ON EMULATION:
ILLUMINATING A NEO-ARISTOTELIAN APPROACH TO CHARACTER EDUCATION THROUGH ROLE MODELLING

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Master Thesis Applied Ethics
Utrecht University
June 2020

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Abstract

Plagued by a climate emergency, unsustainable consumerism, systemic racism, sexism, humanitarian disasters, rising inequality, populism and genocides, modern society is facing a crisis of moral character. In an effort to cultivate a more hopeful future, and enhance both personal and societal flourishing, a form of moral education known as character education has gained prominence. This paper defends an explicitly neo-Aristotelian approach to character education, namely one which seeks to morally transform pupils' characters by imbuing them with substantive ethical ideals in the form of virtues. In advancing this position, I reject the situationist objection that character is illusory by using findings in experimental psychology to support the existence of mixed character traits. Evidence suggests few people are fully virtuous or vicious, but a combination of both. I argue that the method of moral role modelling by teachers, involving admiration and subsequent emulation by pupils, offers particular promise for facilitating virtuous character development, and consider how this strategy can best be actualised in schools. I propose that role modelling by senior leadership ought also to be a required component of character education if role modelling is to be effective, and suggest two arguments to support this claim. As a top-down approach to virtue cultivation, role modelling by senior leadership thus offers a new perspective with which to advance the central aim of neo-Aristotelian character education: teaching children how to be good people.

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Introduction

There is a wealth of empirical evidence to suggest that moral exemplars influence our moral development, identity and attitudes (Bucher 1998, 619). Amongst young people, many presume these exemplars, or role models, constitute those famed for their musical or sporting prowess, yet in reality, studies show that stars such as Ariana Grande, Harry Styles or Lionel Messi merely exert a secondary influence (ibid.). The primary examples sighted predominately derive from the same "social neighbourhood', such as parents, grandparents and siblings (ibid., 621). However, whilst identifiable by the children themselves, these role models may not offer the degree of moral guidance needed for effective moral education, or may be devoid of explicitly moral substance altogether and admired more for their talents than virtues. In the absence of distinctly *moral role models* and sources of ethical authority, appropriate exemplars may need to be found elsewhere.

Taking inspiration from Aristotle, it might be the case that most of us are already disposed to act "at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive and in the right way" (*NE* 1106b20-25), and have developed the deep features of virtuous character that will aid our human flourishing. If true, we can be confident that there are sufficient role models to act as sources of emulation for those in more elementary stages of moral development. Yet the current state of modern society, infused with a climate crisis, unsustainable consumerism, systemic and institutional racism, sexism, humanitarian crises, poverty, populism and genocides, suggests the picture is somewhat gloomier. The contemporary world, it seems, is facing a "crisis of moral character" (Walker 2020, 1). This does not necessarily imply that most humans are moral failures, but that, possessed with what shall be called "mixed" characters, most of us are neither fully virtuous nor fully vicious (Miller 2014, 167). Bridging this "character gap" (ibid. 2017) and aiding the cultivation of positive character traits may thus fall within the remit of education. Teaching good character appears more necessary than ever.

Due to this moral void, the idea that education ought to extend beyond academic subjects and also teach pupils how to be good people has gained prominence. In this paper, I am chiefly concerned with supporting a form of moral education known as neo-Aristotelian character education (ACE). This approach aims to morally transform pupils' characters by imbuing them with substantive ethical ideals in the form of virtues. Teaching pupils how to

embody these virtues and thus improve their mixed characters will ideally enhance both personal and societal flourishing, or well-being. Whilst the education of virtue in this explicitly neo-Aristotelian sense can take a number of forms, I will be dedicated to expounding the method of role modelling, and in particular the part that both teachers and senior leaders can play in this. It is worth noting that whilst "virtually no prominent (contemporary) philosopher writes much about education" (Nussbaum 2016, 311), neo-Aristotelian character education has had a revival of late and been supported by prominent educationalists including Kristján Kristjánsson (2006, 2016, 2018), Wouter Sanderse (2012, 2013, 2020), David Carr (2007, 2011), Lawrence Walker (2014, 2020) and Christian Miller (2014, 2017). The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues at Birmingham University, to which many of these academics are affiliated, is also dedicated to such a pursuit and has put ACE on the map in terms of both educational policy and practice. Throughout this paper, I shall largely appeal to these influences.

In order to add value to the debate surrounding ACE, I aim to respond to the question of *whether role modelling by senior leadership is required for advancing a neo-Aristotelian account of moral character education*. Whilst the general need for role modelling has been supported by empirical evidence which has replicated in numerous studies and across different countries (Kristjánsson 2006a, 38), there is very little research regarding the importance of role modelling from teachers (see Timmerman 2009), despite strong endorsement from the ACE community. In addition, there seems to be neither research nor academic papers which focus on role modelling from educational leaders in the context of ACE. However, given the personal and societal need for better character education outlined above, it is vital that schools and educational policy makers consider how they can best contribute to this character development. Neglecting the positive influence that role modelling from senior leadership may have on effectively implementing ACE could be short sighted.

Given these concerns, my central thesis will involve first defending the position that the education of virtue from a neo-Aristotelian perspective is morally desirable. I shall then proceed to argue that, due to the relationship between the flourishing of the self and the flourishing of others, educating children to be virtuous depends in part on virtuous adults. Specifically, I will propose that whilst virtuous role modelling by teachers is a useful method of character education, alone it is not enough to ensure it is effective. In light of this, I will argue that role modelling from senior leadership is required for advancing neo-Aristotelian

character education, both because senior leaders ought to act as moral and professional role models for other teachers, and because they are responsible for championing the moral ethos of a school. Importantly, for the purposes of this paper, senior leaders will be defined as headteachers and deputy heads, but may also include heads of both academic and pastoral departments. In addition, in line with the nature of applied ethics, "required" carries both practical and normative connotations.

In what follows, I will first expound Aristotle's influence on moral education (Section 1). This will involve delving into the history of earlier incarnations of character education, in particular contemporary character education (CCE). I shall highlight the problems of moral relativism associated with CCE, and how its emphasis on moral pluralism created educational paralysis and value neutrality. By suggesting reasons why a more philosophically and psychologically comprehensive account of character education is needed, I shall then explain the key components of neo-Aristotelian character education (ACE). Having laid the groundwork, I will then start to advance my thesis more formally. I will begin by defending why ACE is a desirable form of character education by drawing upon two arguments in favour of it and their corresponding counter arguments (Section 2). The first concerns supporting why cultivating a virtuous character contributes to the flourishing of both self and community. Here, I will respond to the objection that character is illusory by highlighting findings in experimental psychology in favour of mixed character traits. The second argument involves furthering the empirical credibility of ACE though appeal to Kristján Kristjánsson's psychologically grounded form of virtue-based naturalism. Whilst some have objected that the effects of ACE on flourishing are hard to measure, I will propose that the metaphysically realist nature of virtue makes it an ideal candidate for empirical measurement and cite some possible ways forward.

