renunciation of the WN cause to which they had devoted much of their lives. All but his father lost all trust in him and cut him off.

Derek's transformation led an online publication, the *Daily Beast,* to write a story about him. The author speculated that Derek 'thought his way out of WN by reading studies and books' (Saslow, 2018, p. 225). Derek thought the story was mostly fair but wrote to the author, explaining that:

> People who disagreed with me were critical in this process. Especially those who were my friends [regardless of my views], but who let me know when we talked about it that they thought my beliefs were wrong and took time to provide evidence and civil arguments. I didn't always agree with their ideas, but I listened to them and they listened to me.
>
> Furthermore, a critical juncture was when I'd realize that a friend was considered an outsider by the philosophy I supported. It's a huge contradiction to share your summer plans with someone whom you completely respect, only to then realize that your ideology doesn't consider them a full member of society. I couldn't resolve that (Saslow, 2018, p. 225).

This story, and others like them, are rich in lessons about moral develop-

ment and transformation, and the ways in which belief, trust, and valuing are deeply entangled. Beliefs about people and their worthiness of respect and trust are propagated through networks of *epistemic* dependence and trust that are also to some extent networks of *social* dependence and trust (Nguyen, 2020). Liking and being liked by different kinds of people alter these networks and what we can know. A friendship can present us with evidence that a kind of person we were not predisposed to like, respect, or trust — a Peruvian immigrant, perhaps, or someone who is only beginning to escape an echo chamber of racist mythology and conspiracy theories — actually is someone we can like, respect, and trust. This not only changes what we know, it alters what we *can* know by altering the network of trusted sources and evidence on which we rely. The resulting alterations of belief can have a profound impact on the kinds of people we understand, respect, and will cooperate with in friendship and peace. In Derek's case, there was an obvious sense in which the kinds of people he understood, respected, and would cooperate with could have been changed by reading the kinds of research studies and books that his friend Alison shared with him; but without friends like Alison, Juan, Matthew, and Rose whom he liked, respected, and trusted, he might never have taken those kinds of studies and books seriously.

4.2. The idea of civic friendship

I have written at some length previously on Aristotle's much discussed conception of civic friendship (*politikê philia*) (Curren, 2000, 2019, 2021, 2023c [in press], 2023d [in press]; Curren & Dorn, 2018; Curren & Elenbaas, 2020), and will limit my explanation of it to a couple key points. Aristotle conceived of civic friendship as a social condition of mutually recognized mutual goodwill that is foundational to a society functioning as a partnership in living well. The language of article 26, § 2 and article 29, § 1 of the Declaration is fairly remarkable in the extent to which it echoes this idea of a community that exhibits friendship and cooperation in sustaining conditions in which everyone can live well. Aristotle's understanding of the basis of such a community is that it is made possible by justice and by intergroup contact facilitated by institutions that bring diverse citizens together.

Despite some scholarly puzzlement over the relationships between justice and friendship in Aristotle's works, I believe his view is compatible with Liz Anderson's account of the four stages of integration — specifically, the transition from *formal* social integration to *informal* social integration. The ground rules of the former require equal treatment, as justice does, and the hope is that the experience of interacting in accordance with these ground rules will provide a kind of habituation favorable to the formation of substantial intergroup friendships, trust, and cooperation that go beyond what the rules require and become self-sustaining. These substantial and self-sustaining intergroup friendships would

involve mutual liking or appreciation of the goodness in one another, and this liking or appreciation would enhance or transform the friends' understanding of and goodwill toward other members of the groups represented by their friends. Having diverse friends would in other words put friendly faces on kinds of people who might otherwise seem alien, strange, and threatening. Dispositions of goodwill would potentially reach across the whole society, not by moving outward through geographically concentric circles but through networks of overlapping group membership (Curren, 2021). Aristotle regarded this kind of transmission of goodwill as predictable, based on common observations about human nature.

From a contemporary standpoint, the conditions that lead to civic polarization typically involve patterns of physical separation that align across many spheres and thereby inhibit different kinds of people from interacting with each other (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018). These include residential, geographic, occupational, educational, religious, recreational, cultural, and other spheres. Schools, colleges, and universities that recruit diverse student bodies and provide homes for them over a span of years may offer some of the best opportunities for cultivating civic friendship that can reduce polarization, if the observations on which Aristotle relied were accurate. Because it is through networks rather than concentric circles that goodwill and trust can spread, children's earliest friendships can be significant for the development of global civic friendship (Curren, 2021).

5. Intergroup contact and global civic friendship

Aristotle's assumptions about the formation and transmission of civic friendship have been substantially vindicated, as research in Intergroup Contact Theory (ICT) has advanced our understanding of these matters, especially with regard to intimate or close relationships and indirect or extended forms of intergroup contact, in which people do not have personal interactions with members of other groups.

Bringing people from different social groups together can facilitate the formation of intergroup friendships when these factors are present:

- Participants are treated as equals.
- Contact is interpersonal: i.e., repeated and characterized by reciprocal self-disclosure and building of trust.
- Contact is pleasant or rewarding.
- The authorities and norms of the relevant groups favor intergroup contact.
- Those involved have cooperative goals for the contact (Amir, 1969; see also Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Turner & Feddes, 2011; Bohmert & DeMaris, 2015; Turner & Cameron, 2016; Dovidio et al., 2017; Paolini et al., 2021).

Intergroup friendships protect against the development of prejudice by reducing anxiety about cross-group interactions, increasing empathy across group lines, and promoting respectful behavior. Intergroup friendships and forms of indirect intergroup contact, such as seeing interracial couples, are also helpful in overcoming existing prejudice (Cameron et al., 2011; Dovidio, Eller, & Hewstone, 2011; Dhont, Van Hiel, & Hewstone, 2014; Marinucci et al., 2020; White et al., 2021).

Marco Marinuci and colleagues (2020) summarize some key findings, as follows:

> Intimate relations [cross-group friendships, being roommates, romantic relationships, etc.] have been found to improve explicit and implicit attitudes, attitude strength and accessibility, perceived outgroup variability, empathy, trust, perspective-taking, comfort interacting with the out-group, intended behavior, and the perceived value of intergroup contact, and they reduce blatant and subtle prejudice, perceived outgroup threat, intergroup anxiety, and endorsement of outgroup discrimination in behavior and government policy (Marinuci et al., 2020, p. 66).

Research has also vindicated the idea I attribute to Aristotle, that having a friend unlike oneself puts a friendly face on the outgroup to which the friend belongs. That is, it induces the projection of positive perceptions of the friend onto the entire group. This is known as 'group salience' (Paolini et al., 2014). Further, there is evidence that positive effects of direct contact with a member of one outgroup can transfer to other outgroups and their members (the so-called 'secondary transfer effect'; Boin et al., 2021). From the standpoint of character education, this implies that friendships with one or two people from groups (e.g., countries, religions, or races) different from one's own can be valuable in yielding wider goodwill and respect for human rights.

Creating educational communities that are welcoming, collaborative, and fair to all students can provide settings in which intergroup contact can facilitate civic friendship that is beneficial for the tenor of public life. There are many possible strategies available to residential college communities, including encouragement of cooperative learning experiences, incentives for student organizations to engage in collaborative projects, pairing of students from different groups as roommates, heterogenous pairings of advisors and advisees, global study experiences, and exchange programs (Berryman-Fink, 2006).[5] The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) has advocated a global problem-solving focus for collegiate education that connects students across the world (Hovland, 2006), and my historian co-author Charles Dorn and I have defended this approach as valuable in facilitating global civic friendship (Curren & Dorn, 2018). This could connect students across the globe through mostly remote learning, creating networks of friendly

cooperation, and nurturing multi-disciplinary, cross-regional engagement with problems of common concern. Problem-focused learning of this kind can be a vehicle not only for global cooperative learning but for practice in the demanding art of making properly informed, real-world decisions. To the extent that these decisions are made collectively in trying to address global problems, they may be steps toward a more just global community. Making good on the Declaration's call for education that promotes friendship among all nations would require sustained investment along these or similar lines.[6]

6. Conclusion

This paper has defended the vision of education for human flourishing, respect for human rights, and global civic friendship and cooperation announced in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. When the Declaration was adopted in 1948, fascism had just been defeated in an enormously costly world war. Today we face the reality that authoritarian nationalist ideas are once again a threat to human rights, tolerance, civic friendship, and peace. Fascism and other forms of authoritarian nationalism are politics of 'us' and 'them' that deny the humanity and equal rights of 'them' (Stanley, 2018). They are an affront to the universal basic respect for all persons on which common morality insists and that character education must defend.

Character education is a vital ingredient in a comprehensive approach to overcoming what divides so many societies today — a comprehensive approach that understands and addresses unmet needs and legitimate grievances, distinguishing truths from myths. The 1948 Declaration signaled such an approach, and this paper reflects this fact in locating character education within the larger enterprise of enabling everyone to live well. It has argued that character education adequate to the challenges we face can only succeed through a whole-school approach that is need supportive, just, and promotes friendly intergroup contact in the interest of global civic friendship.

Notes

[1] SDT has developed over the past 50 years into an empirically grounded systematic theory of psychological needs, motivation, well-being, and development, with 100,000 publications and 1.5 million citations (Ryan, in press, xi).

[2] Teachers and school leaders would need a basic introduction to ideas about the nature, basis, and applications of human rights and would need to *model* honest ethical inquiry. Facilitating collective inquiry is more productive for nurturing civic discourse and more powerful for nurturing children's moral seriousness and self-determination than teaching with the idea that one already knows all the answers to complex ethical questions. For an overview of the philosophical debates concerning human rights, see Cruft et al. (2015). On children's interest and ability in ethical inquiry, see Matthews, 1980, 1984; Lipman, 2003; Lipman et al., 1980; Pritchard, 1985, 1996.

[3] The United States is the only country in the world that has not signed the CRC. While there are parts of the United States, such as Vermont and Chicago, in which it is used as a standard of good practice relating to children, the general pattern in recent years has been a weakening of child protection law associated with a

doctrine of unlimited parental rights. On efforts to advance children's rights in the United States, see http://www.responsiblehomeschooling.org; Other countries, including Canada, have made progress toward honoring the CRC. See https://childrenfirstcanada.org/.

[4] This account is based on Saslow (2018), a book about Derek Black written with his cooperation and that of his father and several friends.

[5] The practices of *Colegios Mayores* (residential college communities) also warrant serious consideration in this context, not least because they have existed across Europe for nearly a millennium. See Dabdoub et al., 2022; Suárez, 1966.

[6] For related works, see Nussbaum (2010); Kitcher (2022, 2023).

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Author's biography

Randall Curren is Professor of Philosophy and Professor of Education at the University of Rochester (New York), a former Member at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and a former Professor at the University of Birmingham Jubilee Centre (England) and Royal Institute of Philosophy (London). An author and editor of 150 works, his most recent book is the 2023 Routledge *Handbook of Philosophy of Education*.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1619-5140

To educate citizens and citizen-leaders for our society: Renewing character education in universities

Formar ciudadanos y ciudadanos-líderes para nuestra sociedad: Renovando la educación del carácter en las universidades

Edward BROOKS. Executive Director. Oxford Character Project, University of Oxford *(edward.brooks@qeh.ox.ac.uk).*
Jorge L. VILLACÍS, PhD. Assistant Professor. University of Navarra *(jvillacis.1@unav.es).*

Abstract:

Seventy-five years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights promoted a vision of education "directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (United Nations, 1948, 26.2). In 2015, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) took this further, stating in SDG 4 that "the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by citizens to lead productive lives, make informed decisions and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges can be acquired through education for sustainable development and global citizenship education" (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2016, p. 14). What might the adoption of this educational mission involve for higher education? And what does it mean in a challenging global context following the COVID pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine? This paper argues that the current global tumult should catalyse reflection as to the purpose and content of higher education. It focuses on the importance of education for "values and attitudes", emphasized as an essential component of global citizenship and leadership education in the rubric of SDG 4. It proposes a return to the philosophical categories of "character" and "virtue", arguing that the societal orientation of global universities and their aspiration "to educate the citizens and citizen-leaders for our society" (Harvard College, 2022) necessitates a renewal of theoretically rigorous, pedagogically effective, and practically relevant character education.

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Keywords: character education, virtue ethics, university students, higher education.

Resumen:

Hace setenta y cinco años la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos promovió una visión de la educación «dirigida al pleno desarrollo de la personalidad humana y al fortalecimiento del respeto por los derechos humanos y las libertades fundamentales» (Naciones Unidas, 1948, 4.7). En 2015 los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS) de las Naciones Unidas llevaron este tema aún más lejos y establecieron en el ODS 4 que «los conocimientos, las habilidades, los valores y las actitudes que requieren los ciudadanos para llevar vidas productivas, tomar decisiones informadas y asumir roles activos a nivel local y global para enfrentar la resolución de desafíos globales se pueden adquirir a través de la educación para el desarrollo sostenible y la educación para la ciudadanía global» (Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura [UNESCO], 2017, p. 14). ¿Qué puede implicar para la educación superior la adopción de esta misión educativa? ¿Y qué significa en un contexto global desafiante después de la pandemia de la COVID y la invasión rusa de Ucrania? En este artículo se argumenta que la presente conmoción global debería favorecer la reflexión sobre el propósito y el contenido de la educación superior. En el presente estudio el foco se dirige a la importancia de la educación en «valores y actitudes», enfatizada como un componente esencial de la educación para la ciudadanía global y el liderazgo de acuerdo con el ODS 4. Este artículo propone un retorno a las categorías filosóficas de «carácter» y «virtud», argumentando que la orientación social de las universidades globales y su aspiración a «educar a los ciudadanos y ciudadanos-líderes para nuestra sociedad» (Harvard College, 2022) requiere una renovación de la educación del carácter teóricamente rigurosa, pedagógicamente eficaz y prácticamente relevante.

Descriptores: educación del carácter, ética de la virtud, estudiantes universitarios, educación superior.

1. Introduction

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) advances the ideal of education as open to all and aimed towards the holistic development of the human personality and good of society. "Everyone has the right to education" it states, adding that higher education should be "equally accessible to all on the basis of merit" (United Nations, 1948, 26.1). As for its goal, "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (United Nations, 1948, 26.2). In 2015 the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) took up and advanced the UDHR vision in "SDG 4, Quality Education: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2015). Two of the accompanying targets have specific relevance for higher edu-

cation. Target 4.3 speaks of "equal access to affordable technical, vocational and higher education" (United Nations, 2015, 4.3). Target 4.7 emphasizes education's purpose:

> It is vital to give a central place to strengthening education's contribution to the fulfilment of human rights, peace and responsible citizenship from local to global levels, gender equality, sustainable development and health. The content of such education must be relevant, with a focus on both cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of learning. The knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by citizens to lead productive lives, make informed decisions and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges can be acquired through education for sustainable development and global citizenship education. (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2016, p. 14)

What does such global citizenship education, including the development of "values and attitudes" as well as knowledge and skills, mean for universities? How does it relate to central functions of academic research and disciplinary education? And what does it mean in a challenging global context where crises such as climate change, COVID 19, military conflict, and the rising cost of living, seem to be layered one on the other? In this paper we take universities broadly to refer to all higher education institutions. We argue that the current global tumult should catalyse reflection as to the purpose and content of higher education. In particular, we argue that the opportunity and responsibility of global universities to advance the common good, reflected in their widely shared civic orientation, holds within it a necessary renewal of character education.

The paper will unpack this proposal in three sections: First, we consider trends in higher education amidst the changes and challenges of our late modern context, arguing that present challenges add weight to a recent focus on the social purpose of universities. Second, we turn to the aspiration of global universities themselves, identifying a widely shared mission to serve society that entails an educational focus — in line with SDG 4.7 — on the development of students' values and attitudes as well as their knowledge and skills. Third, we argue that this focus needs to be conceptually robust, pedagogically effective, and practically relevant. We draw on the theoretical framework of Neo-Aristotelian character education (Kristjánsson, 2015) to propose a renewal of character education in universities that will help students to flourish in their lives in and beyond university and enable them to play their part as "citizens and citizen-leaders for our society" (Harvard College, 2022) into the future.

2. Changing higher education for a changing world

The COVID-19 pandemic and Russian invasion of Ukraine, which are the context and catalyst for this special issue of **revista española de pedagogia**, have prompted hand-wringing discussion concerning the status of the

post-war vision of globalised liberal democracy and progressive technological modernity that is encapsulated in documents such as the UDHR. The pandemic's global toll of over 6.5m reported deaths (World Health Organization, 2022), accompanied by the strict lockdown measures needed to constrain the disease and deleterious economic consequences, have been a stark reminder of the fragility of life and the importance of humanistic values and interpersonal relationships. The pandemic has presented a significant challenge to the idea that the modern world is advancing towards a technological and transhumanist utopia. More recently, Russia's brazen invasion of Ukraine demonstrates the influence of leaders, who have significant power to mobilise people and resources for good or for ill. Justified as a holy war, the invasion highlights that human values are mediated through group affiliations. In this case, the war evidences the grip of a starkly illiberal ideology that connects Russia's nuclear capability and its national religion (Adamsky, 2019). Predatory threats of nuclear conflict and the apparent disdain of Russian military commanders for international law highlights that the consensus enshrined after the Second World War in the documents and organisations of the United Nations is fragile.

These major global crises have an impact and importance that reaches across society. Here, our focus is on universities: What do these major global crises mean for higher education? Should a "renewed character education following the pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine" — as the title for this journal edition puts it — be a priority at the university level? What might such education look like? Rather than starting with abstract principles, we will begin with universities themselves and the trends in global higher education that act as their operating context.

In *Changing higher education for a changing world* (Callender et al., 2020a), professors Claire Callender, William Locke, and Simon Marginson bring together recent work by twenty-five leading global higher education academics who have collaborated in the Centre for Global Higher Education (CGHE). Established in 2015, the CGHE is a partnership of six UK and nine international universities who have been funded to carry out research on global, national, and local higher education. Its work focuses on central issues and trends in higher education, including growing participation, funding models, student learning and digitisation, private-sector providers, graduate jobs, university partnerships, international students, governance, and the role of higher education in advancing the public good (Callender et al., 2020b). The book, which was published soon after the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19, presents perspectives and findings from the first wave of CGHE research between 2017 and 2019. It provides a valuable, research-based picture of global higher education in the period immediately before the pandemic. The editors present three framing themes and related trends: expansion, globalisation and inequality.

First, expansion: according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022), 40% of young people entered some form of tertiary education in 2019, most of them enrolling in degree programmes. This number has grown from 14% in 1990 with a present 1% annual growth rate meaning that by 2030 "half of all young people everywhere will enter tertiary education" (Marginson et al., 2020, p. 3). This remarkable growth around the world is not primarily driven by governmental or economic factors (see Marginson, 2016), but "accumulating social demand for opportunities" (Marginson et al., 2020, p. 5). The graduate premium that students and families are seeking is less focused on financial return than on "esteem, satisfaction, personal agency and self-respect" (Marginson et al., 2020, p. 5). Young people are enrolling in higher education with the goal of what Marginson (2014) terms "self-formation", seeking to "manage their lives reflexively, fashioning changing identities, albeit under social circumstances largely beyond their control" (Marginson, 2014, p. 6). As recent psychological research suggests, having an intrinsic motivation (i.e., personal growth) rather than an extrinsic one (i.e., the prospect of higher future earnings) is related to higher academic performance and reduced rates of college withdrawal (Milovanska-Farrington, 2020).

Higher education doesn't simply shape skills but values. It "provides conditions and resources for the self-formation of students and leaves a lifelong mark on graduates" (Marginson et al., 2020, p. 5). Holding together this formative role of higher education with its scale and ongoing growth points to its importance in society. As former Harvard President, Derek Bok (2020), points out:

> Colleges are the dominant institutions for teaching and nurturing young people during four critical years in which they are capable of growth not only in their intellects but in other qualities of personality and behaviour that can help them succeed and flourish after they graduate. For most of these capabilities, there is no satisfactory alternative to college for providing the necessary instruction. (2020, p. 142)

Second, globalisation: the influence, and with it the responsibility of higher education institutions extends across borders right around the world. Advances in communication technologies and cloud-based data storage have led to the development of the internet as a massive, globally accessible library of information. In relation to this data bank, the network of global universities constitutes — at its best — a space for free-thought, knowledge development, and open exchange, akin to a "world mind" (Marginson, 2020, p. 255). The connectedness and integration of societies, economies, political systems, and cultures is a prominent feature of late modernity. Universities, which "are among the most internationally active and globalized of social institutions" (Marginson et al., 2020, p. 7) both shape and are shaped by this broader global context. Universities are ranked globally

and one way they advance up the hierarchy is through global partnerships in research and teaching programmes. Students are recruited globally, with more than 5 million studying internationally each year (up from 2 million in 1999 and increasing at 6% per annum before the pandemic) (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2018). Faculty collaborate in international groups and conferences, with 22.5% of research papers in the Scopus database co-authored across national boundaries in 2018 (Marginson, 2022). However, economic forces of globalisation diminished following the 2008 financial crash, and popular political movements on both left and right have caused many governments to turn inward. Universities, especially global research universities, have faced the consequences of this new nationalism in terms of difficulties for faculty and student mobility, and disruption of funding sources. What is more, the accusation that universities are aloof and distant from local and national concerns has challenged public confidence (Hudson & Mansfield, 2020). There is pressure for universities to demonstrate that a global focus does not leave the local behind, while continuing to fulfil their wider intellectual and social responsibility.

Third, inequality: if one critique of globalised higher education is its disconnection from local and national interests, an important corollary is its contribution to a political economy of inequality, where global cities and networked "elites" are unfairly advantaged. Global research universities, in particular, are in a difficult position — their contribution to society relies on global collaboration to produce common goods, yet productive collaborative efforts are often exclusive, formed between small groups of similar institutions or with barriers to entry that only a few can navigate. In the sector more broadly, the opportunities universities provide for emerging adults to study abroad fosters global mobility and intercultural exchange. However, the financialization of international study, with overseas students paying higher fees in many countries, has the potential to diminish the positive effect of such mobility by limiting opportunities to those with means. There is no single course of action that can address all the challenges. What universities can do is take seriously their impact and so responsibility in relation to societies locally and globally, and act intentionally. Investing in scholarships for international students, engaging in research and teaching on dynamics of global inequality, working with other educational institutions in their vicinity, and developing intentional policies and practices of student selection, are all important levers (Marginson et al., 2020). Universities have a range of local, national and global spheres of influence but the conceptualisation of universities as having a social purpose and responsibility is increasingly prominent (Grant, 2021; The Netter Center for Community Partnerships, 2008).

These three themes of expansion, globalisation, and inequality contain within

them the rationale for a focus on character. It is important how character education is conceptualised and delivered, but if the expansion of higher education is driven less by financial motives than by social esteem and the potential for "self-formation", character education would seem to be an important part of meeting demand. When it comes to the interrelated issues of globalisation and inequality, character education — and especially the development of civic virtues — can be understood as part of the university's responsibility to educate citizens who will work with others to engage global challenges and advance justice in the world.

Such challenges form the backdrop of a higher education sector that, before COVID-19, was navigating minefields laid by some of the contradictory tendencies within global modernity. This contemporary socio-cultural context at once manifests a deep commitment to individual rights and social justice, alongside a lack of consensus on the nature of truth and a wide variety of beliefs and opinions (Bauman, 2011; Giddens, 1991). A positivist paradigm is confidently maintained in science and technology and yet this epistemic stance translates poorly to the moral domain, leaving ethical questions and life commitments increasingly difficult to resolve. The emerging adults that populate university campuses live amidst these tensions. Many students are passionate about social justice and yet ill-equipped to make the kind of commitments needed to advance it, preferring to keep their options open when it comes to such matters as career, family, and political ideology (Alvarado et al., 2020; Arnett, 2015; Salvà-Mut et al., 2018). The world of post-university employment for which degree programmes are expected, by many, to be directly preparatory is likewise in flux, catalysed by the disruption of advanced digitalisation and process automation (Schwab, 2017; Susskind & Susskind, 2015). In such a world, ethical rules and utilitarian calculus offer only limited light to guide action, but character comes into its own. In particular, the virtue of practical wisdom, understood as the moral deliberation and discernment needed to balance competing tensions and make wise and ethical decisions at the most appropriate time, is invaluable. Indeed, the University of Birmingham (2022) has recently added practical wisdom to its official list of graduate attributes as a key quality of "ethical and active citizens" along with "socially responsible" and "reflective".

The context of a rapidly changing world has spawned a futurology of higher education, advanced as a discipline by a wide range of commentators and consultants (Locke, 2020). Amongst the trends said to be driving the future are the transformation of graduate work, the changing profile and expectations of students, a reduction in government funding, deregulation and associated competition from for-profit institutions, and greatly increased use of technology in teaching and learning (Locke, 2020). Add the underlying themes of expansion, globalisation, and inequality and it is easy to lose orientation amidst the com-

plexity with waves of peril and possibility (Schwab, 2017) indistinguishable and all around.

The COVID-19 pandemic and Russian invasion of Ukraine hardly make the field of global higher education any easier to comprehend. What is more, while these challenges are still with us it is far from clear what their medium and long-term effects will be. First, when it comes to student numbers, there is insufficient data to make any conclusions on the impact of the pandemic on the global expansion of higher education. Overall student numbers in the UK have continued to grow (Bolton, 2022) but it would be unwise to extrapolate from selective national examples. Second, both crises have exacerbated tensions in relation to globalization, re-introducing division and distrust last seen in the Cold War. The impact on academic collaboration is yet to be seen and the flow of international students seems to differ by country and is difficult to estimate overall (OECD, 2021). Third, the COVID pandemic clearly accelerated the adoption of digital technologies in higher education as in other contexts. The importance of IT infrastructure and the role of educational technology providers and platforms are notable but it remains to be seen what the "new normal" for teaching and learning will look like, with little indication that digitalisation can replace face to face relationships between students and professors (OECD, 2021). Fourth, when it comes to inequality, there is evidence that the effect of the pandemic on the experience of learners varied significantly in relation to socio-demographic and geographic factors. In a global study of 30,383 students from 62 countries (Aristovnik et al., 2020) 86.7% of respondents reported the cancellation of in-person teaching for some form of online education. However, when it came to satisfaction with online provision, students from Africa lagged significantly behind — perhaps unsurprising given only 29% of African students had functional internet access, compared with a global average of 60%. If this finding is sadly unremarkable, it does highlight the variability of higher education experiences and significant inequality of provision.

If it is too soon to draw conclusions from data in terms of the enduring impact on higher education of the pandemic and invasion of Ukraine, perhaps we can take a step back and consider these events in terms of their broader significance, allowing them to raise questions regarding the purpose of higher education in the modern world. Such reflection can take us beyond questions of short-term performance to consider the deeper question: in a world challenged by COVID-19 and under the threat of nuclear conflict, what are universities for?

One answer to the question is *science*. The COVID pandemic demonstrated the importance of technology in understanding and overcoming serious medical threats. Masks, ventilators, vaccines, and other medicines all need to be developed, tested and safe-

ly administered. In the pandemic, universities have sourced and analysed data, and in some cases contributed to the direct development of technologies needed to combat the disease. If the pandemic points to the role of universities in scientific progress, it has also drawn attention to the human dynamics of modern life. Imposed obligations of 'social distancing' and 'lockdown' as well as severe restrictions on the commemoration of life events, have raised questions about social responsibility and revealed anew the importance of close social relationships. The failure of some prominent leaders and celebration of 'ordinary heroes' has drawn attention to the need for citizens and leaders across society with virtues such as service, compassion, empathy, humility, hope, and courage. The examples that were singled out for public admiration at the height of the pandemic were groups, such as nurses, where these virtues are central to their profession, as well as leaders who evidenced such virtues in distinctive ways. New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern was widely noted for her empathy; Germany's Angela Merkel for the intellectual humility she displayed when justifying policy decisions; in the UK, Queen Elizabeth's steadfast and hopeful resolve was evident as she gave a public broadcast exhorting people to endure present challenges and not give up. The role of universities in science and technology seems straightforward to grasp, but such technologies are developed and deployed within wider social structures that are built on values and upheld by the virtuous action of citizens and leaders. What role should universities play in this latter regard?

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the threat it presents to global democracy prompts the same question from a different angle. If universities are for science, can the scientific capability of universities be legitimately mobilised to support war as it has been to overcome disease? To answer negatively, we will need to refer to values. Starting from an uncontroversial commitment to open inquiry as a central value of modern universities, we are led on to the necessary practice of such liberal virtues as justice, honesty, open-mindedness, intellectual humility, tolerance, and respect. In such inquiry, the potentially subversive question of when (if ever) nuclear weapons can legitimately be deployed, and the courage to pursue it, arises together with the knowledge of how to make them. Universities thus considered have a properly dissenting function in totalitarian states as institutions devoted to critical questioning. What role might Russia's universities play in fostering such dissent against Putin's regime? And if they should play such a role, what role ought universities outside Russia play in the peace-time development of students as citizens and leaders who will uphold rigorous open inquiry and advance free and just societies into the future? It is in raising questions such as these that the current crisis moves higher education discourse beyond economics and efficiency to ethics and character.

3. A mission to educate "citizens and citizen leaders to serve our society" (Harvard College)

In his famous 1930 book *Mission of the University*, José Ortega y Gasset (2010) argued that effective reform of universities must be rooted in an understanding of their purpose. For Ortega (2010), this purpose was social and entailed a focus on education that emphasized the personal enrichment of individual potential so that students would be prepared to contribute to society (Wyatt, 2020). Jonathan Grant (2021) takes up Ortega's emphasis on the public purpose of the university, offering a historical typology that begins with the *confessional university* originating in eleventh century Bologna for the training of clerics and subsequently the moral education for the ruling class. Not until the nineteenth century was this model challenged, when Humboldt's emphasis on research was joined to Newman's emphasis on teaching and formation in an American model of the *multiversity* that soon came to dominate globally. The *civic university* refers to the wave of nineteenth-century, socially oriented universities, both in the USA following the 1862 establishment of 'land grant' universities, and in the UK where 'redbrick' universities were established in industrial cities. "HiEdBizUK" (Collini, 2012) is currently dominant, the term coined by Stefan Collini to refer disparagingly to what he sees as government-sponsored financialization and managerialism in the higher education sector. Grant (2021) portrays the models as overlapping and acknowledges that the typology is crude, but the emphases of different models are observable globally. The proposal he advocates is for a new evolution of the university with a driving social purpose. He offers the University of Pennsylvania as an example, pointing to the work of Judith Rodin, University President between 1994 and 2004, to reconnect the university with the pro-social vision of its founder Benjamin Franklin. Her commitment lives on in her successor Amy Gutmann's affirmation of Franklin's belief that "a university is, first and foremost, a social undertaking to create a social good" (Penn Office of the President, 2022).

The prioritisation of social purpose is widely shared amongst leading universities around the world. Cortés-Sánchez (2018) used text mining to analyse 248 mission statements from the Quacquarelli Symonds 2016 ranking list of universities worldwide, finding "an overall emphasis on society and students, as stakeholders" (p. 597). Breznik and Law (2019) analysed mission statements of 250 universities worldwide, finding that "social responsibility" was one of four core dimensions. Bayrak (2020) used text mining to analyse 227 mission statements from the highest ranked universities in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, and North America, according to the Times Higher Education (THE) 2017 ranking, finding that "higher education institutions in every region call attention to the importance of serving community" (p. 8).

In the Spanish context, a study covering 47 Spanish public universities found that teaching was prioritized over research and service to society in their mission statements (Arias-Coello et al., 2020). However, when examining the most common message classified under the category of service to society, researchers reported that "transfer of knowledge, culture or research results, in order to improve the economic or social development of the surrounding environment or society" appeared for 71% of the universities.

In 2022, we conducted a thematic analysis of mission statements of 17 global universities. Our aim was to probe the findings of recent widescale surveys with a specific focus on the stated educational mission(s) of a small number of global universities. We focused on the highest ranked institutions internationally on account of their global influence and function as aspirational models. Our sample was made up of the top ten universities listed in the THE 2022 ranking as well as the top university from each of Africa, Australasia, East Asia, Europe (beyond the UK), Latin America, the Middle East, and South Asia. The top universities in East Asia, Peking University and Tsinghua University were equally placed in the THE ranking so both were included in the sample. The list of institutions can be found in the appendix, below.

We located the "about" and specific "mission and vision" pages (where available) of university websites and imported them into NVivo. For the majority of universities outside the UK and USA where the primary site was in the local language (ETH Zurich, Indian Institute of Science, Peking University, Tel Aviv University, Tsinghua University), we selected the English site. However, in the case of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, where the relevant information had not been translated into English, we analysed content in Spanish. These pages were coded and thematically analysed by a single researcher according to the pragmatic realism paradigm of qualitative research advocated by Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2018). We used an inductive coding method, focusing particularly on the stated mission of universities, the place of education in relation to it, and the description of that education.

We found a high degree of overlap in the emphases of university statements regarding their mission and purpose. Almost all of them describe their central function in terms of a dual core, using the standard terms of "education" and "research". Many of the universities add a note regarding their pursuit of international excellence in these domains (terms such as "outstanding" and "world-class" are widely used). In common with the research referred to above, there is a shared prioritisation of social purpose. Every institution on the list has this emphasis, with variation only in terms of its relative placement, the extent to which its meaning is elaborated, and the specification of social purpose in terms of a specific commu-

nity. Some speak in general terms of their mission "to benefit society", others elaborate with such emphases as the public good, the common good, societal well-being, the economy, the environment, and the natural world. The global horizon is present in each case, but the majority also highlight national and/or local communities.

The educational mission of the universities we looked at fits clearly within their commitment to "make a contribution to", "make a difference in" or "serve" society. The idea of education for personal success is present in some cases, but it is not nearly as prominent as the idea that education is aimed towards "cultivating global citizens who will thrive in today's world and become tomorrow's leaders" (Tsinghua University Education Foundation, 2022), or, to take the example that is used in the title of this paper, "the mission of Harvard College is to educate citizens and citizen-leaders for our society" (Harvard College, 2022). The personal benefit to students is generally framed in holistic terms such as "intellectual transformation" (Harvard College, 2022), "education that stimulates, challenges and fulfils" (University of Melbourne, 2022), and "transformative and socially engaged" education to "unleash students potential" (University of Cape Town, 2022). Personal benefit is subsumed under the idea of preparing citizens and leaders who will "contribute to society" (University of Oxford, 2022). The content of the education needed to meet such a goal focuses on the development of knowledge, skills, and values. All three aspects are emphasized prominently, with knowledge and skills most prominent but also a significant emphasis on values. The language of values or ethics is explicit in over a third of cases. Specific values that universities are seeking to cultivate are service, creativity, curiosity, resilience, wisdom, and civic responsibility. Perhaps surprisingly, given its scientific and technological focus, it is the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, 2022) that most clearly spells out its commitment to values and character development in its educational mission:

> It is the purpose of the educational program to develop in each student that mastery of fundamentals, versatility of mind, motivation for learning, and intellectual discipline and self-reliance that is the best foundation for continuing professional achievement; to provide a liberal as well as professional education so that each student acquires a respect for moral values, a sense of the duties of citizenship, and the basic human understanding and knowledge required for leadership; and thereby to send forth men and women of the highest professional competence, with the breadth of learning and of character to deal constructively with the issues and opportunities of our time.

Many of the educational emphases we have noted are included in MIT's statement. A focus on professional achievement is integrated with an emphasis on moral values, citizenship, and leadership in what is described as "a liberal as well as professional education". The purpose is for students to develop "the high-

est professional competence" (skills), "breadth of learning" (knowledge) and "character to deal constructively with the issues and opportunities of our time" (character). Interestingly it is character that is singled out as particularly important to navigate the present context.

4. A renewal of character education

We have seen that the ambition of universities to educate citizens and leaders who will serve society necessitates an emphasis on more than knowledge and skills. The importance of developing "values and attitudes" is present as a third component in SDG 4 and highlighted by many universities, which often point to specific values that they seek to help students develop. MIT focuses on "character" in its educational mission, a move we advocate here as holding significant promise.

In arguing that character development should be an intentional focus of universities, we are not presenting a new emphasis but arguing for a renewal of character education in a form that is fit for purpose in modern institutions. The expansion of universities since the mid twentieth century has been built on a vision of opening access to important knowledge and skills, and the need to grow a technically skilled and highly educated workforce for an increasingly knowledge-based global economy. It has been driven by public sector funding and student debt and focused on financial outcomes. The contribution of higher education to career prospects and national economies is important, but few argue that it constitutes the full picture of what universities should be about. In focusing on knowledge, skills and economic impact, the importance of values and character development has not been overturned so much as overlooked. It is harder to conceptualise and articulate in relation to financial benefits and perceived as difficult for modern, ideologically plural institutions to actively promote. The expansion of universities with a mission to serve society, the consensus of university mission statements and international documents like the UDHR and SDGs, and the challenges of the present global context highlight the importance of character education in universities and should spur its renewal.

It is important to note that such a proposal is not without its critics. Some argue against the possibility of character education in university years. Others oppose it on grounds of ethical permissibility, suggesting that the intentional cultivation of virtue in university students needs to be justified by a direct professional concern linked to their degree programme if it is to respect their autonomy as adults (Carr, 2017). Both objections should be resisted. Universities play a crucial role as stewards of the next generation (Bok, 2020) and have a responsibility to take appropriate steps to help students develop the character as well as the knowledge and skills they need to flourish in their lives. What is more, recent research in neuroscience and psychology supports the possibility of virtue cultivation at the life stage of emerging adulthood

(Williams, 2022). Universities are a promising context in which virtuous moral habits, such as self-control, intellectual curiosity, and care for others, can be promoted in students (Villacís et al., 2021). So long as the autonomy of students is affirmed and pedagogical strategies that support student character development as self-directed, David Carr's (2017) concern can be mitigated. What is more, virtues of character supplement the civic competencies required for living well in society and performing a leading role in social change (Naval et al., 2022).

This article proposes that a renewed emphasis on character education is needed to move higher education forward so that universities deliver on their aspiration to educate "citizens and citizen leaders to serve society". In this final section we elaborate on the nature of such character education, arguing that it should be based on a rigorous theoretical framework, a tested pedagogical approach, and a practically relevant orientation toward students' interests.

4.1. Conceptual rigour

At present, many universities focus on the development of "values and attitudes" (SDG 4) under the framing of graduate attributes, 21st century skills, or higher education competencies. Such framings can be helpful in order to focus the attention of administrators and educators onto aspects of education that are not necessarily emphasized in specific disciplinary degree programmes. However, we argue that it is necessary to move beyond generic framings to conceptualise character development in universities more robustly. This is important since it is only by way of a clear understanding of what character education is (and isn't) that it is possible to consider how it can be conducted to good effect in modern universities.

One promising theoretical and practical stream of character education has developed from the twentieth-century renewal of virtue ethics (Anscombe, 1958; MacIntyre, 2007) and selective appropriation of the philosophical and practical tradition of formation that is built on the work of Aristotle. Serious deficiencies in a number of Aristotle's positions, not least concerning race, gender, and slavery mean that Aristotle's teaching should certainly not be taken up without critique. Instead, the approach of Neo-Aristotelian character education, as defined by Kristján Kristjánsson (2015) reads Aristotle critically in order to provides a theory of character and character development that integrates the latest insights of social scientific research with contemporary moral and educational philosophy.

This approach to character education involves three aspects: an understanding of the motivational dynamism in the human person, the presence of habits as means for the potential of positive motivation to be realised in practice, and pedagogical guidelines as to how such habits can be promoted. The motivational dimension of Neo-Aristotelian character education relates to the idea that human

action is deeply motivated by the attainment of happiness or *eudaimonia*, commonly translated as *flourishing*. Flourishing is a dynamic state of human being, wherein the full potential of human life is fully realised. In a flourishing life the internal aspiration for holistic well-being and external conditions necessary to support it are achieved in a way congruent with reason and the common good (Kristjánsson, 2015).

According to Aristotle, the cultivation of virtuous character is central to human flourishing. Virtues of character are rational and emotional dispositions to action. They can be parsed into moral virtues, which relate to living well, and intellectual virtues, which relate to thinking well (Kristjánsson, 2015). These habits of heart and mind have been studied thoroughly since the ancient world. In the last two decades, virtues have also been objects of scientific scrutiny in psychological research (Peterson & Seligman, 2004; Wright et al., 2021). Current efforts to study and promote virtues at the school and higher education levels have classified these habits into four groups (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues & Oxford Character Project, 2020): intellectual virtues, such as curiosity and intellectual humility, which relate to the "pursuit of knowledge, truth and understanding" (p. 6); civic virtues, such as civility and service, which refer to "the engagement of students in their local, national and global contexts" (p. 6); moral virtues, such as honesty, courage, compassion, and justice, which concern the development of "an ethical awareness in academic work and wider university life" (p. 6) animated by a commitment to the common good; lastly, performance strengths are traits such as determination and confidence, whose function is "enabling intellectual, moral and civic virtues" (p. 6). Crowning these virtues is *phronesis* or practical wisdom (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010), which is understood as the integrative virtue of good judgment and serves to facilitate the application of virtues in practice in order to do "the right thing at the right time" (Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues & Oxford CharProject, 2020, p. 6)

4.2. Pedagogical efficacy

A conceptual understanding of character education can only serve its purpose if it can be applied in higher education. There is a need for effective teaching methods, supported by evidence, that can be applied in cohorts of emerging adults in university contexts.

Recent multidisciplinary research suggests the potential of seven strategies for cultivating virtues of character at the higher education level (Brant et al., 2022; Lamb et al., 2021). The seven strategies are:

> 1) habituation through practice; 2) reflection on personal experience; 3) engagement with virtuous exemplars; 4) dialogue that increases virtue literacy; 5) awareness of situational variables; 6) moral reminders and 7) friendships of mutual accountability. (Lamb et al., 2021, p. 82)

These methods have been recently applied in both curricular classes (Lamb et al., 2022) and extra-curricular character

and leadership programmes for university students (Brant et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2019; Lamb et al., 2021). In these programmes, particular practices of habituation are encouraged through individual exercises and tasks (e.g., keeping a gratitude journal). Reflection on personal experience is motivated by group discussions and reflective exercises. The use of biographies, narrative texts, and readings are central techniques to favour the engagement with moral exemplars. Virtue literacy is enhanced through dialogues with visiting speakers, mentor meetings, and small group discussions. knowledge about situational variables enable participants to reflect on their own tendencies and occupational hazards that can undermine their practice of virtues. Lastly, by forming a community of virtuous practice, these programmes provide students with regular moral reminders and can provide fertile contexts for students to establish friendships focused on character development and contribution to the common good.

In addition to educational programmes, institutional and personal actions can be implemented by university leaders and faculty members to promote character in students. As Derek Bok (2020) states, institutional initiatives can encompass courses of moral reasoning, enforcing rules against plagiarism and cheating in honour codes, ensuring that rules on students' behaviours on campus are clearly worded and adequately explained to them, and adhering to high ethical standards in leaders' administration. By effectively implementing these actions, university students are thought to develop conscientiousness traits and improve moral reasoning and moral behaviour. Nevertheless, institutional efforts can be ineffective if universities do not count on faculty who are committed to the ongoing cultivation of their own character since they are "the individuals in the best position to influence students" (Bok, 2020, p. 76). Although more research is needed to understand the nature of this influence, the role of faculty members and other well-chosen mentors as moral exemplars can play an important part in the cultivation of virtue in the university (Lamb et al., 2021).