Building on the success of my argumentative strategy in Section 2, I will then inductively argue for the conclusion that *role modelling by senior leadership is a required component of ACE* (Section 3). In justifying the argument's most contentious premises, I will suggest that the relationship between role model and learner is able to make visible the connection between the well-being of self and others, and further that teachers specifically are well suited and situated to being subjects of the cognitively enhanced process of emulation central to role modelling. However, if ACE is to be both cohesive and effective, role modelling of virtuous character traits by senior leadership is also strongly needed. In light of these considerations, I will then offer some recommendations for teacher training, further research

and policy (Section 4). It is worth noting that whilst the concept of virtue has played a part in many ethical theories, this thesis will refer to the distinctly neo-Aristotelian conception of virtue ethics, rather than the neo-Millian or neo-Kantian appeals to virtue (Sanderse 2012, 74). Consequently, unless specified, both virtue ethics and character education will imply "neo-Aristotelian". Finally, it should be highlighted that the scope of this paper is limited to expounding the stated arguments and their objections, although I acknowledge there may be other compelling critiques.

1   The Aristotelian Turn in Moral Education

Before I begin to advance my thesis, it will be important to situate it within the context of moral education itself. In essence, moral education contrasts to other forms of education in that it aims not to enhance subject knowledge, but to help children become good people. Whilst I appreciate there have been many influential approaches to moral education, such as values clarification (Pozdol and Pasch 1976), cognitive development (Kohlberg 1958) and care ethics (Gilligan 1982; Noddings 1984), the scope of this paper does not suffice to cover them all. This section will therefore be limited to examining Aristotle's influence in the field.

Kristján Kristjánsson, a leading figure in character education, describes moral education as a "multi-dimensional endeavour" that employs elements from moral philosophy, psychology and education (2016a, 1). He claims that these domains provide the normative goals; explain the conditions under which these can be achieved; and how best to actualise them. Interestingly, many recent developments in these areas have been influenced, to a greater or lesser extent, by Aristotle, thus signalling an "Aristotelian turn" in moral education (ibid). Take moral philosophy for example, following Elizabeth Anscombe's proposal in "Modern Moral Philosophy" (1958) that ethics dedicated to duty and obligation, such as that linked to utilitarianism and Kantianism, ought to be abandoned, focus has predominantly shifted to forms of virtue ethics, particularly as regards virtue-based naturalism (which I shall expound further in Section 2). However, instead of dismissing notions of duty altogether, many virtue ethicists have sought to explain it within a virtue ethical framework. Once such example is Rosalind Hursthouse, who claims that one's duty, i.e. what one ought to do, is what the fully virtuous agent would do in that situation (1999, 104). Anscombe's position may thus be better understood as signalling a shift to neo-Aristotelian ways of thinking. Furthermore, in moral psychology, this Aristotelian renaissance has encouraged the inclusion of emotions as core,

and potentially rational, components of the good life. Much unlike perspectives prominent in early twentieth century thought, which tended to favour pure reason and separate it from emotion, most contemporary cognitive views "convey a message that emotional disengagement is tantamount to moral impoverishment" (Kristjánsson 2016a, 2).

This sentiment that emotion is potentially rational, educatable and actively involved in cultivating one's moral character is distinctly Aristotelian in influence. In *The Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle proposes that states of character are "things in virtue of which we stand well or badly with reference to the passions" (1105b25). Because moral virtues are intermediate states lying in a mean between the vices of excess and deficiency (1107a), they are not in themselves passions, but do require having feelings which are proportional or appropriate responses to them. Moral virtue therefore involves both *feeling* and *doing* "at the right times, with reference to the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, in the right way…what is both intermediate and best" (1106b20-25). Take the example of Alison, a deputy headteacher in charge of pastoral care who has cultivated the virtuous emotional trait of temperance. Situations may still require her to be angry, yet, due to her temperate character, she will know the most appropriate and contextually sympathetic way to respond. In this sense, then, emotion, or more precisely emotional sensitivity, is an essential component of moral virtue.

Aristotelianism has further influenced the realm of values education, particularly that pertaining to character. However, the degree of this influence has varied considerably and been a matter of hot debate. For purposes of explanation, I shall therefore divide character education into contemporary character education (CCE) and neo-Aristotelian character education (ACE). The former is an earlier incarnation and is sympathetic to Aristotelian thinking about ethics and education yet does not fully integrate it into the approach, whereas more recent developments are ardently committed to embedding explicitly neo-Aristotelian ideas in character education, particularly as regards the meaning and development of virtues. Unsurprisingly, it is this latter form which I seek to defend in this paper. However, before I advance this position, it will be important to first expound CCE in further depth.

1.1 Contemporary Character Education

CCE is notoriously hard to define, yet in essence involves "school-directed programmes designed to shape directly and systematically the behaviour of young people by teaching explicitly the non-relativistic values thought to directly bring about good behaviour" (Lockwood 2009, 12). It seeks to turn children into good people through virtuous character formation (Sanderse 2012, 21) and views teaching as a form of normative interaction (ibid., 16). In addition to transferring subject knowledge and related skills, teachers influence pupil development through the moral or immoral behaviour they display. In this sense, morality is extended into the practice of teaching, with the education of virtue becoming an element of all teaching (ibid 20).

Whilst character education had already been influential in the United States, it re-emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, supported by educationalists including Kevin Ryan and Thomas Lickona (1992). They were concerned by an apparent decline in both public and private morality, due in part to the decreasing importance of traditional institutions of moral development, such as churches, coupled with social problems caused by the increasingly individualistic and materialistic attitudes of the youth (Sanderse 2016, 20). They further worried about the influence of logical positivism in educational contexts, which "permeated the universities" (Ryan and Lickona 1992, 9-10) and popularised the anti-realist, non-cognitivist position that objective moral truths did not exist and that, ultimately, morality was a product of personal preference. As a result of this privatisation of morality, and corresponding absence of agreement regarding what moral content ought to be taught, schools often fostered moral relativism or retreated from their role as moral educators altogether (ibid.). In effect, pluralism created moral educational paralysis and value neutrality (Lickona 1991b, 3).

In response to these concerns, proponents of CCE sought to reinvigorate public morality by educating pupils in terms of virtue and character. Taking inspiration from Aristotle's moral philosophy (Lickona 1991, 67), they promoted the idea of schools as moral communities, viewing them as the primary opportunity for moral development. The programmes they designed were committed to objectively grounding morality in human nature and experience, and in this sense upheld a non-relativistic position on what is good. Lickona in particular is highly critical of moral relativism, arguing that:

> Such thinking fails to grasp a fundamental moral truth. There *are* rationally grounded, nonrelative, objectively worthwhile moral values: respect for human life, liberty, the inherent value of every individual person, and the consequent responsibility to care for each other and carry out our basic obligations (Lickona 1991b, 230).

CCE further supports a multidimensional view of the moral agent, where moral knowing, moral feeling and moral action are all integral to character development (Ryan and Lickona 1992, 14). In this sense, both cognition and emotion are elements of virtue.

However, CCE's central focus is not on the meaning of virtue, or its development, but on the *content* of moral education. Proponents of CCE therefore set about devising substantial criteria via which the soundness of moral value and virtuous character could be judged (Sanderse 2012, 21). Two foundational moral virtues highlighted by Lickona are respect and responsibility. He claims they "constitute the core of universal public morality" and have objective worth because they promote both individual and community good (Lickona 1991b, 43). Other virtues, such as honesty, respect and tolerance are considered to be extensions of these; they are "aids to acting respectfully and responsibly" (ibid., 45). In addition, they promote the idea that schools should also devise their own specific list of shared values that they want to teach (ibid., 47).

Whilst prima facie this may sound appealing, upon further analysis the rationale for this choice may appear arbitrary and consequently intellectually unconvincing. Indeed, without the necessary theoretical groundwork to support this process, the choice remains underarticulated and potentially vulnerable to being relative to a teacher or school leader's personal beliefs. Promoting "consensus ethical virtues" many not, therefore, have the objective clout that Lickona and his contemporaries were seeking. Critics have uncovered a further objection to CCE. They claim that in focusing almost exclusively on the content of moral education, they have failed to pay adequate attention to both the theoretical *meaning* of virtues and how they are *developed*. This has resulted in a movement which is both philosophically and psychologically simplistic (Carr and Steutel 1999, 3; Lockwood 2009, 13-32). CCE is considered psychologically simplistic partly because the claims it advances are not supported by psychological research, and further because it does not take seriously the idea that children of different ages have different developmental needs (ibid.). Indeed, "neither the theory, assumptions about learning, nor recommended practices of contemporary character education

advocates are informed by any well-considered, researched based conception of human development" (ibid., 31).

In light of this, some contemporary character educationalists, have attempted to add credibility to the approach by rooting their theoretical assumptions in psychological research. Alan Lockwood, for example, aims to align the development of virtue with the developmental psychology of Lawrence Kohlberg (ibid., 45-66). By incorporating Kohlberg's theory of moral development into character education, he attempts to correlate moral education with developmental stages. This new form of "developmental character education", in empirically emphasising the need for developmental stages, hopes to have addressed many of the criticisms levelled at its predecessor (ibid., 68-70). However, CCE still remains a "philosophically undiscerning and underdeveloped movement" (Kristjánsson 2016a, 2) and "disturbingly short of critical engagement with past and present philosophers" (ibid. 2006, 38).

In order to add philosophical substance, the most recent incarnation of character education seeks to formally appeal to neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics in order to convincingly develop and justify the education of virtue (Sanderse 2012, 22). Proponents of this distinctly, rather than implicitly, neo-Aristotelian version hope to advance its reputation as "a promising perspective…on the educational practicalities of moral formation" (Carr and Steutel 1999, 244), thereby removing its previous stigma as intellectually underarticulated.

1.2   Neo-Aristotelian Character Education

Now that I have situated character education within its contemporary context, I shall expound how neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics can give philosophical credibility to the account. Here, I seek mainly to highlight what it can make visible about character education by describing its perspective on the meaning of virtue, specific examples of virtues and how these virtues develop. I shall also give some initial insights into the suitability of using role modelling as a didactic teaching method to aid virtue cultivation in students-a position I shall develop further in Section 3. Once expounded, I will move on to a defence of neo-Aristotelian character education (ACE), and my argument proper, in the following sections.

A number of leading neo-Aristotelian academics, including Julia Annas, Martha Nussbaum and Alistair McIntyre, have sought to emphasise the link between Aristotle and

moral education. In different ways, they advocate combining Aristotelian ideas of virtue, moral development and flourishing, with modern notions of such concepts (Sanderse 2012, 170). This oscillation between ancient-Greek and modern interpretations is considered essential if Aristotelianism is to remain relevant to contemporary education. Championing this integration are educational philosophers Kristján Kristjánsson, Wouter Sanderse and David Carr. Their ideas in support of ACE have recently gained prominence in educational theory, policy and practice, and it is to them that I shall predominantly appeal throughout this thesis.

As regards the meaning of virtue, it may be helpful to begin with Aristotle himself. In essence, he divides the virtues necessary for human flourishing into two types, intellectual and moral (*NE* 1103a5). The intellectual virtues are rational and taught, whilst the moral virtues are not rational in themselves but can follow reason (specifically phronesis) and require practice. Moral virtue is defined by Aristotle as "…a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by reason, and by that reason by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it." (*NE* 1107a). Virtue is therefore a persisting feature of a person, involving a disposition to feel and act in a particular way.

Dispositional virtues, such as generosity, influence how we both feel and act. Virtues develop though the feelings and actions which fortify them, and are weakened by feelings and actions which contradict them (Annas 2011, 9). Both habits of emotion *and* habits of action are therefore central to virtue cultivation, which suggests there may be a behavioural component in the concept of emotion (Sanderse 2012, 84). Take courage, actualising this is the correct response to the emotion of fear. If a habit is made out of this way of acting, reasoning and feeling, and Aristotle's sentiment that "one swallow does not make a summer" (*NE* 1098a15) is upheld, the virtue becomes a *deep* characteristic, intrenched in the fabric of a person (Annas 2011, 9). In this sense, a virtue is also a *reliable* disposition (ibid.). If a person has cultivated the virtue of honesty, she acts honestly and has honest feelings. She "…chooses, where possible to work with honest people, to have honest friends, to bring up her children to be honest. She disapproves of, dislikes, deplores dishonesty…and so on" (Hursthouse 2003).

Aristotle's definition also highlights how the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom, or *phronesis*, is key to working out the mean, or virtue. Akin to a form sense-perception, and informed by life experience, *phronesis* "yields an ability to understand and grasp the salient features, the practical meaning, of the concrete particulars" (Nussbaum 2001, 305). A person

of practical wisdom, is synonymous with a person of good character, since the former entails the ability to feel and act according to the relevant virtue in a particular situation. The *phronimos* will therefore be concerned with such things as justice, courage and generosity and align desires with these (ibid., 306). Importantly, Aristotle claims that "it is not possible to be good in the strict sense without practical wisdom, or practically wise without moral virtue" (*NE* 1144b30-2). What he means by this is that, in the case of moral virtue, "with the presence of one quality, practical wisdom, will be given all the virtues" (1145a1-2). This is often called the unity of the virtues thesis. It implies that person of unqualified goodness, or full virtue, will possess all virtues. Practical wisdom "determines the end", i.e. the golden mean, and the virtues make us "do things that lead to the end" (1145a5).