4.3. Practical relevance

It is possible to have a great theory and excellent pedagogy, but if students do not become involved, it is not possible to educate character in universities. In order to connect the theory and pedagogical practice to life experience, we need to effectively engage the questions students are asking, the challenges they face, and the ambitions they hold.

Character education initiatives at the university must meet students where they are, not only where faculty or university leaders want them to be. An example of this approach is the connection of character development to student aspirations when it comes to leadership development and social impact. Such an approach has been applied since 2014 at the University of Oxford, where the Oxford Character Project has pioneered character and leadership education, delivering programmes at Oxford as well

as in partnership with the Europaeum group of European universities, the London School of Economics, and the University of Hong Kong (Brant et al., 2020; Lamb et al., 2021). This interdisciplinary initiative at the University of Oxford is focused on the development of character and responsible leadership in postgraduate students. Connecting with students' interests in leadership and their desire to make a difference when it comes to pressing social and environmental issues, the Oxford Character Project aims to help students develop as ethical and effective leaders who can successfully navigate complexity and uncertainty to further the good of society.

Today, intentional character development is a minority report in higher education. However, there are early signs that a renewal may be underway. The aspiration expressed by universities in their mission statements can provide a constructive starting point, and there are a growing number of character education initiatives in universities around the world. In the USA, Wake Forest University has a prominent Program for Leadership and Character, delivering curricular and extra-curricular programmes and training faculty to integrate character education into classes across the university. In Spain, the recently-founded Civic Humanism Center of the Universidad de Navarra offers a character-focused leadership programme for students in conjunction with research exploring the benefits of liberal education for character development and professional practice. Spanish residential colleges, called *Colegios Mayores*, have also become a focus for character education, advanced by the "University Communities for Character Development" project (Dabdoub et al., 2022). Created with the first universities in Spain and France, these organizations aim to provide not only a place of residence to university students but also an environment of academic preparation and character development (Suárez, 1966). In these institutions, students from different years live alongside faculty in communities that emphasize the development of character as an important aim of education.

5. Conclusion

Both aspects of the educational vision of the UDHR, its commitment to education that is open to all and aims to develop people and society, were renewed in 2015 by the United Nations in SDG 4 (Quality Education), which asserts that "it is vital to give a central place to strengthening education's contribution to the fulfilment of human rights, peace and responsible citizenship from local to global levels, gender equality, sustainable development and health" (UNESCO, 2016, p. 14). This locates education at the heart of the UN's global agenda, driving progress across all 17 SDGs. The emphasis of SDG 4 is on "cognitive and non-cognitive aspects of learning" in an education that helps students to acquire "the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by citizens to lead productive lives, make informed decisions and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges" (UNESCO, 2016, p.

14). While universities widely affirm this vision in their own mission statements, the intentional development of values and attitudes trails behind the development of knowledge and skills. A renewal of character education in universities, in line with the renewal of virtue ethics and character development in the theory and practice of education more widely, has the potential to fill this gap in the development of students as global citizens.

Appendix

TABLE 1. List of universities included in the present study.

THE 2022 ranking	Institution	Country
1	Oxford	UK
2	California Institute of Technology	USA
2=	Harvard	USA
4	Stanford	USA
5=	Cambridge	UK
5=	Massachusetts Institute of Technology	USA
7	Princeton	USA
8	University of California, Berkeley	USA
9	Yale	USA
10	University of Chicago	USA
15	ETH Zurich	Switzerland
16=	Peking University	China
16=	Tsinghua University	China
33	University of Melbourne	Australia
183=	University of Cape Town	South Africa
201-250	Indian Institute of Science	India
301–350	Pontifica Universidad Católica de Chile	Chile
401-500	Tel Aviv University	Israel

Source: Based on the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2022..

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Authors' biographies

Edward Brooks is the Executive Director of the Oxford Character Project.

His research lies at the intersection of virtue ethics, character and leadership development. Particular interests include the virtue of hope, the relationship between character and culture in commercial organisations, leadership for human flourishing, and exemplarist moral theory.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9171-7661

Jorge L. Villacís holds a PhD in Education and Psychology from the Universidad de Navarra and is an Assistant Professor at the same institution. He is part of the Research Group on Citizenship and Character (GIECC) at the Universidad de Navarra. He has conducted a research stay at St. Antony's College, University of Oxford and completed a Visiting Research Fellowship at the Oxford Character Project. His research interests and publications are oriented towards the development of character strengths in the university context.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0871-250X

The cultivation of critical thinking through university tutoring: A new opportunity after Covid-19

El cultivo del pensamiento crítico a través de la tutoría universitaria: una nueva oportunidad tras la Covid-19

Francisco ESTEBAN BARA, PhD. Profesor Agregado. Universidad de Barcelona *(franciscoesteban@ub.edu).*
M.ª Carmen CARO SAMADA, PhD. Associate Professor. Universidad Internacional de la Rioja *(carmen.caro@unir.net).*

Abstract:

University tutoring is, with some exceptions, in a state that should concern us. The model in recent years is sporadic, optional meetings generally used to clarify doubts about academic content, solve problems with completing tasks, review assessment results, and find solutions for students' personal problems that affect their progress in modules. This model of tutoring may make it possible to resolve problems, but it is a limited and insubstantial version of what it could be. There is case for saying that its leitmotiv is university character education, principally what has come to be called the critical spirit or thinking. In addition, it seems that this is what the contemporary social and professional reality misses and demands: university graduates who think for themselves, always seek the truth of things, and focus on the common good. Covid-19, with all of the impact it has had for universities, especially ones that work face-to-face, offers a new opportunity for tutoring, an opportunity to re-establish it. The new situation has brought both a pedagogical-technological message and an ethical one. Both can re-establish tutoring as an ongoing, deep, and unending conversation that enriches other university situations and opens doors that lead to the best version of oneself. This work has a three-part objective: to present arguments that hold that the main purpose of tutoring is cultivation of the critical spirit or thinking; to identify obstacles raised some years ago and possibilities that the new situation brings; and, finally, to suggest a series of future-oriented conclusions so that our

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universities can give tutoring the place it deserves in line with their circumstances.

Keywords: tutoring, character education, critical thinking, university education, higher education.

Resumen:

La tutoría universitaria, salvo excepciones, ha adquirido un estado que debería preocuparnos. El canon de los últimos años es un encuentro puntual y optativo para, grosso modo, aclarar dudas sobre contenidos académicos, solucionar problemas con el cumplimiento de tareas, revisar resultados de evaluación y encontrar alternativas a vicisitudes personales de los estudiantes que condicionan el seguimiento de las asignaturas. Quizá esa tutoría permita salir del paso, pero es una versión reducida y desustanciada de lo que podría ser. Hay razones para afirmar que su *leitmotiv* es la educación del carácter universitario, principalmente, lo que ha venido a llamarse el espíritu o pensamiento críticos. Además, parece ser que eso es lo que se echa en falta y reclama la realidad social y profesional contemporánea: titulados universitarios que piensen por ellos mismos, buscando siempre la verdad de las cosas y con la mirada centrada en el bien común. La Covid-19, por todo lo que ha significado para las universidades, especialmente las llamadas presenciales, ofrece una nueva oportunidad para la tutoría, una ocasión para su restablecimiento. La nueva realidad ha traído un mensaje pedagógico-tecnológico y otro ético. Ambos pueden recuperar la tutoría en tanto que conversación constante, profunda e inacabable que enriquezca otras situaciones universitarias y que abra puertas que conduzcan a la mejor versión de uno mismo. Este trabajo persigue un triple objetivo: presentar razones que sustentan que la tutoría está principalmente para el cultivo del espíritu o pensamiento críticos; identificar obstáculos levantados hace años y posibilidades que trae la nueva realidad; y, por último, elevar una serie de conclusiones en tono prospectivo para que nuestras universidades, según sean sus circunstancias, puedan situar a la tutoría en el lugar que merece estar.

Descriptores: tutoría, educación del carácter, pensamiento crítico, educación universitaria, educación superior.

1. Introduction

In the spring of 1983, the French philosopher of Algerian decent Jacques Derrida gave the inaugural address for the "Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large" chair at Cornell University (Ithaca, New York). He gave it the suggestive title of "The principle of reason: The university in the eyes of its pupils". This was a very profound lecture, and it was presented with the meticulousness and elegance typical of someone who lived and loved the university, who studied it conscientiously, and who, of course, had an exceptional mind. Emmanuel Levinas had good reasons for calling Derrida the new Kant, as did Richard Rorty when he put him at the same level as Nietzsche. At the start of the lecture, Derrida set out a series of clear and stark questions, ones that

could be called eternal, at least for the great majority of the philosophers and intellectuals throughout history who have stopped to consider the university (Bonvecchio, 1991; Fulford & Barnett, 2020), and for more than a few academics, students, and curious members of the public from different times and places who have questioned its sense, its purpose, or the justification for its existence. In Derrida's words:

> To ask whether the University has a reason for being is to wonder why there is a University, but the question "why" verges on "with a view to what?" The University with a view to what? What is the University's view? What are its views? Or again: What do we see from the University, whether for instance, we are simply in it, on board; or whether puzzling over destinations, we look out from it while in port or, as French has it, "au large," on the open sea, "at large"? (Derrida, 2017, p. 118)

These questions about the meaning of the university have taken on special importance since the dramatic and unexpected outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly with regards to the education that universities offer. As well as the constant process of psychopedagogical change that has happened over recent years (Cannon & Newble, 2000), there has been a need to swap classrooms for screens. Many universities had to move from face-to-face education to an online model (Marin, 2022), and this had to be done in record time and with limited resources. Some of these changes were temporary but not all of them, and we could say that, one way or another, the so-called online university is here to stay (Marin, 2021).

In this situation, university tutoring is also exposed to Derrida's question, indeed, it must inescapably face up to it. Why university tutoring? With a view to what? What is its destination? Dictionaries such as that of the Real Academia Española (Spanish Royal Academy), offer a definition we could be content with, namely: "a meeting that provides guidance and information". But those questions do not refer to just any tutorial or to ordinary tutorials, but specifically the university tutorial, and so this guidance and information must have a special characteristic. It could be said, then, that university tutoring is something like: "the one-to-one meeting that a tutor has with her tutee to discuss course content, concepts or often how the student should approach the course essay or assignment" (Fulford, 2013, p. 115). And, also, with, alongside, or even interwoven with this, we can also think that: "tutoring in higher education is understood as a function that forms an integral part of the teacher's role. It is a personalised model of education that provides comprehensive support for students" (Delgado-García et al., 2020, p. 120). Indeed, university tutoring is academic guidance and information, but this is included in the cultivation of a university character, in the nature of one who seeks truths (Esteban Bara, 2019). University tutoring does not provide just any type of guidance and information; instead they are of a special character, of a level that is profound and complex, and of course, exciting and mysterious.

Nevertheless, reality shows that many tutorials in universities today are meetings that could be classed as utilitarian and which turn out to be bureaucratic and box-ticking exercises (Evans, 2005). They do not generally include intellectual and humanising debate, the mind and soul of the student are not interpellated by those of the teacher, the people who come together do not feel they have been changed. The tutorial becomes an encounter to obtain and offer effective, efficient, and satisfactory responses to closed questions and specific complaints. In other words, contemporary university tutoring seems to be a reduced and insubstantial version of what it should be.

This article has a three-part objective: to present theoretical and practical arguments that confirm that the best outlooks for university tutoring are in university character education, specifically education of the critical spirit or thinking; to identify the principal obstacles to this education, as well as the possibilities that have emerged in the context of post-pandemic universities; and finally, to propose future-oriented conclusions so that university tutoring can fulfil the important and necessary function that has been discussed.

Before continuing, however, we must note that we start from two premises. The first has already been touched on, but is worth repeating. Different disciplines conceive and interpret character education in many ways and so it has become something of an umbrella concept covering everything that relates to the positive development of the person (Berkowitz, 2016). We will focus on what we call university character education, which, while drawing on all of that complexity, directs us principally to the critical spirit or thinking. We believe that this is the main identifying feature of the educational mission of the university, which has persisted over time (Obarrio & Piquer, 2015) and it is one of its most splendid and productive results, as shown by pieces of research that have become international reference points (Perry, 1999). We agree that, in relation to the university and members of the academic community:

> What society should be able to expect from our work is a supply of free citizens, critical in the best sense; people who are capable of reasoned debate with their head and not their heart, and who can therefore protect society from opportunistic strategists and social predators of various types, who ultimately are usually cultural mediocrities. (Barrio, 2022, p. 76)

Perhaps now more than ever, we need graduates who champion this form of being, people who are critical of things that have happened, are happening, and could happen (Barnett, 1997; Davies, 2015). Of course, tutorials are not the only way of working on the critical spirit, but they do seem to be one of the most appropriate, and indeed are designed precisely for this (Vansieleghem & Masschelein, 2012). The second premise is that when we speak of university tutoring we do not mean meetings about matters such as mental health (Marie Martin, 2010), different types of harassment, or addiction (Heffernan & Bosetti, 2021). These meetings are not

tutorials strictly speaking. Furthermore, and it is to be welcomed for the good of the students, many of our universities now have *ad hoc* and specialist units for this type of cases or similar ones.

2. Reasons for educating the critical spirit through university tutoring

We now set out four arguments that we believe explain how the main *raison d'être* of the tutorial is cultivation of the critical spirit or thinking, in other words: learning to live with good judgement (Balmes, 1964) and without allowing others to think on one's behalf (Llano, 2016), becoming accustomed to living with the truth and not allowing oneself to be trapped by lies, becoming an adult in the deepest and most transcendental sense of the word (Biesta, 2022), ultimately, embracing a famous Aristotelian maxim that appears to identify what is in such need today: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true" (Aristotle, 2014, VII, 1011 b 26-28). However, first it is necessary to note some important aspects of this. Firstly: we are not thinking about the education of a person who, rationally, impartially, and autonomously substantiates her judgements of truth or concepts of good (Rawls, 1997; Kohlberg, 1981), but rather someone who is called on to follow the purpose of human nature (*telos*) (Aristotle, 2001). Consequently, this education does not involve preserving a natural state in the face of social and cultural challenges (Rousseau, 1990), but of strengthening and optimising it precisely so that it overcomes the circumstances in which it can be found (Ortega y Gasset, 1981). Secondly: the end that is pursued is not just any vital or moral option, but the truth of things, a dwelling that offers protection from the ideas currently in fashion, relativism, and scepticism (Derrick, 1982). Thirdly: a critical spirit is championed that is aligned with practical reason or with intelligence informed by the virtues, with the set of qualities and attributes that make it possible to fashion a good life, in other words, one worth living (Spaemann, 1987; Ibáñez-Martín, 2017). Fourthly: it is possible to acquire virtues by participating in cooperative practices or forms of human activity that do not focus solely on achieving external goods but also, perhaps above all, on conquering the internal goods that are typical of and define these cooperative activities (MacIntyre, 1987); also, engaging in them involves the mobilisation of habits, of meeting points between reason and feelings, emotions or passions (Bernal, 1998). And in fifth and final place: the critical spirit requires a constant dialogue to be held with others and with the world, it entails living in the fabric of interlocution (Taylor, 1996). Ultimately, cultivating a way of being that could be summarised as doing what is right, in the right way, and for the right reasons (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2010; Cooke & Carr, 2014). Of course, when we speak of what is right, we do not refer to something fixed and immutable but to the process of seeking it, in other words, the exciting and dramatic effort put into locating it and for which it is worth taking responsibility (Nicol, 1977). In this sense, it is important to recall that cultivating the critical spirit involves ques-

tioning and reconsidering our own ideas, and being able to recognise possible errors of judgement. So, although tutors must promote students' autonomy, a central element of their work, which is not at odds with the above, is that they know how to awaken in students the humbleness they require to recognise that they will always need the help of others throughout their lives, since fallibility is intrinsic to the human condition.

That said, of these five reasons we will focus on the four that underpin the fact that the best views on university tutoring relate to the development of the critical spirit or thinking. The first is found in the history of the university. This is not a matter of nostalgia or paying homage to the past, but of observing it in order to be able to know and recognise ourselves, and, above all, to value that which is worth safeguarding and keeping. Ortega, among others, insists on this aspect: "I believe there is no doubt about it. We have but one path, one method: comparing the past with the present to discover whether the same causes are at play now that in the past made possible a healthy life or the triumph of the university" (Ortega y Gasset, 2005, p. 466). The history of the university could well be seen as the biography of the critical spirit (Rüegg, 1994; Tejerina, 2010; Rivero, 2021). Since its first steps, the university has been the home of this spirit, the institution that supports it, even the community that takes the baton from others who went before such as the Pythagorean School, Plato's Academy, Aristotle's Lyceum, and the museum and library of Alexandria (Esteban Bara, 2022). This thread leads us to Socrates himself, who famously defended the value of thinking for oneself, seeking the truth of things for its own sake up to the ultimate consequence (Nussbaum, 2001). Plato reported that the great Greek master likened himself to a horsefly:

> ...you will not easily find, even if it is a little ridiculous to say it, another similar person to me who is placed in the city by the god in the same way that, alongside a horse that is large and noble but a little slow thanks to its size, and which needs to be stung by a horsefly, in the same way, I believe, that the god has placed me alongside the city to do a similar role. (Plato, 2014, 30e)

Today we might speak of troublemaking minds and souls (Fulford, 2022) and, as we have observed, the tutorial seems to be an ideal space for cultivating them. It is important to recall that all students at the earliest medieval universities had a tutor assigned to them, a teacher with whom they would speak frequently (Christpoh, 1994; Verger, 1994). Much water has gone under the bridge since then, but does this mean that we must abandon this way of experiencing the university? Is it not the opposite, that this modus vivendi will save us from the situation we find ourselves in today? The value of thinking for oneself must go hand in hand with teachers defending freedom of expression. Without this freedom, any attempt at dialogue between teacher and student will unavoidably be impoverished. Of course, this defence should not be at odds with respect for the sincere search for the truth and for the dignity

of the person, without which this freedom of expression loses its *raison d'être*. As Ibáñez-Martín notes,

> it is necessary to cultivate a dedicated love of truth, a supreme interest in accuracy, and the utmost respect for people who hold different ideas, and it is also necessary to teach disdain for lies and distortion of evidence, just as it is necessary to eschew all political arguments in the world of science. (Ibáñez-Martín, 2021, p. 45)

The second reason relates to what we have just discussed insofar as it is the entrenchment of the legacy received. We refer to the paradigmatic teaching model founded on tutorials (Mallison, 1941; Moore, 1968; Walton, 1972), principally driven by Cardinal Newman (1986) and his philosophy of university education (Barnett & Standish, 2003; Luque, 2016) and championed by Oxbridge (Oxford University and the University of Cambridge). At the start of the last century, Lord Curzon, who was then chancellor of Oxford University, described the tutorial as the cornerstone of that university's success:

> If there is any product of which Oxford has special reason to be proud, which has stamped its mark on the lives and characters of generations of men, and has excited the outspoken envy of other nations, it is that wonderful growth of personal tuition which has sprung up in our midst almost unawares. (Curzon, 1909, p. 122)

While it is not the aim of this article to analyse this teaching model, we should note that for many years it has been a global point of reference, both because of these universities' outstanding positions in the main university rankings and because it has inspired other universities. Of course, a succession of pieces of theoretical and empirical research have analysed the state of the tutorial model and its adaptation to the universities' current circumstances and students' current needs (Ashwin, 2005; Palfreyman, 2008). Despite any doubts that might arise, everything seems to suggest that Oxbridge tutorials will continue in one way or another:

> Despite these challenges, the tutorial continues to evolve. New generations of tutors introduce fresh ideas, creative approaches and new technologies. They bring to the table a more nuanced understanding of the academic challenges that face students when they leave secondary school. Some mix one-on-on tutorials with larger classes, or individual essays with group-projects. Others incorporate social media and other online resources. If the strength of the tutorial is its adaptability, reports of its likely demise are greatly exaggerated. (Mills & Alexander, 2015)

The third reason. Universities play a fundamental role in constructing a more just, equitable, and sustainable world, one that is more human and humanising. The future that awaits us will largely depend on the university. This task, demand, or desideratum is clearly reflected in reference documents that set out the path of the present and future university. Among others, we should mention the *Magna Charta Universitatum*, which the rectors of 388 universities from Europe and around the world signed on 18 September 1988, later being joined by more universities from

over 80 countries. This was a source of inspiration for the *Sorbonne Declaration* (1998) and, perhaps most famously, the *Bologna Declaration* (1999). This Magna Charta stated that: "The future of mankind depends largely on cultural, scientific and technical development; … this is built up in … universities". The *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action* should also be mentioned. This document, like the previous one, has had great influence on the formation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). This declaration states that it is necessary to "educate highly qualified graduates and responsible citizens able to meet the needs of all sectors of human activity, by offering relevant qualifications" (UNESCO, 1998). There is also the Rio de Janeiro Summit (1999), which was held almost in parallel with the *Bologna Declaration*. This proposed the creation of the EU-CELAC Common Area of Higher Education (ALCUE). The heads of state of the countries from these regions agreed that the university is a priority for the future. Finally, we should mention the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* that the United Nations passed in 2015. This includes 17 targets, the now famous Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for which universities are partially responsible. If they are achieved, we will undoubtedly live in a better world. Although it is hard to find an explicit mention of the cultivation of the critical spirit or thinking in these foundational texts and others we could have mentioned, it is not unreasonable to note that it is apparent when reading between the lines and that it fits in perfectly with their proposals. Also, the overwhelming majority of their signatories and promoters would be pleased to see that university tutoring is in a good time and place for its cultivation.

The fourth and final reason is somewhat pessimistic, but can serve as an incentive. It was identified long ago, but perhaps now has become more visible than ever. We refer to the contributions that note that university education loses its essence if it stops cultivating the critical spirit, love of truth, and an interest in wisdom (Bloom, 1989; Collini, 2012; Deresiewicz, 2019); that without these things, students are denied one of the finest legacies of the university and are left in the hands of those who only talk of employability and accountability (Bellamy, 2018; Torralba, 2022); or worse still, that it is no longer worth the effort of staying in universities that ignore all that is discussed above (Hernández et al., 2013). Of course, for the great majority of these voices, tutorials play a fundamental role in university education and, we believe it is worth listening to them. They should not be accused of being alarmist or pessimistic as so often happens. With a few exceptions, they are authors who are devoted to the university and do not look for excuses. Rather than being pessimists, they are realists, or even optimists. They do not bury their heads in the sand when something is uninteresting or uncomfortable. That said, and as noted in the introduction, the current situation of university tutoring displays obstacles and possibilities that must at least be identified. We will do this in the next section.

3. Obstacles and possibilities for university tutoring after Covid-19

The obstacles and possibilities described below affect both the form and content of university tutoring, and while we consider them separately for reasons of clarity, they are inexorably related. We will start with the former.

3.1. Obstacles for university tutoring

The first obstacle, which could be the root of the others, is a firm decision to train highly qualified professionals. Many bachelor's degrees, not to mention master's degrees, that are currently provided in universities are designed to prepare for a profession, as something like an attempt at a replication or a prelude. One might think that this is good and that things are going well, ultimately the world continues to function and develop thanks to the engineers, lawyers, primary school teachers, doctors, journalists, etc., who graduate from universities. However, there is something that is striking. Research has shown (Chamorro-Premuriz and Frankiewicz, 2019) that employers and leaders of business organisations, at least in OECD member states, report a lack of intellectual proficiency in graduates in recent years, something that speaks of critical spirit and thinking. Seemingly, the decision to train competent professionals has cornered the seeker of truths, creating an imbalance that Ortega (1930, 1937) identified as "the barbarism of specialisation or *specialism*". The result is cohorts of graduates who have considerable technical skill but an underdeveloped and dormant critical spirit. Tutorials seem to be treated as just another teaching resource, usually occasional and trivial, which collaborate with the cause of professionalisation in line with the particular characteristics of each university institution, faculty, and curriculum.

And this obstacle leads to others, such as what has come to be called: *The marketisation of higher education* (Molesworth et al., 2011). In simple terms, this consists of students increasingly taking on the role of clients. This is by no means always so, nor does it happen in all universities, but we should recognise that contemporary university education shows signs of this pseudo-commercial form. Indeed, credits, competences, employability indexes, satisfaction surveys, and teaching load all now form part of the university lexicon, but they are not characteristic of the university as an institution. Obviously, the tutorial is not sidelined. While we do not attempt to give an exhaustive list, its purpose is: to resolve doubts about exams or upcoming assessment activities; go over marks, which the student usually thinks are low and unfair; and find solutions to issues with poor attendance in class or practical sessions, late submission of work, and, more problematically, plagiarism or interpersonal or class conflicts. Seen this way, and continuing with the business language, the tutorial appears to be a "complaints window" or a "customer service office", and above all, it cooperates with what Jaspers identified, years ago, when describing the attitude towards the university of quite a few students: "…they study for the exam and judge everything depending on what is important for the exam; they see time spent studying as an arduous period of transition towards praxis, through which they expect

salvation from this moment…" (Jaspers, 1959, p. 423). This being so, tutorials are ephemeral, occasional, and optional, and, it is easy to find recent graduates who say that they did not attend a single tutorial with any of their teachers.

The position that many university teachers currently find themselves in, often against their will and their vocation should be added to what has been said above. They plan their modules to the best of their knowledge and ability, but they have to focus on research and publishing and on accumulating points to consolidate or improve their academic career (De Rond & Miller, 2005; Thoilliez & Valle, 2015). From this perspective, tutorials become a sort of add-on in response to the student demands mentioned above, and it remains to be seen how often these demands could be resolved by exchanging a couple of emails (Wahab, 2020).

It is also important to note the issue of student satisfaction. Universities have spent years working on making the university experience satisfying in the deepest and widest sense of the term (Staddon & Standish, 2012), with the result that there are numerous activities and also interpretations relating to it (Lyubomirsky, 2010). In the case of tutorials, satisfaction depends on ensuring students feel that they have received appropriate and positive information and guidance, especially in matters relating to the modules they are taking (Retna et al., 2009). As some authors note (Fulford, 2013), the tutorial, and therefore, the professor are expected to fulfil SMART objectives (specific; measurable; attainable; relevant; timely). Some recent studies have shown that students are more satisfied than ever with the tutorial attention they receive. However, these studies also reveal something curious: students feel that they could have been pushed further, intellectually speaking. Perhaps they miss taking part in conversations like the ones Buber (1958) describes as being of "I and Thou", where: "The speaker puts herself rather than the object of the conversation at stake, and in this is the abandoning of any comfortable security" (Vansieleghem & Masschelein, 2012, p. 85). But with the often poorly understood argument of student satisfaction, a space has been created so that, as Buber himself observes, an "I-It" conversation is established, that is to say, a: "technical dialogue, prompted solely by the need of objective understanding" (Buber, 1961, p. 37). Ultimately, and given what is discussed above, we believe that critical spirit and thinking are not considered in the sort of tutorial that is generally practised and is spreading through universities.

3.2. Opportunities following Covid-19

That said, there is room for hope. Alongside the obstacles we have mentioned and other ones that have escaped us, we can see opportunities that have arisen since the outbreak of Covid-19 and with other events that are currently occurring. On the one hand, there are possibilities in form or format. At the start of 2020 when lockdowns were implemented in most countries, face-to-face universities — the majority of them –- had to move their teaching online. It is well known that this was not easy, but it was more or less

achieved, or as some might say, we found a way (Lazar, 2022). Academic activity could be continued thanks to computer programs and digital platforms that facilitate synchronous connection. While many universities already had these resources before the pandemic, they were used only occasionally. The weight of the tradition of face-to-face teaching, the limited training of many teachers in these technological matters, and resistance to change could be some of the reasons for this (Branch et al., 2020).

The transition to the so-called "new normality", in this case in university education, involves learning from lived experience and, above all, maintaining and promoting the novel resources and situations that benefit us, and not just having the university react to the surrounding circumstances (Arnove, 2020). The tutorial must not be sidelined, quite the contrary. A lack of face-to-face teaching does not have to undermine or reduce its significance and meaning or, to put it another way, deep and profound conversations between teacher and student can also take place online (Marín, 2022). Critical spirit and thinking can be cultivated through a screen. Furthermore, online tutorials appear to fit around the lives of today's students: as members of digital generations, they are like fish in water online (Fuentes et al., 2015). They also increasingly have busy diaries, combining study and work and so it is not like the past when students would be on campus all day (Pusztai and Kocsis, 2019). Cabero (2004) noted that the functions of a virtual tutor are technical, academic, organisational, guiding, and social. This last type relates to when students face risks that are present when working with a computer, such as isolation and loss or lack of motivation. It is precisely in the circumstances caused by Covid-19 that this function occupies an ever more relevant place for the university tutor.

That said, universities in general and teaching staff in particular will have to calibrate this situation well. To suggest that the meeting with the professor can take place at any moment, in any place, and for any purpose would do a great disservice to the tutorial, and strange though it may sound, to the student. The fact that options are increasing should not at all reduce the ethics and aesthetics that university tutor has per se. The "impulse society" (Roberts, 2014) we live in and in which the tutorial could also become part of must be countered by arguments such as those of prudence, decorum, respect, and empathy. The tutorial, like all things of the university, has a way of being that should not be perverted by being provided online or for any other type of event (Bailey & Freedman, 2011).

Furthermore, there are possibilities relating to content. Covid-19, as well as later events such as the invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent global geopolitical and economic crisis have raised questions that were buried and forgotten, but which, however we look at them, are highly relevant (Bizkarra et al., 2021). Human dignity, gentleness, and vulnerability, science and culture, biodiversity and bioethics, international relations, and fake news are some of them. However, it would be hard

to find any university degree that could not include some of these topics; and we can state that most students feel they are called upon to say something on the matter, that is, to cooperate in the current "collective thinking" (Simons & Masschelein, 2018).

The new scenario may help to restore Humboldt's (1959) idea of the university as a community of researchers who confront the reality they find themselves in; it can remind us that "the student and the professor are peers in various key moments in which they find themselves without answers, and this obliges them to think" (Marin, 2022, p. 92). No less importantly, it can also make us see how important and necessary it is to stand on the shoulders of giants of culture and science, on any classic of thought that has the virtue of "[relegating] the noise of the present to a background hum, which, at the same time the classics cannot exist without" (Calvino et al., 2015, p. 19). The words of one of the texts that has had the greatest influence in the analysis of modern higher education seem current:

> Our young people can think or do almost anything that occurs to them, but to act differently, ideas are necessary and these are what they do not have. They have access to all of the thought of the past and to all of its glorious examples. But they have not been taught to take them seriously as living possibilities in themselves. (Bloom, 1989, p. 345)

Ultimately, we believe that the contemporary pedagogical-technological setting provides an opportunity for tutorials; going online increases options to encourage them and give them life. The same thing happens in the contemporary social setting. Topics are emerging that fit into any curriculum and can be covered in conversations in tutorials given that these are opportunities to discover the world and not to rely on poorly formed ideas, to position oneself in it and, at the same time, separate oneself from it without losing sight of it; and perhaps most importantly, to find the best version of oneself and the path to a fulfilled life with the coincidence of critical spirit and thinking (Llano, 2002).

4. Conclusions and outlook for university tutoring

Based on the above, we present four conclusions, thinking of how to facilitate the university tutoring that is being endorsed. The first conclusion is perhaps the most obvious and is the foundation of all of the others, namely: university tutoring should be an essential part of university curricula. We believe that this is an ideal time for university tutoring to be treated as more than just another teaching resource and to be made compulsory. Online tutorials do not necessarily undermine face-to-face ones, and if they do not lose their university ethic and aesthetic, they can be seen as an opportunity to make them compulsory. Online tutorials make it easier to find opportunities for professors and students to meet and enable the cultivation of the critical spirit and thinking, in other words, they can play a role in character education for the professionals and members of the public who appear in society with a university qualification

(Pérez-Díaz, 2010). And this leads us to a second conclusion. It is not enough for tutorials to be obligatory; this will be of little use if they are not enriched and promoted. Any university degree, however closed it may appear, should be seen as something open in nature, disposed to the unexpected and unpredictable. And on this point, the tutorial has a special prominence. The purpose of the personal encounter between teacher and student is not to discuss just anything, but rather to discuss anything that helps to profess a profession, any that relates to the university, but above all and precisely, the profession of being a student (Derrida, 2002). There is not a critical spirit of chemistry, one of architecture, and another different one of philology; the critical spirit pertains to the university in general. The current reality is burdened with ethical matters that catch the attention of the students or that can be uncovered by the professor. University tutoring is a new chance for students to learn to become engrossed by the tree of knowledge (Arana, 2004), fall in love with wisdom, follow the truth of things, and pursue the common good. In this article, we have mentioned the importance Socrates placed on the value of thinking for oneself. Accordingly, a return to the Socratic method in university tutoring might be one of the fundamental ways of promoting the critical spirit.

The third conclusion is perhaps the most challenging and the hardest to accept. University tutoring does not fit a quality-control and evaluation philosophy, at least, not the one that has been implemented in recent years (Palfreyman, 2008). How is it possible to establish whether the model of tutorial that is being defended here is profitable? What becomes of it if it is has to justify itself in rubrics, numbers, and percentages? And what is the point of comparing some tutorials to others? People who design academic policies should recognise that university tutoring is part of that element of university education that cannot have a value placed on it and is intangible and transcendental. University tutoring requires trust, hope, an act of faith, that is the breeding ground for the critical spirit and thinking and for the process of personal development of those who undertake it. Of course, what we have said above does not mean that evaluation criteria that go beyond compulsory attendance and participation in discussions at a more or less university level cannot be put in place. On this point, we feel that the practice of Oxbridge seems very good. We refer to the presentation of essays or similar work that require prior study and preparation for an intellectual discussion with the teacher and perhaps also with another course mate.

The fourth and final conclusion concerns academic staff. It is necessary to reconsider the place of the tutorial among the tasks teachers are required to perform and how their dedication to the university is recognised. Nevertheless, there are some questions that should be asked. Are all of the academics who teach on given courses suited to being tutors? Is it enough to demonstrate a degree of enthusiasm or willingly accept that the tutorial is part of the employment contract? Can tutorials provide a perfect excuse for killing time, in-

doctrinating students, or any other activity that has nothing to do with cultivating critical spirit and thinking? It is reasonable to think that not all teachers and researchers will comply with the academic and personal requirements for being tutors, and that it will be necessary to select those who display an interest, have been trained, and show they are prepared for the task of tutoring. We believe that in a matter as important as this, it is necessary to follow Aristotle's (2001) maxim that flutes should be in the hands of the best flautists, so that the best music is produced and the flutes and listeners alike benefit.

Ultimately, while there are obstacles to overcome, we believe that we live in times that are conducive to giving university tutoring a new chance. The current situation has bought about new formats that facilitate setting this in motion and has brought to the table matters that strengthen its leitmotiv: the cultivation of critical spirit and thinking. But this will not be enough: universities must believe in this renewed opportunity, that is to say, they must put the tutorial in its rightful place to make university education as complete as possible, or in other words, following Derrida, to ensure that its views are beautiful, broad, and deep.

Notes

[1] To cite three of the most important: QS World University Rankings; Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE); and the Shanghai Academic Raking of World Universities (ARWU).

[2] Various universities have taken inspiration from the tutorial model of Oxbridge, including: the University of Buckingham; New College of Florida; William College (Massachusetts); Sarah Lawrence College (New York); Ohio University; Maastricht University.

[3] http://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charta-universitatum

[4] https://redue-alcue.org/

[5] See: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/es/

[6] See, for example, the National Student Survey (NSS): https://www.thestudentsurvey.com/; or the Ipsos Mori Learner Satisfaction Survey: https://bollag-stiftung.org/wp-content/uploads/formidable/5/ipsos-mori-learner-satisfaction-survey.pdf

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Authors' biographies

Francisco Esteban Bara is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theory and History of Education at the Universitat de Barcelona. He has been a visiting professor at various universities in Latin America and visiting professor at the Center for Character and Citizenship at the University of Missouri-St. Louis-College of Education. In recent years he has been the Rector's Delegate in the Student Observatory of the Universitat de Barcelona and Vice-Rector for Communication at the same university. His most recent books are: *La Universidad light [The light university]* (Editorial Paidós) and *Ética del profesorado [Ethics of teachers]* (Editorial Herder). He has also published numerous articles in indexed journals. His research interests centre on the philosophy of university education and the formation of the university character.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8679-2090

Carmen Caro Samada is Associate Professor at the Universidad Internacional de La Rioja. She graduated in Humanities from the Universidad Pablo de Olavide (Seville) with a Special End of Degree Prize and a National End of Degree Prize. She has a doctorate from the Universidad de Navarra with a Special Doctoral Prize. Since 2012 she has been a member of the "Educational work as action" (EDUCACCION) research group at the Universidad Internacional de La Rioja. In this academic year, she has joined the "Promoting character skills that support loving relationships and flourishing in schools" project developed jointly with the Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University. She is academic secretary of the **revista española de pedagogía** and secretary of the Education in the Knowledge Society and Action in the Fields of Education, Communication, Rights and New Technologies Doctoral Programme.

https://orcid.org/ 0000-0002-9975-5694

Educational reforms for a crisis. On the education of character in Plato and Aristotle

Reformas educativas para una crisis. Acerca de la educación del carácter en Platón y Aristóteles

David HERNÁNDEZ DE LA FUENTE, PhD. Professor. Universidad Complutense de Madrid *(davidahe@ucm.es).*

Abstract:

This work considers the current crisis in the Western world, caused by the pandemic, war, energy supply issues, and other related disturbances, and its potential impact on current educational models, which are being reformed in various countries and attempts to relate it with historical precedents from classical antiquity that were a reaction to crises of ancient democracy through more or less utopian proposals for the reform of the traditional educational system put forward by two great thinkers: Plato and Aristotle. Our aim is to try to summarize the importance for these two thinkers of the education of individual character in the pursuit of the common goods of various political communities by uniting the wills of the citizens. The methodology used is rereading the fundamental passages of the classical sources on character and education in the young, comparing them with the points of view of most of the research, summarized in the assessments of the great manuals of the history of education. Despite being a well-known theme, it is worthwhile returning to these passages for an updated reflection in our contemporary world. Thus, it is apparent that, in spite of the obvious divergences between the philosophical systems of Plato and Aristotle, there is a curious similarity in the case of character education as the key to solve the problems posed for a society in times of crisis.

Keywords: history of education, history of ancient philosophy, Plato, Aristotle.

Resumen:

En el presente artículo se trata de relacionar la crisis actual en el mundo occidental provocada por la pandemia, la crisis energética y bélica, y otras turbulencias relacionadas, y

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sus posibles repercusiones en los modelos educativos actuales, en plena reforma en diversos países, con los precedentes históricos que se dieron en la antigüedad clásica de reacción ante la crisis de la democracia antigua a través de propuestas más o menos utópicas de reforma del sistema educativo tradicional por parte de los dos grandes pensadores del mundo antiguo, Platón y Aristóteles. El objetivo es intentar resumir la importancia para ambos pensadores de la educación del carácter individual a la hora de perseguir los bienes comunes de las diversas comunidades políticas aunando las voluntades ciudadanas. La metodología que se ha seguido ha sido la de releer los pasajes fundamentales de las fuentes clásicas acerca del carácter y la educación en los más jóvenes, comparándolas con los puntos de vista de la mayor parte de la investigación, resumidos sumariamente en las valoraciones de los grandes manuales de historia de la educación. Pese a ser una temática muy conocida, no está de más volver a estos pasajes para una reflexión actualizada en nuestro mundo contemporáneo. Así, se puede constatar que, pese a las divergencias evidentes entre los sistemas filosóficos de los dos pensadores, Platón y Aristóteles, hay una curiosa coincidencia en el caso de la educación del carácter como clave de bóveda para resolver los problemas planteados para una sociedad en momentos de crisis.

Descriptores: historia de la educación, historia de la filosofía antigua, Platón, Aristóteles.

1. Introduction

In times of crisis, the political community often turns its attention to education in an attempt to establish whether the methods and pedagogy, and also, the content and the very spirit of the rules that govern the educational cursus, are appropriate. And also, whether they may have had something to do with the origin of the crisis or, thirdly, whether they might perhaps in some way provide a solution to it and prevent a relapse in the future. It appears to me that this has been proven various times throughout history, in moments of deep agitation in the past and, specifically, in the Classical World, which is the main object of this reflection. It goes without saying that these moments of crisis obviously do not occur in the present day, driven by epidemics, wars or invasions, and threats of annihilation of varying types. And in the Western World, we often look back towards the world which is generally regarded as paradigmatic and which is believed to represent the origins of our culture, or at least a paradigm for it, which is Classical Greece and Rome. Consequently, I would now like to cast an eye over the question of educational reforms and individual character education as a remedy for collective tribulations in times of upheaval.

It is no coincidence that the two major participatory systems in our political history date back precisely to this classical age of Greece and Rome — Athenian democracy and Roman republic —, nor is the fact that these are the most resounding and perhaps most repeated in the names

of the states currently represented in the UN: from the Athens of Pericles to the Rome of Cicero, the two models of a state had their zenith and their downfall at very close times and since ancient times they have led political theorists to speculate on the cycles of rise and fall of freedoms and constitutions. I think of the ideas of the mixed constitution or of anacyclosis, or cyclical change of constitutions, from Aristotle and Polybius to Machiavelli, Gibbon, Mommsen, Toynbee, and Spengler. But what is the place of education in all of this?

2. The model character of Classical proposals

In response to the question above, a clear historical parallel occurs to me: the proposal for complete reform of education for the individual and the collective in the case of the philosophers Plato and his pupil Aristotle, in the 4th century BC. The situation of Athens, after the Peloponnesian War, which includes the plague of Athens, is a total crisis of the system that led thinkers to look towards education. The political community had experienced a systemic failure in the case of Athenian democracy, and the world of the *polis* was also shaking. New reflections on the traditional Greek *paideia* arose, based on education: the educational system, as the foundation of citizenship, would occupy these thinkers in Plato's political trilogy (*Republic*, *Politics*, and *Laws*) and Aristotle in the *Politics*. In addition to this, there is the fact that their two great philosophical schools would continue in the Academy and the Lyceum until they reached late antiquity and would subsequently pass to the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish Middle Ages leaving an indelible mark on the history of ideas in regards to education and politics: consider, as just one example, the near legendary figure of Aristotle as the great "wise man" in the Arabic tradition, which depicts him as the teacher of the no-less mythic Alexander.

The aforementioned crisis of the systems in the world of classical Greece and Rome, their participatory systems, and their liberal and private education led to an in-depth reflection on the educational models, followed by a series of proposals at different levels, both methodological and ethical. I think, recapping briefly, that of the original and later Sophistic, the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, the emphasis on Rhetoric as the core of education, with tendencies such as Atticism and Asianism, its great trends in the Roman era, and, above all, the more or less realistic ideas of reform or attempts at change in the mind of various philosophers who, as in the case of Greece, can be counted among the founding fathers of Western thought. I refer, obviously, to Plato and Aristotle. After the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War, the crisis of its democracy and of its educational system, which was based on Sophistic and private tuition for the elites in rhetoric, the first utopian endeavours of reform were undertaken, putting education right at the centre of the debate. Achieving the happiness of the collective requires an education that makes the citizen a member of a balanced body politic that must be well-trained in the arts and sciences, but also separately in technical disciplines, with an indelible

moral aspect that makes its members valued components of the city. The harmonious interlinking of individual virtue and the collective happiness of the political community is one of the clear aspirations of these reformists, starting with Plato but following with Aristotle. It goes without saying that these are profound ideas that will leave an indelible, "immortal seed" according to Plato's apposite expression in the Phaedrus, in the souls of our subsequent educational philosophers. It is with good reason that here we can also speak of a start to the philosophy of education.

Indeed, ancient Greece always pursued the integration of the individual in society through educational and cultural mechanisms, in what was known as *paideia*, which was conceived as a global and lasting process in the life of the person and the community. The individual is educated with a view to the collective in a number of phases: within the family and the kin (the *oikos* and the *genos*), in fraternal or cultural associations (the individual was defined in relation to various group such as the *phyle* or tribe and the *phratria*, or brotherhood), in education, with its diverse stages from the *paidagogos* to the *sophistes*, and, finally, in life as a citizen in the political arena. One key aspect of Greek *paideia* is the idea of the complete and continuing education of the individual, which, after Athens' period of crisis following the Peloponnesian War, is recovered, for example, by the orator and rhetorician Isocrates, a near contemporary and rival of Plato, with the ideal of the circular or integral education, the *enkyklios paideia*. Isocrates speaks of education and relates it to Greek culture, proposing an integral curriculum of gymnastics, grammar, poetry, mathematics, and philosophy. But he places the greatest emphasis on rhetorical education, as a means to give the citizen control over himself through public, political, or legal oratory. In effect, these three genres of rhetoric, analysed by writers of treatises such as Anaximenes of Lampsacus or, later, Aristotle, in Isocrates point at a civic and integrating humanism in a way that the great Cicero would later inherit in Rome. Here, Athens is still, despite its decline, the school of Greece, as stated in the famous metaphor of Pericles' *logos epitaphios* (funeral speech), that Thucydides includes in his History of the Peloponnesian War. And being Greek is not a question of race or origin, but rather of participation in *paideia*, the education and culture, that are the true homeland of the human being (Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 50):

> And, so far, has our city distanced the rest of mankind in thought and in speech that her pupils have become the teachers of the rest of the world; and she has brought it about that the name Hellenes suggests no longer a race but an intelligence, and that the title Hellenes is applied rather to those who share our culture than to those who share a common blood. (Isocrates et al., 1980, p. 149)

3. The Platonic reform

However, let us turn to Plato who, according to the traditional view, followed his master Socrates in the fight against the private and relativistic education of the *polis*, the form represented by the Sophists. His is the first in-depth consideration, in the 4th

century, of the need for a profound reform after the crisis. Like Aristotle later on, he proposed a reformed education, under the control of the state, that turns the traditional *paideia* into an integral training that continues all through people's lives. But the emphasis now should not be on rhetoric, as in Isocrates and before him the sophistic base of democracy, but on overcoming this, in philosophy and specifically in dialectics. This new complete education is already proposed in the *Republic*, but its higher levels can only be reached by the governing elite of society. The combination of tradition and innovation in Platonic education is of interest: a first stage focuses especially on gymnastics and music (understood as the "art of the muses"), to centre on the *soma* and *psyche* duality, during two initial stages, childhood, and youth, and two classes of citizens. After completing this first phase, those who according to their nature or excellence must continue to study to head for the upper stage (and, thus, the upper class) will continue with dialectics and mathematics, geometry, astronomy, and music in a gradual ascent towards metaphysical knowledge of ideas. We should recall these classical statements by Marrou about the controversial educational project Plato proposes in the *Republic*:

> For in the last resort the practical educational problem for fourth-century society was how to bring up its various sections, and Plato's ambitious and difficult schemes left this concrete problem unsolved, his sole concern being to select and train a small group of philosopher-rulers who could take over the reins of government for the good of the State. But Plato himself had few illusions about the possibility of this kind of effective seizure of power: it seemed to demand such an improbable conjunction of physical and mental strength as to be — and he was the first to realize it — well-nigh miraculous. …
>
> In the end, Plato perceived the truth about his own nature. His teaching became concerned with one man only, or at most a small group of men gathered together in a school, a closed sect, a cultural oasis in the midst of a vast social desert. The Wise Man shall spend his life "cultivating his own garden" … the Wise Man, for Platonism had now achieved a personalist type of wisdom. Thus, Plato's thought, set in motion in the first instance by the desire to reinstate the totalitarian ethic of the ancient city, finally rises far above it and lays the foundations of what will remain the personal culture of the classical philosopher. (Marrou, 1982, p. 117-118)

However, we are more interested in Plato's second project, the one in the *Laws*, as it is more realistic and less utopian. The setting of the discussion is highly characteristic: three old men have a walk on a pilgrimage to the cave of Zeus, debating how the new ideal and more realistic constitution for the city of Magnesia might be. The dialogue is between an unnamed "Athenian Stranger", a Spartan, Megillus, and a Cretan, named Clinias. By focussing on the maximalist proposals of the *Republic*, the history of education as seen in Marrou, and also part of political philosophy, as in the case of Popper, has perhaps been unfair on Plato, simplifying his ideas or directly labelling them as regressive or even totalitarian[1]. The *Laws* must be taken into account and read as Plato's final, retrospective proposal. In this way, Altman's more

recent proposal (2012) seems more fair to me, about the order of pedagogical reading of Plato's dialogues — we know it from the Neoplatonists — and the idea that his doctrines sometimes present false, contestable, or paradoxical arguments as a shortcut that attracts students, before showing the more complex "long route": like an astute teacher, he likes to challenge his reader with various routes open to pedagogical research. Therefore, his work must be read as a progression, including the proposals from his last text, without disregarding the progressive and integrating aspects, the conscious contradictions between the early dialogues and the late ones.

Plato's last political work, the *Laws*, completing his political trilogy, deserves special attention in this regard and, especially, in contrast with the *Republic*. We should not forget that, as Socrates says in the latter dialogue, the Kallipolis or *beautiful city* that is presented as an ideal in this dialogue is no more than "a paradigm in heaven". But the *Laws*, on the other hand, contains a complete constitutional structure that starts with a preamble based very closely on music and on the chorus which, dedicated to different traditional divinities such as Apollo, the Muses, and Dionysus, will guide the education of the citizens in their different ages, from childhood to old age. Education in the *Laws* places special emphasis on the moral formation from childhood of good citizens and citizens who are good, where the ethical and the political come together the constant practice of virtue. What characterises this educational reform is its emphasis on a continuous education, from childhood to old age. We should recall the celebrated preliminary definition of education in the following dialogue (643c–e):

> Athenian. First and foremost, education, we say, consists in that right nurture which most strongly draws the soul of the child when at play to a love for that pursuit of which, when he becomes a man, he must possess a perfect mastery. Now consider, as I said before, whether, up to this point, you are satisfied with this statement of mine.
>
> Clinias. Certainly, we are.
>
> Athenian. But we must not allow our description of education to remain indefinite. For at present, when censuring or commending a man's upbringing, we describe one man as educated and another as uneducated, though the latter may often be uncommonly well educated in the trade of a pedlar or a skipper, or some other similar occupation. But we, naturally, in our present discourse are not taking the view that such things as these make up education: the education we speak of is training from childhood in goodness, which makes a man eagerly desirous of becoming a perfect citizen, understanding how both to rule and be ruled righteously. (Bury, 1967-1968, p. 63-65)

The crux of what Plato considers at the start of the *Laws* is how to educate the soul in self-control, in confronting pain, but also in the pleasures (wine and symposia are frequently mentioned) and so to work on virtue and courage. Therefore, he considers in detail the educational choruses, where citizens will sing and be educated collectively, from childhood to old age.

This emphasis on the lyric chorus — contrasting with drama, which Plato

always rejected for being related to democracy — recalls the Dorian world of common social education. The Dorian model was the most common experience of state-controlled education in the Greek world, with its *syssitia*, or common meals, and so it may be that Plato took inspiration in its mythical and literary figures at the start of the *Laws*. As for the lyrical and musical background of the *Symposion*, the basic institution of elitist Hellenic education since the Archaic Age, it appears to be reread here with a view to reforming it together with the *polis*. There is an extensive bibliography on the Greek symposium in general and the Platonic one in particular[2] that clearly displays the key role of this aristocratic institution as a model.

Pfefferkorn (2021) has recently re-examined the function of the three choruses of the *Laws* as a fundamental transition for understanding how the preamble to the dialogue is connected, and therefore with it the earlier tradition, both Greek educational and Platonic in particular, with the rest of the project of this final Platonic city. The most important chorus, in which I concur with this author, is the chorus of Dionysus, which is dedicated to the oldest group and has a greater political load, while those of Apollo and the Muses, for the two younger age groups, embody, for Pfefferkorn, a *lifetime* education on the basis of moderation or sophrosyne. Therefore, the regulation of the ages for drinking wine in book II of the *Laws* is so important: The Athenian stranger — perhaps representing Plato himself, in the only dialogue that does not feature Socrates as a character — distinguishes three categories in the regulation of the use of wine. Up to the age of 18, there is an absolute prohibition on drinking wine, enjoyment in moderation begins at 30 and from 40 people can take part in Dionysian indulgence (*Laws* 666a-c).

It is crucial to overcome pleasure as well as pain for this platonic character education, which is intended to reform the old *polis* in a way that is simultaneously both new and archaic: as in any deep reform, everything changes, but with roots in the traditional myths, religion, and symposia, and the lyrical and choral tradition, so that it seems that nothing changes. For "the victory over self is of all victories the first and best" (see 626e). So, when defining fundamental education, this memorable passage is very enlightening (*Laws* II 653a-c):

> I want us to call to mind again our definition of right education. For the safekeeping of this depends, as I now conjecture, upon the correct establishment of the institution mentioned.
>
> Clinias. That is a strong statement!
>
> Athenian. What I state is this, — that in children the first childish sensations are pleasure and pain, and that it is in these first that goodness and badness come to the soul; but as to wisdom and settled true opinions, a man is lucky if they come to him even in old age and; he that is possessed of these blessings, and all that they comprise, is indeed a perfect man. I term, then, the goodness that first comes to children 'education'. When pleasure and love, and pain and hatred, spring up rightly in the souls of those who are unable as yet to grasp a rational account; and when, after

> grasping the rational account, they consent thereunto that they have been rightly trained in fitting practices: — this consent, viewed as a whole, is goodness, while the part of it that is rightly trained in respect of pleasures and pains, so as to hate what ought to be hated, right from the beginning to the very end, and to love what ought to be loved, if you were to mark this part off in your definition and call it 'education,' you would be giving it, in my opinion, its right name. (Bury, 1967-1968, p. 89-91)

Plato's proposal for reform is of great depth, as can be seen, precisely because it revolves around character education. The most important thing is moral discernment: pleasure and pain must make people love what is just and hate what is unjust from the earliest childhood. Elsewhere I have considered education in pleasures through the rules of wine (Hernández de la Fuente, 2013), with special emphasis on the choruses of older people. We should note that moral character education continues, with great relevance, into old age: the elderly, under the sign of Dionysus, continued to sing and learn in their choirs. But the bases of this regulated education for reforming the *polis*, much more plausible than that of the *Republic*, extend through all age groups. And also, through both sexes — the freedom and equality of women in this Platonic utopia is notable — and all social classes. There is a certain striking egalitarianism in the *Laws*. The characters of the rich and powerful are often ruined from childhood by a bad education full of adulation. Consider this illuminating passage on this matter, with the always helpful appeal to Persian history (*Laws* III 695c–696a):

> Darius was not a king's son, nor was he reared luxuriously. When he came and seized the kingdom, with his six companions, he divided it into seven parts, of which some small vestiges remain even to this day; and also incorporated in the law regulations about the tribute-money which Cyrus had promised the Persians, whereby he secured friendliness and fellowship amongst all classes of the Persians, and won over the populace by money and gifts; and because of this, the devotion of his armies won for him as much more land as Cyrus had originally bequeathed. After Darius came Xerxes, and he again was brought up with the luxurious rearing of a royal house: 'O Darius' — for it is thus one may rightly address the father — 'how is it that you have ignored the blunder of Cyrus, and have reared up Xerxes in just the same habits of life in which Cyrus reared Cambyses?' And Xerxes, being the product of the same training, ended by repeating almost exactly the misfortunes of Cambyses. Since then, there has hardly ever been a single Persian king who was really, as well as nominally, 'Great.' And, as our argument asserts, the cause of this does not lie in luck, but in the evil life which is usually lived by the sons of excessively rich monarchs; for such an upbringing can never produce either boy or man or greybeard of surpassing goodness. To this, we say, the lawgiver must give heed, — as must we ourselves on the present occasion. It is proper, however, my Lacedaemonian friends, to give your State credit for this at least, — that you assign no different honor or training whatsoever to poverty or wealth, to the commoner or the king, beyond what your original oracle declared at the bidding of some god. (Bury, 1967-1968, p. 229-231)

The final reference to the mythical legislation of Lycurgus and to the mar-

tial egalitarianism of Sparta, which Plato admired for its project, albeit with the appropriate caveats, is very significant. Here we find an education that shaped citizens of a city that was to be happy. So, the city of Magnesia, in this dialogue in which Socrates does not appear, is closer and more pragmatic: it gives specific rules and curricula. But we constantly find there is a lack of attention to this dialogue in the philosophy of education: see, for example, the ambivalent but somewhat unfair verdict of Loshan (1998, p. 42-43), which is based only on the *Republic* and closely follows a somewhat anachronistic interpretative tradition that dates back to Popper: "Can Platonic education serve as a model for education in any city? ... In one way it can; in another it cannot. ... Critics and supporters alike have presented him as advocating totalitarian ideological control." In my opinion, a panoramic vision that includes the *Laws* could somewhat modify the traditional appreciation of Platonic politics. It must be read with care to find the key points of the educational reform and the formation of the character of the individual as a formula for times of crisis.

4. The Aristotelian reform of the character

Plato's disciple, Aristotle, after decades of philosophical education and exercise alongside his teacher in the Academy, could not be untouched by the debate about education in the crisis of the *polis*. When he struck his own path in the history of ideas, he made an important contribution to the theories regarding holistic education in the ideal city towards virtue based on the individual character of the citizens. He did this in the *Eudemian Ethics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*, and in their natural continuation, the *Politics*. In books VII and VIII of the *Politics*, which revolve around the political system of the ideal city, the relationship with the collective is key, through reform of the education system, which also rejects, as it had to, the Athenian model of democracy with its sophistic and rhetorical foundations. The traditional outlook on his teaching can be seen in this quote from Bowen, which underlines his dedication to citizen virtue from the individual, from the "good man" of tradition (*kalos kai agathos*) with the "good leisure" (*schole*) dedicated to scientific and philosophical speculation:

> Beyond his methodology, Aristotle represented for the Hellenistic and succeeding eras the figure of the professor per se, the scholar pursuing the life of intellect for its own sake and professing his theories to the students of his following. With his ideal of the intellectual life — exemplified by his own systematically arranged and catalogued library, one of the first in existence — and his belief that the greatest good rests in the pursuit of intellectual arete, Aristotle introduced a new concept into the world. Plato had directed his school to the practical end of producing the enlightened statesman; Aristotle sought the goal of disinterested knowledge. To the sense data of observation he applied the methods of inductive and syllogistic reasoning to yield an established and ordered body of knowledge. This knowledge was designed to cultivate intellectual virtue and to liberate the in-

> dividual from the bonds of the vegetative and appetitive modes of existence; so in the Hellenistic era, under the influence of Aristotle, the concept of the liberal arts, initiated by Plato, was developed further. Already mathematics had been given form by Pythagoreans and then Plato, and such knowledge — arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and harmonics — emphasized content; the methods of ordering it were rhetoric and dialectic. To this Aristotle added logic and the beginnings of grammar, thus promoting the growth of the seven liberal arts which were to form the basis of education for the ensuing 1,500 years. (Bowen, 1972, p. 128-129)

In common with his teacher, of course, Aristotle has the certainty that this new education would be public or it would not be, that the *polis* must take charge of the system, in contrast with what happened in Athens, specifying the different educational levels (see in general Curren's monograph, 2000). Initially, at the ages of five to six years, it seems that children attend classes without taking part in them. They gradually progress through education, which, in its most important stage, distinguishes between childhood, from the ages of seven to fourteen, and youth, from puberty to the age of twenty-one. The educational system will be public and will concern itself with the body and the spirit in equal measure: reading and writing, gymnastics and music are the principal parts, and they serve to shape the citizen who will enjoy the leisure needed to elevate the spirit towards scientific knowledge and speculation, which are synonymous with liberty. The following is a classic passage in this regard (*Politics* VIII, 1, 1337a 10–35):

> Now nobody would dispute that the education of the young requires the special attention of the lawgiver. Indeed, the neglect of this in states is injurious to their constitutions; for education ought to be adapted to the particular form of constitution, since the particular character belonging to each constitution both guards the constitution generally and originally establishes it — for instance the democratic spirit promotes democracy and the oligarchic spirit oligarchy; and the best spirit always causes a better constitution. Moreover, in regard to all the faculties and crafts certain forms of preliminary education and training in their various operations are necessary so that manifestly this is also requisite in regard to the actions of virtue. And inasmuch as the end for the whole state is one, it is manifest that education also must necessarily be one and the same for all and that the superintendence of this must be public, and not on private lines, in the way in which at present each man superintends the education of his own children, teaching them privately, and whatever special branch of knowledge he thinks fit. … It is clear then that there should be legislation about education and that it should be conducted on a public system. (Rackham, 1944, p. 635-637)

According to Curren's (2000) reading, the key to the start of book VIII of the *Politics* is the equation of the constitutional interest with the acquisition of virtue: that is to say, legislators must concern themselves with imposing correct habits on the citizens so that they share a common goal, as members of a community. It is, then, impossible to conceive of politics, ethics, and education separately. The state must educate its citizens well if it wishes to maintain the constitutional

system and voluntary compliance with its regulations.

Among the ideas Aristotle suggests for achieving the general happiness of the community there is, as is to be expected, the necessary education of the citizen in the framework of the political system and as "political animal," following the general principles that his teacher Plato could also endorse of an education that is virtuous and structured in stages. Obviously, the greatest emphasis is placed on the education of the youngest, to which book eight of the *Politics* is specifically devoted, with analysis of the educational experiences in existence until that time — following the path of Aristotle's work in many other disciplines, from the constitutional to the zoological — and proposing a reformed *paideia* on the basis of the middle point of tradition, which gathers the earlier one, systematises it, and structures it. The similarity of the basic curriculum with his teacher Plato, when mentioning a division into grammar, gymnastics, and music, is of particular interest. But there is also work on individual virtue and ethos through the dedication to good leisure, the starting point of all formation. The insistence on musical education, for example, parallels Aristotle's politics with the works from the end of Plato's life, in particular the *Laws*, and recalls the dual meaning of the word *nomos*, which alludes both to the law and to musical modes. Let us consider a well-known passage on the subjects taught in the proposed city (*Politics* VIII, 3, 1337b 23-1338b 5):

> There are perhaps four customary subjects of education, reading and writing, gymnastics, music, and fourth, with some people, drawing; reading and writing and drawing being taught as being useful for the purposes of life and very serviceable, and gymnastics as contributing to manly courage; but as to music, here one might raise a question. For at present most people take part in it for the sake of pleasure; but those, who originally included it in education did so because, as has often been said, nature itself seeks to be able not only to engage rightly in business but also to occupy leisure nobly; for — to speak about it yet again — this is the first principle of all things. For if although both business and leisure are necessary, yet leisure is more desirable and more fully an end than business, we must inquire what is the proper occupation of leisure. For assuredly it should not be employed in play, since it would follow that play is our end in life. But if this is impossible, and play should rather be employed in our times of business (for a man who is at work needs rest, and rest is the object of play, while business is accompanied by toil and exertion), it follows that in introducing sports we must watch the right opportunity for their employment, since we are applying them to serve as medicine; for the activity of play is a relaxation of the soul, and serves as recreation because of its pleasantness. But leisure seems itself to contain pleasure and happiness and felicity of life. And this is not possessed by the busy but by the leisured; for the busy man busies himself for the sake of some end as not being in his possession, but happiness is an end achieved, which all men think is accompanied by pleasure and not by pain. (Rackham, 1944, p. 639-641)

Aristotle's treatment of leisure recalls what Plato did with pleasure in the *Laws*, which is discussed above, as well as the vindication of play (*paidia*) in the framework of education (*paideia*), also with deep Platonic echoes. Indeed, our modern word for "school" ultimately derives from the Greek for leisure, that is, schole. And work or business (*ta pragmata*) are precisely the negation of leisure, *a-scholia*, with the alpha privative. The concept of free time is of great importance for Aristotle since, as he says, it is "the principle of everything," of all scientific speculation, of the occupation in the tasks of the government, and of course, of all philosophical reflection. More attention should be devoted to leisure given its importance in the social and political framework that Aristotle advocates: the essence of the Greek being is in leisure and Aristotle regards it as one of the fundamental characteristics of the free citizen (for a partial discussion see Hernández de la Fuente, 2012).

Another important question is the role of music and literature in the complete education in the Aristotelian system. As in the case of the choruses from Plato's *Laws*, Aristotle argues for education to continue into adulthood, which to some extent prolongs state control over the moral formation of the citizen. Aristotle mentions music, but here the great difference with Plato is the drama, in particular, tragedy, which we know that Aristotle sincerely appreciated, in view of what he theorises in the *Poetics*. As Reeve notes in his summary of Aristotle's pedagogical philosophy (1998, p. 61):

> Aristotelian education continues to some extent even in adulthood, both at symposia, in the army, in the school of experience, in institutions of higher education, like the Lyceum, and in that other distinctively Athenian institution where music played a fundamental role. I mean the theater.

Of course, the question of leisure and pleasure, as well as play, music, and the choruses of youths, adults, and the elderly, in both works, the *Laws* and the *Politics*, can be linked to the philosophical ideal of the *theoria*, of the contemplative life, as a means of remedying education, with the appropriate nuances and adapted for society in general. Hence, good leisure has an undeniably central role that can already be found in Plato, for whom it is necessary in the citizen community. However, it is undoubtedly Aristotle who deserves a more systematic treatment and more prominence for the topic, to which he gives an undisputed prestige when he postulates the emergence of philosophy and science as a result of free time for a ruling class that has its basic needs covered and so takes to mathematics and other sciences which do not relate "to the necessities of life" (*Met.* l. 981 b, Tredennick, 1933). The idea is to provide one class, at least, of citizens, which stands out from the others owing to advances in the educational system — or, even though this notion is controversial today, for their "liberation from the sciences of what is necessary," in other words, once their subsistence needs have been covered — a knowledge that is purer, more humanistic or of pure scientific speculation, that regards the contempla-

tive life (*bios theoretikos*) separately from the practical life (*bios praktikos*). It is clear that, as well as the educational nuances, in the background of the question there is the debate of how to "live well" (*eu zen*) of all of Greek moral philosophy, that of the so-called "genres of life."

In Plato, again linking the two thinkers, the government of the philosopher in the just city has its foundation precisely in the fact that the philosopher is always far from mundane matters, dealings not related to his *theoria*, as his perception should be directed towards the world of ideas. Perhaps the philosopher would not have to flee from all that surrounds him in this way in the perfect city, as it would be possible to live philosophically with each part of society fulfilling its function and with society in general being educated in virtue. Both philosophers place special emphasis on the educational function of the state and on cultivating music and the arts in order to educate citizens from childhood to old age, in an ambivalence between play, leisure, and education. However, there are obvious differences between the two philosophers, for example, regarding literary and artistic tastes and the role of different genres in the arts funded by the state. It is clear that Aristotle saw tragedy as useful, something Plato saw as an error thanks to its relationship with Athens' failed democratic experience, and so he came to favour the lyrical chorus.

5. In conclusion

As we have seen, both Plato and Aristotle focus on the need to educate young people who will be citizens in a system of values that gives cohesion to the whole of the city. In so doing these philosophers connect to the aims of the various political systems that Greek civilisation saw, from the archaic and classical periods, with the opposing models of Athens and Sparta, up to the Hellenistic and Roman periods, with their cities that adopt the model of the Hellenic *polis*, featuring gymnasia, schools, and palaestrae throughout all of the Hellenistic East and, subsequently, in the most unexpected corners of the Eastern Roman Empire. The Hellenic *paideia* tried to instil certain values in the population as a whole, always from the earliest age, with the conviction that the perfection of the political community is only achieved where there is a concord (*homonoia*) in the etymological sense, that is to say, a way of feeling and thinking alike, acquired from childhood. The cases of Plato and Aristotle are of interest as they come after the collective upheaval of the crisis of Athens after the war. Plato puts a whole pedagogical programme in the mouth of Socrates, which is developed in the city, in the framework of the society, as "the country places and the trees won't teach me anything, and the people in the city do" (*Phaedrus* 230d, Fowler, 1925, p. 423-425). For Aristotle, there is no happiness in human life outside the *polis*, in whose political and educational framework complete perfection is achieved and which we must develop from the individual virtues up to the best possible political community.

Finally, we should ask what the great lessons of the philosophers of education from Greek history are, following the

much-discussed crisis of Athenian democracy and of an educational system that was fragmented and focussed on what was necessary. There is no need to recall here the emphasis of Sophistic education throughout the whole of the golden age of Athens owing to its rapid and easy triumph in the political and judicial assemblies. The misunderstood arts of rhetoric led to the situation that Plato criticised so much through the words of Socrates in his famous debates with the Sophists Protagoras, Gorgias, Callicles, and Polus in dialogues such as *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, and the *Republic*, among others. Relativism and the interest in the short term, solely in *what is necessary*, and an education centred on those who had the means to pay for it, made the philosophers from the schools of the 4th century BC around the Academy and the Lyceum consider the imperative need for the state to take charge of a common educational system. But this does not mean that there had to be a uniform system. In the different stages and disciplines proposed for educational reform by the authors we have considered, a clear gradation can be seen. There are classifications of subjects — but not separation of humanities and sciences, as is wrongly done today — but there is no classification for reasons of economy nor a segregation between rich and poor. Merit and capabilities are the basis of the selection.

Can we make use of something from these ancient theories today? Perhaps by taking the best of each of them we might find a current rereading for times of crisis. From Isocrates we can recall the idea that the true homeland is culture. From Aristotle, overcoming the division between poverty and wealth and favouring a middle term, which is also a middle class, and a uniform education as the backbone of a moderate state with a commitment between the social classes. From Plato perhaps the ideas of overcoming discrimination against women and of continuous education in all ages of the human being that need stages of educational development. Nowadays, beyond questions of gender, age, social or economic class, and geographic origin, an appropriate reading of these philosophers can inspire reflections that are very relevant to times of crisis, like the one we are currently experiencing. Therefore, it is always good to read the classics, carefully avoiding the anachronisms that set out to align them with current parameters, which it would be impossible to find in a city state like Athens or any other from the Greek world. And I think of slavery, the question of foreigners and citizenship, or the question of women's participation in public life. However, if we use these emblematic texts as a conceptual and first laboratory, they will open up to us a wide panorama for study and debate for pedagogy. It is clear that Plato and Aristotle are pioneers in approaches to the sciences and humanities. And beyond what the classic manuals of history of education that have been cited say, Plato and Aristotle can be teachers of pedagogy for turbulent times like the current ones, as they were the pioneers in considering the question of educational reform for all of society from parameters of ethics and

the education of the individual *arete*, so I have, as a minimum, attempted to note it in these reflections on their classical passages regarding character education.

Notes

[1As] is well known, Popper's extensive work (1945) comprises two large sections: the first centres on Plato and his influence — with a critique that suffers from an excessive literalism and an absence of context — and the second focusses on his critique of Hegel and Marx.

[2] Summarising briefly, as well as the works of Oswyn Murray, who edited a symposium on the symposium (Murray, 1990), the most recent considerations of this institution's iconography and cultural context, from art on pottery to philosophy, are the works by Lynch, 2011; Hobden, 2013; and Wecowski 2014.

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Author's biography

David Hernández de la Fuente is a Professor of Greek Philology at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. He was previously lecturer, researcher and professor at the universities of Potsdam, Carlos III de Madrid, and the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia. He is the author of various essays on classical literature, philosophy, and mythology, among which stand out *El despertar del alma: Dioniso y Ariadna, mito y misterio [The Awakening of the Soul: Dionysus*

and Ariadne, Myth and Mystery] (2017), and *El hilo de oro: los clásicos en el laberinto actual [The Golden Thread: the Classics in the modern Labyrinth]* (2021), as well as numerous articles and chapters in books on his speciality. He has received various distinctions in his career, such as the Burgen Scholarship Award and the Premio Acción Cívica en defensa de las Humanidades.

 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0960-7717

The plural concept of good character

El plural concepto del buen carácter

José Antonio IBÁÑEZ-MARTÍN, PhD. Professor Emeritus. Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (UNIR) *(jaimm@unir.net).*

Abstract:

Support for character education has been gaining momentum in recent years, invariably in educational circles across the Anglosphere. This paper distinguishes between good character and *buen carácter* and highlights the distinctive features of the two meanings attributed to good character, particularly in Spanish. It undertakes a philological, philosophical and psycho-pedagogical analysis to this end. Moreover, it draws a distinction between temperament and good character and stresses the importance of developing a higher standard for good character, both for oneself and for those in whose hands educational responsibilities are placed. For this purpose, it considers the main human qualities at the heart of of good character based on a trascended reading of one of the most prominent representations of Spanish culture, *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha*.

Keywords: Difference between good character and *buen carácter*, various meanings of good character, fundamental features of the different meanings, importance of reading *Don Quixote* in the development of good character through education.

Resumen:

El movimiento educativo promotor de la educación del carácter ha ido adquiriendo mayor fuerza últimamente, siempre en el ámbito de la cultura inglesa. En el artículo, se muestran las diferencias entre *good character* y buen carácter, señalando las cualidades que identifican los dos sentidos que, especialmente en español, tiene el buen carácter. Para ello, se hace un análisis filológico, filosófico y psicopedagógico. Se diferencia entre temperamento y buen carácter y se subraya la importancia por alcanzar un buen carácter en su superior significado, para uno mismo y para las personas sobre quienes se tienen responsabilidades educativas. Se propone una lectura trascendida de *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, estudiando las cualidades humanas centrales del buen carácter que allí se descubren, como expresión relevante de la cultura española.

Descriptores: Diferencia entre buen carácter y *good character*, diversos sentidos del buen carácter, cualidades básicas de los diversos sentidos, importancia de la lectura de el *Quijote* para la educación del buen carácter.

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1. Introduction

One of the most acrimonious debates in recent years among academics has centred around freedom of expression, which has frequently been called into question as individuals or associations have been "no-platformed" because their opinions were incompatible with the worldview of others and therefore deemed to be an expression of hate speech. Needless to say, every effort should be made to prevent hate speech. However, we should not forget that university campuses ought to provide a platform where the exchange of different views and beliefs is promoted as that some individuals simply fear the truth and will close down any public debate that strays from the politically correct line, the prevailing ideology that seeks to establish the standard by which the conduct of all citizens is measured.

These ideas have slowly but surely taken hold in educational circles. First of all, the word *virtue* is falling into disuse in conversational language, so much so that Paul Valèry, as director of the Académie Française, stated in his speech of 20 December 1934 at an award ceremony of the Académie: "*ce mot vertu est mort, ou du moins il se meurt*"[1] (this word, *Virtue*, is dead, or at least it is dying) (p. 2). Over time, the concept of *goodness* has steadily been replaced by correctness and has ultimately become *political correctness*.

Yet, educators know that education cannot be restricted exclusively to the confines of scientific knowledge and competence, hence several momentous movements emerged towards the last third of the 20th century to promote moral education, such as those of Kohlberg or Gilligan.

One such movement that has gone from strength to strength is character education which dates back to ancient times but has taken on various forms in recent years. On that basis, we are going to examine our understanding of *good character*. As such, we will consider the English and Spanish meanings of the term character *(carácter)* before examining how it is interpreted from a philosophical and psycho-pedagogical perspective.

We will subsequently reflect on the plural concept of good character before concluding with several proposals in respect of its content, especially through the prism of Spanish culture.

2. Meanings of *carácter* / character in Spanish and English

Carácter (character) derives from the Greek *kharaktés* and originally meant the tool that was used to mark one's livestock to distinguish it from the herds of others. By consulting the *Dictionary of Real Academia Española* (DRAE) and the *Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (ODCE), it is possible to compare and contrast the meanings of *carácter* and *character*.

The DRAE is clearly more explicit in its treatment of the original meanings of the term *carácter*, since 5 of its definitions concern the mark that is added to a thing, such as the aforementioned brand or tool, or printed markings. On the other hand, only number 5 of the ODCE definition refers to "printed or written letter, etc.". The first ODCE definition is "collective qualities or characteristics

that distinguish a person or thing". While that definition is more succinct, it is similar to the meaning provided by the DRAE: "*conjunto de cualidades o circunstancias propias de una cosa, de una persona o de una colectividad, que las distingue, por su modo de ser u obrar, de las demás*" (the set of qualities or circumstances of a thing, a person or a group that distinguishes them from others as a result of their way of being or acting).

The ODCE definitions under 2a and 2b are noteworthy: *moral strength* and *reputation, esp. good reputation*. Number 9 of DRAE provides the closest Spanish definition: *"fuerza y elevación de ánimo natural de alguien; firmeza, energía*" (natural strenght and loftiness of spirit; steadfastness, energy). The difference is intriguing: while the English definition immediately relates the term with morality, this aspect is non-existent in Spanish, as assertiveness (*firmeza*) can also be exhibited by those who act immorally.

Despite the admission of other less important meanings, the DRAE distinguishes between *carácter heredado* (inherited character), which would denote "each of the functional or anatomical features passed from one generation to the next, in animals and plants", and *carácter adquirido* (acquired character), in reference to features "acquired by the animal in its lifetime". It is clear, therefore, that Spanish associates *heredado* (inherited) with either animals or plants, and *adquirido* (acquired) exclusively with animals. As such, it makes an indirect reference to human beings, as rational animals, whose character is both inherited and acquired. The "acquired" is non-existent in plants, scarce in irrational animals and abundant in rational animals.

3. The concept of character from a philosophical perspective

We will focus on a pair of pre-eminent authors: Richard Peters, who was a highly influential philosopher of education for many years, on the one hand, and Kant, on the other.

Peters tells us that character takes three forms: the non-committal sense; character as a distinctive style within the character traits of a person; and *having character,* which indicates a firm commitment to certain principles[2]. The relationship between these forms and *good character* is significant. For obvious reasons, it makes little sense to consider good character from a non-committal perspective. On the other hand, in respect of the distinctive style, which is very clearly defined, we should bear in mind that while we are speaking about a *good character* in this case, we may also very well be referring to a fickle or irritable character.

It is a different story in terms of *having character* in so far as we are alluding to a firm commitment to certain principles. In this respect, Peters (1981) refers to Kant's well-known text, which is so important that it is worthy of a brief commentary here.

In his *Anthropology,* Kant states:

> To be able to simply say of a human being: "he has a character" is not only to have

said a great deal about him but is also to have praised him a great deal; for this is a rarity, which inspires profound admiration and respect towards him. If by the term 'character' one generally understands that which can be expected of a person, whether good or bad, then one usually adds that he has this or that character, and then the term signifies his way of sensing. But simply to have a character signifies that property of the will by which the subject binds himself to definite practical principles that he has prescribed to himself irrevocably by his own reason. Although these principles may sometimes indeed be false and incorrect, nevertheless the formal element of the will in general, to act according to firm principles (and not to fly off hither and yon, like a swarm of gnats), has something precious and admirable in it; for it is also something rare.

Here it does not depend on what nature makes of the human being, but on what the human being makes of himself; for the former belongs to temperament (where the subject is for the most part passive), and only the latter enables one to recognise that he has a character.

All other good and useful properties of the human being have a price that allows them to be exchanged with other things that have just as much use; talent has a MARKET PRICE, since the sovereign or lord of the manor can use a talented human being in all sorts of ways; — temperament has an AFFECTIVE PRICE; one can have an enjoyable time with such a person, he is a pleasant companion; — but character has an inner WORTH and is beyond all price. (1991)[3]

This long citation is thought-provoking and emphasises the difference between *price* and *value*, which has since been repeated on a frequent basis. Yet, its central argument may raise certain questions. Kant warns that a firm commitment to principles is not yet a definite character, but a disposition favourable to character, for the character requires maxims stemming from reason and moral practical principles. But as this may also raise further questions, Kant concludes by listing the following five negative principles pertaining to character:

Not intentionally to say what is false; consequently, also to speak with caution so that one does not bring upon oneself the disgrace of retraction.

Not to dissemble; appearing well disposed in public but being hostile behind people's backs.

Not to break one's (legitimate) promise, which also includes honouring even the memory of a friendship now broken off, and not abusing later on the former confidence and candour of the other person.

Not to enter into a friendly or familiar association with evil-minded human beings, and, bearing in mind the *noscitur ex socio* etc., to limit the association only to business.

Not to pay attention to gossip derived from the shallow and malicious judgment of others; for paying attention to it already indicates weakness. Also, to moderate our fear of offending against fashion, which is a fleeting, changeable thing; and, if it has already acquired some importance in its influence, then at least not to extent its command into morality. (Id.)[4]

In his conclusion, Kant ends by asserting:

In a word, to have made truthfulness in the inmost recesses of one's acknowledgement to one's self and at the same

> time in one's behaviour towards others, one's highest maxim, is a man's sole proof of the consciousness of having a character; and since this is the minimum which can be demanded of a rational man, but at the same time the maximum of inner worth (of human dignity), he must, in order to be a man of principles (to have a definite character), must be possible of the most common human reason, and hence superior to the greatest talent, in point of dignity. (Id.)[5]

We cannot comprehensively analyse these ideas. Kant's proposal of a way of sensing character serves as a basis for Peters's second interpretation of character. Yet, we have already noted that this form does not necessarily fit with the description of *good character*. At this juncture, we shall attempt to determine whether those who *have character*, according to Kant, can also be said to have a *good character*. It goes without saying that truthfulness in the inmost recesses, to the extent that maxims are accepted from reason and moral practical principles, and that a decision is made to apply them to one's behaviour towards others, is meritorious. However, it is debatable whether the most common human reason can discover such maxims and principles, qualified as unquestionable and immutable; nor do the stated negative principles regarding character give us the impression that we are converging on our usual conception of a *good character.*

We have to concede that both authors offer interesting ideas about character. But perhaps they have laid the groundwork for a concept worthy of further investigation: the plural dimension of the concept of *good character*, for the purposes of which we will also examine psycho-pedagogical perspectives on character.

4. Psycho-pedagogical perspectives on the concept of character

From a psycho-pedagogical perspective, there is usually one practical objective: to analyse reality while engaging in experimental scientific practices, as well as researching the most effective means by which to resolve the issues raised.

If we follow the order of the meanings of the term character in everyday language, the first issue concerns the set of qualities by which a person or a group is distinguished. This raises several problems, including:

a) Determining the distinctive qualities of the various characters.

b) Determining how these qualities become part of the personality of individuals or even groups.

c) The influence of what is not acquired but inherited and the prominence of the role of human freedom in the forging of the character.

No definitive response has been forthcoming to any of these problems.

On the first issue, it would be remiss of us not to consult Gordon Allport who, as Head of the Psychology Department at Harvard University and President of the

American Psychological Association, conducted important research and achieved numerous feats between 1924 and the year of his death in 1967. In 1937, he made his first and most widely recognised contribution to the discipline when his book entitled *Personality: a psychological interpretation* was published. It conducts an important study of each individual's characteristics by analysing thousands of traits relevant to humans. In subsequent years, he published numerous works. In 1990, Goldberg published an article[6], which has defined his work. In it, he draws on the work of Allport (1937) and Cattell (1943)[7] and ultimately consolidates the essential factors, which he dubs *The Big-Five.* They have since been repeated *ad nauseum*.

Yet, his model based on character traits — abbreviated as OCEAN — standing for *openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness* and *neuroticism,* has been shrewdly criticised by some, including Kristjánsson who, while acknowledging its practical nature in some respects, asserts "the model suffers from arbitrariness regarding the traits that make us 'who we are' in an everyday sense" (2013)[8], and likewise dismisses that it is redundant to speak of character or virtue, which would be better expressed by the *self-concepts (self-esteem, self-regulation and self-efficacy),* as that would considerably undermine the specific virtues to which human beings can aspire.

Finally, personality character traits do not sufficiently reflect a person's personality, for they do not sufficiently justify the precise actions that he takes, since, as asserted by Zubiri "a human being determines his psychophysical substantiality, and that determination by an appropriation of possibilities is what constitutes his virtue and vice" (1986)[9].

The second issue is essentially what sets human beings apart from the rest of nature. In his well-known phrase, Ortega y Gasset stated that while the tiger cannot stop being a tiger, cannot be *de-tigered*, man lives in perpetual danger of being dehumanized. This clearly means, on the other hand, that the human being needs to be humanized. In other words, as asserted by Kant in another equally recognisable phrase, whereas man needs man to become a man no any duck needs another duck to learn to swim. On the other hand, it also means that even a person with the best upbringing and education can be dehumanized: we have all seen films where a Nazi officer is looking for Jews hiding in a house and, although he is able to play one of Bach's compositions on the piano located in a living room, it does not stop his soldiers from firing at closets or beds just in case that is where those they pursue have chosen to hide.

This humanization process has a wide range of sources. Some will be random, and are usually promoted informally by the social context, or occur as a result of personal initiatives that have arisen more or less suddenly. Conversely, others will be the result of the person's upbringing or education or the initiative of the person who has hopes of forging a life that is worth living.

Some take the view that all processes must be random, and education should be eschewed in so far as it does not involve the teaching of indisputable scientific facts, in a bid to avoid indoctrination, paternalism or oppression. It should not need to be stated that genuine educational initiatives should guard against indoctrination of any kind (vid. Ibáñez-Martín, 2021)[10]. However, viewing the characteristics of human autonomy and the exercise of freedom based on those demands overlooks the human condition and the realities of the teaching profession and takes us on a path that leads nowhere. Another no less popular school of thought posits that the human being is subject to the whims of his temperament or forced to act by social pressure. Ortega y Gasset responded that "We are not predetermined, but we are responsible for the decisions we make and for creating our own path in life" (1964)[11], and we are not forced to act by circumstances since they are the options open to us, as indicated previously.