In light of this conception of virtue, it is important to define which virtues ought to be taught and cultivated in schools. Here, I turn to the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues who lead the field of ACE. The Jubilee Centre is an interdisciplinary research centre within the School of Education at the University of Birmingham in the UK. It uses data-rich research to inform and craft resources for teaching character education in schools, with the aim to enhance both individual and societal flourishing. They have compiled and subdivided a number of virtues of both historical pedigree and relevance to schools, that teachers can use as a guide. Due to my explicit emphasis on teaching *good character*, my focus here is primarily on the stated moral virtues and *phronesis* (practical wisdom): compassion, courage, gratitude, honesty, humility, integrity, justice, respect. Other subsets of these virtues, such as civic virtues, will be important to teach when conceptualising character education as a whole, yet discussion of these remains outside the scope of this paper. The following table clarifies the central virtues in the Jubilee Centre's character curriculum:

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF CHARACTER

Intellectual Virtues	Moral Virtues	Civic Virtues	Performance Virtues
Character traits necessary for discernment, right action and the pursuit of knowledge, truth and understanding.	Character traits that enable us to act well in situations that require an ethical response.	Character traits that are necessary for engaged responsible citizenship, contributing to the common good.	Character traits that have an instrumental value in enabling the intellectual, moral and civic virtues.
Examples:	*Examples:*	*Examples:*	*Examples:*
autonomy; critical thinking; curiosity; judgement; reasoning; reflection; resourcefulness.	*compassion; courage; gratitude; honesty; humility; integrity; justice; respect.*	*citizenship; civility; community awareness; neighbourliness; service; volunteering.*	*confidence; determination; motivation; perseverance; resilience; teamwork.*

Practical Wisdom is the integrative virtue, developed through experience and critical reflection, which enables us to perceive, know, desire and act with good sense. This includes discerning, deliberative action in situations where virtues collide.

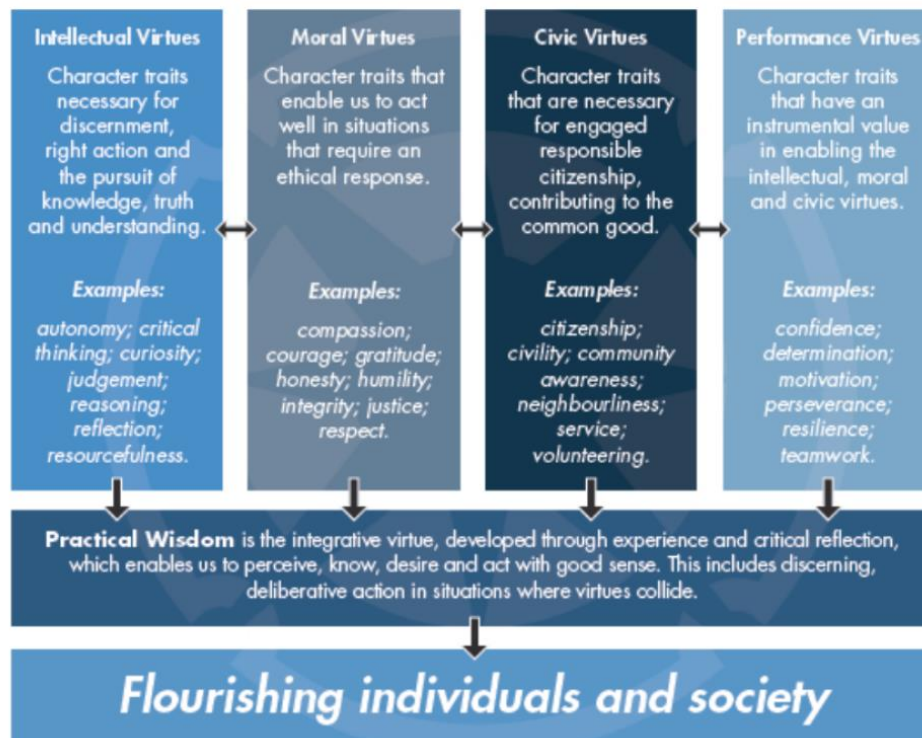## Flourishing individuals and society

Figure 1. *The Building Blocks of Character* in the Jubilee Centre's Framework for Character Education in Schools 2017

Having meaningfully defined virtue and specified examples, the question for ACE now involves how the intellectual virtue of phronesis and corresponding moral virtues can be developed and taught in schools? Addressing these questions, which are key to increasing the philosophical and psychological credibility of character education, involves theoretical appeal to a neo-Aristotelian conception of moral development, combined with empirical support from elements of moral psychology. Whilst there are numerous ideas I could draw upon, for purposes of relevance to my thesis, my explanation will be limited to those with links to role-modelling, such as the skill analogy.

In book two of the *Ethics* Aristotle likens the learning of virtue to the learning of a practical skill. He proposes that, analogously to a skill, one learns to exhibit the moral virtues by exercising them (1103a30), which in effect means we become good by doing good things. Like virtues, learning a particular skill requires practice, experience and teaching (Annas 2011, 10). Initially the learner depends on the teacher for guidance and tuition, then gradually as

proficiency improves the learner becomes more independent, until eventually the learner transitions to the expert. Importantly, the aim is not to merely impersonate the teacher's skills in a clone-like manner, but to acquire for oneself their expertise through dedicated emulation (ibid.). This is the difference between mindless habituation and emulation.

A further factor in the acquisition of skill and virtue relates to the giving of reasons. Particularly with complex skills, such as those pertaining to moral virtue, the interaction between expert and learner will necessitate the giving of reasons (ibid., 19). The learner needs to understand not only *how* to do X, but also *why*. Reasons, as one medium of explanation, enable the expert to convey how to act generously, but also why this is valued (providing they do so with an appropriate degree of articulacy). The importance of reason-giving has also been highlighted by Roger Teichmann who refers to it as a "language-game" and method to mitigate against subjectivity (2011, 5). This is partly because the giving of reasons implies "there are (sufficiently) objective criteria for what count as good and bad reasons" (ibid.). The neo-Aristotelian model of moral development therefore entails that the learning and teaching of virtue, depends in part on facilitating *understanding* through the giving and receiving of reasons (Annas 2011, 19). A sentiment that is echoed by key proponents of ACE Sanderse (2012) and Kristjánsson (2006). Stimulating virtue and moral reasoning through emulation and the giving of explanations is thus partly how virtue ethics explains how children evolve into virtuous adults (Annas 2011, 21). Whilst Aristotle cannot be credited with a full developmental model as such, his ideas remain helpful in illuminating how virtuous character ought to be cultivated.

Concerning the teaching of virtue in schools, proponents of ACE cite a number of didactic methods including Socratic dialogue, the use of storytelling and the arts, and role modelling (Sanderse 2012). Whilst all have been met with academic support, role modelling in particular is now considered to be a sophisticated method of moral development. Concerned that previous forms of character education failed to make students morally good, Kristjánsson argues that:

> children must be taught about right and wrong in a more straightforward manner, moral virtue must seep into them from an early age like dye into wool, and they must, *inter alia*, learn to take their cue from worthy mentors and moral exemplars (2006a, 37).

Correspondingly, research has found that a teacher's ability to model and explain certain virtues, does actually contribute to the development of these virtues in pupils (Kristjánsson 2006a; Miller 2017). This implies that the role of a subject teacher cannot be easily disentangled from the character they have morally, all elements of their attitude and conduct send out a moral message to pupils (Kristjánsson 2006a, 38). *If* someone is a good teacher, *then* they are a good person (the extent of this goodness will be expounded further in Section 3). This condition is important as ultimately moral exemplars are meant to inspire emulation in pupils; if a pupil emulates a good teacher, then they too may develop morally. The kind of character a teacher has is therefore crucial to their suitability as role model (Carr 2011, 258). Notice here the emphasis on *emulation* again, the idea is not to merely imitate role models since this would be an "ethically important form of admiration", but to learn to "waken yourself to your "higher self"-the higher ideals to which you can aspire" (Kristjansson 2006a, 41).

To illustrate the idea that ideals rather than a person ought to be the subject of emulation, consider Plato's *Euthyphro* dilemma in which Socrates questions "Is the pious loved by the gods because it is pious, or is it pious because it is loved by the gods?" (Plato 1981, 10a). The first horn intuitively lends itself to support the claim that it is the *ideals* in themselves which are worthy of emulation, rather than because they were exhibited by a particular person. Socrates response in the dialogue, suggests a similar outcome for piety-it is loved because of its intrinsic value (Kristjánsson 2006a, 41). Conveying this to pupils will require, as previously mentioned, the giving of reasons (ideally by someone who has cultivated practical wisdom). This highlights the cognitive element of emulation in a way that simply pointing to good examples would not. For the remainder of this paper, "role modelling" will imply this cognitively enhanced conception of the term.

Having given some insights into how neo-Aristotelian character education might address questions regarding the meaning and development of virtue, I shall now proceed to defend my thesis. The following sections will aim to address two central questions. Firstly, why is neo-Aristotelian character education desirable? Secondly, how might it best be achieved? In light of this, in Section 2 I will offer key arguments to support the desirability of ACE; whilst Section 3 will advance my position that the method of role modelling, in particular from senior leadership, is required if ACE to be cohesive and effective.

2 The Education of Virtuous Character from a Neo-Aristotelian Perspective is Morally Desirable

In order to ascertain whether role-modelling from senior leadership is indeed necessary for advancing a neo-Aristotelian account of character education, I will first need to defend why such an approach to moral education is desirable. In this section I present two arguments in favour of the philosophical and psychological credibility of ACE and their corresponding counter arguments. The first relates to why character education is conducive to living a flourishing human life both for oneself and the community. Whilst the second aims to advance the empirical foundations of ACE by objectively grounding it in a psychological form of virtue-based naturalism.

2.1 Character Contributes to the Flourishing of Self and Others

The claim that character education is essential to living a flourishing human life is reflected in the concept of *eudaimonia*, usually translated as flourishing or well-being. Aristotle equates this to "living well and faring well" (*NE* 1095a18), and considers it an end in itself, the highest good to which all other goods aim (ibid., 1097a20-30). This final end, flourishing, is achievable though practicing actions which engage with our characteristic activity which is tied to our function. As Aristotle claims all things have a function, ascertaining the nature of this is key to ascertaining the good. What is good is that which performs its function, or *ergon,* excellently (1097b25). Aristotle's function argument proposes that reason is the unique characteristic activity of humans. It being, "an activity of the soul which follows or implies reason" (1098a8). With soul more precisely representing a kind of psyche. To reason well implies living well, by using the rational intellectual virtue of practical wisdom to determine the salient features of a situation and the appropriate virtuous course of feeling and action. In essence, then, *eudaimonia* involves engaging with our rational soul by habitually practicing the virtues. Well-being is therefore a product of virtuous character cultivation.

Interestingly, recent research on our cognitive make up supports the idea of a faculty, much like practical wisdom, which is able to "moralise emotions into virtues of character" (Sanderse 2012, 25; 102). This suggests that despite Aristotle's famously problematic assumptions about teleology and final ends, many elements of his thought may still remain plausible today. Indeed, by appealing to these Aristotelian themes, contemporary eudaimonist virtue theories maintain that "the virtues benefit their possessor, that they are necessary and

(with a bit of luck) sufficient for eudaimonia, for living well as a human being" (Hursthouse 2007, 159). If this is correct, and virtuous behaviour is constitutive of well-being, then moral education focused on virtue cultivation will also contribute to pupil flourishing. Put simply, developing virtuous character traits *at least* contributes to, if not entails, a modern conception of *eudaimonia*.

As regards the latter, Julia Annas has suggested that it is both viable and natural to conceive of well-being in eudaimonist terms (2011, 120). She claims that all people are seeking well-being either implicitly or explicitly, and already consider this in relation to goal-based thinking. She proposes that structured ethical reflection on how one's life is going generally reveals a number of shorter- and longer-term goals. Whilst Annas maintains that goals regarding one's life as a whole are indeterminate, the purpose of ethical thinking is to refine this as yet vague idea into something more determinate (ibid., 124-5). The eudaimonist conception of well-being may consequently still be a realistic stance to hold. On this account, a "flourishing life" relates to how life is lived overall, which is largely due to character. As the virtues are a matter of character, the kind of character disposition cultivated will influence well-being (ibid., 151). Whilst it would be too much of a stretch to claim ACE alone is sufficient for flourishing, its focus on virtuous character cultivation can be reasonably taken to suggest that it is a necessary component. Without being taught how to develop such a character, well-being in this neo-Aristotelian sense would be unattainable.