We could continue to analyse this second issue by reflecting briefly on the existence of a personality peculiar to certain groups and its prominence in all group members. The matter is both ancient and contemporary. It is addressed by Plato on two occasions. In *The Republic*, he states that it is individuals who characterise cities, and he refers, for instance, to "the Phoenicians or the inhabitants of Egypt who tend to be prone to greed".[12] His subsequent position is more complex as, in *Laws*, he recognises that among some people — again in reference to the Phoenicians and Egyptians — meanness reigns due to the pecuniary habits of their members, but he also asks that

> one thing should be remembered about places, and that is that some surpass others in terms of producing better or worse men, and that it is not possible to legislate without first acknowledging this fact. The favourable nature of some will actually depend either on changes in the wind direction, I believe, or on the heat; other determining factors will include water, or the food produced by the earth. Not only are they able to exert a positive or negative influence on physical bodies; but they can also produce the same effects on souls. Of all these kinds of territories, especially distinguished are those which, either due to divine inspiration or because they have been lucky enough to produce men of genius, welcome favourably or unfavourably all those who make those places their home.[13]

But the personality of groups is not exclusive to the ancients, as it remains valid nowadays, as indicated by a number of verses of Miguel Hernández (1938), written at tragic times, in which he describes the peoples of Spain in the following terms:

> Asturians of courage/Basques of armoured stone/Valencians of happiness/ and Castilians of soul,/laboured like the earth/and as graceful as wings;/Andalusians of lightning/born among the guitars/ and forged on anvils/flooded with tears/ Extramadurans of rye/Galicians of rain and calm/Catalans of firmness/Aragonese of stock/Murcians of dynamite/fruitfully multiplied/Leonese, Navarrese, masters/of hunger, sweat and the axe/kings of mining/ lords of the tilled soil.[14]

This set of positions is undoubtedly closely related to the third issue that we set out to analyse, that is the influence of the inherited and the prominence of the role of freedom in the forging of one's character. Indeed, experience mysteriously shows how an original set of characteristics affects the members of a group, but, at the same time, we also observe that a clear diversity emerges even between twin brothers who have grown up exposed to the same environment, which gives us the impression that these forms of being and thinking are the sum of a diverse range of inherited attributes, for there are specific genetic inclinations that go hand in hand with those of a more general nature. This inherited attribute is called temperament and is different from character predominantly on account of its origins and entrenchment. Indeed, it has been shown that human freedom, if nurtured properly, can change, according to the degree of effort brought to bear, the temperament and character by which we are distinguished. Zubiri said:

> personality is modified in the course of existence, by virtue of which the human being remains the same person without ever being the same, since the human being is constantly regulating and qualifying his personality. (1986)[15]

Having presented an overview of character, we will now turn our attentions to the fundamental point, since the first thing that character education should seek to ascertain is when to look for a *good character*.

5. Approaches to the idea of good character

Perhaps our primary task should be to consider the reasons why we talk about *good character*. In Spanish, an adjective is usually employed to qualify or provide information about a noun, so much so that it is placed after the noun, unlike in English where the adjective is placed before, with the exception of poetic language, such as when Machado states: "and the ridiculous helmet/the good Manchego" (1951)[16]. But there is no shortage of exceptions to the rule, especially when the order of words changes the meaning (in Spanish, changing the position of the adjective "*buena*", as in the case of *una vida buena* and *una buena vida*, modifies the meaning from living well to a good life, which are not the same thing. Another example is "*pobre*", as in the case of *un pobre hombre* and *un hombre pobre*, where the former means a poor devil and the latter means a poor man) or the speaker wishes to add emphasis to a quality, such as *esta es una buena pintura* (this is a good picture).

As for *good character*, there is no change in meaning in Spanish depending on the order in which the adjective appears relative to the noun. Nor can it be considered that a reference to good character is an attempt by the speaker to be ironic, such as when we say *what a carefully constructed case* despite listening to a speech full of vacuous arguments. In Spanish, perhaps it has become a set combination in which the adjective is placed before the noun, as in the case of free will (*libre albedrío*). Indeed, placing the adjective after the noun (*carácter bueno*) is un-

common, also because character education has been developed in the Anglosphere and it is easy to pass from *good character* to *buen carácter*.

But it seems to me that talk of *buen carácter* can pave the way for us to contemplate the plural concept of good character and the various levels of good character found in Spanish, which differ to varying degrees from their use in English.

We should bear in mind that the second meaning of character in English is *moral strength*, whereas the word *moral* is not included in any Spanish definition of character.

This may serve to explain why English speakers refer to *character education* as a *subset of moral education* (Arthur et al., 2017)[17], so much so that newer presentations of character education relate it to the presence of virtues in the teaching profession. While I consider such a presence to be beyond doubt, an analysis of the uses of *buen carácter* in Spanish give me the impression that a plural concept of *buen carácter* exists and includes different elements in which moral virtues are present and other elements more closely related to the third meaning of *bueno* given by the DRAE: "funny, appetizing, pleasant, amusing", elements one would not necessarily associate with morality.

One article recently published in the press emphasises the difference between good character and morality:

> JRBM was once the most popular mayor among the electorate of his region. He is now facing charges in court connected with his tobacco smuggling network, which stretched across the US and China. He has always been commonly referred to in his town as Nené. He earned the sympathy of voters as a self-made man - he started as an emigrant in Germany and the Netherlands and, upon his return, set up several businesses - and for the generosity in his treatment of people who were going through difficult times. Money was never an issue when it came to helping out a neighbour to repair a home or cure an ailment. He amassed such power that none of his adversaries were able to lay a glove on him during his 18-year stint as mayor. Nené's is not a story you hear every day. Once a respectable mayor and the most popular among the electorate in his region in Galicia, he is now infamous for his ties to smuggling and drug trafficking, and faces charges in connection with his tobacco smuggling network, which was active in Portugal, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Croatia, the United States and the United Kingdom, among others. (Puga, 2022)[18]

Everybody said Nené had a *good character*: he earned the sympathy of people, he was generous, he helped those in need and judging by photographs of him, he seems a well-mannered, modest and calm person. But he did not set a moral example. Not only did he undermine the common good by devoting his time to tobacco smuggling, but he was also involved in the drug smuggling business, without giving a second thought as to the misfortune his activities would inflict on the lives of so many.

It seems to me that the list of positive character traits indicated above describes the first level of good character and is not too dissimilar to the way in which

Don Quixote is described as he nears the end of his life. The narrator says he "was always of a gentle disposition and kindly in all his ways, and hence he was beloved, not only by those of his own house, but by all who knew him" (Cervantes*, book II, c. 74)[19]. According to the definition given by the DRAE, *gentle* refers to a calm and good-tempered condition, that is to say with strength, energy and serene courage to overcome difficulties and face risks.

But the concept of good character is evidently plural since there is a "higher standard" above and beyond that which we have described in this paper. It manifests itself when the mature education of good character is promoted, where all consolidated and stable habits of human excellence arise harmoniously. That is nothing new: it is intriguing to read Marcus Aurelius** who lists a number of attributes that make up one's character in his book entitled *Meditations,* starting in Book I with the assertion that he learned "from my grandfather Verus good morals and the government of my temper"[20].

This higher standard is expressed by Lickona who states:

> Good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good and doing the good habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action. All three are necessary for leading a moral life; all three make up moral maturity. (2001)[21]

We may find these words discouraging. Are we able to identify the *unconditional* goodness that we should exhibit even if it costs us our lives?

A plethora of philosophical responses has certainly been developed, and it makes little sense to think that everyone has the capacity to analyse the various theories of the great thinkers. Which is why the following remarks of MacIntyre are particularly interesting:

> In stories, in contrast to theories, the universal is only found in and through the particular. What we need are stories that impel us to transcend them – even if everything subsequently runs counter to the direction in which we are supposed to be headed. Many places transcend themselves and point to the theories we actually need: folk tales, the dramas of Sophocles and Shakespeare and, in particular, Dante's Divine Comedy; such examples take us beyond and towards the kind of theoretical understanding provided by St Thomas's commentaries on Ethics and Politics.
>
> One of the most urgent things to learn, first from narration and subsequently from theory, is that he who develops his character badly is less and less capable of understanding what he has misunderstood and how he has made such an error: part of the evil of the villain is intellectual blindness in moral questions. (1993)[22]

While MacIntyre does not cite Cervantes, he does allude to Shakespeare, a contemporary of Cervantes, albeit from another culture which is as worthy as ours to highlight the best of certain human qualities. However, since my upbringing was influenced chiefly by Spanish culture, when I reflect on the higher standard of good character, Don Quixote naturally springs to mind, although it does not escape my attention that he occasionally

lacked the fundamental virtue of prudence, as he acknowledges when he is at death's door: "My reason is now free and clear, rid of the dark shadows of ignorance that my unhappy constant study of those detestable books of chivalry cast over it" (Cervantes, 1994).[23]

Therefore, based on a comprehensive analysis of *Don Quixote*, I submit that the higher standard of *good character* comprises the following attributes. We will focus on seven groups with the most pertinent attributes, without claiming to cite every single feature included in all 116 chapters of both parts of *The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha:*

1. *Courage and magnanimity*

Even at the beginning of the story, Don Quixote is willing to confront a "lusty" farmer, with a horse and a lance, who was flogging a boy stripped from the waist upwards. He was not told by another to approach that farmer who was probably stronger than him, and perhaps had his reasons for flogging the boy. But "in an angry voice" he calls on him to fight "I will make you know that you are behaving as a coward" (Cervantes, 1994).

But then comes the episode of the windmills which combines courage and illusion. The previous boy was real. However, confusing large windmills for giants, and engaging them in combat, epitomises bravery — to Sancho he says, "if thou art afraid, away with thee out of this and betake thyself to prayer" (I, c. 8) — with the illusion of embarking on an honourable adventure.

Sometimes we overlook adventure and magnanimity, remaining in an apathetic state of egoism. That could not be said of Lindbergh who, in 1927, became the first man to fly from New York to Paris, or of Hernán Cortés as he came face to face with the Aztec Empire, or of Malala Yousefzai, a Pakistani activist who began, at the age of 11, to campaign for girls' right to education and eventually received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 at the age of 17. That is also absent from Don Quixote who considers it his duty to continue doing that for which he is responsible, as he says to Don Diego

> it was my bounden duty to attack those lions that I just now attacked, although I knew it to be the height of rashness; for I know well what valour is, that it is a virtue that occupies a place between two vicious extremes, cowardice and temerity; but it will be a lesser evil for him who is valiant to rise till he reaches the point of rashness, than to sink until he reaches the point of cowardice; for, as it is easier for the prodigal than for the miser to become generous, so it is easier for a rash man to prove truly valiant than for a coward to rise to true valour. (II, 17)

2. *Serenity and good-tempered*

For us, Don Quixote personifies the strength and energy that are needed to overcome difficulties and problems, always in the interest of justice, which is why he advises Sancho, upon being appointed governor of an island, that it is the duty of justice to discover the truth and that "if perchance thou permittest the staff of justice to swerve, let it be not by the weight of a gift, but by that of mercy" (II, 42).

However, it should be noted that serenity is closely related to patience. Indeed, life inevitably throws an abundance of adversity our way and we would do well to embrace it in a good-tempered manner, while remembering that the obsession to get our own way is a very childish instinct, also because some matters will need time to develop. In reference to Don Quixote, the bachelor Sansón Carrasco said

> your worship alone bears away the palm from all the knights-errant for (all) have taken care to set before us your gallantry, your high courage in encountering dangers, your fortitude in adversity, your patience under misfortunes as well as wounds. (II, 3)

3. *Benevolence and empathy*

The narrator of *The Ingenious Gentleman* states that Don Quixote was "ready to please everybody", and, shortly afterwards, Don Quixote states that his desire was to bring to life again the defunct knight-errantry, having "carried out a great portion of my design, succouring widows, protecting maidens, and giving aid to wives, orphans, and minors" (II, 16). Good character is related to the desire to seek goodness in others, to be sensitive to the problems they face and to show an understanding of and interest in people.

4. *Humility and simplicity*

Life is beset by a number of widespread evils including envy, anger or bitterness, pride, vanity and contempt for others. Conversely, Don Quixote is heard saying to Sancho "who humbleth himself God exalteth" (I, 11); in much the same way, the Curate is told "where envy reigns virtue cannot live" (I, 47).

It is easier to be humble if one follows the old principle of knowing oneself, as Don Quixote reminds Sancho "the most difficult thing to know that the mind can imagine. If thou knowest thyself, it will follow thou wilt not puff thyself up like the frog that strove to make himself as large as the ox" (II, 42). Simplicity and an aversion to listening to oneself or ostentation are other expressions of humility.

5. *Tenderness and courtesy*

These attributes characterise the consideration for others, both in terms of the affable manner in which one addresses them and the care one takes in one's appearance, in view of the requirements of the position or the specifics of the situation in question.

Don Quixote asks the poor gentleman to be "affable, well-bred, courteous, gentle-mannered, and kindly, not haughty, arrogant, or censorious, but above all by being charitable" (II, 6). On the other hand, he instructs Sancho "go not ungirt and loose, Sancho; for disordered attire is a sign of an unstable mind (ant. loose, slack, unkempt)" (II, 43). And he then says "thou shouldst array thyself in the apparel thy office requires, and that at the same time it be neat and handsome" (II, 51).

6. *Gratitude and relationship with God*

It cannot be said that someone who believes that everyone else should be at their

beck and call has a good character, without being able even to reciprocate upon being received with a smile in a store. On the other hand, we read that Don Quixote says to the innkeeper: "I shall preserve for ever inscribed on my memory the service you have rendered me in order to tender you my gratitude while life shall last me" (I, 16).

Yet, Don Quixote also asserts

> ingratitude is the daughter of pride, and one of the greatest sins we know of; and he who is grateful to those who have been good to him shows that he will be so to God also who has bestowed and still bestows so many blessings upon him. (II, 51)

Throughout his masterpiece, Cervantes leaves us in no doubt that the reward of virtue is eternal, for

> I know that the path of virtue is very narrow, and the road of vice broad and spacious; I know their ends and goals are different, for the broad and easy road of vice ends in death, and the narrow and toilsome one of virtue in life, and not transitory life, but in that which has no end. (II, 6)

7. *Temperance*

In times of rampant consumerism, which is particularly wretched given the prominence of poverty that blights so many communities both distant and local alike, it can be striking to read a Roman Emperor declaring

> I am thankful to the gods (….) that I preserved the flower of my youth, and that I did not make proof of my virility before the proper season, but even deferred the time; that I was subjected to a ruler and a father who was able to take away all pride from me, and to bring me to the knowledge that it is possible for a man to live in a palace without wanting either guards or embroidered dresses, or torches and statues, and such-like show; but that it is in such a man's power to bring himself very near to the fashion of a private person, without being for this reason either meaner in thought, or more remiss in action, with respect to the things which must be done for the public interest in a manner that befits a ruler. (Marcus Aurelius) [24]

While temperance moderates human desire by subjecting it to reason, it also adds an element of sobriety and continence to our actions that paves the way to a degree of happiness that can never be experienced by those with an obsession for ephemeral pleasures whose effect invariably leaves them feeling disgruntled.

In much the same way as Marcus Aurelius, Don Quixote appeals for temperance. He calls upon Sancho to

> be moderate in thy sleep; for he who does not rise early does not get the benefit of the day; issues a warning "remember, Sancho, diligence is the mother of good fortune, and indolence, its opposite, never yet attained the object of an honest ambition. (II, 43)

and shows him the importance of eating and dining in moderation "more sparingly still; for the health of the whole body is forged in the workshop of the stomach. Be temperate in drinking, bearing in mind that wine in excess keeps neither secrets nor promises" (II, 43); and stresses

> let it not be seen that thou art (even if perchance thou art, which I do not believe) covetous, a follower of women, or a glutton; for when the people and those that have dealings with thee become aware of thy special weakness they will bring their batteries to bear upon thee in that quarter, till they have brought thee down to the depths of perdition. (II, 51)

While the list of attributes that we have offered does not represent all the attributes that constitute a good character, those we have indicated perhaps form the basic nucleus of the second definition of good character, where consolidate and stable habits of human excellence arise harmoniously, which is so important in the pursuit of happiness.

Evidently, as Don Quixote informs us, we are aware that any human quality needs to be moderated by a sense of prudence, which corresponds with what is usually defined as "the right reason applied to practice".

6. Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to highlight the concept of *good character*, which is perhaps more varied in Spanish than in English, by determining the various levels one might encounter in the use of these terms and setting out the basic elements of each of them, based on a philological, philosophical and psycho-pedagogical analysis.

Finally, I think it appropriate to conclude with three fundamental caveats:

a) *Tener carácter* (to have a character) is undoubtedly linked to a number of principles, whereas temperament refers to realities inherited by the person, which also play a prominent role. But we should bear in mind that, as long as we remain resolute, we can influence and change those realities, and we should also seek to promote educational practices that set out to develop the good character of those who, in one way or another, depend on us. At times, we find comfort in saying that we cannot change because *that's just the way we are,* while forgetting that, in these cases, *research will be needed to determine how we can further develop our nature.* Let us not forget that bitterness towards nature is poisonous, and it is naive to seek a quick fix, since such measures, rather than cultivating, can destroy the improvements we need, albeit in a slow and laborious manner.

b) The fuel powering our internal engine is love, the feeling of being loved; it takes a considerable effort to cultivate a loving relationship that is strong enough to stand the test of time and cope with setbacks, although that effort is greatly facilitated if we find an answer to fundamental questions about our existence, which will help us to fill any existential vacuum and infuse our hearts with joy.

c) By focusing on educational initiatives, we will soon discover that the most important thing is to put others on the right track and help them to forge a life that is worth living.

Notes

[*] The translations offered of the texts by Miguel de Cervantes are taken from: *The Project Gutenberg Etext of Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes [Saavedra]*, translated by John Ormsby, PG Etext 996, 1997, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/996/996-h/996-h.htm.

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Author's biography

José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín, Doctor of Philosophy at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Professor of Philosophy of Education at the same university, where he occupied the positions of Vice-Dean, Head of Department, etc. Professor Emeritus of Universidad Complutense de Madrid, where he was awarded the Medalla al Mérito Docente following his retirement. He is Professor Emeritus of the Universidad Internacional de La Rioja, where he was Vice-Rector of Doctoral Programmes and he created and directed the Master's in Character Education and Emotional Education. His research focuses on the study of anthropological foundations, the critical-philosophical assumptions of educational processes, moral and civic training within democratic systems and character education. He has authored numerous publications and received a wide range of awards. The King of Spain awarded him with the Gran Cruz de Alfonso X el Sabio (Great Cross of Alphonse X, the Wise).

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1171-7117

New digital virtues or virtues for the digital context. Do we need a new model of character education?*

Nuevas virtudes digitales o virtudes para el contexto digital: ¿es necesaria una nueva educación del carácter?

Juan Luis FUENTES, PhD. Associate Professor. Universidad Complutense de Madrid *(jlfuente@ucm.es).*
Jorge VALERO. Graduate. Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (UNIR) *(jorge.valero@unir.net).*

Abstract:

No one questions the fact that technology has colonized various aspects of our lives. We make use of technology in our work in a great variety of professional fields, in establishing our social relationships or in order to look for on-the-spot information. This new digital world generates different reactions, which del range from pessimism arising from the risks provoked by a certain confusion, perplexity and, at times moral blockage, to an optimistic outlook based on the possibilities the digital world offers for human development. This article is centred at the intersection of these two viewpoints and aims to examine whether the digital world demands a new paradigm of virtues — a substantial change — or whether it simply requires an updating of the classical pattern of virtues to the new circumstances produced by technological change. The article will set out some of the principal characteristics which are provoked by the almost total presence of technology in our lives and will focus on the virtue of critical thinking, which has become especially necessary in view of problems of *infoxication*, *post-truth* or the more and more common methods of online fraud and abuse. After analysing these aspects and the limits of technology and of the digital paradigm, we argue that in the present-day context there are no elements which are incompatible with the classical conception of the virtues. It is certainly true that new challenges will emerge in character education in view of students' immersion in the use of IT and that this situation will mean that certain virtues will require special reappraisal; such will

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be the case of critical thought, responsibility and the protection of privacy. However, there is no reason to suppose that the pillars of Aristotelian ethics have been in any way altered or have become obsolete. We defend the idea that an updating and adjustment to a demanding new context is preferable to any really substantial change, since the foundation and objectives of the ethics of virtue remain unchanged in the digital world.

Keywords: character, moral education, critical thinking, virtue, *cyber-flourishing*, digitalization.

Resumen:

Nadie cuestiona el hecho de que la tecnología ha colonizado diversas esferas de nuestra vida. Recurrimos a ella para trabajar en los campos más variados, para establecer relaciones sociales o para buscar información de manera inmediata. Este nuevo mundo digital suscita diversas perspectivas que van desde el pesimismo ante los riesgos que entraña cierta confusión, perplejidad y, en ocasiones, bloqueo moral, a la postura optimista por la posibilidad de un nuevo modo de desarrollo humano o plenitud digital. El presente artículo se sitúa en esta encrucijada y examina si este mundo digital demanda un nuevo paradigma de virtudes –un cambio sustancial–, o si por el contrario se trataría más bien de adecuar el esquema de virtudes clásicas a la nueva realidad tecnológica. Para ello, se exponen algunas de las características principales que provoca la presencia casi total de la tecnología en nuestra vida, y se sitúa el foco en la virtud del pensamiento crítico, que se plantea como especialmente necesaria ante fenómenos como la *infoxicación*, la *posverdad* o los cada vez más comunes métodos de fraude y abuso *online*. Tras analizar estos aspectos y los límites de la tecnología y del paradigma digital, se argumenta que no hay elementos en el contexto actual que resulten incompatibles con la ética clásica de las virtudes. Ciertamente, emergerán retos concretos para educar el carácter en la situación digital de los estudiantes y esta situación supondrá revalorizar algunas de las virtudes de manera particular, como sucede con el pensamiento crítico, la responsabilidad o el cuidado de la intimidad. Sin embargo, no hay nada que permita afirmar que los pilares de la ética aristotélica se hayan visto alterados o queden obsoletos. Se defiende la idea de una adecuación con la mirada puesta en un demandante contexto, antes que de un cambio realmente sustancial, pues el fundamento y el objetivo de la ética de la virtud siguen siendo igualmente válidos para el mundo digital actual.

Descriptores: carácter, educación moral, pensamiento crítico, virtud, *cyber-flourishing*, digitalización.

Sors salutis
et virtutis
mihi nunc contraria
est affectus
et defectus
semper in angaria.
Hac in hora
sine nora
cordum pulsum tangite;
quod per sortem
sternit fortem,
mecum omnes plangite![1]

O Fortuna – *Carmina Burana*

1. Introduction: substantial change or adaptation to a new reality

Batavia is the old name of modern day Jakarta and was also the destination and name of a Dutch galleon loaded with treasures belonging to the East India Company, which foundered on the reefs of the Indian Ocean near the coast of Australia in the seventeenth century. On board the ill fated vessel was an apothecary, Jeronimus Cornelisz, whose advanced education and brilliant eloquence did not impede him, but rather spurred him to lead an authentic massacre and months-long subjection of the 300 survivors — many of them children — who managed to reach the shores of a tiny islet known as Beacon Island. Sexual violence and death were the predominant keynotes of a terrifying story in which the sole motives seemed to be the pleasure of sadistic enjoyment, the desire of absolute dominion and the apparent impunity of the perpetrators. Described in novels by Leys (2011) and Fitzsimons (2020), this story is the starting point of a recent and disturbing book entitled *Evil online*, by the Dutch professors Cocking and van den Hoven (2018), in which the islet of the atrocities and the present day digital environment are compared. The singular characteristics of the two scenarios involve a new reality which bears the stamp of apparent isolation and impunity, and which produces the effect of creating enormous moral confusion in which the voice of conscience can hardly, if at all, be heard. In order to reinforce their introduction to the argument, the authors recall the senseless attack on a web page which had been created to help people who suffer from epilepsia, to which the hackers added a number of images with strong flashing lights, knowing well the harm which these images would cause people who suffer from this condition and who go to precisely these pages in search of help.

It is significant to observe that after years of euphoria and optimism, the voices which today warn against the dangers of the digital world are no longer isolated instances; more and more voices, like Cocking and van den Hoven (2018), describe the new technological environment as "a new economic order which claims for itself human experience as the gratuitous raw material to be used for any number of covert commercial practices" (Zuboff, 2020, p. 9) — a parasitical logic based on behavioural changes in the human person which are without precedent in human nature and which threaten human nature itself, fundamental rights, market democracy and the sovereignty of the people (Vid. Carr, 2004; Morozov, 2012).

On the other hand, authors such as Harrison (2021) defend the possibility of *cyber-flourishing* starting from a revised, adapted and perhaps even digitalized type of character education, with the appearance of new virtues such as *Cyber-wisdom* or new ways of living in society and democratically when we become *cyber-citizens*. Indeed, digitalization signals a new stage, a qualitative change in the understanding of concept. Whereas the analogical refers to different positions sharing a common base, the digital expresses a new category, differ-

ent from what has been traditional, of the way in which human intelligence is used.

Nonetheless, in reference to this new digital environment in which we live, we may well ask: is the classical model of virtues still valid? — the model on which our teaching is based and which was renovated by the neo-Aristotelian tendencies of the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries? A model whose comeback was aided by the resurgence of the ethics of virtue in the works of Anscombe (1958) and which helped in the understanding and development of moral education (Curren, 2015), has given birth to a renewed and hope-inspiring version of character education (Walker et al., 2015). Or, on the other hand, are we to consider this paradigm to be obsolete, out of date and antiquated so shortly after its resurgence? And therefore, should it be shackled and thrown into the technological abyss which is opening up in front of us? Should it be not only renewed or recycled, but even reinvented or substituted? Using the terminology of the Greek philosopher, should we be thinking in terms of a substantial change?

In short, the central discussion contained in this article could be set out in the following terms:

- On the one hand, do we need to be thinking of *new virtues,* which would constitute a *substantial change* in the way we educate and affect the very aims of education, leading us to speak of a different and renewed idea of education in general and character education in particular? This could even lead us to a new concept of the person, in the wake of the promising but disquieting theories of transhumanism (Bostrom, 2005), which, in anthropological terms, differentiate between the task of educating and its ultimate meaning, inasmuch as the ethics of virtue in an education of a neo-Aristotelian character are described not so much as certain norms or principles but as the possibilities of human potential (Massini-Correas, 2019).

- On the other hand, are we thinking more in terms of an adaptation to the new discoveries regarding human intelligence, retaining the most essential and characteristic elements of classical education, but accepting the advisability of rethinking certain known virtues or of prioritizing certain known virtues over others, while giving attention to the new necessities created by the technological context — all of which amounts to a *relevant change* in the way we view our work as educators.

2. New ways of doing, being and educating

There can be no doubt that, thanks to technology, our habits have changed in a relatively short time over the last few years. In Aristotelian terms this could signify a transformation of the human being. A forceful idea in the thought

of the Greek philosopher is that *we are what we do*, or, to put it another way, we become by doing — our actions and behaviours shape us for good or for bad. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* the author clearly explains that the person who assiduously practices generosity is very likely to become a generous person, and conversely the person who lies habitually is at risk of becoming a liar. In his own words (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./2007)

> In the same way, by doing things justly we become just, and by living temperately we become temperate, and by doing brave things we become brave […] And the same thing happens with the virtues, because in our dealings with men we become just or unjust; and in situations of danger in which some fear and others dare, some become heroes and others cowards. Likewise with covetousness and anger, some become temperate and mild while others become dissolute and corrupted according to their acts. To conclude with a principle: habits are established through acts (1103a-1103b).

What is more, although these changes are not irreversible, they do not occur instantaneously; by their very nature: they require repeated actions over time, not single but habitual actions that occur in everyday life. It would be questionable to state that we have the habit of doing something if we do it, even with regularity, every so often. In other words, a person who goes out to run once a month could hardly describe himself as a runner, or a person who goes to a certain restaurant every two years call himself a regular customer; a habit requires greater assiduity and frequency. Consequently, we are not defined, or at least not significantly, by those actions which we carry our occasionally.

In this sense, the following features, among others, are characteristic of the way that technology has become part of our lives. One of the principal influences of technology in our daily existence is in the fields of time and space. It is true to say that we do not tend to use technology sporadically in these fields; we use it frequently and habitually, to such an extent that it has become a natural part of the repertoire of our usual daily behaviour; for this reason, we could affirm that the use of technology defines us as human beings since it is one of our habits. In the words of Cocking and van den Hoven (2018, p. 33), "The World Wide Web now significantly defines the way that we lead our lives". In addition, we share not only our time but also our space with digital devices: we no longer need to go to a specific place to access technology because it has expanded and become so generalized that our technological devices accompany us and share and inhabit our own personal space. They go almost everywhere with us as *wearable* technology, on our wrists, in our pockets or in our wallets. We use technology so much that it has become almost unconscious and involuntary, rather like the way we don't think about changing gear in our cars; we check our smart phones regularly or we hit the keyboard of our computer in a similar way to the way we blink or breathe. Perhaps the most telling proof of all this is the effect we feel when we are deprived of the technology which we use habitually

and on which we base our daily behaviour — the sensation that something essential in our life is missing. In this sense, almost a decade has passed since we began hearing the term "nomophobia" (an abbreviation of the English term "no-mobile-phone-phobia"), to refer precisely to "the discomfort, the anxiety, the unease and the distress caused by not being in contact with a mobile phone" (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014, p. 156). This makes almost unimaginable the possibility of a digital reversal, that is, reverting to a non-digital world.

In addition to this, the areas of human experience into which digital technology has become integrated are in no way marginal, specialized or restricted to a reduced sector of the population. The relatively small economic cost and the ease of use of modern day technology means that it is within easy reach of almost everybody — at least in Western societies — and at the same time technology is not limited to use in the workplace, but is to a large extent personal and used in a wide variety of human activities. Technology has thus become an important element of leisure time, that part of our time which is less instrumental and more unstructured and has a value of its own (Pieper, 1974; Fuentes, 2017): it has its own specific value which does not depend on anything but itself and for this reason it becomes a more radical and permanent feature of human behaviour. What is done for its own sake is generally unaffected by other factors. In this sense, we may well think that technology is no longer just *a means to*, a work tool whose use ends at the end of the working day or the productive activity involved; on the contrary, its place is neither peripheral nor instrumental but at the centre of the most personal.

It has become part of our social relationships, including the most private and valuable for the character of the human being, those which are based on friendship and love, and even on solitude. Technology intervenes, at least partially, in many elements of those interpersonal relationships by means of interpersonal channels of expression and communication. The insufferable picture of a group of friends or family members together in which all eyes are concentrated on their mobile phones and no word is spoken, as if all were in the grip of a false idea of solitude and were taking refuge from the company of the others on their mobile devices, is a cruel reflection of the digital beings in which we appear to have been transformed. But, paradoxically, this apparent digital solitude does not measure up to authentic solitude, which has an instructive value, which confronts the individual with himself, which permits an intimate, intra-personal encounter in which the individual can listen to his heart and discover within himself the transforming impetus and motivation to write or rewrite his own history. To be more specific, García Morente (1935) seems almost prophetically to describe the *solitary* relationship of the individual with his electronic device when he states that:

> Our life today is a life extroverted, a life lived outside itself, in the open air of advertising. And in a parallel way, in the manner

> of an instance of reciprocal penetration, advertising and the exterior invades the innermost corners of our personal lives through the thousand holes we have deliberately opened (p. 9).

Transversally, from the private to the public, from the individual to the social, the digital transformation has also taken place in the commons and in the configuration of present day democracies, in matters pertaining to the very exercise of citizenship (Gozálvez et al., 2019). Usage of the digital media and presence in virtual discussion forums have today become a priority for political parties, while the social movements in different parts of the world over the last decade owe their development to a large extent to technology and the internet (Castells, 2015).

In the academic world, technology has also predetermined the way in which research is carried out and it is the means to know what is happening worldwide and to relate to society García-Gutiérrez and Ruiz-Corbella, 2020), inasmuch as it has provided exponentially increased access to information, reducing costs and the time necessary not only to obtain texts but also to distribute their publication in a variety of different formats. As Cocking and van den Hoven (2018) explain, if we take into account all the written production in the history of humanity, from the Egyptian papyri and the Sumerian clay tablets to the present, we will find that 90% of the total has been produced in the last two years. This has meant that researchers have had to be much more discerning in their search for information and selection of contents; along with other factors, this superabundance of information has led some to raise questions regarding the very significance of academic life, such as: does it make sense to continue publishing today when the very abundance of published material means that most of it will never be read? (Burbules, 2020).

In view of this, it seems logical to consider that we are not faced with a superficial or anecdotal matter whose effects are felt by a limited number of individuals, but that we are faced with a problem which: 1) affects practically the whole population, and 2) occurs transversally in essential spheres and facets of human life and not on a sporadic basis but in our day to day life, and which therefore may originate new ways of being and of relating to one another and to the rest of the world. If this context, therefore, makes new ways of being possible, it is reasonable to also speak of new ways of educating and of research in education. In this regard, it is significant that authors such as Jonas (1985), referring to technology in general, and Burbules y Callister (2000), referring to technology in education, argue that the new media can give birth to new objectives to which we can aspire and, consequently, to new abilities and virtues in which to educate.

To address this question, we intend to analyse critical thinking or critical spirit as an example of a specific virtue of a clearly intellectual nature; under various names or headings, it usually appears in the list of virtues or features which are

considered desirable in the formation of character and it has been considered to be "one of the most important skills needed in the coming years", according to *World Economic Forum* (2020, p. 5).

2.1. Adjectified critical thinking

We can define critical thinking as a type of logical thinking which helps us to interpret and make sense of the world (Doddington, 2007), which is based and founded on reasons (Siegel, 1988) derived from principles or criteria (Lipman 1991), to carry out evaluations and express opinions which lead us to adopt a position (Ibáñez-Martín, 1991), thus forming our beliefs, perceptions, behaviours and feelings.

The majority of these authors, who are considered as reference points in the study of critical thinking, analysed this virtue before the end of the previous millennium, when the technological revolution and the internet were still in their infancy; the various concepts which they define cannot therefore be considered as belonging to a digital context. Perhaps for this reason and without wishing to question the value of their ideas, it could be said that their conclusions fall short in terms of a virtual environment or that they fail to take into account the characteristics which define such an environment and differentiate it from the physical world.

Critical thinking implies that the thinker has all the information necessary to express an opinion; in a virtual environment it also implies that he has the added competency in the use of *hardware* and *software*, that he needs to be aware of the different sources available which flourish in new and different places and in a variety of languages, and at the same time that he is mindful of a new and negative extreme which is difficult to imagine in an analogical environment – that is, what has been termed *infoxication* (Fundéu de la RAE, 2012), or difficulties in processing an excess of information on any given topic which saturate or overload the processes of cognitive assimilation and therefore hamper or impede the process of comprehension. In this sense, it is significant to observe the number of people who abandon the social networks due to the pressure they receive from the virtual community and the enormous expectations placed on them. Cases which come to mind include Simone Biles, the American gymnast, the Dutch cyclist Tom Dumoulin or the Japanese tennis player Naomi Osaka: they all had to face serious anxiety problems because of the difficulty of coping with the pressure from exposure to millions of followers which reached them directly through the social networks; in addition, we should not forget the influence of the *haters* — those who confuse a critical spirit with the desire to destroy the other.

This new conception of critical thinking also implies learning how to distinguish between the truth and *post-truth*. Internet is the perfect seed ground for post-truth, the spreading of *fake news* and hoaxes. It feeds on conspiracy theories, fantastic beliefs and populist and sensationalist fantasies. Although such beliefs have always been one of the tools of social influence, the creation of opinion and at times sheer

manipulation (Pina Polo, 2019), their reach and their efficacy has been greatly multiplied by contemporary technology (Caro, 2015). This is why the role of the educator today is much more important than that of one who simply expresses truths to his students; his task is much more complex since he must enable them to recognize truth as such in an ocean of meticulously prepared messages which have been conceived and designed to suit the characteristics of the receiver, taking into account the way he uses internet, his habits, interests, preferences, geographical location, gender and more (Conroy, 2020; Jackson, 2019). He must therefore be able to resist and manage a type of commercial advertising without precedent due to its ultra-personalization, or what, in the words of Zuboff (2020, p. 36), is nothing less than "a way to camouflage a series of aggressive extraction operations which exploit the innermost corners of life as if they were a mine": hyper-abundant advertising, with an implicitly produced symbolic impact (Gozálvez et al., 2022), based on researched strategies of neuro-marketing and on intensive vigilance of commercialized human experiences and the creation of needs in the name of "the rhetoric of the empowering role of the web" (Zuboff, 2020, p. 24), or even the more and more sophisticated types of attempted fraud such as *Phishing*, *Smishing* or *Vishing*. All this is accompanied by a number of external determinants which weaken critical vision: the dizzying speed and instantaneousness of internet, which triggers decisions and behaviours, or the individual use of technology with clearly social ramifications, which in the case of adolescents lacks sufficient parental supervision due to factors such as the digital generation gap (Sánchez Pérez, & Fuentes, 2021; Muñoz-Rodríguez et al., 2020). The net result is a growing problem for those involved in moral education, since, as Randall explains:

> Moral habituation, like habituation in any complex skill, must consequently be guided by someone who can provide an articulated understanding of what is to be done and why, a language that directs attention to salient particulars and formulates relevant considerations through which the student can understand what she is doing and why (Curren 2015, p. 467).

Together with critical thinking, we could consider other classical virtues or features of character which are also particularly challenged by the characteristics of the digital environment and which come to mean new demands that were not present in the traditional analogue context. In effect, technological responsibility (Hernández et al., 2015), caution regarding privacy online and cyber-wisdom (Dennis, & Harrison, 2020), trans-media creativity, or digital citizenship are but a few examples of areas requiring a similar analysis in order to be able to confront possible transformations in character education in virtual environments.

3. Character education suited to digital environments

In spite of all that has been said, we can nonetheless find arguments which seem to indicate that character education and the virtues necessary for the digital context are

not so very different from the generic proposals suited for a context of face-to-face personal relationships. In any event, our line of argument is that we need to adapt to the new environment while maintaining the essence and basic fundamentals in use until now; it is clearly not a question of a new type of character education for the digital environment, nor of new virtues to substitute the old.

A preliminary consideration which can be made is the obvious fact that, although we make wide use of technology, we do not live in a virtual world. A large and significant number of our activities are carried out in analogical contexts and are based on face-to-face personal relationships into which technology does not intrude. To be more precise, we could in fact identify three environments: the virtual, the personal and the hybrid, the third being understood as a conjunction of elements of the other two. It would therefore be unwise to claim that a new digital education of character is needed to take the place of the former, since, by doing so, we would be relegating to a secondary level an important part of our existence. Is politics still possible without the use of virtual environments? Is love still possible today without the use of technological devices? Does friendship outside the social media still make sense? Can we teach and educate without the use of machines or screens, for example by taking a walk through the countryside or the city, by visiting patients in a hospital or by going to a museum? If our answer to these questions is affirmative — without even entering into the added value or the enabling role that technology could play in them — then we are speaking of spaces in which the centre of our action is not digital. Indeed, one of the lessons we can learn from the health crisis is that basic education, one of the most important pillars of our societies and at the same time one of the key stages of a person's life, cannot be completely virtual, not so much because of the alarming digital gap which hinders access to technological media, nor the difficulties which it implies in respect of conciliating home and work life, but rather because of the importance of face-to-face personal relationships in human growth and development. As yet, human life in a virtual environment is not possible.

At the same time, the human being's endless capacity to create new technology is persistently limited by the constraints imposed by the human condition itself. Although some space or time barriers have been overcome, others are stubbornly insurmountable. In spite of easy and multiple access to information, we are unable to read two documents simultaneously: we still have to concentrate all our attention on a single document. Multitasking divides a person's attention but does not multiply it, and has a dilutory effect on the depth of intellectual comprehension. Sophisticated, high definition cameras are as yet unable to give us ubiquity or to overcome the mind-body or cognitive-corporal dissociation which we experience in virtual spaces; our attention remains focused on a single space. While an array of devices allows us to save valuable time, they can do nothing to alter the distressing finitude of human life or to halt the inevitable passage of time, something which is in fact comfort-

ing in view of the problems suffered by the *struldbrugs*. These characters, taken from Jonathan Swift's classic novel (2000) *Gulliver's Travels*, inhabit the land of Luggnagg and have to cope with immortality, something which our species considers advantageous and sought after, but which paradoxically is the source of all sorts of individual and social problems. Among them is one of great relevance to character education: their existence is apparently unending, lacks any sense of the transcendental and is the source numerous obstacles regarding social organization and intergenerational change.

In any event, the increase of life expectancy resulting from present-day technology is in no way comparable to the idea of immortality. The finitude of life remains in spite of the extension of the years and does nothing to modify the fact that, as Zubiri states (1986, p.658), "to exist is to exist constitutively in the face of death". In conversation with Heidegger, Zubiri partially shares the other's idea that a person who lives without a prior experience of death does live an authentic existence (*eigentliches Dasein*). However, the idea of immortality suggests a new category which is similar to the mathematical conception of infinite and is more akin to a representation, since proof of its existence is impossible; death "belongs to the formal structure of the living human: it is that act which positively projects man from the provisional to the definitive" (Op.cit., p. 666). Even while religious faith contains the promise and hope of the immortality of the soul, life still has an obvious limit in death. St. Augustine shows this symbolically when he describes a first death as that which precedes the final judgement, and a second and permanent death which is reserved to those do not pass that judgement. The first is not simply a fee of passage; it is the gateway to another form of existence and a major condition for the life thereafter (2000, XIII, 23).

The second question we should ask is whether it makes sense to speak of new virtues in the context of a realistic system of ethics, such as the ethics of virtue on which present-day neo-Aristotelian education of character is built. To speak of *new ethics* should surely cause alarm bells to ring among those who believe that the basis of ethics is objective and realistic; in other words, that it is not founded solely on human conventions, which, by nature, are changeable, but on the idea that the source of morality lies outside the subjective beliefs of the individual and of society. In the case of the ethics of virtue, the criteria to decide what is good and what is evil are constitutively rooted in the anthropology of the human being himself and his perfective potential, and therefore it is pertinent to ask if it is possible to speak of new virtues or features of character arising from the *new technological context*. By contrast, it seems probable that this claim would fit more easily into a system of constructivist ethics which would be more receptive towards emerging social demands and more amenable to the creation of new ethical norms. By their very nature, they are changeable and depend on historical circumstances and on the inter-subjective rationality of a group

or a society; they are not subject to any permanent feature of the human being. In this sense, what John Dewey writes is highly significant. Starting from a pragmatic standpoint, he considers society, not the individual and his human condition, as the reference point in deciding on the content of school curricula. Thus, in *The School and Society* he stated that:

> Whenever we have in mind the discussion of a new movement in education, it is especially necessary to take the broader, or social view. Otherwise, changes in the school institution and tradition will be looked at as the arbitrary inventions of particular teachers; at the worst transitory fads, and at the best merely improvements in certain details. (Dewey 1899, p. 20)

At the same time, a system of ethics constructed in opposition to cognitive or realistic ethics seems to be more suited to a technological context, one of whose principal characteristics appears to be a logic attuned to the apparently endless ability of the human being to create and to produce a variety of artefacts, devices, programmes, publications, opinions, tendencies etc.; therefore, new norms and values can be new elements influenced by the creative freedom of users. This creative prominence of the individual, which surpasses the role of being a mere spectator or consumer to become an active protagonist, has given birth to what has come to be known as a *culture maker* (Hatch, 2013) and is linked not only with material aspects in the construction of devices but also with the civic participation of citizens in the public arena and in support of democracy (Gozálvez et al., 2022). However, it is not easy to imagine how new virtues could be integrated into a realist ethical system such as virtue ethics, which does not accommodate exclusively subjective criteria in order to determine the meaning of a righteous life (Kristjánsson, 2017); such a system must find an equilibrium between what is subjectively satisfactory and what is objectively praiseworthy (Curren, 2015). The foundation of ethical behaviour is given human reality itself and the perfective nature of the virtues potentially present, neither of which we completely determine ourselves. For this reason, it is meaningless to talk about new virtues because of a change of context.