Annas' claim that virtuous character is a precondition for a flourishing life can further be supported by developments in positive psychology, a movement committed to "developing interventions that build the enabling conditions of life" (Seligman 2010, 233). Martin Seligman, a leading figure in the field, has written extensively on what is considered the aim of positive psychology-flourishing. His study involving over a million participants who took the "VIA Signature Strengths Questionnaire" found that once people's key five strengths had been highlighted, they were able to use these strengths to address things they did not enjoy which in the long run enhanced their well-being. Their task was to:

> "think of something that you have to do at school or at work every week that you don't like doing. Given that you have found your signature strengths, think of a way of doing that task using your highest strength" (ibid., 238).

These strengths included things such as kindness, fairness and social intelligence. Furthermore, this empirical evidence suggests that "positive interventions, unlike negative ones, tend to be addictive" and further that many "positive exercises…are self-sustaining" (ibid., 237). What this means is that equipping people with tools, such as an understanding of how their strengths can be helpful in difficult situations, can contribute to flourishing through their positive motivational force. This emphasis on how positive traits contribute to well-being, bodes well for this modern eudaimonist form of character education.

Yet flourishing, or well-being, is not restricted to the self. In line with Aristotle's emphasis on the link between the flourishing *polis* and the flourishing individual in the *Politics*, the neo-Aristotelian suggests that one's own well-being is intrinsically connected to the well-being of others. For example, a recent study that aimed to identify possible moral exemplars from *Time* magazine's list of influential people of the last century, found that those considered moral exemplars acted primarily in the pursuit of communal interests which they considered to have intrinsic value (Walker 2020, 11). The apparent flourishing of these exemplars was a result of their virtuous behaviour towards the community. This indicates that "in exemplary moral character, personal impact and fulfilment are actualized in an integrated form of motivation through promoting others' well-being" (ibid.). In this sense it is impossible to disentangle virtuous behaviour from the polis, which is "not just for living but for living well" (Gottlieb 2009, 194). Proponents of ACE can thus reject egoist assumptions levelled at it, by maintaining that cultivating virtuous character primarily benefits the community. In the context of a school community, or *polis*, the education of virtue will ideally increase pupils' motivation and ability to enhance the well-being of others. In aligning their feelings and actions with virtue, bullying may be reduced, friendships strengthened, and charity and community action engagement increased. Pupils may also choose to pursue a job which benefits others and find less fulfilment in materialistic concerns associated with youth, such as social media. Morally educating pupils' characters clearly benefits society.

Objections

However, the concept of character development has received much criticism from social psychology. In papers including *"Virtue Ethics and the Fundamental Attribution Error"* (1999) and *"The Non-existence of Character Traits"* (2000), Gilbert Harman subjects character ethics to empirical scrutiny to suggest there is no evidence for character traits. He claims

attributing character traits to people is "folk morality", founded on unsubstantiated intuitions that ought to be rejected, and which are a consequence of a failure to appreciate the influence of situational factors (1999, 316). Through this situationist critique, Harman posits that "it may even be the case that there is no such thing as character, no ordinary character traits of the sort people think there are, none of the usual moral virtues and vices" (ibid.). To support his position, he draws upon two experimental studies in moral psychology, the Milgram (1963) and the Good Samaritan (1974) experiments, to demonstrate how troubled or pressured environments can cause people to act "out of character". In essence, the Milgram experiments were conducted after the Second World War to try to explain the behaviour of the Nazis during the Holocaust. They were designed to test how readily participants would obey orders to administer electric shocks, and abandon their usual moral convictions, when subject to authority.

The experiments were inspired by the intuition that obeying orders was not a valid excuse for abhorrent behaviour, as had been a prominent line of defence during the Nuremberg trials (Athanassoulis 2000, 216). Surprisingly, the Milgram experiments showed that most people, in following orders, would similarly inflict considerable harm on others. This caused Harman to assert that behaviour is a result of environment and situational factors, rather than a product of fixed character traits (Harman 1999, 321). He claims that these obedience experiments illustrate "the tendency of *observers* to infer wrongly that actions are due to distinctive robust character traits rather than to aspects of the situation" (2000, 223). If character traits were stable dispositions to act in specific ways, those of good character would not conform to authoritarian pressure and would resist the giving of shocks, yet the experiments showed that character traits did not explain differences in behaviour, situational factors did (1999, 329). This 'fundamental attribution error" assumes that character is robust and immune to interpersonal or social pressures (ibid., 323). Yet in reality, virtuous conduct is reinforced by specific social settings, rather than robust character traits.

In a similar vein, John Doris argues in *Lack of Character* (2002) that experimental psychology empirically discredits the conception of ethical character. He does this by demonstrating how it is illusory to believe that a person in possession of a good character will act ethically, even when put "under substantial pressure to moral failure" (Doris 2002, 1). Also drawing upon findings from Milgram and further the prison experiments of Zimbardo *et al.* (1971), Doris postulates that the problem with character explanations is that "they presuppose

the existence of character structures that actual people do not very often possess" (2002, 6). Focusing on how moral philosophy fails to deeply engage with empirical psychology, he proposes that to remain viable, virtue ethics must account for the "empirical nitty gritty" and align its normative prescriptions with reality (ibid., 4).

This "empirical turn" in ethics and corresponding critique of character has also been championed more recently by Mark Alfano in *Character as Moral Fiction* (2013). He proposes that both the intellectual and moral virtues that many consider to contribute to character are "factitious" in the sense that possessing them is exceedingly rare, and subsequently that the justification for the "explanatory and predictive power" of the virtues rests on a "foundation of sand" (ibid., 82). To support this claim, he cites research which suggests that character traits are fabricated. Studies show that telling people they have a character trait, and praising them for it, can encourage them to simulate the disposition (Alfano 2019). However, Alfano argues this self-fulfilling prophesy is not true virtue or character, but moral fiction. If these objections are correct, then virtue ethics and neo-Aristotelian character education cannot convincingly place such importance on character traits, nor can they feasibly hold that they are constitutive elements of flourishing. Put simply, if character does not exist, then nor can character building (Harman 1999, 328). The implications for a moral educational movement focused solely on this concept may thus be extremely damaging.

In response to such objection, I offer the following rejoinders: firstly, that the criticism is levelled at a notion of *fixed* character traits which misunderstands the concept of character proposed by virtue ethics. The correct *mixed* interpretation of character does not exclude the idea that it may be vulnerable to environment, thus weakening the force of the original objection. Secondly, that due in part to the replicability crisis in psychology, the empirical evidence on which the objection rests is no longer credible.

Regarding the first line of retort, whilst virtue ethics does maintain that it is possible, indeed desirable, to cultivate deep and enduring character dispositions, it does not follow that it also assumes most people have fully done so. This does not mean that one should not aim to be consistently virtuous in our moral feeling and action, but that realistically most people will fail to do this (Miller 2017, 20). In this sense, whilst virtue ethics supports a robust concept of character, it does not necessitate that all people already have a fixed or permanent one, which makes the above position less compelling. Indeed, even Aristotle's account of moral

development concedes that only those who are fully virtuous, the *phronimos*, will consistently act virtuously; the hoi polloi or weak-willed may struggle to resist situational temptations (*NE*, Book VII), such as those contrived in the Milgram experiments.