It could be argued that present day suggestions regarding character education, although inspired by Aristotle, are not completely aligned with the philosopher's ideas since they have required a certain practical adaptation in view of new advances in knowledge and experience, which is why they are referred to as neo-Aristotelian (Kristjánsson, 2015). However, this renovation and updating of Aristotelian ethics has in no way repudiated their essential pillars; the cornerstones of his proposals regarding character education maintain their adherence to objective reality and their rejection of subjectivist approaches. A given reality can be known, at least partially and, by means of speculative research and the examination of experience, it is possible to reveal common features which can be promoted through education for the benefit and improvement of individuals and the societies they live in,

This approach helps us to counter the arguments outlined in the preceding section. It is true that the new habits such as those arising from virtual environments and the use of technological devices in human space and time are an important challenge for character education and virtues. But they are a challenge which can be met by the Aristotelian model of virtues. We must necessarily make a specific reference to prudence, a virtue objective which highlights and at the same time limits the role of context in deciding what is good, since "the doing of good presupposes the accordance of our action with the real situation" (Pieper, 2020, p. 47). The virtue of prudence presupposes the ability to analyse, deliberate and judge according to changing circumstances. In other words, the insufficiency of the individual virtues themselves to determine the mid-point between two vices on the one hand, and the inability of the context on its own to tell us what would be the right course at a given moment of time and space on the other, make it necessary to call on a practical wisdom which can regulate decision making in specific contexts, the here and now, which will never necessarily be the same in any two given situations. For that reason, the virtuous answer varies: for example, when the person who has to decide to enter a building in flames is a trained fireman or a person suffering from asthma: while for the first it is an act of bravery, for the second it would be a reckless behaviour which would place his own life in danger and have scant possibilities of rescuing anyone from the burning building. When the fireman is confronted with an emergency situation, he evaluates the circumstances before acting. The fact that he is familiar with certain factors may speed up his decision, but unusual situations call for extra deliberation, greater risk analysis, the establishment of limits and the adoption of measures which in different circumstances might not be necessary.

Thus, we can say that the new digital context requires not only a special use of practical wisdom but also deliberation and a close examination of an unfamiliar reality; this will allow us to decide how to act in the face of unknown circumstances which we have never had to confront before. *Cyber-wisdom* or *cyber-phronesis* refer precisely to the ability to do the right thing at the right time, but in the context of the online world (Harrison, 2016, 2021). At the heart of the matter is the ability to think critically and autonomously, but in a context which has certain characteristics of its own such as anonymity, ease of access, lack of physical presence — with what that means in respect of the level of empathy; the user also has the feeling that regulation in the web is much looser than in the physical world. However, the very definition of cyber-wisdom offered by Harrison pre-empts the idea that it is not a question of a new virtue, but rather an adaptation of classic wisdom. In his own words: "I define cyber-wisdom as doing the right thing for the right reasons when online. This is a quality that children can apply in any given situation" (2021, p. xii). From the above, two relevant points arise. The first is that if we delete from the quote the words "when online", we could be perfectly well talking about classic wisdom, inasmuch as we

decide what to do for the right reasons in *different* situations; this gives the digital an adjectivized character, not substantive but complementary, additional to the nuclear and essential, because it refers to the circumstances without changing the content of the virtue. Let's call to mind Aristotle's definition when he described it as the ability to determine with certain precision "what is just, noble and good for man" (1143b, 20-25), whereas for Pieper "the meaning of prudence is to find the right means to those ends and to determine the course of action, in conformity with the here and now of these fundamental dispositions" (2020, p. 84), Here we have the second relevant question which refers to a constituent part of the concept of prudence, the ability to be versatile and adapt ourselves to different contexts, and, after considering the setting and characteristics of the new environment — face-to-face, online, hybrid, safe, dangerous, sombre, luminous, rural or urban — express a judgement in accordance with the righteous.

If we go back and look carefully at the definition of critical thinking described in the previous section, we will see that it is in no way inadequate for the digital context and that the principles it establishes are possible conditions and valid and applicable references to articulate a critical and righteous position in respect of virtual environments. Doubtless the circumstances described will be more demanding — which is always the case whenever there is a change — and will call for greater deliberation of the information received and in some cases — for example, in respect of knowledge and use of new information sources — for new competencies. We are referring, rather than to different competencies, to their application, which is to be accompanied by a close examination of the technological context which we have been referring to (and which will include problems which are peculiar to this world, such as cyber-bullying, disinformation, cyber-harassment and sexting, among others). Many of the techniques that are used in education of critical thinking can be applied mutatis mutandis to the digital context. For example, in the same way that moral dilemmas of different types are used in the classroom, some such dilemmas could be included which would demand reflection on the long term consequences of some of our actions on internet. Or in the same way that we compile manuals which guide our behaviour, we could also establish norms for our conduct on internet (*netiquette)*

The root of the question here is that the fundamental objective continues to be the love of wisdom, as Gilson points out when, to express his idea of the erudite, he defines intellectual humility as "scrupulous respect for the truth" (Gilson, 2015; Vid. Ibáñez- Martín, 2021). By its very nature, virtue as a practical and operative concept is linked to determined circumstances and the factors of time and place should be taken into account when measuring its value. As the English usually say: *the proof of the pudding is in the eating!* Its full meaning is acquired in practice, when it is exercised and lived, not simply its theory and description,

which reduces it to a merely theoretical construct, an imaginary ideal lacking the context which gives it shape. Considered in these terms, it becomes flexible and pliable, as we saw in the case of the fireman and the asthma patient. Thus what changes in the digital context is not the virtue but the context itself, as is demonstrated by the fact that the definitions of critical thinking or practical wisdom formulated prior to the watershed moment of the technological revolution are still valid for a virtual environment.

It is, however, appropriate to point out that the virtual environment has contributed to mark up the value of certain virtues against others, or, to put it another way, it has created the conditions in which certain abilities are tested more than others. As the search for reliable information in internet demands greater critical scrutiny, we should also bear in mind that our wider possibilities of action and influence over others gives greater relevance to the virtue of responsibility, as Jonas (1985) showed in the context of the nuclear arms race — a context which is in certain ways parallel to our actions in internet and the social networks. It is also true that the virtual context offers ample space for creativity, along with new media, multimedia production channels and transmedia, which can be especially useful in the training of young people (Scolari, 2019).

At the same time, reflection on the subject of virtues in the technological context reveals links between certain features of character which need to be reinforced. Indeed, the strengthening of critical thought would seem to call for a parallel strengthening of the virtue of fortitude, which will enable users to withstand the pressure exerted by the social networks and to resist and to persist in the face of well- or ill-founded criticism. The protection of privacy is another of the most relevant and disputed challenges that the social networks pose to character education; the exposure which the network invites and the numerous examples of youthful exposure we are witnessing today seems to question the value of the private and the personal, the lines which separate different social environments and even the sense of corporeality and its inseparable connotations in the human mind.

4. Conclusions

The need to respond to a new and confusing environment, which amazes us and unsettles our given mental structures with its continued novelty and increased possibilities of action, the desire to accept the promise of a more comfortable life and a more efficient, more efficacious and more modern education in spite of the fear of emerging threats or of not rising to the challenges of the times and of wasting advantageous new resources or not acting responsibly in the face of an extraordinary technological force — all these factors cannot leave us, as it were, dazed and numb, and driven to irreflectively embrace the dazzling wonder of a new reality as if no other alternative were possible. We feel moved to create new languages which place us in an unprecedented milieu in

which we try to come to grips with phenomena with which classical structures and categories of thought seems to be insufficient and which elude our traditional logic. However, precisely at times of uncertainty and confusion, when everything appears to be changing like the river of Heraclitus, it is necessary to put to the test the pillars which support our conception of the world and not forsake them at the drop of a hat; we must maintain the hope that what remains will to some extent respond to the new challenges. Let us remember the words of Peter Kreeft in reference to practical wisdom:

> Moral rules and ideals are not designed for the good times but for the bad times (…) They are like the laws of the State: they are most needed not when people are good but when they are bad, to protect people against evil (Kreeft 1993, p. 20).

The different facets of human life which have been challenged by technology are in no way trivial and there is little doubt that both philosophers and theoreticians of education should be on the alert in respect of the virtues necessary to achieve the fullness of human life in a new and predominantly hybrid context. In spite of this, a close analysis would seem to indicate that character education founded on neo-Aristotelian principles has the necessary resources to deal with the ethical and teaching challenges posed by the virtual environments. The ethics of virtue are founded on the perfective potential of the human person, and while these have not been modified by the new context, they need to be adapted to take into account certain particular circumstances; it will also be necessary to reappraise virtues which have acquired a new importance and even to associate them with others in order to reinforce the integral dimension of character in all its complexity.

Note

[1] Destiny is against me, in health and in virtue, thrusting and hobbling, always enslaving. At this hour, without delay, may the vibrant strings be played; since destiny defeats the strongest, who weeps with me for such villainy. Fortune is now against me in health and virtue; but with loves and failings I still forge ahead. At this unaccustomed hour, feel the pulse of my heart, which thankfully beats yet stronger and mourn you all with me.

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Authors' biographies

Juan Luis Fuentes holds a PhD with European Mention and Extraordinary Prize from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Associate Professor of the Department of Education Studies and Vice-Dean of International Relations at the Faculty of Education (UCM). His lines of research include character education, social education and the use of technology from an ethical-civic viewpoint.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4326-3324

Jorge Valero Berzosa graduated in Law and Humanities at the Universidad Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona. He holds a Master in Cultural Criticism from Universidad Carlos III and a Master in Character Education from Universidad Internacional de La Rioja (UNIR). He has devoted a large part of his career to secondary and high school teaching. His lines of research are character training and the development of virtue ethics, especially through literature.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3301-7776

Friendship and character education: A systematic review

Amistad y educación del carácter: una revisión sistemática

Zaida ESPINOSA ZÁRATE, PhD. Associate Professor. Universidad Loyola Andalucía *(zespinosa@uloyola.es).*
Josu AHEDO RUIZ, PhD. Associate Professor. Universidad Internacional de La Rioja *(josu.ahedo@unir.net)*
Miguel RUMAYOR, PhD. Associate Professor. Universidad Panamericana *(mrumayor@up.edu.mx).*

Abstract:

This paper presents a systematic review of scientific articles on friendship and character education (CE) published between 2007 and 2021. It seeks to identify the dominant theories from which CE is approached, how friendship is understood in the studies, and what specific relationship is built between friendship and character; in other words, the extent to which it is posited that friendship can be harnessed to acquire virtues. Results indicate a prevalence of a psychological approach to CE, linked to an instrumentalist perspective on friendship, which associates it with certain benefits. However, this approach is closely followed by a philosophical–moral view that understands friendship as a good in itself and, consequently, highlights its humanizing potential. The Aristotelian framework for understanding friendship and character stands out within this approach. The relationship between friendship and character in the selected articles is explored through 5 categories that emerged in the analysis: 1) friendship for character; 2) character for friendship; 3) friendship and transgressions; 4) teachers' and students' perceptions of the influence of friendship; and 5) analysis of programmes that include friendship in the curriculum.

Keywords: friendship, character education, systematic review, moral education, virtue, character strengths.

Resumen:

Este trabajo presenta una revisión sistemática de artículos científicos publicados entre 2007 y 2021 sobre la amistad en relación con la educación del carácter (EC) con

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el objetivo de identificar cuáles son las *perspectivas teóricas* predominantes desde las que se aborda esta cuestión, cómo se comprende en los trabajos la *amistad* y cuál es la *relación* concreta que se establece entre esta y el carácter, es decir, en qué medida se entiende que la amistad puede servir para desarrollar virtudes. Los resultados apuntan a un predominio del enfoque psicológico en la manera de abordar la EC, ligado a una perspectiva instrumentalista de la amistad que la asocia a determinados beneficios, pero no alejado de otro enfoque, filosófico-moral, que comprende la amistad como un bien en sí mismo para la vida y, en consecuencia, pone de relieve su potencial humanizador. Dentro de este enfoque sobresale el recurso al marco de comprensión aristotélico. La relación entre amistad-carácter en los artículos seleccionados se explora a través de 5 categorías que emergieron en el análisis: 1) el carácter para la amistad; 2) la amistad para el carácter; 3) amistad y transgresiones; 4) percepciones del profesorado/alumnado sobre la influencia de la amistad, y 5) análisis de programas en los que la amistad aparece como contenido educativo.

Descriptores: amistad, educación del carácter, revisión sistemática, educación moral, virtud, fortalezas del carácter.

1. Introduction

Rooted in the sphere of personal intimacy, character is formed in the company of others, especially in the relationship with the person's *significant* others. As Taylor (2016) observes, the genesis of the mind is not a monologic process; instead, people's identities — and, consequently, their ways of being — are always defined through dialogue. In this dialogue, which sometimes includes disagreement and struggle, people's characters are mutually shaped. Friends find one another through this dialogue, like two intimacies open to being saturated, in Ortega y Gasset's terms, where each one comes forward with its circumstances and its own self (Rumayor, 2015).

From *care* in attachment relationships — an outpouring of love that is given, without which the person cannot be herself (Cabada, 1994) — to *friendship*, which makes life bearable and worth living (Aristotle, ca. 350 B.C.E./1985), *the others are a condition of possibility for the self*. This means that the singularity and originality of the person, who is capable of novelty and personal initiatives, emerge in the relationship with others, as one's own voice only makes sense in communication with them. In other words, the person's original contribution is devised precisely in their company and arises from those relationships. Without the scaffolding that the others provide, the person's capacity for manifestation is very limited. On this basis, singularity and sociability are not in conflict, but instead are inseparable moments of personhood.

Therefore, rather than enjoying the autonomy of a self-sufficient subject, we are

affected by a radical heteronomy. This involves not only being "bound by responsibilities" (Ortega, 2013, p. 413) towards the others, but also that our personal possibilities of understanding, loving and doing are, though not limited, really affected by those with whom we interact, which make up our particular origin (Arendt, 2013). This open or porous human nature is what makes the person capable of resonance, like a musical instrument (Rosa, 2019), in a distinctively singular way, in contrast to the impoverishing shielding of a buffered self. Character is developed *with* others — in their company — and *through* others — with their scaffolding — and this even also sometimes happens *for* them. Therefore, "*the longing for relation is primary*" (Buber, 1970, p. 78).

This openness of human nature does not just display a dimension of lack nor only expresses human insufficiency or the need for others to make survival possible, as a reductionist biological explanation might claim (Carr, 2018). Instead, the capacity to "overcome separation" (Fromm, 2014, p. 27) and generate humanising relationships reveals the wealth provided by the possibility of perfecting oneself creatively from others, engendering shared projects that are not in one or other of the individuals that promote them, but "between" them (Buber, 2018), and which are connected to the respective individual projects in such a way that they are not limited to respecting them, but they also foster them, taking them beyond themselves.

Plato (2015) expresses this duality of human relationships — their merely instrumental or utilitarian dimension and their finalistic dimension, when they are understood as goods in themselves — in his representation of love in the *Symposium*, where love is, paradoxically, depicted at the same time as being a kind of wealth and as a kind of poverty. Aristotle (ca. 350 B.C.E./1985) notes something similar when distinguishing between different types of friendship (for pleasure, for utility, and of character), depending on which dimension, instrumental or moral, is prioritised in them based on the purpose for which they are conceived. For Aristotle, only friendship that is built on virtue can be called true friendship.

Within this framework, analysing the quality of the relationships that individuals are capable of generating serves as a good criterion for measuring the vigour of their societies and, consequently, also their malaises. In Buber's terms, it is the "sphere of between" that needs to be examined since this is precisely what distinguishes human beings from other realities.

This article focuses on friendship relationships from the theoretical framework of humanism, which sees them as a type of interpersonal relationship that expresses the *dialogic* human essence. As a relationship that seeks to be authentic — based on seeking the good for the other for its own sake —, friendship represents a way to enhance the person's character and so advance in the flourishing of societies, overcoming the failure of the political and social projects of individualism

and liberalism, as well as different kinds of modern collectivisms.

While there is a *civic* meaning of friendship (*philia politike*), whereby all human beings can recognise one another as equals as they belong to the same family (Nussbaum, 2014), thus achieving a solid base for civic coexistence that goes beyond the paradigm of *suspicion*, this article refers to friendship in the sphere of private interpersonal relationships. It focuses on them after acknowledging their importance for life — as a result of: (a) the frequency of the interaction between friends; (b) the intimacy of the links established and, consequently, their intense emotional charge, and (c) the prevalence of them throughout life —, which makes them an especially fertile terrain for CE, in line with recent research (Kristjánsson, 2022).

Through the review of literature about friendship that we carry out, we intend to examine how they can contribute to personal growth and, therefore, what dynamics must be activated to increase the *quantity* of humanising friendships and their *vigour/quality/depth*, measured in terms of their educational potential.

Therefore, the objective of this study is to perform a systematic review (SR) of scientific articles published between 2007 and 2021 on friendship in its relationship with CE. The choice of the last 15 years has to do with analysing how character education has been understood after Lawrence Kohlberg's death, who ruled out the possibility of character education, as he did not believe in virtue as an end of moral education. In other words, the present article aims to analyse whether the selected works understand that friendship has the potential to educate the different dimensions of character, with the purpose of examining their findings and revealing similarities and differences between them. The specific objectives that were pursued are:

1. To identify scientific documents that: consider friendship in its educational potential, specifically, as contributing to CE, understanding friendship as an interpersonal relationship and not in a civic or political sense, and CE as an approach to moral education that aims at cultivating all the person's capacities which are necessary to act as human beings, increasing positive freedom. These capacities can be classified into the four dimensions of intellectual, performative, moral and civic character (Shields, 2011).

2. To provide a general description of the articles and their methodological approach: their publication date, the universities or research centres of origin, the method used (theoretical, quantitative, qualitative, mixed or intervention proposal not implemented yet), as well as the populations studied.

3. To analyse critically their results, the theoretical perspectives from which they are carried out and their limitations, thus identifying future lines of re-

search. This includes collating the most significant findings of the studies about how friendship can contribute to character development, as well as analysing the theoretical frameworks from which character and friendship are understood, pointing to their possible limitations.

2. Method

An SR is a rigorous method for critically analysing the results of previously selected primary studies, regardless of their methods, to integrate their conclusions with the aim of revealing similarities and differences so that these can inform decision-making (Higgins & Thomas, 2021). This contribution specifically considers the theoretical orientation and the conclusions reached in each article as terrain from which to advance in the practice of CE. The analysis of the documents includes studying how the theoretical perspectives of each piece of research might have influenced its findings, In other words, it seeks to identify the theory from which the results are reached and its assumptions, which allow — and limit — the understanding of the topic. Synthesising their results makes it possible to reveal gaps and future lines of research.

2.1. Steps in the study

Step 1. PICO question: The research questions that guided this SR were structured in line with the PICO methodology (Patient–Intervention–Comparison–Outcome):

1. What are the *theoretical perspectives* from which CE, and friendship as a path towards it, is tackled? As a consequence of this, (i) how is character understood? and (ii) which particular dimension of it is brought into focus?

2. How is *friendship* understood? Is there a qualitative classification or distinction of various types of it?

3. What is the specific *relationship* established between friendship and character? To what extent is it understood that friendship can help develop virtues?

Step 2. Inclusion/exclusion criteria: The requirements for selecting the works were: (a) empirical or theoretical articles, (b) written in Spanish/English, (c) published in scientific journals indexed in the Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, or Dialnet databases, (d) between 2007 and 2021, (e) which deal with the question of friendship, and (f) relate it to CE.

The exclusion criteria left aside: (a) studies not related to education, (b) studies that did not have an explicit focus on improving character, and (c) studies that did not explicitly consider friendship as a *means* for educating some of the human faculties, even though they dealt with friendship in other regards.

Step 3. Literature review: The descriptors used in the search for documents were "friendship" combined with "character education" and "moral education". We consulted four databases: SCOPUS, Web of Science, ERIC and Dialnet (Graph 1).

GRAPH 1. Search strings.

SCOPUS	WoS
(TOPIC("friendship") AND TOPIC (character education)) AND PUBYEAR > 2007 AND PUBYEAR < 2021-06-01 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE,"ar")) This same search chain is repeated for the following descriptors: FRIENDSHIP (TOPIC) + MORAL EDUCATION (TOPIC) Each of the two searches was filtered by "Education & Educational Research" as area of research and by language (English or Spanish).	(TITLE-ABS-KEY("friendship") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("character education")) AND PUBYEAR > 2007 AND PUBYEAR < 2022 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE,"ar")) This same search chain is repeated for the following descriptors: FRIENDSHIP (TITLE) + MORAL EDUCATION (TITLE-ABS-KEY) AND PUBYEAR > 2007 AND PUBYEAR < 2022 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE,"ar")) Then, in each of these two searches, articles in English and Spanish were selected in "Language".
DIALNET	**ERIC**
(friendship) AND (character education) AND PUBYEAR > 2007 AND PUBYEAR < 2009 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE,"ar"), Subject "Psychology and education" This same search chain is repeated for the following descriptors and for the 2010–2020 and 2020–2029 time ranges: FRIENDSHIP + MORAL EDUCATION Each of these searches was filtered by language, including articles in Spanish and English	(Any field("friendship") AND any field (character education)) AND PUBYEAR > 2007 AND PUBYEAR < 2021-06-01 AND (LIMIT-TO (Evaluated by experts) This same search chain is repeated for the following descriptors: FRIENDSHIP (Any field) + MORAL EDUCATION (Any field)

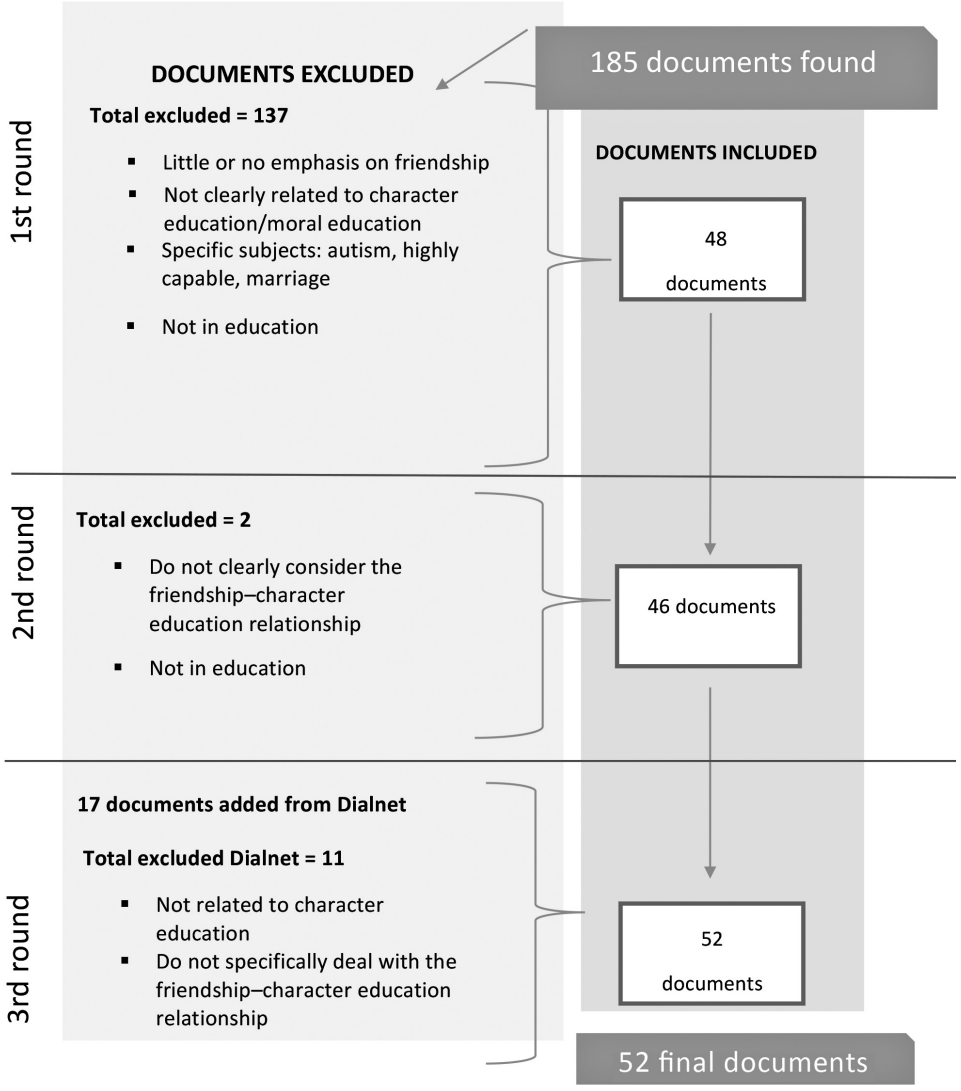
Source: Own elaboration.

Step 4. Review process: Steps and flow chart. For the literature review process, we prepared a manual for coding the studies (title of the publication, objectives, CE theory from which it is devised, dimension of character proposed, definition of friendship and typology, conclusions reached about the friendship–character relationship, methodological design, and population studied), which provided common criteria for their analysis. During the process, special attention was paid to explaining in detail why the studies should or should not be included in the research, and this was reviewed and discussed within the group.

Graph 2 shows the review process and its steps, fulfilling the PRISMA

criteria (Page et al., 2021). From a total of 185 documents found in the first round, which did not include the Dialnet database, 137 were excluded, leaving 48 documents to be read. In the second round, another 2 were excluded, and so 46 texts were reviewed, and, in the third and final round, the relevant documents from Dialnet were added. Of the 17 documents found in this database, 11 were ruled out, and so the final sample comprised 52 documents.

GRAPH 2. Flow chart.



Source: Own elaboration.

Step 5. System for coding and synthesis of results: The 52 documents were analysed using a coding system comprising: (1) extrinsic variables relating to the

year of publication and the universities from which they originated; (2) methodological variables relating to the research methods and study populations; and (3) substantive variables relating to the conceptualisation of friendship, theoretical frameworks used, and conclusions about the educational potential of friendship.

We performed a quantitative, descriptive analysis of the extrinsic and methodological variables (frequencies and percentages), and analysed the substantive variables following Flick (2018) and Gibbs (2018). The process involved identifying "units of meaning", that is to say, patterns of ideas or similar themes to group those studies that shared similar meanings, giving a list of emerging categories. Through triangulation between the researchers, these were adjusted through repeated comparisons and reflection throughout the process.

3. Results

The results are presented in three blocks. (1) Following a *general* and *methodological description* of the studies, we considered (2) their *theoretical perspectives* and, consequently (2.1) how they understand character, what dimension of it they consider and the interests from which they propose its cultivation, as well as (2.2) the conceptualisation of friendship used in them. This analysis enables a meta-theory of the question analysed. (3) Thirdly, the *findings* of the research regarding the *friendship–character relationship* are considered, that is to say, the ways in which they report that friendship can contribute to the formation of character. We present this last point according to emerging categories taken from the analysis.

3.1. General and methodological description of the studies

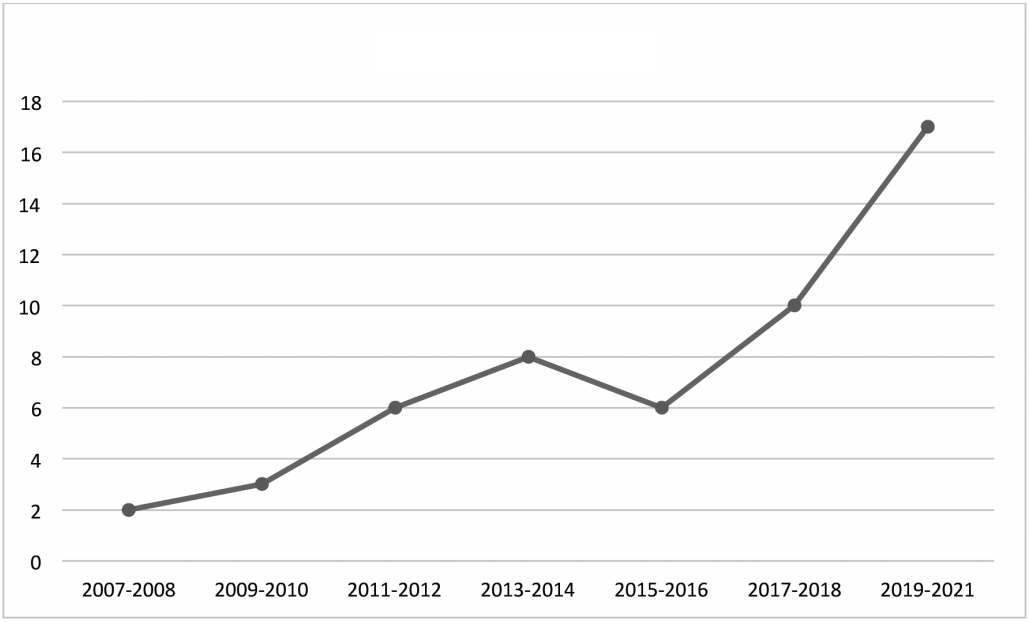
A total of 51.92% of the works are from the 2017-2021 period, with 2020 being the year with the most publications. No works from 2007 met the inclusion criteria and only one from 2008 did (Graph 3).

Universities from the USA (30.776%), UK (21.15%), Turkey (17.31%), and Spain (9.61%) were involved in in the studies. Switzerland (5.77%) and Germany (3.85%) had fewer works. The Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland, Italy, Croatia and, outside Europe, Canada, Australia, India, the Philippines, and Japan contributed one work each (1.92%).

With regards to the methodological designs of the 52 works, 17 are theoretical (3, 4, 10, 21, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 35, 37, 38, 39, 44, 51, 52), 14 use quantitative methodologies (1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 22, 24, 28, 29, 32, 36, 46); another 14, qualitative 5, 6, 7, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 40, 42, 45, 47, 48, 49) and 4 mixed (33, 34, 41, 43). There is one literature review (8) and two intervention proposals (15, 50) (Graph 4).

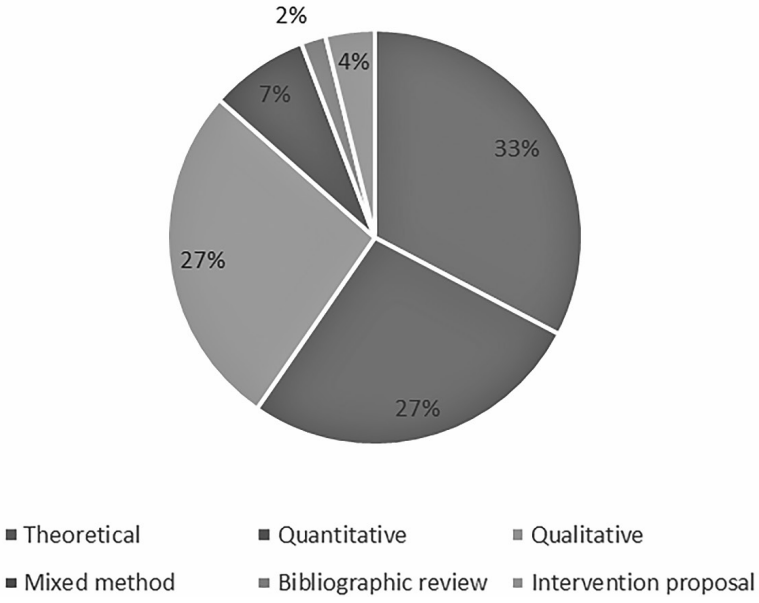
In relation to the populations studied, 17.31% of the studies refer to *early-years* pupils, 30.77% consider the primary stage, 32.69% secondary, and only 5.77% analyse friendship in university students, although 32.69% do not focus on one specific stage. Some works refer to two stages simultaneously (e.g., primary and secondary: 11, 13, 14, 17, 33, 36), with the aim of comparing the effect of friendship in different ages.

GRAPH 3. Years of publication.



Source: Own elaboration.

GRAPH 4. Methodological designs.



Source: Own elaboration.

3.2. Theoretical perspectives of the studies

Of the works, 50% have a psychological focus, 36.54% have a moral focus, and 13.46% include both perspectives.

Within the *psychological* focus, various theoretical references can be seen: 42.31% (1, 14, 17, 18, 19, 23, 31, 36, 45, 47, 50) start from the theoretical framework of *socio-emotional learning*; 19.23% (2, 6, 9, 12, 43) are based on *positive psychology* when analysing the effect of the possession of certain character strengths on acceptance by peers, number of friendships, and quality of friendships. Works 6, 33, 40, 46 take as their reference point *communities of care* (Noddings, 2010) and 13 is based on *Piaget's* conceptualisation of morality as something that the child learns in everyday interactions with peers. Works 13, 16, 20, 27, 29, 42, 50 relate to *social learning theory*, in which people learn from one another (learning by observation, imitation, and modelling). Study 50 applies this, from the perspective of social education to attitudes towards disability, which "are learned, expressed, and modified in social contexts" (p. 43), so that cultivating friendship among those who are different appears as the highest level of their integration.

Within the *philosophical-moral* focus, present in 36.54% of the studies, a large number of studies explicitly refer to Aristotle (3, 4, 10, 26, 37, 38, 39, 44, 49, 51, 52). The rest (5, 15, 16, 48, 21, 22, 30, 32), albeit from other approaches, also take an interest in the question of moral good, which entails a normative and not just descriptive scope.

The character dimension that is considered most is the *moral* one (23 works consider it: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 26, 29, 30, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 45, 49, 51, 52), although the *civic* aspect is also present in 15 studies that refer to different types of transgressions (bullying — 1, 11, 36, 45, 47, 17, 18; exclusion — 13, 42, 50; lack of academic honesty — 16,41; and intrapersonal — 7). Some take an interest in the *emotional* dimension (2, 9, 14, 33, 34, 36, 43, 46), but only three of them refer to *intellectual* character (4, 9, 10).

A notion of character can be observed in the works that regards it as something that mediates behaviour, formed by a set of features that give people a stable predisposition to act in a given way, and it is understood that these can be cultivated to improve a type of behaviour. Nonetheless, study 7 has a *situationist* vision, in which how people act is determined by the circumstances in which they find themselves. With regard to this vision, the results of study 1 show, in relation to bullying, how character remains across contexts, and that there is an association between traditional bullying and cyberbullying. In other words, people carry their roles as bully/assistant/defender from the real world to the virtual world.

In relation to the conceptualisation of friendship, it is must be underlined

that friendship in itself is the central topic of interest in only 48.08% of the research works (3, 4, 9, 11, 13, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 28, 29, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 44, 49, 51, 52), while in the remaining 51.92% it appears in a derived way or emerges as a variable that contributes to certain behaviours. Many studies take its definition for granted, using the term in its everyday or intuitive sense. Most of the works (67.31%) do not differentiate between distinct types of friendship — compared with the 32.69% that do (1, 3, 4, 9, 16, 21, 22, 26, 35, 38, 39, 42, 43, 45, 49, 51, 52) —, although in the wake of their conclusions it can be inferred that there are relevant qualitative differences for their educational purpose.

Two perspectives on friendship can be distinguished: a dominant *instrumentalist* one relating to the psychological focus, in 61.54% of the works, which consider friendship to be a factor that *protects* against certain behaviours and promotes integration or, on the contrary, as a *risk* factor that can lead the individual to lose herself, to feel "*out of character*" (7, p. 133); and a *finalistic* perspective (32.69%), which, beyond the utility that friendship produces (for well-being, non-violence, etc.), understands it as a good in itself, and is more frequent in the ethical focus (3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 16, 21, 26, 33, 35, 38, 39, 44, 46, 49, 51, 52). No article expresses an *aesthetic* comprehension directed to self-discovery and self-recognition of one's own authenticity through the friend as an *alter ego*, which results in a certain similarity of styles, although three articles do mention this (3, 37, 49).

In addition to the articles that follow the Aristotelian perspective of friendship characterised by reciprocal good will (e.g., 3, 4, 49), ones that detail the *six functions* that friendship can fulfil stand out in particular. (9): intimacy, stimulating company, help, partnership of trust, self-validation, and emotional security; and the link of this to five character features (15): "Seeks goodness for themselves, seeks goodness in the other, does a good deed for the other, chooses companions of good character, and helps the other to do the right thing" (15, p. 62). Study 21 mentions three necessary conditions for friendship: "Shared activities, the passions of friendship, and acknowledgement of the fulfilment of the first two conditions, constituting an acknowledgement of and consent to the special relationship" (p. 3).

3.3. The friendship-character relationship: emergent categories

The results from the analysis of this relationship are structured around five emergent categories. Table 1 shows the categories, subcategories, and inductive coding.

1. Character for friendship (9, 12, 19, 25, 32, 37, 39, 46, 49): this includes the works that analyse *the influence of one's character on friendship relationships*. In other words, ones that show *how having certain character traits is necessary/expedient in order to have (more and better) friendship relations*.

TABLE 1. Inductive coding categories and subcategories.

Categories	Subcategories	Codes
Character for friendship (character→friendship)	Character suitable for making friendships	Acceptance by peers
		Character strengths relevant for friendship
	Quantity of friendships	Number of friends
	Quality of friendships	Friendship functions fulfilled
		Satisfaction with the relationship
		Intimacy of the friendship
		Depth of the friendship
Friendship for character (friendship→character)	Nature/essence of the friendship	Purpose of the friendship
		Meaning of the friendship
		Motives of the friendship
	Improving character	Acquisition of virtues
		Perfecting
		Humanisation
Transgressions and friendship	Bullying	Friendship as a protective factor against victimisation
		Risk factors for bullying linked to friendship
	Discrimination on grounds of race/disability	Intergroup friendship as a protective factor
		Character traits that reduce exclusion
	Interpersonal transgressions	Friendship as a motivator of intrapersonal transgressions
	Academic dishonesty	Friendship and lack of academic integrity
Teacher and student perceptions of the influence of friendship on character	Teacher perceptions	The influence of friendship on the well-being of the students
		Friendship for the moral development of students
		The influence of friendship on the character strengths of the students and teachers
	Student perceptions	Positive valuation
		Relationship with social behaviour
Analysis of programmes	Literature for character education	Friendship between people
		Identification of character profiles
	Socio-emotional competence through cultivation of friendship	Reduction in emotional and behavioural problems
		Academic Performance
	Homeschooling	Friendships of homeschooled children

Source: Own elaboration.

Study 9 presents how character strengths influence *acceptance* in the peer group, the *quantity* of friends, and the *quality* of friendships (measured in terms of friendship functions fulfilled and satisfaction with the relationship). Study 49 reports what a group of German early-years and primary children most valued in their friends, namely being virtuous, when operationalising the definition of friendship during play: a friend is someone you can "best play with" (p. 354) (does not cheat, is not a bad loser, does not give false promises of play, does not fail to claim potential victories, etc.). So, friendship is at risk when there is a lack of virtue, when "one of the two partners has not (yet) attained a moral plane that would allow for a symmetrical ethical exchange to occur" (pp. 358-359). In other words, "friendship only thrives within an ethical framework" (p. 361), so that friendship is virtue or requires virtue, in correspondence with the Aristotelian explanation of the most perfect sense of it.

2. Friendship for character (3, 4, 10, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 33, 34, 35, 38, 43, 44, 48, 51, 52): the 16 works included in this category consider the influence of friendships on improving character and enquire into the *primarily or fundamentally* educational nature of friendship, that is to say, its *de jure* educational character, even though it is *de facto* also associated with other motives. Therefore, its meaning or purpose for the process of development of the person is analysed.

Studies 3 and 4, taking a neo-Aristotelian line, argue that while various classes of friendship can be distinguished, the most perfect one is the educational type, in other words, that which happens between individuals who, through it, become better, more capable of understanding and acting: the perfect friendship is "knowledge-enhancing, virtue-enhancing, and life-enhancing in general terms" (3, p. 135). Therefore, it is established that its nature or essence lies in this educational capacity, which thus emerges as a criterion for valuing the appropriateness of continuing with certain friendships or ending them.

From different interests, but with the same underlying idea, study 21 considers academic friendship, that is to say, friendship between university teachers, as a source of humanisation in the workplace that makes it possible to connect and not dissociate the personal and the professional, , inasmuch as friendship has to do with human flourishing.

3. Transgressions and friendship: this category contains the 15 studies that analyse the influence of friendships on various types of transgressive behaviour. Among these, bullying stands out (1, 11, 17, 18, 36, 45, 47), as does exclusion of people who are different based on race (13, 42) or disability (50). Two studies (16, 41) cover the relationship between friendship-academic dishonesty, and the influence of friendship on interpersonal transgressions (7).

4. Teacher/student perceptions of the influence of friendship (2, 5, 6, 20, 28): Pieces of research that examine teachers'

perceptions of the influence of friendship on different aspects of character are grouped here: specifically, perceptions of student well-being (1), of the moral dimension of character (5), and of some character strengths (love, kindness, and forgiveness) (6). Works 20 and 28 analyse students' perceptions.

5. Analysis of programmes: this includes the works that analyse the effectiveness of programmes, didactic proposals, or educational options that consider friendship.

Works 15, 50, and 30 all turn to literature to improve character. To do so, they identify friendship between people: study 15, through the Able Minds programme in a prison setting, with *The Lord of the Rings*; study 50 offers a literature-based intervention proposal for the inclusion of disabled students.

Study 14 provides the first empirical evaluation of the KooLKids SEL programme applied to 854 Australian children, which, among its content, considers friendship. Study 8 evaluates the socialisation of *homeschooled children*, including their capacity for friendship, to determine whether the different dimensions of character are well cultivated through this educational option.

4. Discussion

The dates of publication of the works display a clear growth in interest in the educational sense of friendship, which is notably concentrated in English-speaking countries, with the USA and UK leading in number of publications. Turkey is in third place, followed by Spain. This concentration of studies in English-speaking countries does not necessarily reflect a special interest in this question in this geographic area but could be because more is published in these countries. Nevertheless, it has to be underlined that the revival of CE since the 1990s has from centres in the USA, and that the centres with the longest history in this field are in this area, whose model is spreading to and being imitated in other regions.

Regarding the methodologies used, there is no clear preference for quantitative or qualitative methods, but the fact that 32.69% of the works are theoretical does stand out as it reflects an interest in exploring the foundations of friendship as a means of character education. From this effort to lay foundations, we can expect that the number of empirical works will increase in the next few years. The samples used show that secondary school is the stage that attracts the most attention, which is consistent with the special importance of friendship in this developmental stage.

Regarding *theoretical perspectives*, while the psychological perspective is predominant, the distance from the philosophical-moral focus is not relevant, indicating an interest in a humanistic model of learning (Regmi, 2015), as well as in normative questions that provide the foundations and assumptions of the psychological perspective.

The notion of character as mediating in behaviour is in line with the Aristotelian understanding of character as a second nature, which, while able to change, is stable and predisposes people to act in a certain way. Only one study (7) expresses a *situationist* vision that is somewhat sceptical of character, in which people's actions are determined by their different contexts.

The emphasis on the moral dimension of character is perceived in the works is in line with the "moral turn" we have seen in the field of education (Ibáñez-Martín, 2015), which is evident in the explicit commitment to transcultural core values (6; Brooks et al., 2019; Bernal et al., 2015; McGrath, 2015) which, far from being cultivated through indoctrination and mechanical, routine, or acritical habituation (4) as a way of acting according to the values of tradition to perpetuate its structures (Hurtado, 2013), are debated with the learner as necessary character traits to create a desirable society.

Moral character education is ambitious when these values are based on their intrinsic worth, and not just how they benefit coexistence in a liberal society — something that does not happen in many studies, as mentioned below — because it discusses the *ends* for which living is worthwhile and, therefore, it is related to *wisdom* in the Aristotelian sense: it is a *wisdom-centred education* which, as study 10 notes, is "born from love" (p. 96). That is to say, it has love as a principle in both senses of the term: as a material cause and as the final cause, and it *formally* consists of a cultivation of the inwardness or arrangement of the loves that form the character.

In effect, from the loving guidance and care that teachers provide (material cause), which naturally occurs in friendship and is essential for the success of CE, educational action involves directing the feelings to the love that forms their foundation, which is love of good (formal cause), and for that purpose, as positive psychology notes, all human beings have (efficient cause) inner assets or positive character traits they can build on to develop their potential. This education that aspires to wisdom is loving in the ultimate sense, as a *final* cause, because it is unitive: it sets out to coordinate those who are distinct, contrasting with the division that pride brings. But, like friendship, "it does not involve uniformity of opinions, but … harmony of hearts that are awake" (Panikkar, 1993, p. 325). In this sense, like friendship and love in any of their forms, we could say that education enraptures: it takes one outside oneself and is manifested as practice of vital openness.

Affection and care are specific components of friendship relationships, in other words, their presence in them is taken for granted (as study 6 notes, friendship is translated into behaviours that evince the character strengths of love and kindness), and so they are an especially fertile terrain for CE, since, as Berkovitz and Bier indicate (2017), people learn more effectively from people with whom they feel requited and emotionally linked. If, for this reason, it is recommended that school should be an extension of the family on the basis of

the school's great capacity for moral influence (2; Berkowitz, 2005), we can with even more reason deduce the character forming potential of friendships, whose closeness to the individual is greater than that of the school.

Despite the attention that the moral dimension of character receives, references to "good" character in many studies have a significant limitation as, rather than referring to strictly moral content, they refer to well-being and the capacity to display functional behaviour in society. For example, study 14 pursues the development of competences that are "essential for becoming a good student, a good citizen, and a good worker" through an SEL programme (14, p. 2). But what supposedly makes the student/citizen/worker "good" is not explained here, that is to say, its content remains hidden. Furthermore, this is not explained but rather it is taken for granted, as is the capacity to function effectively in society, with health and well-being and without violence.

Although even the studies that focus most on the subjective well-being of the individual, like 2, recognise that this is incomplete if objective elements (eudaimonic) relating to the realisation of certain types of acts are not included, the focus on well-being, mental health, and non-violence monopolises the interest of many of the works that link these, instrumentally, with certain effects (improved academic performance, life expectancy, productivity, fewer behavioural problems, etc.).

Study 9 also understands that being a "good" friend involves having certain character strengths, but here "good" does not have a moral sense. Instead, *with regard to others*, it is related to providing them with well-being or satisfaction and, *with regard to oneself* with obtaining results that are desirable or useful in life (being liked/being accepted and having well-being). Therefore, the goodness of friendship seems to be limited to its benefits.

This does not just happen with character that is regarded as good, but also with the notion of friendship used: fewer studies consider the intrinsic value or the good for the self or internal good of friendship in relation to its contribution to the growth of the person, beyond the external goods with which it is associated (3).

This perspective in which friendships start and end following the logic of the *homo economicus* appears explicitly in study 11, which presents an understanding of it based on cost–benefit — "participants choose their friendship ties and behaviours based on calculations of individual costs and benefits" (p. 2097) —, and also in 16, when referring to friends for academic benefits, or in 50 and 13, when referring to their benefits for the integration of people who are different. However, this utilitarian approach contradicts the results that these same studies achieve, which emphasise the humanising. and hence inherently valuable, sense of friendship, revealing the limitation of the theoretical framework that is explicitly assumed.

According to study 10, the educational potential of friendship occurs on the basis of *action* in which the friends join one another. That is to say, the root of friendship is in something one *does*, not something one *has* (feelings, company, etc.), and so, in a fundamental sense, it is necessary for friends to seek the same. As a result, friendship links people in action, and its *dynamic* character, which other research underlines (3, 11), can be discerned here.

Regarding their typology, only a third of the works make it explicit that *not all friendships are equal*, although, in many that do not do so, a qualitative distinction is apparent as they refer to a variety of functions that friends fulfil, which in some cases refer to concrete benefits that can be obtained from them. For example, study 1 links the qualities of a friend to her capacity to prevent victimisation; 13 and 50 relate certain features of friendship to reduced exclusion.

With regards to the emerging categories, we can highlight the following:

Regarding the first category relating to the contribution of "character for friendship", some studies (e.g. 9, 49) investigate what the ideal friend is like, what is valued in her, and what is the relationship of certain character traits with the satisfaction of friendship and the functions that the friend fulfils (to determine how particular character traits "serve" better than others to fulfil certain characteristic functions of the friend — entertaining company, intimacy, trust, etc.).

Nonetheless, the centre of interest of these works is not "the role that friends and friendships might play in the development and co-development of character strengths" (9, p. 35), that is to say, how one's own character is improved *with* friends and *thanks* to them, in other words, *between* them, even though it is precisely here that the CE that the friendship is capable of ("friendship for character") comes into play.

Therefore, the studies in the first category only give clues about what the *conditions for friendship* are, in other words, what character traits it is useful to have to be accepted and to have a large number of quality friends, but there are no indications about how *in* it — in the dynamic relationship of friends — character develops mutually in the "zone of proximal development" (3, p. 136) in which each person can grow precisely thanks to the company and action of the other, that is to say, through the scaffolding that this provides.

While studies 3, 4, 8, 9, 49 refer to this, none of them pause to analyse *how this happens and what strategies can be adopted to favour personal growth among friends*, just as — from the other side of the coin — only studies 8 and 6 make suggestions on how to promote the relationship while individuals develop personally and so that they do it. In Buber's words (2018), how the "sphere of between" is cultivated once it has been generated. Kristjánsson, in study 4, gives clues to the central component for it being *dialogue*, and the title of study 49 also indicates this ("Often the lack of conversation has

ended a friendship"). In other words, what happens in relations of friendship that have the effect of helping their subjects improve their character is a *process of discernment, of accompanied intellectual enquiry* through which friends "become partners in the ongoing task of talking their own half-formed evaluative commitments into a full-fledged and determinate stance in the world" (4, p. 345), having adjusted their perspectives from the contributions of the other to make them more suitable, truer. In this dialogic process, the individual takes the step from mere habit or acritical routine of virtue to full virtue, that is, reasoned, when judging the behaviour in which the person has been initiated in her upbringing (4). This distancing of oneself from the education one has received occurs naturally in the context of friendship, when leaving the house and encountering ways of living that differ from one's own, that is, in the relationship with those who are *others*, but who, owing to friendship, become others-like-me, coming to recognise one another mutually.

From this framework, it is necessary to enquire into how this dialogue between friends can be promoted and accompanied to develop their character and, therefore, what educational strategies can be used with this aim. For example, studies 13 and 50, when confirming that certain friendships — intergroup ones — contribute to improving moral sensitivity, they ask *how this happens, what specific dynamics in the interpersonal relationship favour it* and they express the need for more research to explore these mechanisms.

Like study 4, studies 8 and 6 offer some indications about how the appropriate conditions for establishing positive relations of friendship are created. They note that the quality/depth of the friendship is promoted when a context of support, love, security, and care is offered that is characterised by personalisation, as happens in the family. Regarding homeschooled children, study 8 notes that they have better social competence ("they apparently have higher quality relationships both with close friends and with parents and other adults" (pp. 8-9) and that they scored "significantly higher than public school children on feelings of closeness to best friends" (p. 7) because their parents adapt experiences of socialisation to their individual personalities and needs in a way that is not possible in conventional schools, and these conditions of personalisation and support favour their capacity to establish quality friendships. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the strengths of love and kindness in teachers (6) so that when they model them, they create a school culture of care and relations of secure attachment that make it possible for children also to develop these strengths and, consequently, friendship.

Friendship is presented differently in the articles grouped under the heading of "friendship and transgressions". On the one hand, when considering bullying or discrimination, friendship appears as a *factor of protection* against victimisation. On the other, "feeling unpopular and being friendless appeared as risk factors for (cyber)victimisation" (1, p. 347). Furthermore, friendships have a positive influence

on character when they display certain characteristics: when they are intergroup (13, 50), moral character is improved (a higher sense of the perception of the badness of exclusion is achieved as is a more notable use of moral reasoning) as is their socio-cognitive dimension (reduction in prejudice, greater personal security, and more social satisfaction) (50); exclusion on grounds of disability is reduced when they display certain character features (capacity and will to defend the other, reciprocity in a relationship of trust, and popularity). In contrast, other articles present friendship as a motive that can contribute to transgression (intrapersonal — 7 —, or academically dishonest behaviour — 16 —).

In any case, these studies start from a common idea: that *friends have a powerful capacity for influence*, which intensifies in early adolescence. This occurs in both a positive and a negative sense: friends have a potential to transform the capacity to act as they socialise and promote certain actions, and so they play a fundamental role in the development of the character.

Nonetheless, *this influence is modulated* by: (a) certain moral characteristics of the person (the greater the moral disconnection, the greater the influence of friendships); (b) age (it is more marked in early adolescence than in childhood, given the external pressure to conform to the norms of the group, based on the need for acceptance and belonging – 1, 11); and (c) the qualities of the friend (50, 13, 26).

Therefore, the benefits that friendship can provide to CE *do not always occur*: age matters and, evidently, so do the traits of the friend, which it is necessary to learn to discriminate. As Aristotle observes, the humanising character of friendship depends on the type of friends one has, and so people must be taught to cultivate friendships with this in mind, especially in adolescence, something that is missing in the moral training of secondary-school students, which is currently limited to preventing risk behaviour.

Friends' capacity for influence explains how, over time, people *become accustomed* to each other (11, 13), as they mutually encourage one another towards certain forms of behaviour, thinking, and feeling, which come to be reinforced. Number 11 corroborates this hypothesis — from the mutual assimilation of friends in its one-year longitudinal study — and this happens more among young adolescents (aged 11-14) than children (aged 9-10).

Not only do we come to resemble our friends over time, but we also initially *choose those who display a certain "similarity in values, cognitive style and social skills"* (13, p. 64). That is to say, *people associate with people who are like them* and then mutually reinforce one another. In the case of bullying, "*young adolescents were more likely to form new friendships with peers who were similar in bullying*" (11, p. 2099). And, regarding racist attitudes, "*excluding students associate with other excluding students*" (13, p. 55). This agrees with the Aristotelian vision (ca. 350 B.C.E./1985), in which friendship develops between people who are equal in virtue.

Taking this into account, intervention programmes should not just be directed at the individual, but should consider *friendship networks, groups, and their dynamics* (13, 11) to examine what behaviours are socialised, are approved by the group and become normative, and affect the norms of the group. Study 16 refers to the importance of the culture (*ethos*) of the communities and the need to modify it as one of the keys to educating character, in line with the proposal of Berkowitz and Bier (2005, p.10) of a "*caring community*" or "ethical learning community" (Davidson et al., 2008, p. 382).

In the fourth category, regarding teachers' and students' perceptions of the importance of friendship, there are discrepancies between the articles. On the one hand, study 10 and the teachers from study 5 see it as a value at risk that must be revitalised when faced with an atmosphere of mistrust of the other that generates violence as a defence system, as well as faced with the individualism that, according to the authors, is fostered from the family.

However, study 2 underlines how neither teachers nor families placed high value on the importance of friendship for the well-being of the children, faced with the actual perspective of them. This disparity between the perspective of children and that of adults, and between the teachers themselves in different studies, shows that the educational capacity of peers has been underestimated.

The analysis of the programmes grouped in the fifth category allow us to conclude, firstly, that the representation of relations of friendship through narrations has a great inspiring potential (15, 50), even in a context such as prison. Furthermore, the identification of "character profiles" helps to detect the thought mechanisms used for making good/bad decisions.

And secondly, it is not easy to promote friendship, as no difference was found in prosocial behaviour detected following the implementation of the KooLKids SEL programme, despite it having a module focussed on friendship (14). The clues that study 8 provides point to the need to personalise the experiences of socialisation to adapt them to individual needs from a context of support and care.

5. Conclusions

The literature review carried out here shows that, of the 52 documents found that analyse the relationship between friendship and character relationship, only 48.08% focus on friendship as the central topic, contrasting with the other articles, which consider it in a derivative way. This lack of articles is especially striking in the context of educational research, given the recognised impact of friendship on adolescence in particular, but also the considerable value attributed to it in any stage of development.

The psychological-instrumental focus on friendship is predominant in

the documents analysed. However, this is not far from the philosophical-moral perspective that appears in many works based around the Aristotelian framework. The results achieved show that, while the influence of friendship on character is recognised under certain conditions, to which special attention is paid in relation to different types of transgressions, the specific mechanisms through which this influence operates and, in consequence, the educational dynamics that would have to be generated to multiply their positive effects are not known. Therefore, this SR identifies a future area for research into educational strategies aimed at strengthening relationships of friendship since these are a chance, an opportunity — like a gift — to become a better person.

Annex 1. List of the 52 primary documents.

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Authors' biographies

Zaida Espinosa Zarate has a Doctorate in philosophy from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. She has been a Visiting Professor at the University of Oxford (2022), and is the author of the book *Percepción, pensamiento y lenguaje. El realismo radical de Reinhardt Grossman y el realismo moderado de Fernando Inciarte [Perception, thought and language: The radical realism of Reinhardt Grossman and the moderate realism of Fernando Inciarte]*. Her most recent articles include "Problem-Based Service Learning (PB-SL): Constructing a pedagogy of poverty based on Ignacio Ellacuría" (*Educational Philos-*

ophy and Theory, 2022). Her research is in the fields of ethics and character education.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5217-2731

Josu Ahedo. Licentiate degree in Philosophy, Political Science, and Law. Communication graduate. Doctor of Philosophy. He was a secondary education and baccalaureate Teacher for 16 years. He has been an Associate Professor at the UNIR since 2011. He is Director of the Master's in Teaching Methods in Personalised Education and Coordinator of the Master's in Character Education and Emotional Education. He is Director of the El quehacer educativo en acción (Educational work in action) research group (EDUCACCION).

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2480-5423

Miguel Rumayor is a researcher at the Universidad Panamericana (Guadalajara, Mexico) and Associate Professor of Theory and History of Education at the Universidad Villanueva (Madrid, Spain). Two six-year research periods recognised by CNEAI (Spain's national research activity assessment council). Visiting Scholar at Oxford, Notre Dame University, Catholic University, Duquesne University. His most recent work is *Vida académica y formación personal: la universidad hoy a la luz del pensamiento de John Henry Newman [Academic life and personal formation: The university today in light of the thought of John Henry Newman]* (Eunsa, 2021).

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0450-4842

Identifying practices to promote character development in university residential settings: The case of Colegios Mayores*

Identificación de prácticas para promover el desarrollo del carácter en contextos residenciales universitarios: el caso de los Colegios Mayores

Juan P. DABDOUB, PhD. Lecturer. University of Navarra *(jdabdoub@unav.es).*

Aitor R. SALAVERRÍA. Predoctoral fellow. University of Navarra *(caracter@unav.es).*

Marvin W. BERKOWITZ. Co Director of the Center for Character & Citizenship. University of Missouri-St. Louis *(berkowitz@umsl.edu).*

Abstract:

In recent years, several initiatives have attempted to integrate character education in universities. However, it is difficult at the university level to find initiatives aimed at generating communities in which their climate or culture contribute to character development, a relatively common approach at the school level in the character education movement. University residential centers may be an ideal setting for generating such communities. However, studies, guides, or programs along these lines are scarce or nonexistent. A case worthy of study is that of Colegios Mayores, university residential communities in Spain with a centuries-old tradition that aim to contribute to the integral development of students. However, the literature on the educational dimension of this institution is also scarce and outdated. Contributing to outline its educational dimension, this study reports the results of a survey of directors of Colegios Mayores. The aims of this study are to: 1) explore whether the community of Colegios Mayores agrees in considering six practices as characteristic of this institution;

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2) explore the level of implementation of each one of them; and 3) explore if the way in which the community members are involved in these practices responds to the social learning model of Communities of Practice proposed by Etienne Wenger. The questionnaire was answered by 19 directors, representing 15.2% of the population (N=125). Based on the results, it is reasonable to affirm that most directors of Colegios Mayores: 1) consider that the six practices proposed are characteristic of this institution; 2) already implement these practices in their centers; and 3) consider that the Communities of Practice model reflects the way in which the collegial community engages in these practices.

Keywords: Character development, Colegios Mayores, Communities of Practice, character education, residence halls, higher education, university.

Resumen:

En los últimos años, diversas iniciativas están intentando integrar la educación del carácter en el ámbito universitario. Sin embargo, es difícil encontrar a nivel universitario iniciativas dirigidas a generar comunidades en las que el clima o la cultura contribuyan al desarrollo del carácter, un enfoque relativamente frecuente a nivel escolar en el movimiento de educación del carácter. Los centros residenciales universitarios pueden ser un ámbito idóneo para generar este tipo de comunidades. No obstante, los estudios, guías, o programas orientados en esta línea son escasos o inexistentes. Un caso digno de estudio es el de los Colegios Mayores, comunidades universitarias residenciales en España de tradición multisecular que pretenden contribuir al desarrollo integral de los estudiantes universitarios. Sin embargo, la literatura que desarrolla la dimensión educativa de esta institución también es escasa y está desactualizada. Con el propósito de contribuir a perfilar su dimensión educativa, esta investigación aplica un cuestionario a directores de Colegios Mayores para: 1) explorar si la comunidad de Colegios Mayores está de acuerdo en considerar seis prácticas como propias de esta institución; 2) conocer el nivel de implementación de cada una de ellas; y 3) explorar si el modo en que la comunidad colegial se involucra en estas prácticas responde al modelo de Comunidades de Práctica propuesto por Etienne Wenger. El cuestionario fue respondido por 19 directores, representando al 15.2 % de la población (N=125). Partiendo de los resultados, es razonable afirmar que la mayoría de los directores de Colegios Mayores: 1) considera que las seis prácticas propuestas son propias de esta institución; 2) ya implementa estas prácticas en sus centros; y 3) considera que el modelo de Comunidades de Práctica refleja el modo en que la comunidad colegial se involucra en estas prácticas.

Descriptores: desarrollo del carácter, Colegios Mayores, Comunidades de Práctica, educación del carácter, residencias universitarias, educación superior, universidad.

1. Introduction

The world is changing rapidly. For many institutions, this is a context that generates diverse crises for which they have not been able to prepare. Institutions and their leaders need to rediscover their missions in a new and dynamic context and adapt their means in a strategic and intentional way to fulfill those missions.

This phenomenon is undoubtedly present in the educational field. Society demands from educational centers people capable of understanding and acting in today's world. It is becoming increasingly clear that the type of development demanded of children and young people does not consist solely in the acquisition of knowledge, skills or competencies, or in reaching certain levels of emotional balance. This is a lot, but it is not enough to meet the great challenges of our society, especially when we need citizens with a strong moral compass who are committed to the common good (Bok, 2020). Responding to this need, the character education movement has promoted the integration of the moral dimension into educational systems with a renewed emphasis over the past three decades (Bernal et al., 2015; Dabdoub, 2021; Dabdoub et al., 2020).

This movement focused on character development is beginning to be received at the university level. For years, various initiatives have been promoted to contribute to the character development of college students, such as mentoring, great books programs, service-learning, or leadership programs, among others (Brooks et al., 2019; Lleó et al., 2018; Lorenzo et al., 2019; Torralba, 2022). However, it is difficult to find at the university level initiatives aimed at generating communities in which climate or culture contribute to character development, a relatively common approach at the school level in the character education movement (Berger, 2003; Berkowitz, 2021; Elbot & Fulton, 2007; Lickona, 2004; Novick et al., 2002).

An ideal setting for generating such communities is residential centers that house university students. Their construction has become a particularly lucrative business internationally since 2020 (Kim, 2022). Building on the theory and experience generated at the school level, these residential contexts can be designed to generate communities that contribute to the character development of all their members. However, studies, guidelines, or programs along these lines are scarce or nonexistent, although there are several international associations that group together university residential centers that emphasize the development of their students. These include Collegiate Way International (2022), the European University College Association (2022), and the Residential College Society (2022).

In this reflection on how to generate this type of community, a case worthy of study is that of *Colegios Mayores*, residential university communities in Spain with a centuries-old tradition that aims to contribute to the integral development of university students (Carabias, 2013). In many ways, they can be considered as the Spanish version of the European colleges (de Lario, 2019). We believe that lessons can be learned from the experience of this institution to inspire those who wish to create communities that contribute to character development at the university level. However, the literature that develops the educational dimension of this institution is also scarce and outdated (Lascaris, 1952; Oliva, 2010; Suárez, 1966).

Recently, Dabdoub, Salaverría, Berkowitz, and Naval (2022) have conducted a prelim-

inary study in which they identify: 1) six essential features of the nature of Colegios Mayores; 2) their educational mission; 3) six practices characteristic of this institution; and 4) the way in which the collegiate community engages in these practices.

The features of the nature of the Colegios Mayores and their educational mission have been easily identified in the current legislation, in the statutes of the Colegios Mayores and in the documents published by the *Consejo de Colegios Mayores Universitarios de España,* the association to which all these centers belong. The essential features of their nature are: 1) non-profit centers of higher education; 2) necessarily integrated into a university; 3) providing non-formal education; 4) to a diverse range of students; 5) belonging to a value-driven community; 6) in a residential context (Dabdoub, Salaverría, Berkowitz, & Naval, 2022). In the case of the mission, the study refers to the Salamanca Statement (Consejo de Colegios Mayores Universitarios de España, 2018, pp. 135-136) written and signed by all the Colegios Mayores in Spain. Based on this two-page-long text, the following mission statement can be constructed. An emphasis on character development is clearly detected:

> To strengthen the civic spirit of students, promoting values such as freedom, participation, equality, solidarity, coexistence, responsibility, tolerance and democracy with a critical and respectful attitude, fostering their commitment to society and instilling an open and constructive attitude towards the great challenges of the future.

Unfortunately, the particular practices of this institution and the way in which the collegiate community is involved in them has not been codified or delineated. Therefore, such as model has been proposed by the authors based on their professional experience leading Colegios Mayores, and there are no official documents or studies to contrast what they propose (Dabdoub, Salaverría, Berkowitz, & Naval, 2022; Oliva, 2010). Knowing and defining these elements is necessary to study how these communities can be intentionally and strategically designed to generate a culture or climate that positively impacts character development in Colegios Mayores. In addition, this study focused on Colegios Mayores can also inspire how non-residential university contexts can be designed to promote character development.

For these reasons, a study is needed to conduct an initial exploration to see whether the community of Colegios Mayores in Spain recognizes these practices and the way in which the collegiate community is involved in them as something of its own.

2. Objectives

This research has three main objectives. The first is to explore whether there is agreement in the community of Colegios Mayores on the six practices that Dabdoub, Salaverría, Berkowitz, and Naval (2022) identify as characteristic of this institution. The second objective is to find out the level of implementation of each of these practices. Third, this study aims to explore whether the way in which the collegial community engages in these practices responds to the Communities of Practice model (Hoadley, 2012; Wenger, 1999).

Exploring which are the practices of Colegios Mayores, their level of implementation and the way in which the collegiate community engages in them contributes to make explicit the educational dimension of this institution. This opens the door to subsequent projects in which this experience can be shared and further deepens how these practices and the way in which students engage in them contribute to generate a type of community in which the climate or culture contributes to character development.

3. Method

To respond to the objectives of this study, a questionnaire was designed and administered online to directors of Colegios Mayores, following the guidelines of Regmi et al. (2016) and Ball (2019) for its design and application, and Grimshaw's guide (2014) to present the results.

The questionnaire was prepared by the authors with the advice of five experts on the subject, one from Spain and four international experts. It was distributed and applied using *Google Forms*. It has 46 items distributed in five sections: 1) profile of the director; 2) profile of the Colegio Mayor; 3) identification of common practices and their level of implementation; 4) Communities of Practice; and 5) comments. The estimated response time was 15 minutes. It was distributed and answered between May 10 and August 10, 2022.

The target population of the questionnaire is composed of directors of Colegios Mayores. It is difficult to determine the exact number of Colegios Mayores in Spain. Each year the number varies due to closures and new openings. The Council of University Colleges of Spain speaks of 125 centers. Being a small number in relative terms, we tried to send the questionnaire to the entire population. After an arduous review, e-mails were obtained from 116 centers (92.8% of the estimated population).

The questionnaire was sent to each of these centers by means of a personalized e-mail addressed to each director. The body of the message requested their collaboration by answering the questionnaire and invited them to consult additional information on the web page of the research project in which this study is integrated (Dabdoub, Salaverría, Berkowitz, Power, et al., 2022). The first mailing was sent on May 10, 2022 and a reminder was sent on May 17. No incentives were given.

Table 1 shows the items corresponding to the six specific practices (I1-I6) identified by Dabdoub, Salaverría, Berkowitz, and Naval (2022), providing a brief description and concrete examples of each: I1. Collaborative governance; I2. Service roles and tasks; I3. Retreats, excursions, trips; I4. Collegial initiatives; I5. Peer mentoring; and I6. *Tertulias*, colloquiums, informal meetings. In each of the items, two questions are answered. The first is directed to the level of implementation of the practice: Do you consider that this practice is implemented in your center? As a response option, you can choose one of four levels of implementation: *Level 1*: Yes, and I consider that it is practiced effectively; *Level 2*: Yes, but I consider that we would have to improve the way we practice it; *Level 3*: No, but we would like

it to be practiced; and *Level 4*: No, and we have no interest in practicing it. The second question is: Do you think that this practice can be considered as characteristic of Colegios Mayores? In this case, you can only choose between two possible answers: yes or no. In addition, in each of these six items there is the opportunity to add comments.

TABLE 1. Description and examples of practices characteristic of Colegios Mayores.

Practice	Description	Example
I1. Collaborative governance	This practice consists of the collegiate members participating in the governance of the Colegio Mayor through leadership and management tasks, processes of consultation and deliberation and/or through decision making, following the mission and values of the community and contributing to its common good.	By way of example: in my college there is a College Council or Assembly that brings together college members to deliberate and make decisions; there are working teams such as deanery commissions, committees, boards or clubs that entail leadership and management responsibilities; there is some kind of democratic process for the election of college members' representatives.
I2. Service roles and tasks	This practice consists of students being assigned a role or a task in which they provide a service to the community or contribute to the care and maintenance of the center's facilities.	By way of example: tidying and cleaning common areas; taking photographs and videos of activities; gardening tasks; creating content for the website or social networks; taking care of electronic equipment; library management.
I3. Retreats, excursions, trips	This practice consists of dedicating a few hours or days to withdraw from the ordinary life of the Colegio Mayor with a group of students to deepen or enhance some aspect of the community, such as its needs, mission or values.	By way of example: these experiences can take the form of an excursion to the mountains, a cultural visit, a professional trip, a work day, a spiritual retreat, a ski plan, a work camp, a study day.
I4. Collegial initiatives	This practice consists of listening to the voice of the students about the initiatives they would like to carry out and offering the necessary institutional support to implement them.	By way of example: the initiative of the students gives rise to social volunteering, conferences, round tables, colloquiums with invited experts, sports tournaments, clubs, activities, artistic experiences, debates, workshops, seminars, celebrations, excursions or cultural trips, among others. Institutional support can be provided in various ways: by creating spaces in which these initiatives are encouraged; by reserving a space in the center or in the University; by offering funding, in the event that the Colegio Mayor allocates a budget item for this purpose; by relying on the support and advice of experienced collegians in the organization and development of the initiatives.

I5. Peer mentoring	This practice consists of facilitating the opportunity for students to establish an advisory/tutoring/mentoring relationship with another student or member of the Colegio Mayor. Essentially, this is a mentoring system between peers who share collegial status, where the mentee can benefit from the advice, experience and support of a more senior mentor.	For example: first-year students are assigned an advisor for academics; for the first few days of the course, there are senior students who spend time explaining how the Colegio Mayor works, introducing them to the community life, introducing them to other students; undergraduates can turn to graduate students or professors who are part of the collegiate community for academic, professional, or personal advice.
I6. *Tertulias*, colloquiums, informal meetings	This practice consists of periodic informal meetings in which a significant part of the Colegio Mayor meets and has a relaxed conversation in a climate of trust and spontaneity.	For example: having a daily informal meeting in which a significant part of the collegial community meets and talks about what has happened that day; inviting a professional to meet with the community in the context of an informal conversation.

Note: The description of the practices and their examples were written by the authors and coincide with the items in the questionnaire.

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2 shows the items corresponding to the seven characteristics of Communities of Practice (I7-I13) identified in Hoadley (2012) and Wenger (1999). Each of the items explains how that characteristic is manifested in the context of Colegios Mayores. Since the model of Communities of Practice is relatively unknown in the community of Colegios Mayores, this part of the questionnaire has a short descriptive text included in Appendix 1. Each of the items in this section answers a single question: do you think this statement adequately describes what happens in Colegios Mayores? There are only two possible answers: yes or no. In addition, each of these seven items offers the opportunity to add comments.

TABLE 2. Characteristics of Communities of Practice in the context of the Colegios Mayores.

Feature	In the context of the Colegios Mayores
	Features extracted from Hoadley (2012)
I7. Access to experts	Students must have access to experts (we can understand that in the Colegio Mayor the experts would be the senior students) and must perceive themselves as members, or aspire to be members, of a community in which the practices of the experts are central to the mission of the community.

I8. Pre-existing culture	In order for students to be introduced to a pre-existing culture by joining a community of practice, it must already exist, with some sort of common history and identity.
I9. Legitimate peripheral participation	In an educational system there must be room for legitimate peripheral participation. This means that individuals who want to join this community can assume these practices gradually, being able to legitimately choose the pace and times they consider convenient.
	Characteristics extracted from Wenger (1999)
I10. Flexible	It is a flexible training modality, in which the is no rigid, fixed, or pre-established program.
I11. Open	It is open because it responds to emerging needs within the community.
I12. Participatory and horizontal	It is participative and horizontal, since its members select the objectives, establish the way of working and support and lead each other.
I13. Self-regulated	It is self-regulating, since its members are the ones who decide how they want to participate, the degree of involvement, and the time of dedication.

Note: The description of the characteristics and their adaptation to the context of the Colegios Mayores were written by the authors and coincide with the items of the questionnaire.

Source: Own elaboration.

4. Results

As noted above, the questionnaire was sent to the directors of 116 centers. Nineteen responses were received. Many institutional e-mails are not regularly monitored in Colegios Mayores. In other cases, those that are monitored do not involve direct communication with the director, which complicates the questionnaire reaching its addressee.

It is also worth noting that it is not common for the directors of Colegios Mayores to dedicate themselves exclusively to this job. In fact, among the participants in the questionnaire, only 20% are dedicated full time. This complicates the real possibilities of them attending this type of collaboration. These reasons, together with the absence of incentives, explain the response rate.

The demographic data of the sample are shown in Table 3.

Regarding the representativeness of the sample, it would have been desirable to have a greater participation of public centers. It may seem that public centers would be underrepresented.

TABLE 3. Demographic data of the sample of Colegios Mayores in Spain.

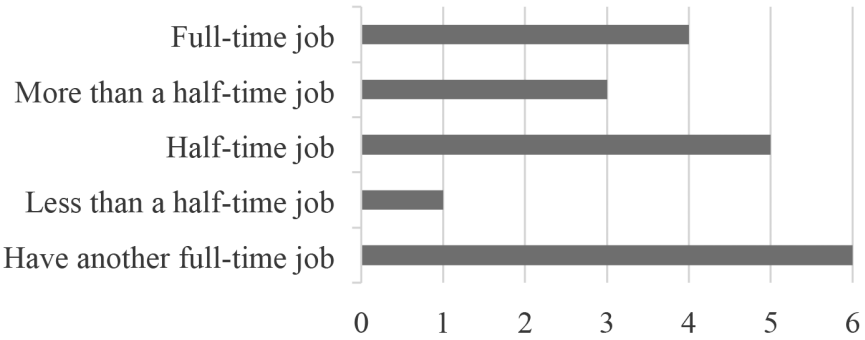
Number of directors (n)	19 (15.2% of the population)
Universities represented	9
Provincial capitals represented	8
Scope	Public (1 | 5.3%), Private (18 | 94.7%)
Diversification by gender	Female (6 | 31.6%), Male (8 | 42.1%), Mixed (5 | 26.3%)
Christian Inspiration	Yes (18 | 94.7%), No (1 | 5.3%)

Source: Own elaboration.

However, if we take as a reference the university with the largest number of Colegios Mayores, the *Universidad Complutense de Madrid*, it turns out that, of its 36 Colegios Mayores, 31 are private (86.1%) and 5 are public (13.9%). The next university with the largest number of Colegios Mayores is the *Universidad de Granada*, which has 12 Colegios Mayores, of which 11 are private (91.6%) and one is public (8.3%). The university with the highest number of Colegios Mayores per student, the Universidad de Navarra, has 11 Colegios Mayores, all of which are private. In short, the proportion of public and private centers in the sample does not differ much from the proportion of the population.

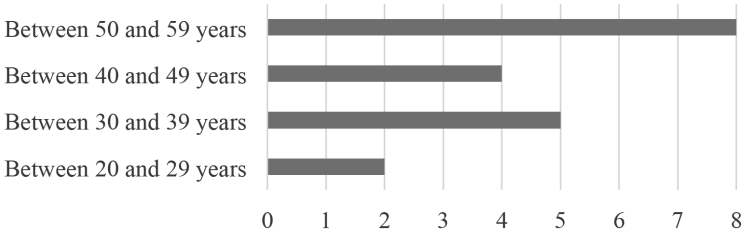
Other demographic data of interest are shown in Graph 1, which presents the dedication of the directors to the direction of the Colegio Mayor, and Graph 2, which presents the age ranges of the directors who responded to the questionnaire. More demographic data were collected, including: the year of foundation, the addresses of the web pages of each Colegio Mayor, the entities or institutions responsible for the management of each center, the residential capacity, and the texts of their missions. These data have not been included because they are not strictly related to the objectives of the article and because their presentation exceeds the permitted length limit.

GRAPH 1. Distribution of directors by dedication to the Colegio Mayor.



Source: Own elaboration.

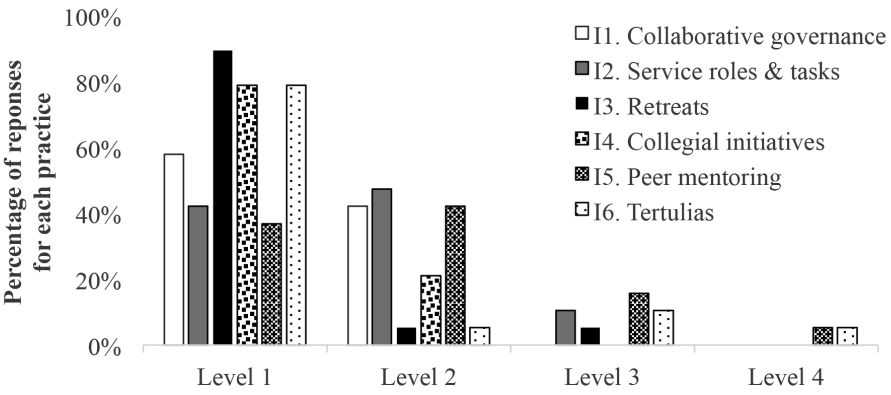
GRAPH 2. Distribution of directors by age range.



Source: Own elaboration.

Graph 3 shows the percentage of responses that place each of the six proposed practices in each of the four levels of implementation. It shows that most directors consider that the six practices are adequately implemented in their schools (Level 1) or that they can improve their implementation (Level 2). It also shows that a small group does not implement four of these practices but is interested in doing so (Level 3). Lastly, only one director considers that peer mentoring and *tertulias* are not implemented in his/her Colegio Mayor and is not interested in integrating them (Level 4).

GRAPH 3. Level of implementation of practices in Colegios Mayores.

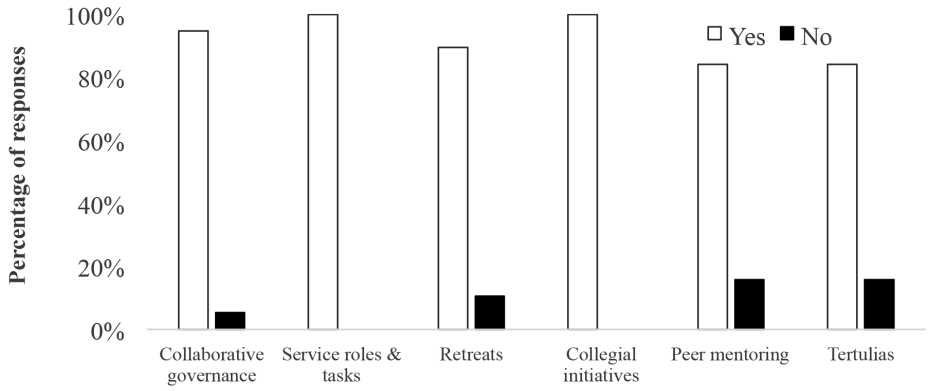


Note: A description of the four levels can be found in the Method section.

Source: Own elaboration.

Graph 4 shows the percentage of responses obtained when asked whether each of the six proposed practices can be considered as specific to or characteristic of Colegios Mayores. It shows that most directors confirm this hypothesis.

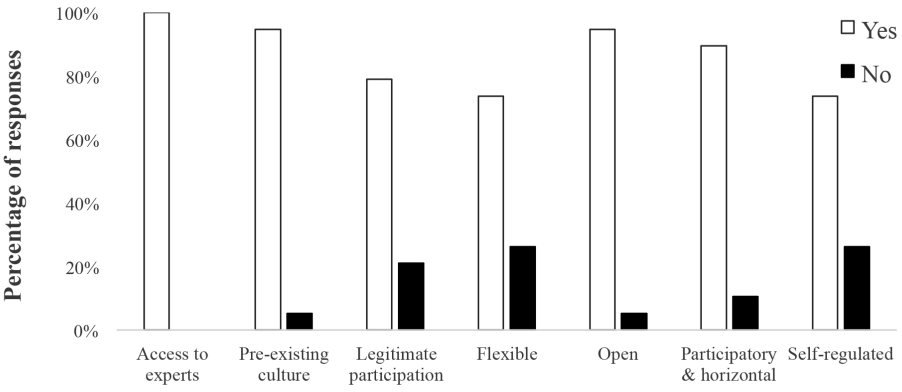
Graph 4. Identification of characteristic practices of Colegios Mayores.



Source: Own elaboration.

Finally, Graph 5 shows the percentage of responses received indicating whether the characteristics of the Communities of Practice represent the way in which students engage in the practices of Colegios Mayores. It shows that the responses of most directors confirm this hypothesis.

Graph 5. Characteristics of Communities of Practice in the context of the Colegios Mayores.



Source: Own elaboration.

In the following, we describe the results obtained for each practice and for each of the characteristics of the Communities of Practice.

I1. Participatory governance (*collaborative governance*)

100% of the directors consider that participatory governance is practiced in their Colegio Mayor. In addition, 57.9% of the directors consider that it is conducted effectively, while 42.1% think that the way in which it is practiced could be improved. Except for one director, the rest consider that it is a practice typical of the Colegios Mayores (94.7%). There were 6 comments on this item. As an example, we show two of them:

- The term "college" refers to the participation of the members in the planning and deliberation of their activities while respecting the values and mission of the Colegio Mayor. It is an excellent way to educate in responsibility.

- They are the protagonists of their own training, and the assumption of responsibilities is a good opportunity for growth and service.

I2. Service roles and tasks

A total of 89.5% of the participants consider that this is an integrated practice in their centers, including both those who consider that it is adequately implemented (42.1%) and those who think that it should be improved (47.4%). The rest (10.5%) consider that this practice should be incorporated. 100% agree that this is a practice typical of the Colegios Mayores. There were 6 comments on this item. By way of example, we show two of them:

- In the same way as participatory governance, even at the same level of importance, committees give concrete expression to the spirit of service that we promote.

- Assuming responsibility also means taking on specific tasks for the benefit of all.

I3. Retreats, excursions, trips

This is the practice that most directors (89.5%) consider to be the most effectively integrated practice in their Colegios Mayores. The 5.3% consider that its implementation could be improved. The remaining 5.3% consider that they do not practice it but think that it would be convenient to incorporate it. There were 6 comments on this item. As an example, we show one of them:

- It is part of the Colegio Mayor to promote an adequate coexistence, for which it is necessary to get to know each other and to carry out responsibilities together. The retreats and excursions encourage a personal relationship outside the strictly academic issues.

I4. Collegial initiatives

100% of the directors consider that their Colegio Mayor encourages initiative by giving a voice to the members of the community and by providing institutional support. The 78.9% say that this is done in an effective way, while 21.1% think that it could be improved. 100% consider that this is a practice typical of the Colegios Mayores. In this section there were 6 comments. By way of example, we show two of them:

- My experience is that the best initiatives that have been conducted in my Colegio Mayor have been proposed by the students.

- It is important that the activities that are carried out come from the initiative of the students, although often it is not clear for them, and sometimes neither for us, which are the appropriate channels to realize them.

I5. Peer-mentoring

The 78.9% consider that peer mentoring is practiced in their College. The 36.8% consider that it is done effectively, while 42.1% think that they should improve the way it is done. The 15% say that there is no peer mentoring being practiced in their Colegio Mayor, but they would be interested in having it. Only one director (5.3%) considers that there is no peer mentoring in his/her Colegio Mayor and has no interest in having it. A total of 84.2% think that this is a practice is characteristic of Colegios Mayores. In this section there were 5 comments. By way of example, we show two of them:

- It is one of the things that the first-year residents appreciate the most and is a valuable help to them.