Remember that these experiments aimed to test whether when instructed to be cruel, people would remain compassionate or succumb to cruelty. They concerned authority, not character. In light of this, it is clear that what the Milgram experiments (if credible) show, is not that character traits do not exist, but that the subjects involved do not have full virtue, so that when put under situational moral pressure, most people will fail to act compassionately (Athanassoulis 2000, 216). This implies that there is a tendency to be overly optimistic when attributing positive character traits, such as compassion, to others. In reality, most people are not fully compassionate, even if they consider themselves to be, which accounts for why they may not act compassionately under pressure. Indeed, even if "full virtue is a stable and fixed disposition that will manifest itself despite difficulties and temptations, there is no reason to suppose that it is a widespread disposition" (ibid, 219).

This idea has gained additional support from Christian Miller, a philosopher who specialises in the empirical study of virtues and vices. Miller draws upon recent findings in experimental psychology to argue that character, far from being predominantly virtuous or vicious, is very much a "mixed bag" (2014; 2017). For example, in a study by Robert Baron, 61% of people who were exposed to the smell of fresh cinnamon rolls to put them in a good mood whilst shopping helped someone in need, compared to 25% whose mood was not so enhanced (Miller 2017, 76). Similarly, when a bad mood was induced in a study by Frank Weyant, 71% of people volunteered for the American Cancer Society, compared to 33% of control participants (ibid.). What data such as this demonstrates is that, whilst a *few* people may be close to virtue, *most* people are not wholly virtuous or vicious, so motivation to help can fluctuate depending on, for example, mood. If most people were fully compassionate, one would expect them to be more reliably altruistic in their actions and motives (ibid.). Therefore, whilst people may like to think of themselves as honest, generous and kind, Miller maintains that this traditional idea of character is mistaken, most are neither moral saints nor morally corrupt, but a combination of both.

In meta-ethical terms this represents an error theory about moral character judgements (Miller 2014, 153). Naturally, comparisons with Harman's fundamental attribution error will

be drawn-yet ironically the error is not, as he supposes, in the attribution of character itself, but to the majority of people having a fixed character. The real "fundamental attribution error" can therefore be formulated as follows:

> At least with respect to moral behaviour, we have a tendency—*not* to overestimate the impact of dispositional factors and underestimate the impact of situational ones—but rather to overestimate the impact of *certain kinds of dispositional factors* and underestimate the impact of *other kinds of dispositional factors*…At least with respect to moral behaviour, we have a tendency to overestimate the impact of *traditional moral character traits* and underestimate the impact of *Mixed Traits, which are neither traditional moral virtues nor traditional moral vices* (ibid., 167).

This means not that character does not exist, but that often it is represented in mixed, rather than fixed, traits. It is highly complex and therefore not suitable for being diagnosed as purely virtuous or vicious, most people have capacities for both simultaneously (2017, 121). As a result, when morally assessing a person, they usually do not meet the criteria for possessing full virtues and vices, i.e. ones that are both cross-situationally consistent and repeatedly stable (2014, 167).

As regards addressing this error Miller suggests that even though character cultivation is a "slow and gradual process", one ought still to try to develop virtues which are stable over time and across situations (2017, 15). Deficient characters need educating, and this education needs to be empirically informed if it is to be effective (2014, 210). As ways to bridge this "character gap", he suggests a number of promising educational strategies to teach virtue, including role modelling and "getting the word out" (2017, 195-218). The former I shall draw upon explicitly in Section 3, the latter exposes how familiarity with common obstacles to virtuous behaviour can help overcome these obstacles. For example, students who were taught about the bystander effect were shown to be 17.5% more likely to help in an emergency two weeks later than those who had not been so informed (ibid., 211). This focus on the method of character development thus makes the case for character education even more compelling. Virtue ethics can still take empirical psychology seriously *and* hold on to the notion of character. Being vulnerable to environment does not undermine the notion of character proposed by neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, only the "uncharitable or overly simplistic" conception of it assumed by situationists Harman and Doris (Miller 2014, 215). Only fully virtuous characters would be able to completely resist environmental temptations. As the

majority of people are not fully virtuous, this accounts for differences in behaviour and motivates the case for character education.

Now to my second line of response. Critics claim experimental results show that people do not possess any character traits. Whilst I have already demonstrated this claim to be misguided, it can further be discredited by appealing to the replicability crisis in social psychology. In essence, it is expected that statistically significant findings in new psychological research replicate. However, it transpires that considerably fewer findings replicate than once presumed, which calls into question the reliability of the methodology and conclusion. For example, Open Science Collaboration attempted to replicate 100 sets of results which they systematically sampled from top psychological journals, yet found only 36% of the original findings replicated and remained credible (Shrout and Rodgers 2018, 489). This replication rate was particularly bad in social psychology.

In light of this, Doris has subsequently admitted the "unfortunate errors" involved in much of his own work (Machery and Doris 2017, 119), whilst Mark Alfano has also acknowledged that much of the psychology he was relying on in *Character as Moral Fiction* does not replicate (2019). Originally, he thought more was attributable to the situation rather than person, yet in rethinking how much of his previous view can be supported empirically, Alfano has become more sympathetic to virtue ethics and the idea of thinking of personalities in reason sensitive terms (ibid.). Given this new possibility of empirical credibility, the notion of mixed character seems more plausible. It is clear that to enhance human flourishing our mixed characters need morally educating in the virtues, thus paving the way for ACE. However, if I am to further convince critics of the desirability of ACE, I will need to expound the empirical support it has gained from moral psychology in more depth. For this I appeal to a psychological form of virtue-based naturalism.

2.2 The Empirical Credibility of Virtue-based Naturalism and its Implications for ACE

One may also observe in one's travels to distant countries the feelings of recognition and affiliation that link every human being to every other human being.

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1155a21-22

Constructing an empirical foundation for the teaching of objective virtue is essential if character education is to avoid the problematic subjectivism which has so far prevailed in moral education1. Indeed, teachers have been prone to adopting a subjectivist attitude to the teaching of virtue. This was perhaps a hangover from post-war educational philosophy which, driven by neo-liberal ideas about the promotion of personal autonomy, regarded any attempt to steer individuals in a particular moral direction as indoctrination (Carr 1999, 32). This attitude of "agnostic neutrality" and fear of coercing pupils by influencing their ideas about ethics, culminated in a belief that morality is a private affair, a matter of personal choice (ibid., 37). This results in moral education which simply introduces pupils to different relative views "in a climate of live-and-let-live omni-tolerance" (ibid., 38). Consequently, if no appeal is made to objective reasons, then pupils are their own arbiters of morality, guilty only of ethical fault by their self-determined relative standards (Sanderse 2012, 171).