- The senior students are in charge of accompanying the junior students; this accompaniment is essential in the first year of college life.

I6. *Tertulias*, colloquiums, informal meetings.

The 84.2% consider that this type of gatherings, colloquiums or informal meetings are practiced in their Colegios Mayores. The 78.9% consider that it is done effectively and 5.3% that it should be improved. Two directors (10.5%) affirm that these types of meetings do not take place in their center but would be interested in having them. Only one director (5.3%) considers that this type of meeting does not take place in his Colegio Mayor and would not be interested in it being organized. A total of 84.2% consider that this is a practice characteristic of Colegios Mayores. In this section there were 5 comments. As an example, we show two of them:

- These are the best moments of the day, when they share interests, what has happened during the day and they promote more interaction between them. Inviting professionals to these meetings allows them to broaden their horizons and not just focus on talking about what they are studying.

- It is a good opportunity to learn to listen to each other, to respect each other's turn to speak, to express one's opinions and argue them properly, as well as to get to know each other better.

4.1. Characteristics of the Communities of Practice

The most accepted characteristics are: that it allows access to experts (100%); that there is a pre-existing culture into which one is incorporated (94.7%); that it is open, because it responds to emerging needs within the community (94.7%); and that it is participatory and horizontal (89.5%). Those with a lower acceptance

rate are those that describe these communities as flexible and self-regulated, both with 73.7%. The idea that there can be legitimate peripheral participation is accepted by 78.9% of the directors. In any case, all items have a degree of acceptance above 70%. There were 18 comments in this section. By way of example, we show three of them:

- It is not always easy for the students themselves to choose the pace, nor is it always easy for the direction team to work with different rhythms.

- I think the role of senior students in a broad sense is essential. Not only as professional advisors, but also as inspirers of a lifestyle.

- It is important that they all get involved in the Colegio Mayor, but clearly each one will do it in a different way according to their hobbies, tastes, interests, etc. And it is always gradual, the involvement of the senior residents who have been at the Colegio Mayor for years is fundamental for the success of the project.

5. Discussion

A frequently discussed question is whether Colegios Mayores differ from ordinary university residences in terms of their educational dimension. Considering their nature, mission, practices, and the way in which these practices convey collegial life, it can be affirmed that Colegios Mayores are true educational institutions that are distinguished from a mere accommodation with services. A descriptive analysis of the results invites to affirm that the directors of Colegios Mayores consider that the six practices identified by Dabdoub, Salaverría, Berkowitz and Naval (2022) and the Communities of Practice model reflect the educational *praxis* of this institution.

This is not a minor advance, since having categories to present the way in which Colegios Mayores educate allows a theorization and deepening of this peculiar educational model. It is difficult to find previous studies whose results can be compared and discussed with those found in this one. Surely future similar studies will allow to establish a dialogue that will lead to qualify, correct, or deepen the statements of this research.

The number of participants is not high. However, the specificity of the topic could justify this. Of the 19 participating directors, only one of them belongs to a public center. By no means is this single center considered to represent the public Colegios Mayores. Nevertheless, it is significant that the only public center coincides with what most private centers answered, subscribing the six practices and six of the seven characteristics of Communities of Practice. Moreover, in a sector where most centers are private, it is considered that the representativeness of the sample is not compromised.

In the case of the practices, all of them appear at least once mentioned in the interviews that Oliva (2010) conducted with numerous Colegios Mayores, although at

no time did he attempt to verify whether they were practices that were inherent or essential to the nature of Colegios Mayores. One practice that stands out above all others and gives this institution its most characteristic features is collaborative governance. This practice is in direct resonance with approaches such as the Just Community (Power, 1988), the 11 principles framework (Lickona, 1996) or the PRIMED model (Berkowitz, 2021), which allows us to assume that it has a leading role in positively impacting character development.

It is confirmed that the Communities of Practice model, concretized in the seven characteristics drawn from Hoadley (2012) and Wenger (1999), is widely accepted by the respondents as an accurate way to explain how members of the collegial community are incorporated in the practices of Colegios Mayores. These seven characteristics are implicit in Fernando Suarez's *Teoría del Colegio Mayor* (1966), especially in the chapter entitled "*La convivencia y sus ventajas"* (Community life and its advantages). Although the author uses different words, the essential ideas and concepts are practically the same, so that the results of this study coincide with what Suárez proposed more than half a century ago about the educational nature of Colegios Mayores.

6. Conclusions and final thoughts

The results obtained in the questionnaire suggest the following conclusions. First, the community of Colegios Mayores represented by their directors considers that the six practices identified by Dabdoub, Salaverría, Berkowitz, and Naval (2022) are part of the nature of this institution. Second, that most directors already implement these practices and perceive that they perform them adequately or that they can improve, while a small group does not have some of these practices incorporated but would like to start doing so. Third, most directors believe that the characteristics of the Communities of Practice model accurately describe how students engage in the practices of Colegios Mayores.

This study is a significant advance in the task of describing the educational dimension of Colegios Mayores. It may also help other similar entities that are looking for ways to make explicit the practices they conduct to promote the development of their students and how they implement them. Moreover, it can serve as an example and inspiration for university residential centers that wish to integrate educational purposes into their communities.

A pending study is how these practices should be designed to promote a positive impact on character development. For example, there are directors who exercise collaborative governance in such a way that they are an equal member of the community, acting as experienced consultants, not *enforcing* rules or instilling a particular ideology, but inspiring respect for universal values and principles. In contrast, other directors push through rules and make decisions without reaching agreement with other members of the community, leaving little room for students to make decisions and assume leadership roles. Which of the two approaches con-

tributes more and better to promoting the development of student character?

We believe that the next step in this research line is to inform the design of these practices with the advances that the science of moral and character education has gained over the past decades. Both the PRIMED model for character education (Berkowitz, 2021) and the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education (Lickona, 1996) offer design principles not only for specific practices, but for the design of educational communities, although their proposals are aimed at the school level. Adapting these design principles to university level could help make Colegios Mayores' communities and their practices effective in promoting character development.

One initiative in this line is the research project "Leveraging Colegios Mayores for moral development in higher education through the Just Community approach" (Dabdoub, Salaverría, Berkowitz, Power, et al., 2022). In this project, experts from the Just Community approach to moral development (Power, 1988; Power & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2008) collaborate with experts in residential colleges to elaborate a guide to design collaborative governance practices to promote students' moral development in university settings.

With these studies on the specific case of Colegios Mayores we want to open the reflection on how residential university communities can be designed in such a way that they contribute to the development of character. We hope that they can be one more actor, and a decisive one, in the general effort to make universities places where the integral development of character is favored.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Brief introduction to the model of Communities of Practice in the context of community colleges

We believe that it is difficult to say that students must compulsorily assume the educational practices of a Colegio Mayor. On the other hand, we do not believe that Colegios Mayores are indifferent to their students being involved in these practices that they consider positive for their development. Avoiding obligation and indifference, we believe that there is a better way to explain this reality of Colegios Mayores, in which the individual freedom of each student is compatible with an institutional educational proposal.

One model that can help to understand how students engage in the Practices of Colegios Mayores is Communities of practice. Hoadley (2012) defines it as follows:

> A community of practice is an important theoretical construct that underlies a particular model of learning, namely, learning in which people, through a process of legitimate peripheral participation, take up membership and identity with a community which serves as the home of these shared practices. While knowledge communities can take many forms (communities of interest, knowledge-building communities, Delphi groups, etc.), Communities of

practice typically have a degree of informality (low to moderate institutionalization, making them a community and not an organization), and high connectivity (rather tight social relationships between members of the community, and a relatively high degree of identification with the group). (p. 299)

Another approach is to understand Communities of Practice as a novel learning modality aimed at people who: are interested in continuing to learn; believe that they can contribute their knowledge and skills to their community; know that by working and sharing with others they can learn more, go further, and develop better outcomes; are willing to share with the professional community; believe in the social construction of knowledge and feel they are agents of the development of their profession, that is, of the whole community, and of their own development.

In the context of Colegios Mayores, a Community of Practice can be defined as a space of interaction and mediation in which a group of people with a common mission reflect on the practices that lead to their personal and community goals, supporting each other and collaborating to develop and improve.

The following statements show characteristics of a community of practice that help to differentiate this approach from an ordinary course or training program. Please indicate the extent to which you agree that these characteristics represent the way learning and development take place in the context of Colegios Mayores.

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Authors' biographies

Juan P. Dabdoub is Lecturer at the School of Education and Psychology of the Universidad de Navarra, where he defended his doctoral dissertation in 2019. He is member of the Education, Citizenship, and Character Research Group since 2015, Secretary of the Association of Moral Education since 2021, and founder and co-Director of University Communities for Charcater Development. His lines of research focus on the theory and practice of character education, educational leadership, and the design, implementation, and assessment of interventions that promote character development.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3750-0685

Aitor R. Salaverría is a doctoral student at the School of Education and Psychology of the Universidad de Navarra, where he obtained his M.A. in Globalization and Social Integration Law in 2011. His research focuses on studying how to promote character development in university contexts. He collaborates closely with the Education, Citizenship and Character Research Group since 2019 and is and founder and co-Director of University Communities for Character Development. He has been a Director and consultant of Colegios Mayores since 2011.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9894-2917

Marvin Berkowitz is the first Sanford N. McDonnell Endowed Professor of Character Education and co-Director of the Center for Character & Citizenship at the University of Missouri-St. Louis since 1998. His research focuses on character education, moral development, and educational leadership. He is founder and co-editor of the *Journal of Character Education* and founder of the Center for Addiction and Behavioral Health Research in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4335-6405

The Spanish Colegios Mayores: The pedagogical value of a longstanding institution

Los Colegios Mayores: el valor pedagógico de una institución centenaria

María José IBÁÑEZ AYUSO. Assistant director of the Colegio Mayor Universitario Francisco de Vitoria. Doctoral Student of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid *(mibanez@ucm.es)*.

Abstract:

Every year, almost a third of Spanish university students move to another province to pursue higher education, and many housing options are available to them (halls of residence, shared apartments, student residences, etc.). From a pedagogical standpoint, the question of the formative potential of each of these spaces arises. Since their birth more than six centuries ago, *Colegios Mayores* (a special model of Spanish halls of residence) have contributed significantly to the development of Spanish higher education and to promoting culture. However, there has been little research into these educational institutions, meaning that their great cultural and pedagogical legacy is unknown. The aim of this study is to analyse the educational value of the Colegios Mayores as formative settings where the educational function of the university remains alive. With this purpose, from a hermeneutic-interpretative approach, these centres are analysed from the perspective of both liberal and character education. This work concludes that Colegios Mayores are formative spaces at the forefront of education that offer their students a setting with a profound university experience, where the search for truth, the synthesis of knowledge, the encounter with tradition, and the formation of critical thinking are combined with opportunities for the cultivation of virtue, thus achieving an authentic comprehensive formation.

Keywords: Higher education, moral education, liberal education, hall of residence, humanities.

Resumen:

Cerca de un tercio del alumnado universitario español se traslada anualmente a otras

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provincias para cursar estudios superiores, siendo múltiples las opciones de alojamiento que se les plantean (Colegios Mayores, pisos compartidos, residencias universitarias…). Desde el punto de vista pedagógico cabe preguntarse cuál es el potencial formativo de cada uno de estos espacios. Los Colegios Mayores, desde su nacimiento hace más de seis siglos, han contribuido significativamente al desarrollo de la educación superior española y al impulso de la cultura. Sin embargo, la investigación sobre estas instituciones educativas es escasa, haciendo que se desconozca su gran legado cultural y actualidad pedagógica. El objetivo de este estudio es analizar la importancia de los Colegios Mayores como institución formativa donde permanece viva la función educadora de la universidad. Con esta finalidad, desde un enfoque hermenéutico-interpretativo, se analizan estos centros desde el prisma de la educación liberal y de la educación del carácter. Se concluye que los Colegios Mayores son espacios formativos a la vanguardia educativa, que ofrecen a sus estudiantes un contexto profundamente universitario, en el que la búsqueda de la verdad, la síntesis de saberes, el encuentro con la tradición o la formación del pensamiento crítico se conjugan con numerosas oportunidades para el cultivo de la virtud, lográndose así una auténtica formación integral.

Descriptores: universidad, educación moral, cultura general, Colegio Mayor, humanidades.

1. Introduction

The historical development of universities in Spain cannot be understood without considering educational institutions that have a great cultural legacy and are currently of great pedagogical importance, but which, paradoxically, remain largely unknown: the *Colegios Mayores*. Deeply rooted in the tradition of Spain's universities, these institutions can be found in the genesis of such emblematic universities as Santiago de Compostela and Alcalá de Henares; they played a key role in the foundation of the first universities in Hispanic America, and throughout all of the modern age they have provided people to fill senior positions in Spanish and European society (Eguía, 1957; Lario, 2019). Nonetheless, the university reform undertaken by Charles III and, more specifically, by Pérez Bayer, launched an epoch of decline for these centres, which gradually lost their splendour and importance before being reborn with strength in the 20th century.

Since 1922, Colegios Mayores have been present in educational legislation through provisions of various types, and the Organisation of Spanish Universities Law of 1943, the Organic Colegios Mayores Decree of 1956, the Protection of Colegios Mayores Law of 1959 and, in particular, Decree 2780/1973 regarding the regulation of Colegios Mayores deserve a special mention owing to the importance they place on this institution. This last decree recognised the important pedagogical work that is done in them and listed the nine principal aims of these institutions, all of which are linked to integral formation

(Pérez, 1973). Although Colegios Mayores were still considered in later legislation (Organic Laws 6/2001 and 4/2007), the explanation of their ends and recognition of their pedagogical value was much more limited than in the 1973 decree (Carabias, 2013).

Despite enjoying less legislative protection and popularity than in other times, Colegios Mayores continue to be a very important reality in the panorama of Spain's universities, as shown by the large number of Colegios Mayores in existence (134 in 24 cities); the large number of students that these institutions house each year (nearly 22,000); and the thirty-three universities that have at least one Colegio Mayor (DBK, 2022). In fact, in some universities, the Colegios Mayores are a very notable reality. For example, the Universidad Complutense de Madrid has more than thirty colleges, both integrated into the university and affiliated, and universities such as Navarra and Granada have more than ten. Furthermore, these colleges also have important collaboration networks at both regional and national and international levels for organising joint activities, interchanging good practices, and for institutional representation among which stand out the Asociación de Colegios Mayores de Madrid (Association of Colegios Mayores of Madrid, ACMM), the Consejo de Colegios Mayores Universitarios de España (Council of University Colegios Mayores of Spain, CCMUE), and at a European level, the European University College Association. Similarly, Colegios Mayores contribute actively to invigorating university life, not just for their members, but also with talks, artistic events, and formative activities open to all students.

Although Spain's Colegios Mayores have distinctive traits, similar institutions can be found elsewhere in the European Higher Education Area. This is the case, for example, of some British collegiate halls of residence that still preserve the communal and interdisciplinary experience of the historic institutions of Oxford and Cambridge (Hegarty, 2012) or of certain residential models in Eastern Europe (Mazalu, 2012). The Italian *collegi di merito* deserve a special mention owing to their great similarity and shared history. These centres are very similar to Colegios Mayores in their educational project, but they have greater legislative support, as the Italian government classifies them as bodies that perform an important cultural promotion role. This means that the requirements for centres that aspire to this status and for students who want to obtain a place in these institutions are very demanding (Conferenza Collegi Universitari de Merito, n.d.).

1.1. An unnoticed institution

Although the information above endorses the important historical legacy of these centres and their relevance in the current educational panorama, research into the Colegios Mayores is limited, being principally limited to studying them from a historical perspective. Given the longevity of these institutions, there are so few works that the historian Lario (2019, p. 19) considers that there is a "fast of

vocations" in this line of historical research, a fast that is even more evident from the pedagogical approach to these institutions.

There was more analysis of the formative contribution of these centres in the second third of the 20th century, when many researchers underlined, in articles and books, the pedagogical importance of these institutions for the integral formation of students, establishing multiple parallels with the thought of notable philosophers such as Ortega or Newman, and even suggesting making it obligatory for all university students to reside in these institutions. These works also proposed character education as the aim of these centres, in which a great potential for contributing to the formation of virtuous citizens was apparent (de la Vega, 1948; Eguía, 1957; Eguido, 1977; Lascaris, 1952; Lorenzo, 1958; Martín, 1977; Martínez, 1978; Nieto, 1952; Robles, 1946; Suárez, 1966). However, towards the end of the 20th century, interest in the educational work of these centres declined notably, with the only works we found being those by Ramos (1990), Díez del Río (2003), Pedrosa and Fernández (2007), Calvo (2010), and Cañamero and Domínguez (2014), as well as various publications by the CCMUE, most notably *Los Colegios Mayores en el Espacio Europeo de Educación Superior* (González & Calvo, 2007). Nonetheless, more recently, a number of voices seem again to take note of the pedagogical value of this institution as a space for integral formation (Martín & Jutard, 2019), as a privileged environment for the development of personal and professional competences (Renuncio & González, 2017; Villar, 2018), and especially as an excellent environment for character education and cultivating virtues (Torralba, 2022).

In 2022, this growing interest achieved a new momentum through three events of a university, political, and social nature that reflect recognition of the formative work of the Colegios Mayores from different sectors of society.

2. A renewed interest in Colegios Mayores

On 5 February 2022, the rectors of twenty-four Spanish universities signed the Declaración de Santiago sobre el valor de los Colegios Mayores en el s. XXI (Santiago Declaration on the Value of Colegios Mayores in the 21st Century), expressing their recognition for the intense formative work of the Colegios Mayores. The universities emphasised the importance of these centres as a space for integral formation and underlined the great contribution that Colegios Mayores make to fostering democracy and social justice, by promoting active citizenship in their students (Meneses, 2022).

Secondly, and also in 2022, this support for the figure of the Colegio Mayor can also be seen in the political sphere, in particular in the parliamentary discussion document proposed by the socialist group in the Spanish parliament, in the framework of the University System Organisation Act (Ley de Ordenación del Sistema Universitario [LOSU]), which enjoyed the support of parliamentary groups with very different

political orientations (the Partido Popular on the right and Podemos on the left). All of them, despite their significant ideological differences, agree that Colegios Mayores provide much more than just accommodation, and that, compared with other residential options with exclusively commercial interests, they offer students an authentically university experience, which should be protected by legislation. As the deputy Renau Martínez said:

> A Colegio Mayor is much more than somewhere students live […]. It is a place where one can live and breathe the university; it is a place for intersection, for the intersection of art, debate, science, participation, values and democracy […]. Despite all of the changes that this institution has experienced over the years, over the centuries, there is still an essential element that gives it — and so it should be recognised — a special character. They are part of the university and so should be regulated from this perspective, recognising the fundamental role they play in the formation of thousands of students and the fact that they offer these students additional growth at a personal level through the social and cultural experience that living in them provides. (General Courts, 2022, p. 8)

Finally, in 2022, the prestigious consultancy Deloitte, after analysing more than a hundred Colegios Mayores, published a report that reflected both the distinctive experience that living in these centres provides for students and the extra value that these institutions contribute to society. The use of numerous pieces of quantitative and qualitative data, through which the international and interdisciplinary wealth of the collegiate community was analysed — the broad social, cultural, and sporting offer of these institutions or the generous economic support that they allocate to their students — illustrated the wealth of the formation of the Colegios Mayores (Linares & Muñoz, 2022).

Furthermore, it is no wonder, as we will see, that this defence and recognition of the value of Colegios Mayores also coincides with a renewed interest in liberal education (Hitz, 2020; Torralba, 2022) and character education (Brant et al., 2022; Lamb et al., 2022) in the face of contemporary educational challenges, as these pedagogical approaches achieve their best practical possibilities in places where virtuous ways of living can be promoted.

The aim of this research is to explore the pedagogical value of the Colegios Mayores as spaces where the educational role of the university remains alive. To do so, it considers, through a hermeneutic-interpretative focus, how these institutions generate educational practices typical of liberal education and character education from neo-Aristotelian focuses (Fuentes & Sánchez, 2020) displaying the timeliness and pertinence of these centres in the current educational panorama.

3. Colegios Mayores: a transformative university experience

Rubio (2017) notes that since its birth in the Middle Ages, the university has gradually been transformed in line with changes that have affected the anthropological model. For this reason, at a moment in history like the present one, where the productive

capacity of the person prevails (Han, 2017) and technical skill is deified, it seems logical that there is a strong emphasis on the professionalising aspect of the university. It is no surprise then that universities often invoke concepts such as employability, transfer, internationalisation, agreements with companies, or international rankings to assert their efficacy as symbols of their good work. Nonetheless, the university, as an educational institution should not be concerned so much with efficacy as with fruitfulness. A fruitfulness that is intimately related to the students' capacity for personal transformation (Llano, 2009); it is, precisely, this fruitfulness, this educating mission of higher education in line with the Humboldtian tradition, that many miss when speaking of the university today (Barrio, 2022; Esteban, 2022).

There is no question of the importance of students acquiring in-depth technical knowledge that enables them to practise their future profession, but limiting the experience of university to this goal involves forgetting that the university is tasked with a much higher mission, the task "of 'enlightening' man, of teaching him the full culture of the time, of revealing to him clearly and precisely the gigantic present world, into which his life must fit to be authentic" (Ortega y Gasset, 2007, p. 131). For this reason, it makes sense to say that the greatest legacy that the university offers students, far from being employment opportunities, is time: time to dedicate oneself to the higher aspects of the person, namely self-cultivation through reading, through encountering beauty, considering great questions, or dialogue with others (Esteban & Fuentes, 2020). Ultimately, time not just to ask what a good life is and how to achieve it, but also time to shape a personality that is capable of giving an embodied answer to these questions (Deresiewicz, 2019).

Some time ago, the philosopher Alejandro Llano asked whether it was still possible to live this profound experience of the university in institutions that are drowning in bureaucracy and are focussed on the job market, and he observed that this university experience could still be found in one place: the Colegios Mayores. So, in a lecture with the title "Los Colegios Mayores: universidad vivida" (Colegios Mayores: lived university), he noted that:

> A Colegio Mayor today can offer the students who live in it — or who frequent it — the uncommon possibility to discover that the university is much more than a machine for delivering classes, grading exams, issuing certificates, and launching onto the job market ambitious professionals who lack a sense of solidarity, or simply future unemployed people. The university is a spiritual adventure, a forge for free personalities, a discoverer of the new, a haven for cultured coexistence. (Llano, 2004, p. 3)

For this reason, in the midst of this panorama of higher education losing its way (Esteban, 2022), Colegios Mayores provide a unique setting for a transformative university experience for students.

3.1. A spiritual adventure

Colegios Mayores offer a space for a liberal education where the original essence of the university institution can be found.

Aspects such as the search for the truth, the synthesis of knowledge, or the university community comprise the distinctive ethos of life in a Colegio Mayor, which can be summarised in four main categories: 1) searching for the truth from an open reason; 2) cultured coexistence; 3) encountering tradition and beauty; 4) fostering a critical spirit and active citizenship.

Faced with the fragmentation of knowledge and hyper-specialisation that typify current higher education, Colegios Mayores are a space for the university activity par excellence: the search for the truth. This search is promoted through experiences with the capacity to open students to the big questions. From seminars on love, suffering, friendship, transcendence, or meaning to volunteering that opens students to the encounter with the mystery of vulnerability and suffering. Colegios Mayores not only raise these existential questions but also encourage students to answer them from a reason that transcends scientism, since

> a wisdom that tries to build itself using only empirical reason cannot give a sufficient response to the big existential questions. If we want to study them, it is necessary to turn to that flow of ethical experiences that configures a historical wisdom that critically and at the same time gently embraces a varied set of contributions people have made through all the sources of knowledge that we possess. (Ibáñez-Martín, 2021, p. 40)

This historical wisdom that Ibáñez-Martín refers to can be found, for example, in the important role of the humanities in college activities and which is reflected in the many philosophers, writers, historians, and artists who are invited every year to participate in different talks and symposia in Colegios Mayores. College seminars also stand out, where students can learn about topics as varied as astrophysics, human rights, sustainability, entrepreneurship, and economics, thus opening themselves up to new perspectives from which to consider reality. Similarly, this search for the truth is enriched by the interdisciplinary community in which students are immersed, since, as Llano notes, "Colegios Mayores offer a setting for cultured conversation, which leaves an indelible imprint in the intellect of young scholars" (2004, p. 8).

This cultured coexistence has three essential traits: the importance given to study, the wealth of the university community, and the role of dialogue. Colegios Mayores foster a profound commitment by students to their time at university, as they are often required to achieve a minimum number of credits to be able to stay in the college in successive years. Likewise, these institutions offer a range of seminars and courses to help students confront the challenges of university life, such as time-management workshops or seminars on study techniques or academic writing. Similarly, the wealth of the difference present in the college community plays a fundamental role in this cultured coexistence, both at the level of academic disciplines and at the level of age, geographic origin, or socioeconomic status, thanks to the scholarships that many Colegios Mayores offer. This diversity enriches students by opening up

new perspectives, sciences, cultures, and outlooks on them, generating numerous dialogues and conversations between the students, which, as Newman observed, are of incalculable formative value (Newman, 2014).

Thirdly, Esteban (2022), speaking about the misdirections of university education, identifies a depressing fact: people now can leave university without feeling like they are heirs to anything. Faced with the loss of cultural transmission as the axis of educational activity (Bellamy, 2018), Colegios Mayores remain loyal to their educational mission of fostering the students' encounter with tradition. One of the most notable ways in which this happens is through university ceremonies, which are of great importance in the life of Colegios Mayores. So, while many university students only attend this type of academic activity on the day they graduate, Colegios Mayores place great importance on solemn ceremonies to mark the start and end of the academic year. These acts, which are presided over by academic authorities and where the *Gaudeamus Igitur* is sung, are a profound encounter with university tradition, allowing students to understand that the university is about more than just obtaining a professional qualification, as they join a tradition dating back centuries. Furthermore, in a context that advocates a horizontal educational relationship, these ceremonies make it possible to discover the meaning and dignity of the professor and of academia. In these ceremonies, students also hear lectures with a marked humanistic content. One example is the lecture delivered in the 21-22 end of course at the Colegio Mayor Alcalá, entitled "Cultivar el asombro por la vía de la Belleza" (Cultivating wonder through Beauty) (Bocos, 2022). College scholarships are also very important, and, being awarded in a solemn ceremony, they give a new identity to the people who receive them, conferring greater maturity and wisdom on them, as well as a greater responsibility towards their surroundings. As Sánchez (2019, p. 263) observes, the college scholarship is character building:

> From this assembly room, doctors, jurists, teachers, researchers, and artists will emerge, but above all, people with a different vision of the world around us; with a more daring and more mature way of confronting life's challenges. You will be capable […] of guiding yourselves in your decisions always by the values you have learned and built here: justice, solidarity, perseverance, and, above all, I insist, the search for freedom and truth will become your best letter of presentation.

Similarly, the colleges are a centre of cultural blossoming. Poetry recitals, literary contests, art exhibitions, and courses on great works of literature are activities frequently held in Colegios Mayores and they allow an encounter with cultural tradition. Theatre is especially important. During the 21–22 academic year, the Certamen de Teatro Universitario (University Theatre Contest) organised by the ACMM featured fourteen works, bring students into contact with works by dramatists from different eras such as William Shakespeare, Federico García Lorca, and Enrique Jardiel Poncela (ACMM, 2022). Music, painting, and sculpture also have

an important place in these centres. Many colleges have spaces dedicated to art exhibitions and they promote numerous cultural activities such as visits to museums, exhibitions, and notable places, with many of these activities being accompanied by university professors who teach the students to consider and comprehend the grandeur of what they see. Moreover, Colegios Mayores have encouraged the creation of numerous cultural initiatives within the university setting, among which stands out JOECOM (Young Orchestra of Students and Colegios Mayores). This orchestra, which mainly comprises college members, but also other university students, not only fosters the students' encounter with music, but also enables them to put their talent at the service of others. For example, in February 2022, they put on a benefit concert in Madrid's Auditorio Nacional that raised more than 17,000 euros for the charity Caritas Diocesana (Serrano, 2022).

Finally, the Colegios contribute to the formation of a critical spirit that is the foundation of active citizenship. As well as holding frequent discussions about topical issues and inviting politicians with different positions to participate year after year in symposia, the Colegios Mayores have an area of special importance that shapes the critical spirit of their students: debate.

> We learn to think seriously by participating in serious and truly meaningful discussions, and seeking arguments to defend what we think in contrast with other positions, which might be at odds with ours, but which are supported by well-structured and thoroughly thought-out arguments, which make us rethink ours, polish them, sharpen them, both dialectically and rhetorically. (Barrio, 2022, p. 77)

This activity enables students to question their own beliefs, it obliges them to approach controversial subjects from different perspectives, it fosters their capacity for analysis and argumentation, and it improves their communication skills. Colegios Mayores foster debate at a university level with tournaments open to all students, promoting the profound questioning of very topical subjects every year; for example, the Torneo Nacional de Debate Adolfo Suarez (Adolfo Suarez National Debating Tournament), which in its fifth edition encouraged reflection on the climate emergency with the following question: "Agenda 2030: ¿debe España impulsar más la lucha contra el cambio climático?" (Agenda 2030: should Spain do more to drive the fight against climate change?) (Ecoaula, 2021). Finally, it is important to note that the commitment of Colegios Mayores to fostering active citizenship is intimately linked to the very essence of the university institution and to its mission to contribute to the common good. As well as actively promoting university volunteering through participation in local projects and work camps at the national and international level, social entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly important in these institutions, with frequent seminars being held with notable social entrepreneurs, who through their testimony share the value of committing to social transformation and justice from their professional environment.

3.2. Education for plenitude

Colegios Mayores are true spaces where liberal education and character education are combined (Beltramo, 2020; Kristjánsson, 2015), because the search for truth is joined by the formation of a fundamental element for human plenitude: commitment. "The human being is not born to plenitude, but advances towards it thanks to its capacity to commit to what it finds to be true" (Ibáñez-Martín, 2015, p. 40). Mounier identifies this capacity to commit oneself as the fifth originating act on which the person is founded: "being faithful" (Mounier, 2002, p. 701). The formation of this creative fidelity requires four actions: decentralisation, personal knowledge, self-command, and giving, all of which can be experienced in the day-to-day life of the Colegio Mayor.

Firstly, Colegios Mayores offer a unique space to experience the relational character of the person: we exist with others. This discovery occurs thanks to the fact that, unlike in other types of university accommodation, Colegios Mayores place great importance on communal life. For this reason, they implement many initiatives to strengthen it, from ordinary activities such as eating together, or forming part of a sports team, to other more unusual ones like integration workshops, trips, or excursions, that promote the encounter between the different students. It is this encounter that enables knowledge of oneself, as well as great human experiences that can only be undergone with others, such as welcoming, dedication, forgiveness, love, and gratuity. Similarly, Colegios Mayores offer a unique space to encounter one of the greatest treasures a human being can find: friendship. At the present time, social networks have changed how people relate to each another, creating more numerous but also much more superficial links, and so from the educational sphere it has become necessary to help young people create profound relationships (Sánchez-Rojo & Ahedo, 2020). To do so, not only must places for meeting be created, but also as friendship is a process of allowing the other to inhabit one's own intimacy it is necessary to help students cultivate their interiority. On these lines, many Colegios Mayores have accompaniment programmes or programmes to develop personal competences that offer students these spaces where they can stop, reflect, get to know themselves, and, ultimately, cultivate an inner space.

In this growth through friendship, self-command is equally important, since, as Ahedo and Domingo (2022) note, self-possession is necessary in order to be able to give oneself and, in this regard, Colegios Mayores also offer a space for growth. The strength of arguments is limited when motivating a person to action, and so it is necessary to promote training that also involves the will and affectivity from an integrating perspective, and so it is highly edifying to promote the cultivation of the virtues. Colegios Mayores "offer the ideal setting for a type of community to emerge where virtues are learned and exercised" (Torralba, 2022, p. 116), for example the virtue of temperance. Compared with the family home, where control by parents usually moderates aspects such as

food, schedules, or use of technological devices, students in the college must learn to take responsibility for these aspects themselves, deferring immediate gratification in favour of higher value goals. Both peer mentoring by students from higher years for newly enrolled students as well as the college rules, which, freely assumed, help students manage their newly acquired independence, thus also discovering the role of the limits of freedom, are of great help in doing this (Reyero & Gil Cantero, 2019). Similarly, perseverance, responsibility, and sacrifice are also areas of growth that easily emerge in Colegios Mayores owing to the many opportunities they offer students for teamwork, through sporting or intellectual activities, which often require self-surrender and commitment to others.

In parallel, these institutions also boost the discovery of the donal being of humans, given the important role that service plays in the college community. From the start of their university journey, students are encouraged to assume responsibilities in the life of the Colegio Mayor gradually. So, little by little, the students start to participate in committees that invigorate the life of the Colegio, organising activities for their companions, or leading college activities (clubs, programmes of discussions, integration workshops, etc.), thus discovering in everyday life the joy of giving. Student deans deserve special mention. These are figures that have been present since the very origins of these institutions (Eguía, 1957). The deans are final-year students who take on responsibility for overseeing the life of the Colegio and representing their institution in different university settings, providing a model for their companions and giving their time in a disinterested way so that others can enjoy the college experience that has been bequeathed to them; thus, generating a testament of dedication, which has a deep importance among their fellow students.

This dedication, so common in the day-to-day life of the Colegio Mayor, is of great pedagogical value, because it makes it possible to experience a fundamental aspect for the education of liberty: renunciation. In an era when technology extols freedom of choice as the principal attribute of human freedom, Colegios Mayores make it possible to experience freedom as self-determination and so understand that "the essence of commitment is not the limitation of freedom, but rather vital positioning: it closes off some paths but opens others" (Burgos, 2010, p. 40).

4. Colegios Mayores as an exception

Marín claimed that "the university is a state of exception where normal laws do not apply" (2012, p. 27). So, the people who pay are not in charge; the people who know the most are most aware of their own ignorance; and unlike material goods, which are lost when given away, the most perfect way to possess knowledge comes from sharing it through its communication. Similarly, Colegios Mayores can also be said to be a state of exception.

Firstly, compared with other living arrangements where the student is a client, the student's position in a Colegio

Mayor is, above all, that of a scholar. As happens in the university, the college member does not pay for a series of comforts but rather discomforts, as the Colegio Mayor is a demanding and challenging experience that takes students outside their comfort zones, opening them up to new disciplines, interests, and people. Secondly, the Colegio Mayor is not merely a functional space that fulfils the single task of providing accommodation; instead, it is a true home, providing a framework from which to make reality more comprehensible, a "here around which theres are drawn" (Bellamy, 2020, p. 142). Just like how the family home provides roots from which to build an identity, the Colegio Mayor, through the formative proposition described above, also provides these roots, as it helps the students to discover tradition, themselves, and others. Thirdly, this exceptional nature comes from the fact that as the Colegio Mayor is an experience of a relational character, it requires the cultivation of interiority for its fruitfulness, since "greeting and sending off are only possible in the threshold where the inside becomes accessible for shelter and offering" (Marín, 2021, p. 28). Similarly, in the midst of a culture that exalts the material, Colegios Mayores are not so much concerned with what one has as with self-consideration; thus, fostering an education that transcends mere freedom of choice to lead to the discovery of freedom as self-determination.

Ever since Gil de Albornoz founded the first Colegio Mayor in 1364, the history of the university in Spain has been intimately linked to these institutions. Thanks to them, major universities were founded in Spain and the Americas; they have been the cradle of some great thinkers, scientists, leaders, and artists through the ages such as Eduardo Chillida, Josep Borrell, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, Francisco Giner de los Ríos, and Federico García Lorca; and today more than six centuries later, with Spanish universities suffering from an excessive emphasis on the role of turning out professionals, the Colegios Mayores offer resistance to this phenomenon, preserving within them the essence of the university experience. Today, the Colegios continue to incarnate this first aim of higher education, "where the institution takes responsibility for the individual and accompanies it in a process of self-discovery and human realisation […] thus favouring their integral development at an individual and social level" (Colomo & Esteban, 2020, p. 58).

Sadly, despite the pedagogical importance of these centres, their formative value is often obscured by stories relating to practices such as hazing (Mérida, 2021), images of which go viral on social media with the result that they seem like frequent practices in the collective imaginary when in reality cases are ever more isolated (Fernández, 2022). These vile acts are not just forbidden in these centres, but for years regional and national associations of Colegios Mayores have worked hard along with universities to eradicate them completely through awareness raising campaigns such as one called "Contra las novatadas y en pro de la integración" (Against hazing and for integration) (Díaz,

2022) led by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the Colegios Mayores of the capital. This situation makes it all the more necessary to assert the pedagogical value of the Colegios Mayores to generate greater awareness at a social and academic level of the intense educational work done in these centres, which is often hidden by the increase of stories in the media such as those described above.

5. Conclusion

Every year, around 30% of Spain's university students move away from their home province to pursue higher education (Ministerio de Universidades, 2022), adding another difficult decision to the choice of course: where to live. Given the relational character of human beings, where students choose to live will have a strong influence on their personal growth and maturation.

In recent years, many investment funds have found that university accommodation is a sector with very high financial returns, driving the creation of different types of accommodation such as halls of residence and shared housing (de la Cruz, 2022). Today there is a risk that the commercialisation of higher-education institutions may also affect university accommodation, and so there is a need for greater research into the formative possibilities of Colegios Mayores to make it possible to defend and distinguish these educational institutions from other residential options with less of a pedagogical scope.

This study has shown the pedagogical value of the Colegios Mayores, demonstrating the continued relevance of this centuries-old institution. It has also shown that these institutions are privileged spaces for a wide variety of educational practices relating to liberal education and character education. Life in a Colegio Mayor offers a space for liberal education in which efforts are made to accentuate the search for truth through open reason, cultured coexistence, the encounter with tradition and beauty, and ultimately fostering a critical spirit and an active citizenship. We have also found that Colegios Mayores can offer authentic spaces where liberal education truly achieves character education by fostering commitment in students through experiences that promote decentering, personal knowledge, self-command and giving.

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Author's biography

María José Ibáñez Ayuso is currently Assistant director of the Colegio Mayor Universitario Francisco de Vitoria (Madrid). She combines this position with teaching at the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria and with writing her doctoral thesis in the Faculty of Education of the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Since November 2022, she has been Vice President of the European university college Association (EucA). She took a Master's in Memory and Criticism of Education at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia. She graduated in Psychology from the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and in Education from the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9055-5525

Book reviews

Gairín, J., & Castro, D. (2021).
El contexto organizativo como espacio de intervención
[The organisational context as a space for intervention]
(Anna Díaz-Vicario)

Ahedo, J., Caro, C., & Fuentes, J. L. (Coords.) (2021).
Cultivar el carácter en la familia: una tarea ineludible
[Cultivating Character in the Family: an Unavoidable Task]
(Natália De Araújo Santos)

Fukuyama, F. (2022).
Liberalism and its discontents.
(Jorge Valero Berzosa)

Watts, P., Fullard, M., & Peterson, A. (2021).
Understanding character education: Approaches, applications, and issues
(Dana Atef Jeries)

Balduzzi, E. (Coord.) (2021).
La sfida educativa della Laudato si' e l'educazione del carattere
[The educational challenge of 'Laudato si' and character education]
(Maria Valentini)

Book reviews

Gairín, J. & Castro, D. (2021).
El contexto organizativo como espacio de intervención [The organisational context as a space for intervention].
Editorial Síntesis. 302 pp.

While many works consider the organisation of educational centres, this book presents an up-to-date and systematic analysis of their basic components as organisations from the perspective of how these institutions facilitate socio-educational intervention and action.

This work was written jointly by the Professor of Didactics and School Organisation Joaquín Gairín, a leading figure in the field of organisation and management of educational centres, and the Associate Professor of Didactics and Educational Organisation Diego Castro, who has extensive experience in the field of management and non-formal organisations. Their complementary profiles give *El contexto organizativo como espacio de intervención* a special value that expands its outlook from the organisation and management of compulsory education centres towards the organisation and management of other types of educational and training institutions, such as universities and non-formal socio-educational organisations.

The content of the work is set out in twelve chapters grouped into four parts: organisations in their context (I), organisational components (II), the organisational dynamic (III), and the distinctive aspects of organisations (IV). The authors consider, in a systematic and ordered way, the different components of analysis of the organisations, enabling the reader to opt for a total approach to the components, and as well as attention and depth in reading, analysing, and reflecting on one or more of these components.

The text starts with a brief introduction that enables the reader to position herself in the content of the work. It then goes into greater depth in the exposition and analysis of each setting through a review of the classic literature and most up-to-date focuses. We will now briefly look at

each part with the objective of considering the work's principal theses.

The first part focusses on analysing the relations that the educational centre maintains with its immediate setting, also characterising the educational centre as an organisation. Starting from the assumption that familiarity with the context is essential to be able to act, the authors underline how considering context involves analysing the social-cultural-economic context, the family context, and the administrative context. Therefore, throughout the first chapter, the authors consider questions such as the educator city, the rights and duties of parents or legal guardians, and the relationship between regulations and centre autonomy.

The second chapter considers the concept of the organisation, presenting twelve specific features of educational institutions. It also defines and clarifies some related concepts such as administration, management, leadership, and governance whose meanings are often blurred confounded.

The five chapters in the next part focus on the typical components of educational organisations. Accordingly, chapter three, which is the first in this part, focusses on institutional plans, in other words, the set of documents that establish and formalise the mission, values, and goals of an organisation. Specifically, it sets out the medium-long-term and short-term characteristics of these documents.

Next, starting from the position that "people are the most important component of organisations, and can make their operation possible or restrict it" (p. 83), chapter four considers the organisation of human resources. Specifically, it considers both the academic organisation of the students and the necessary academic organisation and coordination of teachers, as well as the planning of contributions by other professionals who are involved in educational centres.

Chapters five and six respectively focus on presenting the organisation of material and functional resources, which, along with human resources, comprise the basic elements of the internal educational setting. The authors present the conditioning factors of school space, architecture, organisation of equipment and teaching materials, timetabling, budgets and their management, as well as the rules that contribute to organising the activity of educational centres.

This part ends with chapter seven, which is dedicated to the relational system. Starting from the idea that the centres include a diverse group of people with different interests and goals and that the relationships established between people and groups often shape the functioning of an organisation's structures and how well it achieves its objectives, the authors consider formal and informal relationships, communication, participation and decision-making processes, and the environment and culture as the ultimate expression of these relationships.

Having considered the topics linked to goals, resources, and people, the authors

move on to the third part, which centres on questions relating to the organisational dynamics that mobilise the organisational components presented in the previous part and make them function adequately. Questions linked to management (chapter eight), the running of institutions (chapter nine), and institutional change and improvement (chapter ten) are considered in depth.

More specifically, in chapter eight the authors start from the idea that traditional organisational functions mean the management can be defined as the body or person that habitually exercises organisational functions, analysing the nature and functions of school management, the role of management as agents of change, and of leadership for pedagogical change.

Following on from this, chapter nine goes through the different focuses and models of institutional management that serve as a preliminary to proposing an integrated and comprehensive model of school management that synthesises and adopts the resources and benefits of earlier models from the viewpoint of the current situation.

This part ends with the chapter dedicated to innovation, which beyond clarifying the meaning of the term and considering the relations and differences with other proposals for change (reform, change, and improvement), reviews how processes of change occur, are created, and are implemented.

Finally, the last part is dedicated to the differential aspects of the organisations. Taking the distinctive characteristics of university organisations (chapter 11) and non-formal educational centres (chapter 12) as examples, the authors make us aware of how the contextual and institutional features affect the organisational aspects.

This work's authors display a very broad knowledge of the subject of organisation and management of educational institutions, which they are able to set down on paper clearly and simply, establishing connections between the different topics they consider, giving the work both rigour and coherence.

A number of questions and activities are suggested at the end of each chapter to encourage debate and reflection and consider the content presented in more depth.

In view of all of this, the book is especially suitable for people who are starting out in the study and analysis of educational organisations, and also for those who are already professionally active in this type of institution and wish to reflect on their everyday work.

This book can be described as a manual of school organisation and so could well become part of the obligatory or recommended bibliography for organisation and management modules on bachelor's, master's, and other postgraduate courses in the field of education, but also other lines of study in which educational institutions are an area for professional activity.

Anna Díaz-Vicario ■

Ahedo, J., Caro, C., & Fuentes, J. L. (Coords.) (2021).
Cultivar el carácter en la familia: una tarea ineludible [Cultivating character in the family: An Unavoidable Task].
Dykinson. 176 pp.

This book has been written by eighteen university teachers, three of whom have also acted as coordinators and the foreword was written by Óscar González, teacher and director of a school for parents. This work is the result of a research project at the Universidad Internacional de la Rioja (UNIR) entitled *Character education as the basis for all-round training of students in secondary school and at baccalaureate level.*

The first thing to note, and the reason why this publication is of such importance, is that the matter of character education, and that of virtues, which is very closely connected to it, has scarcely been studied in our country, possibly because these matters, particularly the question of virtues, were monopolised by the teaching of religion. This is not the case in English-speaking countries, particularly in the USA, where character education has been part of educational programmes, albeit with fluctuations, as noted by Concepción Naval, one of the first Spanish teachers to study it, and Aurora Bernal, one of the co-authors of this book. For this reason, the fact that a group of teachers, and university teachers at that, have dedicated their research efforts to studying something of such magnitude as character building, is to be welcomed.

As this is a book written by numerous authors, various issues have been addressed, although almost all of them are related to the learning of character building in the family. This is borne out by the titles of the different chapters: 1. "Families with character and happy lives", by Aurora Bernal Martínez de Soria; 2. "The family as a virtuous community", undertaken by Tania Alonso-Sainz and Francisco Esteban Bara; 3. "Friends, the family that you choose and put together yourself: crucial for education", written by Ana Romero-Iribas; 4. "Sexuality and human training. A critical analysis of a controversial issue", a work by David Reyero; 5. "Educating for freedom", in co-authorship between Josu Ahedo and Blanca Arteaga-Martínez, 6. "Rethinking the role of authority in education and social media", produced by David González Ginocchio and Elda Millan Ghisleri; 7. "Forgiveness education" by María del Rosario González Martín, 8. "Gratitude: a virtue to teach in the family", composed by Mª Carmen Caro Samada and Juan Luis Fuentes; 9. "Life ecology: how to educate for cheerful simplicity in the family", written by Zaida Espinosa Zárate; 10. "The acquisition of sustainable habits in the family", a work by Arantxa Azqueta and Yaiza Sánchez-Pérez; 11. "The return to basics: the reconstruction of the emotional bond in minors and families in difficult social situations", by Juan Luis Fuentes and Tania García-Bermejo; and 12. "Educating character inclusively: educational opportunities and challenges of functional diversity in the family", by Elena Álvarez-Álvarez and Carmen María Martínez Conde.

To a certain extent, together these titles form a useful map of the contents of the book. This is a publication in which theory is combined, as is to be expected in a research project, with practical suggestions, which no doubt will be of help to parents, to whom the book is mainly addressed, and to teachers. Thus, starting with the foreword, it is brought to our attention that character development begins in early childhood, that is to say, in the family, when the child has not yet started school.

Many authors have defined character in the strictest sense of an inner nature, which would imply a touch of determinism, thereby contradicting any educational intervention. The authors of this book do not do so; in order to avoid the restrictive biological constraint that claims "some people are born with good character and others with bad", they insist that character can be taught and that this is true from the first moment of existence. This happens over time until the goal of living fully is achieved. To some extent, they mostly follow Aristotle, whom several of them quote, who claims that happiness, the ultimate and universal aim of human beings, will depend on what each of them does with their lives, regardless of the temperament with which each of them was born.

It is in the family, the home of unconditional love, of acceptance regardless of what offspring may do, where a virtuous community can evolve, as a habit that is acquired, like all habits, through repetition and action. This offers parents a broad range of possibilities for action, in their difficult but fascinating job of raising their children.

From freedom, a fundamental faculty — and a right — the book extracts other issues, which are less often studied in education, but are rather provocative and contemporary, as contributing to character education, and which act together to attain many of the goals in education, such as friendship, sexuality, simplicity, care for the environment, gratitude, overcoming social difficulties and functional diversity.

Human beings are not born free, children are totally dependent beings and gradually become free if their environment allows them to do so. Children need to learn how to exercise their freedom, which should not be seen as an absence of restrictions. To teach about freedom is to understand it in the same way as Albert Camus, say the authors, as "the chance to be better" or, from a social point of view, as Mandela, who said that "to be free is to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others". To teach about freedom is to teach about commitment and responsibility, towards oneself and towards others. A task that is not always easy for parents, due to fear or out of overprotectiveness.

However, friendship, as the 'chosen family', helps to develop freedom, as well as many other values, such as generosity, gratitude, sharing, trust, solidarity and mutual growth, since character building occurs in coexistence and relationships with others. The authors deal with these

topics in the different chapters and specifically go into detail on some highly topical issues of major concern to parents, such as the dangers of only interacting on social media, due to the constant exposure and how easy manipulation is, whilst hiding behind anonymity. In this sense, one way for the family to contribute to the healthy establishment of children's friendships is to get to know their friends and show an interest in them, maybe by making the family home a meeting place and building their confidence.

Within freedom, there is also sexual freedom, which only a mature person can have, since it is not a question of 'doing whatever I like and with whomever I like'. Likewise, in the family, although it is predominantly here that sexuality can be taught, it should go beyond, as it almost always has done, providing dry information or instilling fear of undesired consequences. Special care should be taken with the sexual education of children in a hypersexualised society in which minors start accessing pornography, as their only source of knowledge, at the early age of eight years old, which can deeply damage them.

The crisis of authority, both in the family and at school, has been a subject of discussion since the mid-twentieth century. The authors explain what authority is and what it is not, and they focus on social media, as it is a matter of widespread concern for parents. These media, according to the authors, enable the spread of certain problems relating to authority and are a clear guide to the life and role models of school-age children. In this respect, the proposal is made that if authority and rules start at home, the regulation of social media should not just be left to the government but should also be one of the family's tasks.

Another important point discussed in the book is that of healthy forgiveness, not forgiving and forgetting which ends up creating abusive relationships but knowing how to consciously forgive the harm that has been done and its consequences. It also deals with the study of gratitude as a virtue which encompasses intellectual and emotional aspects, and at the same time there may be a major opportunity to develop it in the setting of the family and school, to overcome behaviourist viewpoints based on exchange.

In chapters 9 and 10, the authors deal with questions regarding an 'ecological life', simplicity and the acquisition of sustainable habits. They highlight the importance of being conscious with regard to consumption, with a reference to the film *The Platform* (*El Hoyo* in Spanish), as an example of the lack of restraint in society and which leads us to think about the environment and how to raise children by nurturing this virtue and encouraging responsible and sustainable consumption. Teaching about the environment is the key to discovering the world around us and at the same time make children and young people aware of environmental problems or even just the problems that affect their community and get them to think of creative solutions to resolve them.

Finally, they deal with the need to rebuild emotional bonds in vulnerable families,

the importance of emotional and psychological closeness, and the difficulties in achieving these goals in certain contexts and building character inclusively. Inclusively understood as referring to a form of participation in which the child has a sense of belonging to the family and society.

In conclusion, this book is a reference guide for parents and teachers which will enable them to find out a little more about how to cultivate character in children and young people in our society. A society which is increasingly more connected and individualistic, which has forgotten about values which are essential for moral and cognitive development. Without a shadow of a doubt, this is an interesting book and it deals with contemporary issues which invite us to reflect on the society around us and on where we want to go.

Natália De Araújo Santos ■

Fukuyama, F. (2022).
Liberalism and its discontents.
Profile Books. 192 pp.

Little is left of that Francis Fukuyama who years ago consecrated the liberal system in which the United States and Europe lived as "the end of history". According to the author, the Western system represented the last attainable political stage and would inevitably tend to spread throughout the planet because "the end point of the ideological evolution of humanity" (in the author's own words) had been reached. *Liberalism and its discontents* unambiguously shows the intellectual journey that Fukuyama has been undergoing throughout this time, which crystallizes in a much less risky proposal than the one he defended in *The end of history*. The professor's latest publication considers fundamental aspects for understanding the sociopolitical situation that democracies experience today, in addition to diagnosing their health and systematizing the problems they face. Liberalism has not only failed to spread, but is beginning to face serious threats whose origin lies within liberal societies themselves.

This essay is intended as a defense of "classical liberalism," a system that Vladimir Putin a few months ago called obsolete. It seems pertinent that, at a time when the terms are no longer clear, Fukuyama begins by outlining what he understands by classical liberalism — a necessary division of the powers of the State and a subjection of public institutions to the rule of law — and the reasons that justify its preeminence over other political systems. He is especially concerned about recovering the liberal principle of tolerance, in the face of the increasingly frequent episodes of groups that prevent politicians and other social actors from freely exposing their ideas (even in universities, whose primary nature is to be spaces for the reasoned search for truth).

Two chapters are devoted to economic analysis, in which Fukuyama shows how liberalism, when it focuses solely on the absolute liberalization of the economy, leads to neoliberalism. In his view, this unbridled neoliberalism advocates an

individualistic and selfish view of the subject, and makes the pursuit of self-interest the sole guide to his actions. Fukuyama unfolds a much richer vision of human nature, recalling that man has a social aspect that allows him to transcend this first frontier and seek interests beyond oneself. Conceiving the human being as a rational being, but excluding emotions, feelings and will, would be to have a mistaken conception of the human being: it would be incomplete. The inverse option — to credit the emotional in excess, discarding reason — also implies cutting off part of human nature.

The theoretical heart of the book lies in the fourth, fifth and sixth chapters. Fukuyama again offers a historical overview, in this case of various approaches to the "autonomy" of the human being (Luther, Rousseau and Kant, among others). Absolutizing personal autonomy and the capacity to choose, placing them above one's own good, corrupts the liberal system, paradoxical as it may sound. This criticism has been postulated by both libertarians (Nozick) and communitarians (Taylor, MacIntyre, Sandel). Fukuyama adds his contribution to this, arguing that not all the options from which one can choose, although lawful, are equally good. In other words, there are some ways of exercising autonomy that are better than others, and that celebrating diversity for the sake of diversity alone does not seem to be a sufficiently solidly based course of action.

There is an underlying leitmotiv that runs through the whole work: the detractors of liberalism come from outside — as we saw in the Russian president's statement — but also from within the liberal system. There are ideological options leaning both to the right and to the left of the ideological arc trying to undermine the pillars of the system. It is this internal attack which worries the author the most.

From the left, there are arguments in favor of collective rights and a hard critique against the little success of the liberal program. On the one hand, part of the progressive left began by championing "identity politics" as a way of effectively extending rights and equality, basically to complete the liberal program in a real way and eliminate any type of discrimination. However, taking this program to the extreme meant extending the autonomy of individuals to entire collectives. The problem arises when an individual right and a collective right collide.

On the other hand, from left-wing positions, liberalism is also in the spotlight because of its limited success at the global level: inequality, poverty and injustice continue to exist. The temptation here is predictable: why not tackle these problems from another political framework? The answer is clear: there are societies in which giving prevalence to one of the branches of government — generally the executive over the legislative and judicial — has led to the country's economic growth, but at the cost of suppressing the freedom and lives of so many. The case of China is paradigmatic.

The conservative attack on liberalism is based on the fact that the latter has

undermined roots, traditions, religion and national unity. This tendency defends that liberalism has become a shell of rules without content (a common reproach made to the European Union). In this regard, Fukuyama reminds us that today's world is not comparable to that of a century ago, and that it will be difficult to find the common trunk that many conservatives claim is necessary to build a solid vision.

Nevertheless, Fukuyama does not succumb to the temptation to disassociate liberalism from the nation-state system which, with its peculiarities, is still in force in our century. One problem with liberalism is the timidity with which it acts when claiming cultural tradition or patriotism. This causes that illiberal nationalism appropriates it. For Fukuyama, the nation-state remains the actor best armed to defend the liberal system and the liberal principles.

The author deals with technology as a threat to the principle of freedom of expression in chapter seven. Fukuyama focuses on some risks, for example, that all the media may fall under the control of a single entrepreneur or business group, or that the Internet may offer massive but poor quality and distorted information. The point here is that the essay does not propose any solution beyond the announcement of the need for a balanced protection of the values of transparency and privacy (which does not really address the heart of the matter).

The book closes with a chapter in which the author draws up a list of principles for the reconstruction of liberal society. Among them we find the defense of the threatened freedom of expression, the primacy of individual rights over collective rights and the idea that individual autonomy is not absolute. The latter is particularly interesting, since it puts in the mouth of a liberal the idea that there are absolutes that should not and cannot be voted on, absolutes that are even above our freedom. Fukuyama gives the example of slavery: no matter how much the majority voted in favor of it, there is a prior premise, "we are all created equal", and therefore the liberal system not only cannot allow it to be voted on but has the duty to safeguard that fundamental right.

There are two aspects that are particularly relevant for educators reading this book. The first is to rethink the role of the university as a space for academic discussion. A growing aggressive *woke culture* threatens freedom of expression, naturally associated with the university institution. Meetings are prevented, events are sabotaged and conferences are assaulted on the grounds that society contains structural errors that must be corrected, even by force if necessary. The real fact is that someone is banned from public space because of his beliefs, not because of his actions, which is a direct attack on the liberal system.

Secondly, Fukuyama's references to character and the capacity we all have to cultivate it are highly interesting. He defends the need to educate citizens with character and public spirit, since they are the ones who in the end make society flourish.

This is an aspect of enormous interest for all of us who are devoted to education, since, together with the family, the school is where any person begins to work on the forging of character. Fukuyama's point, following in the wake of many before him, is that good character formation leads to the proper exercise of our freedom.

Fukuyama, in short, takes up the problems liberal political system faces and launches some pertinent ideas, as we have seen. The threats to the system are better developed than the solutions, but although some questions remain unanswered, the essay provides us with a fairly accurate map of the situation. Some of the challenges that liberal democracy must face today are clear. And if anything is clear, from beginning to end, it is Fukuyama's believe that there is not yet a better alternative to the classical liberalism that has prevailed in recent centuries.

Jorge Valero Berzosa ■

Watts, P., Fullard, M., & Peterson, A. (2021). *Understanding character education: Approaches, applications, and issues.* McGraw-Hill Education. 168 pp.

Educators, including teachers and all professionals involved in the educational process, are fully aware that core elements of education are the personal and social development of the pupils. Teachers play an essential role in allowing their pupils to evolve and become the best version of themselves while being integrated in various social cycles. Clearly, academic achievements also form an integral part of education. However, when facing stressing factors, schools tend to redirect their goals in order to meet the needs of those pressures. An example of a stressing factor is the evaluation of academic progress through tests and examinations. Some teachers have suggested that these exams do not reflect the real abilities and skills of the pupils. Moreover, some of those measurement tools do not serve the ultimate goal of education which is to help the pupils to develop in a holistic manner; personally, academically, and socially.

The current book introduces the character education approach and its potential impact on schools encouraging personal and social development of the pupils. The book is structured around seven chapters providing ideas, methods, and practices that are emphasized by character education.

The first chapter provides definitions for two key concepts: character, and character education. 'Character' refers to the set of qualities producing specific moral emotions that guide the behavior of individuals. Traits that are stably present in one's character, will shape the true essence of their holder. There are four types of virtues: intellectual, moral, civic, and performance virtues. These virtues are considered the 'building blocks of character'. Thus, character education is the intentional effort of schools and families to assist young people in understanding and caring about ethical values, along with developing personal and psychological qualities, bearing in mind that

character is an ever-evolving process that should be cautiously evaluated and taken into consideration. By doing so, character education offers an inclusive perspective of an individual as a whole entity. Furthermore, the discussed book takes on a broad neo-Aristotelian approach towards character education. From this perspective, character education stresses the education and development of virtues, that are positive and morally worthwhile, so they can help children in the future.

In addition, the chapter introduces two approaches to pupils' personal and social development. The first approach is positive education, which is associated with the elements of positive psychology implemented in education, such as developing a positive mindset and sense of self-efficacy. The second approach is social and emotional learning, describing the process of obtaining skills and knowledge to construct healthy identities, regulate emotions, fulfill personal and collective goals, show empathy, build supportive relationships, and considerately make decisions.

The second chapter is dedicated to the teacher's character and its role in guiding conduct. While it is well documented in educational research, the impacts of the moral and ethical aspects of teaching tend to be marginalized when academic success and preparation for employability are prioritized by education reforms in schools. As a consequence, along with the constant discussions about schools' assessment scores and accountability of teachers, teacher-training programs convey the message that a teacher's purpose is limited to passing subject knowledge and technical skills to pupils. However, despite the minor emphasis on the teacher's character and qualities that ought to be demonstrated, there is no doubt that teachers' character has an effect on their personal and professional behaviour. A teacher is exhibited as a role model, influencing the pupils' character development, attitudes, and conduct, both consciously and unconsciously. Moreover, the chapter elaborates on the character virtues of a 'good' teacher, for instance: confidence, humility, teamwork, kindness, empathy, humour, and good communication.

The third chapter discusses the appropriate environment for character education. Usually, school websites and policy documents contain the main vision and aspirations of a school. However, in order to harvest the fruits of those visions, the school needs to ensure translating these intentions into concrete actions. A school should establish a clear set of principals guiding the social and emotional development of the pupils. Involving pupils in the process contributes to creating a shared mission that aims to develop their character. It is the role of a school community to select a set of core virtues and direct it in certain ways for it to be considered as positive. The chosen virtues should correspond with the values and culture that the school attempts to promote. Furthermore, the school's physical environment is vital to reflect the school's vision. A creative, well cared-for learning environment is generated by creative teachers who design and decorate the space in a way that supports character education, and also by

proud pupils displaying their work on the walls and celebrating their success.

The fourth chapter explains the relation between character education and good behavior for learning. The link between character and behaviour is clarified when character is considered as the guide to the thinking, reasoning, and conduct of an individual. Schools which adopt the character-based approach to behaviour lean toward using strategies aimed at developing pupils' intrinsic motivation to behave accordingly, and their ability to make good decisions when managing their own behaviours. Those strategies develop virtues such as respect, compassion, empathy, responsibility, etc. In other words, having good character helps the pupils in choosing the right behaviours and for the right reasons. School behaviour policies are key components in setting out the behavioural expectations of pupils. Although there is no guarantee that those expectations are parallel to the ones at home, the most effective solution is to have a home-school agreement. Following the character education, a school can use various approaches which can encourage positive behaviour for learning, such as giving verbal praise, modelling, assigning roles and responsibilities to pupils, informing parents about positive behaviours at school, etc. Furthermore, this chapter illustrates several positions of behavioural management. Among the approaches mentioned, one of the often used ideas is giving rewards and sanctions. Nonetheless, rewards and sanctions can be useful in promoting good behaviour if they are applied carefully and intentionally within a character based approach.

Chapter five argues the immersion of character education within the curriculum. The fact that character education does not have a constructed curriculum allows teachers to exhibit their skills in planning creative personalized character education fitting their schools. Therefore, teachers should integrate the learning of character and virtues in the contents across the curriculum in a way that is meaningful and interesting, while providing the opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they are learning and linking it to their personal life. For example, character can be taught in a computer science class by focusing on key ethical issues regarding the mergence on new technology and being wise users who are able to safely navigate in the virtual world. An additional opportunity to teach character learning is through distinct enrichment activities happening in after-school hours. These activities, including sports club, outdoor learning, and others, develop the pupils' interests beyond the borders of the formal curriculum.

Chapter six reflects on character education beyond the school gates through social action. Also referred to as 'service-learning', social action is considered a core pedagogical strategy in character education, and it is defined as practical actions by young people in service of others to create a positive change. Service-learning consists of an on-going process of action, reflection, communication, and negotiation, which connects the development of pupils' character to their role as citizens. Therefore, service-learning aims to balance between personal and community

development. When pupils participate in a meaningful social action, they understand educational and moral purposes behind it. Also, teachers take an important part in connecting the pupils' experiences in school, with their actions outside of it. By creating an open, discursive, and democratic school environment, the school community builds a strong foundation for democratic forms of social action beyond its gates.

The final chapter offers additional practices and resources that can be used as a part of character education. The first method suggested to teach character is through stories. Using stories is a popular choice to learn about morals and virtues as stories combine imagination and entertainment, and they are considered as a powerful method to engage children's minds and emotions, and enabling them to experience new situations and contexts. Another approach offered is using moral dilemmas. For the purpose of character education, teachers can use moral dilemmas to encourage pupils to reflect on real-life situations requiring and ethical action. As a result, pupils can debate, explain, and justify their chosen response. Furthermore, this chapter mentions using moral exemplars as a vehicle to teach character education. As previously mentioned, pupils can learn via observations, thus, the actions and behaviours of adults in their surroundings imply moral meaningful messages to the pupils. However, teachers tend also to use moral exemplars from 'real life' or literature in order to inspire the pupils to absorb character virtues. Moreover, the chapter proposes a list of resources, organizations, and institutes for further professional development on applying character education in schools.

In summary, this book is a valuable reading for teachers or educators attempting to understand character education and dive in the process of implementing it on the educational field. It defines, explains, and displays the components of character education and its contribution to developing virtues and ethics in young children. The book connects between theory and practice in a simplified manner, while offering a combination of several insightful case-studies and self-reflective activities in order to illustrate and contextualize the ideas discussed.

Dana Atef Jeries ■

Balduzzi, E. (Coord.) (2021).

La sfida educativa della Laudato si' e l'educazione del carattere [The educational challenge of 'Laudato si' and character education]. Studium. 151 pp.

Environmental education has broadened its goals. Whereas in the beginning it was mainly centred on scientific information, consciousness-raising and the prevention of environmental risks, it tends now to include a critique of the 154 "myths" of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market). It seeks also to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others,

with nature and other living creatures, and with God. Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care.

Paragraph 210 of Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato si'* represents the substantial opening of this book *The educational challenge of* Laudato sí´ *and character education*. It is a work that is profoundly inscribed in an eminently transformative and generatively pedagogical horizon of meaning, drawing lifeblood from the beating heart of Pope Francis' Encyclical *Laudato si'*: the fruitful, and at the very least revolutionary, perspective of integral ecology.

Such innervation enlivens the identity fabric of *Laudato si'*, underscoring its structurally educational nature, but according to a distinctive and original key of interpretation: the inexhaustible pedagogical-educational soul of the Encyclical is focused in this book on a challenge that, in an indissoluble way, connects ecology and anthropology. Indeed, for ecology to be ontologically structured, the constitution of a new and regenerated man and an intimately transformed humanity is necessary. In order for ecology to materialize and profile itself integrally, anthropology must be challenged equally integrally, developing a peculiar dynamism: that of character education.

"Character" represents the unique identity profile of each individual, inescapably connoted by intentionality, and the term "educate" refers to the dynamic action of not only promotively changing in terms of improvement, but to an authentically transfigurative conversion from the innermost roots of the human being. A concept that is expressed and sublimated by the Greek term *metanoia*. This is the foundational core of the reflection contained in this work: to educate the character of each person under the banner of a *dinamis* that connectively articulates into transformative movement the plane of the capacity to act with the inner level, which ethically and morally interpellates.

But this purpose can only be achieved within an indispensable dimension of pedagogy, which is ennobled and elevated in a masterful way in the Encyclical: freedom.

By virtue of the intentionality that denotes character education, in fact, Balduzzi discusses a human being intimately called to "make himself free," to use Giuseppe Mari's expression, that is, a subject who is the protagonist of his own existence, responsible for who he wants to be and who he will become, and thus engaged in a task that is properly humanizing. For each individual, it is a matter of pronouncing and experiencing a unique, unrepeatable, non-delegable stance regarding "who I am" and "who I am with the world": in a perspective that, by virtue of man's dispositional frailties and shortcomings, and thus of his infinite possibilities in terms of existential perfectibility, is open to ulteriority and transcendence.

To a horizon that is not pre-packaged, but constantly in the making, to be chosen and, with commitment and responsibility, created and built.

Freedom is certainly a fundamental core in Balduzzi's writings, which describes a pedagogical-transdisciplinary vision of the human being as a subject characterized by design, intentionality, inviolable dignity, in accordance with what Robert Spaemann asserted in *Persons. On the difference between "something" and "someone"* (2007): man "cannot be understood as a causal consequence of one of his predicates, or of the totality of his predicates. What he may always be, he is in a way that does not determine who he is". This position is also in consonance with the perspective of Emmanuel Mounier, whose work Balduzzi quotes in this book: "[...] my character is not what I am [...]. It is the form of a movement directed toward a future pushed toward a better-being. It is what I can be more than what I am".

Character education thus develops in a motion which is convergent and ascending at the same time, and which, guarding a gaze of pedagogical-existential complexity and unity, intimately transfigures and converts man, making him integrally new. The semantic backdrop is that of a responsible freedom in which the human being's dispositional fragility and vulnerability are opportunities to "be more," to use a Freirian expression; they are opportunities to become wounded, opening up to bright rays of possibility and further paths, leaving footprints of awareness and value in the world.

Thus, a humanizing space of contiguity between *Laudato si'* and character education appears, in which the immanence of the here and now does not retreat into itself, is not exhausted in the instant, but opens wide to transcendence, to the future, to planning. This is the transformed and renewed space inhabited by virtue (*arethè*): not a simple "doing," but a true way of life in which doing reflects the responsibility of being, in a perspective of proximity that necessarily expands to the We (ethos); this is the dimension in which the inviolable dignity of each person embraces practical consciousness and experiential baggage, linking these elements in an integral and unitary grammar, dual and non-dualistic.

From a structural point of view, the book testifies to the author's open, expert and wide-ranging gaze. A horizon that is tinged with trans-disciplinary value, highlighting not only the originality of the thematized content, but also the art of comparing and dialoguing different perspectives. Indeed, the dialogic scope of the work is evident in bringing together the positions of diverse and internationally prominent authors, relating voices, ideas, experiences, and thus constructing a peculiarly generative and impactful narrative plot.

Organizationally, the book is divided into two basic sections, consistent with the cyclical and systemic nature of "theory-practice-theory" pedagogy itself: the first part is in fact related to research perspectives, while the second, pragmatically oriented, concerns the actual areas of action.

Thus, following the order of the work, Balduzzi opens the first section by highlighting the intersecting roots of meaning between *Laudato si'* and character education, which are transversal themes of the work as a whole: the contribution represents the foundation and springboard for the subsequent development of the dissertation, through three hermeneutical overviews of integral ecology.

Aurora Bernal offers a timely survey of the current importance of character education, in which she explores, in a lifelong framework of education the current research, critical issues, potentials, and complexity of the topic under consideration. Bernal also innervates character education in the framework of moral education, emphasizing pedagogical concepts such as autonomy, freedom, and self-determination. Marco Emilio's philosophical contribution, on the other hand, is aimed at investigating difficult-to-resolve tensions against the contextual backdrop of the climate crisis. The keynote problematizes character education and virtue ethics from a perspective of renewal and repair of collective wisdom, rediscovery of common home and destiny, in which individual choices are necessarily conjoined with communal ones. Finally, in contiguity with the regard for the space of the We, the care of the spaces to be inhabited is inserted, through Marisa Musaio's reflection.

Cities, nodes of a world understood as a global construction site, are investigated in their deepest meaning, not only physical, but also anthropological, narrative and existential: through care, it is possible to build places of authentic encounter, leading to a regeneration of the periphery as a centre of proximity.

The transition to the second part of the book unveils vistas of action within the foundational framework of the connection between character education and *Laudato si'*. The school context, a privileged relational space, is the fil rouge of the contributions collected, starting with the proposal of Carmen Martínez Conde and Josu Ahedo, who present an idea of a school in solidarity embodying nodal values of the Encyclical, such as proximity, sharing, generosity, and equality. Balduzzi continues the discourse, envisaging opportunities to make integral ecology tangible and authentic through the compulsory teaching of civic education in schools, screening potentialities and possible criticalities.

Elena Arbués' wide-ranging international work concerns ecological civicism at the university, recovering its dialogical, empowering and cognitive value, and bringing to light its transformative identity, especially in the area of lifestyle and citizenship.

Finally, Enrico Miatto focuses on the practice of Service Learning: numerous semantic nodes connect *Laudato si'* with this educational practice, but, above all, Service Learning is connoted by surplus, responding to Pope Francis' call to build bridges, open windows on the world, be "outgoing" witnesses.

The zetetic and concrete action perspectives presented in this book open

possibilities of profound transformation to the reader. In particular, one grasps the no longer postponed need to chart paths of generative reparation toward a sense of a communitarian we, now banished in the society of narcissistic positivity envisioned by Byung-Chul Han, which consumes all forms of otherness to the point of elimination.

Without firm bonds, without the "evasion", about which Emmanuel Lévinas writes, (*dell'Evasione*, 1983) which is capable of snapping us out of the blindness of a solipsistic consciousness hinged in the Self, it is not possible to trigger *metanoia* and become the protagonists of integral and virtuous ecological and anthropological transformations.

The priority is to re-build the quality of human relationships, rediscovering our original creaturely fragility and, consistent with Buberian thought (*Il principio dialogico e altri saggi*, 1993), elevating the relationship with others from "I-itself" to "I-you": a perspective that courageously restores dignity, care and value to bonds.

The dialectical spade work of this book leads the reader to feel and touch deep roots of meaning. They tell of the virtue of taking a complex look at a world in which "everything is connected"; to protect care for the quality of every relationship; to cultivate the strength to live fully the meaning of *ex-ducere*, not only by "drawing out" that inexhaustible best that tells of human perfectibility, but also by emptying oneself of the fullness of self, selfishness, greed, and thus overflowing into the beauty of the Other: the only destination in which to nurture hope, responsibility and action for an integral ecology.

References

Spaemann, R. (2007). *Persons. On the difference between "something" and "someone"*. Laterza.

Maria Valentini ■

Instructions for authors

A. Purpose of the journal

Revista española de pedagogía was created in 1943 and its search for excellence has always distinguished itself. In fact, it has been the first journal of pedagogical research in Spanish that has been included in the most relevant international databases. It accepts only original, high quality submissions from anywhere in the world that help advance pedagogical knowledge, avoid mere opinion polls, and are of general interest. Articles must follow commonly accepted ethical criteria; in particular, in cases of plagiarism and falsification of data, the author will be penalized by the rejection of their submissions. Articles with more than three authors will only be accepted if a reasoned explanation is provided, and in any case, the intellectual collaboration of all the signatories must be certified, not just data collection. Three issues a year are published.

B. Languages used in the journal

The original language of the journal is Spanish, the language used by hundreds of millions of people worldwide. However, meeting the demands of a globalized world requires the use of not only Spanish but also English to make the articles we publish available to the international academic community, just as we have traditionally done by publishing some articles in English. Therefore, the policy of the journal is for it to be printed wholly in Spanish and for articles to be published in Spanish and English on its website (revistadepedagogia.org). Articles are received in Spanish, if this is the first author's mother tongue. Otherwise, articles are received in English. If an article is accepted, an economic agreement will be reached with the authors to implement the procedure that guarantees the use of appropriate academic language in them, with the translation being done by native expert professionals in each of the languages who must translate all the contents of the original article, including tables and graphs. Texts cited in the article that were originally published in Spanish, although they were later edited in an English translation, or those that are only published in Spanish, have a special treatment. In particular, it is preferable for a classic text to be cited with both versions: that of its original and that of the printed translation. This ensures that, when translating the article for the Spanish version of the journal, the translator does not retranslate into Spanish some Spanish quotations translated into English. On the other hand, an article from a Spanish journal or a paragraph from a book in Spanish, never published in English, is quoted with the text in its original language and the translation is left to the translator, without prejudice to the fact that, in certain circumstances, the author may consider it appropriate to offer his or her own translation.

C. Requirements of originals

C.1. The publication of research articles must be in accordance with the Publication Manual of the *American Psychological Association* 7th Edition, 2020, (www.apastyle.org), from which we include some basic points which must be strictly followed by the authors.

1) The length of the contributions, including all sections, will be between 6000 and 7500 words. They must be written double spaced, on numbered pages, and using the Times New Roman typeface.

2) The first page must include: the title of the article (in lower case, except the first letter) in English (not in italics, 24 point, bold) and Spanish (in italics, 18 point, bold); the name of the author or authors (bold, name in lower

case and surname in capital letters), 11 point and also bold, followed by the abbreviation Ph.D. if you are a doctor, and followed by your professional category and place of work (Full Professor, University of Valencia, not in italics) as well as your email (in italics); an Abstract (10 point bold) followed by the body of the abstract of between 200 and 300 words (10 point, without bold, first line indented) in English,in accordance, where possible, with the IMRAD format (introduction, objective, method, results, discussion and conclusions). Then, the Keywords (10 point bold) are listed, between 5 and 8 (10 point, lowercase and not in bold). Authors are adviced to check international thesauri such as UNESCO or ERIC. Following the abstract and keywords, the article should include the translation of both into Spanish (*Resumen* and *Descriptores*) or English, depending on the original language of the article.

It is important to remember the value of reflecting carefully on the choice of title and the wording of the abstract of the articles. The text of the article then follows in 12 point.

3) The start of each paragraph will be intended in 0.5 cm. The text will not be justified. Headings should be in lowercase 14 point bold and in line, not intended. Subheadings will be in lowercase 12 point bold and in line, not intended. Finally, lower-level subheadings will be in lowercase 12 point normal text, and in-line, not indented.

4) Following the APA model, the References list will be at the end of the article, in alphabetical order by surname, naming all the authors up to a maximum of twenty, with the second line indented. If the number of authors of a publication exceeds twenty, the first nineteen authors should be listed in the reference, followed by ellipses and the last author.

It is not necessary to indicate the geographical location of the publisher. The original title of foreign publications should be included next to their English translation in square brackets. The date of retrieval of an online publication should only be indicated if the content is designed to change over time and the page is not archived.

Some examples are given below:

- **Books:**

  Genise, N., Crocamo, L., & Genise, G. (2019). *Manual de psicoterapia y psicopatología de niños y adolescentes [Manual of Psychotherapy and Psychopathology of Children and Adolescents]*. Editorial Akadia.

- **Journal articles:**

  Siegel, H. (2002). Philosophy of Education and the Deweyan Legacy. *Educational Theory*, *52* (3), 273-280. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2002.00273.x

- **Chapters in multiauthor books:**

  Mendley, D. M. (2005). The Research Context and the Goals of Teacher Education. In M. Mohan & R. E. Hull (Eds.), *Teaching Effectiveness* (pp. 42-76). Educational Technology Publications.

- **References to web page:**

  Guarino, B. (2019, January 3). How will humanity react to alien life? Psychologists have some predictions. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2017/12/04/how-will-humanity-react-to-alien-lifepsychologists-have-some-predictions

  U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *U.S. and world populatíon dock. U.S. Department of Commerce*. Retrieved July 3, 2019, from https://www.census.gov/popclock/

5) References in the body of the article are written in an abbreviated way that differs from what is used in the Reference list. Specifically, if the reference is a direct quotation, the text must be enclosed in quotation marks and, usually at the end, the author's last name, year and page number are placed in parentheses: (Taylor, 1994, p.

93). If it is not a direct quotation, and so is not enclosed in quotation marks, the page number will be omitted: (Taylor, 1994). When the author's name is given in the text he/she will not be included in the parenthesis: According to Taylor (1994, p. 93), culture ... When an idea is supported by several authors, they will be separated by semicolons: (Taylor, 1994; Nussbaum, 2012).

To quote several works by one author, only the years will be added after the author, with letters added if it is necessary to distinguish between publications from the same year: (Taylor, 1994, 1996a, 1996b).

When citing works by 3 or more authors, only the first one is cited followed by et al.

Textual quotes will be written in-line if they have fewer than 40 words. If the quotation has 40 words or more, it will be placed in a separate paragraph, without quotation marks, indented by 0.5 cm and in the body text style in a typeface one point smaller. Following the quotation, the author, the year and the page are added in parentheses. The material quoted is reproduced textually, including spelling and punctuation.

Other authors' texts will be quoted following the criterion of consulting the originals that are written in those languages and using their official translation when such text has also been edited in the other language. If this official translation is not available, the quoted text will be offered to the readers translated by the author of the article (noting that the translation belongs to the author of the article), or by the sworn translator hired by the journal.

The use of endnotes will be limited. They must have correlative numbering, using the automatic system in Word and they will be placed after the body of the article and before the References that list everything cited in the text.

6) To highlight a word, italics will be used. Underlining or bold should not be used.

7) The number of lists, diagrams, tables and graphs in the text should be limited. These will be called Tables or Graphs. In any case, they must be where they should be in the article and always in black and white. In tables, columns should be aligned using tabs (only one tab per column). When quoted in the text (e.g. "as we see in Figure 1 on core subjects"), only the first letter will be capitalized, while at the top of the Table or Figure the whole word will be in small caps, in 12 point capital with Arabic numerals, followed by a point, writing the title in normal text.

The text within the table will be written in the same typeface as the normal text, not in italics or bold, and in 9 point. The source of the table or figure will be placed below it, without a space of separation, stating the Source, colon, surnames, comma and year, or saying Own elaboration.

Graphs and tables, in addition to appearing where they should in the article, have to be sent in their original editable format whenever possible. The images sent must be of high quality (300 dpi).

Equations will be centered, separated from the main text by two lines. They should be referenced in the text, stating the number of the equation; therefore, they will be accompanied by Arabic numerals, aligned to the right and in parentheses in the same line.

The article will conclude with a list of the bibliographical references of all the works cited, except for the works cited whose authors include one of the authors of the article. In these cases, these works will be listed in the version with names of the authors, while in the anonymous ones they will not be included in the references, although they will appear in the text, where they will appear as follows: (Author, 2022, p. 39). Citation of publications belonging to journals or publishers considered "predatory", i.e. those that lack a rigorous and quality scientific evaluation system (e.g. double-blind peer review) and whose main purpo-

se is not to disseminate knowledge but to obtain an economic profit by charging publication fees to authors. Lists of predatory publishers and journals can be consulted at: https://beallslist.net/

Finally, a brief biography of the authors should be included, of a maximum of ten to fifteen lines, which should mention their ORCID and the main aspects of their academic career, current academic situation, university where they obtained their higher academic degree, as well as the contact telephone number of the Editor, which will not be made public.

C.2. In addition to research articles, the **revista española de pedagogía** wishes to keep up to date by publishing, in various formats, other works and relevant information in pedagogical science. For this reason, it publishes reviews of books, current news, brief commentaries on educational problems, readers› comments on articles published in the last year, etc. These must all be sent to the journal using the procedure described in the next section. The reviews, always on recent books from relevant publishers, will be between 1200 and 1700 words and must be submitted along with a copy of the book reviewed. They will be headed by the book›s details as follows:

Villardón-Gallego, L. (Coord.) (2015). *Competencias genéricas en educación superior*. Narcea. 190 pp.

Commentaries will be of moderate length. The analysis of published articles will be sent, from the journal, to the author of the analysed article, so that he/she can prepare a response.

D. Correspondence with authors and evaluation of originals

Papers must be sent to: director.rep@unir.net. Authors must send two Word files: the first one will not disclose the identity of the author or any self-references that reveal his or her name; the second file must include this information. Along with these files, authors must send a document containing a declaration of authorship, transfer of copyright, etc., which can be downloaded from the journal's website.

Due to the high number of papers sent to the journal, papers may only be submitted within the 4 following time frames:

- 10th to 30th January
- 1st to 30th April
- 10th June to 10th July
- 1st to 30th October

Special deadlines may be set for public calls for papers for monographic issues. Articles will not be accepted outside of these time frames and anyone who does send one will not receive a reply. Reviews, news, etc. may be submitted all year round.

The assessment process is objective and impartial. To this end, the "double-blind" principle is applied, ensuring that reviewers are unaware of the identity of authors whose articles they are reviewing, and authors, likewise, are unaware of who is reviewing their papers. External reviewers will work in the assessment process to guarantee expert opinions.

Authors will receive confirmation of receipt of their article within 15 days of emailing their work to director.rep@unir.net. Approximately three weeks after this notification, they will be sent the results of the initial evaluation. The time frame established for completing the review process is four months from the date the article was confirmed as received. After this deadline, the author will ordinarily be informed of the final outcome of the assessment. If the outcome is positive, it is important to bear in mind that the journal will not normally publish papers by the same author within a period of two years following the publication of his or her paper, nor will topics that have been addressed in special issues be accepted within the same period. If the outcome is negative, please be reminded that the experts do not review authors, whose identities

are unknown, but rather the specific papers. This allows authors whose papers have not been accepted to submit other papers at a later date. Any papers received will not be returned.

When a paper is accepted, the author will be required to send a printed copy of the final text, attaching an explanation of how he or she has incorporated the observations reached, as the case may be. The author will send an editable Word document with the final text to the aforementioned email: director.rep@unir.net.

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E. Dissemination of published papers

Once the papers have been published in the **revista española de pedagogía**, authors can contribute to dissemination tasks, both by supporting the ones that the journal itself carries out and by their own initiative. Specifically:

1) The **revista española de pedagogía** has profiles on the main social networks (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn), where it disseminates the papers it publishes, consequently we recommend that authors follow the journal on these networks and share their publications.

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   - https://twitter.com/REPedagogia
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2) In addition, our journal is part of the Aula Magna 2.0 academic blog (http://cuedespyd.hypotheses.org/), where entries on topics of interest for educational research, as well as reviews of articles are regularly published, which contribute to their diffusion.

3) It is also advisable to use academic social networks (ResearchGate, Academia, university repositories, etc.), uploading the articles when the embargo period (one year) has elapsed.

4) Articles have a one-year embargo period before becoming freely available on the web. These articles could be offered freely immediately, after an economic agreement with the journal.

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