This kind of pedagogy thus promotes a form of moral education devoid of substance, which crudely separates apparently subjective non-rational values from objective rational facts. Yet this need not be the case, as Carr proposes that:

> the older Aristotelian distinction between theoretical reasoning and practical deliberation provides a rather deeper insight into the nature of evaluation than the crude empiricist distinction between subjective non-rational values and objective rational facts. In these terms, values are to be seen not as subjective preferences but as principled dispositions or rational commitments, rooted in certain established practices conductive to human flourishing, and tested by their power to sustain and vindicate such practices (Carr 1999, 34-5).

In light of this, *if* it can be demonstrated that the neo-Aristotelian conception of virtue has empirical and thus objective clout, *then* character education may be considered desirable. Whilst I have already made credible the idea of character and mixed traits, I now aim to delve deeper into how virtue may be justified meta-ethically and taught. In attempting to satisfy the aforementioned condition, I will first briefly define ethical naturalism before moving on to a specific defence of psychological virtue-based naturalism, and finally its implications for character education.

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1 The problems of moral subjectivism and appeal of objectivism have been highlighted by Derick Parfit. He maintains that moral facts give us reasons to have particular aims and desires, which then give us reasons for acting (Parfit 2011, 47). Without such a robust foundation, such a motivation may be lacking. In addition, the appeal to objective reasons aims to ensure what we ought to do is not relative to individual wants, whims, or agendas (ibid., 49). Thus, whilst proponents of moral relativism may think their position fosters inclusivity and tolerance, in reality it may undermine these values by allowing all and any views to have equal moral weight.

In essence, ethical naturalists are realists. They argue, through appeal to biological and psychological facts about human nature, that substantial moral facts exist and are constituted by non-moral natural facts (Papineau 2007). They further maintain that moral philosophy must relate to that which is empirically observable, thus distinguishing themselves from intuitionists. In arguing for *natural* moral facts, they seek to oppose G. E. Moore's "open question argument" which proposed that moral facts and natural facts could not be identical. When the natural properties of a situation are highlighted, the open question of whether this property is good or bad will always remain, demonstrating that the natural property and goodness cannot be the same (Moore 1903). However, most moral naturalist realists claim *a posteriori* that Moore's argument illuminates a conceptual, rather than metaphysical, gap. Much like water and H20, two concepts can refer to the same property. In this way they argue that a moral and a natural fact can be identical (Papineau 2007). In light of this, it seems possible for naturalistic realists to "vindicate the claims of ethics without going beyond the natural world", and combine the characteristics of factuality and normativity (Railton 2017, 44).

There have been many attempts to ground morality naturalistically in virtue ethics. Aristotle himself is generally considered a naturalist, yet his notions of biology, which are both teleological and essentialist, are no longer thought to be tenable (Sanderse 2012, 179). In short, his metaphysical teleology is problematic because it presupposes that all of nature has an intrinsic purpose or *telos,* and that all organisms have a final cause. His essentialism could also be thought unpersuasive as taxonomies of natural kinds, which classify humans as rational animals, may not exist at all (ibid.). Despite this, some neo-Aristotelians maintain that biological teleology can be defended, human nature has a purpose, and that virtues lead to flourishing for humans as a biological species (Foot 2001; Carr 2011).

Educational philosopher David Carr for example, holds that even though different societies may have different interpretations of virtues such as courage, courage remains a virtue because the *shared biological nature* of human beings means it is required (2011, 5-6). Previously, Philippa Foot in *Natural Goodness* (2001) argued that flourishing is tied to meeting the characteristic needs of a particular species. In this sense they believe that "ethical evaluations are grounded in and can be derived from natural facts" (Sanderse 2012, 183). Yet biological teleology has been met with criticism. Many feel the idea of nature it involves is more Darwinian than Aristotelian, making ethics more to do with survival and reproduction

than with virtues such as justice (ibid.). This calls into question whether moral facts can be deduced from natural facts in this explicitly biological way, and whether the education of virtue can be justified objectively.

In light of these problems, which I have admittedly mentioned only briefly, other neo-Aristotelians have opted to abandon *metaphysical* teleology whilst retaining an appeal to the notion of ends. By focusing on ends, rather than purpose, they argue that people today are able to comprehend the idea of ends to direct themselves towards, making a modern conception of eudaimonia more persuasive (see Annas 2011, Kristjánsson 2016b). Furthermore, these philosophers aim to still objectively ground morality in nature, but non-naïvely by appealing to psychology rather than biology (McIntyre 1981; Kristjánsson 2007, 2010). This empirically more appealing psychological emphasis on virtue-based naturalism has been particularly influential in the realm of character education. Kristjánsson, for example, hopes that conceptually and empirically grounding virtue in the psychology of human emotion can make visible the idea of the good life, and further act as a solution to the value neutrality and subjectivism prominent in contemporary moral education (2005, 67). He employs empirical psychological research to illuminate the relationship between emotion and virtue, and their influence on human flourishing.

Central to his position is the idea that people share particular emotions because of a shared moral-psychological make-up (Sanderse 2012, 188). On this account, even if people value different things, they are unified in common basic emotional experiences. At a point in moral development, these shared experiences commit people to basic virtues that are essential for human flourishing (ibid.). This emphasis on shared virtues allow Kristjánsson to focus on the features of human morality that transcend local traditions. He argues that these universally applicable virtues ought to be cultivated because they enable people to choose well in elements of experience common to all human lives (Kristjánsson 2010, 8). For example, in the sphere of life to do with bodily pleasures, which all people experience, the virtue of temperance is required. Likewise, in the sphere which concerns fear, courage is the appropriate virtue.

As regards the *education* of objective virtue, Kristjánsson seeks to demonstrate that it is both morally and psychologically justified to teach virtues such as generosity, justice and practical wisdom (2006b). He bases this justification largely on the idea that "the basis of morality [is] to be found in our natural dispositions to have certain emotions" (Kristjansson

2006b, 55), a claim which is supported by psychological research into what he terms "Belief in a Just World" theory (BJW). The conclusion of BJW states that people have an intrinsically motivated desire to believe the world is a just place (ibid.,). Children understand that short term satisfaction is worth delaying for long term gain, and this is because of their belief that the world is inherently just, so justice will be served in the end for themselves and others (Sanderse 2012, 185). Kristjánsson defines desert-based emotions as "an emotion which involves belief about a state of affairs relevant for desert, coupled with a desire for that "desert to be done" (2006b, 59) and subdivides these "desert-based fortunes of others and fortunes of self-emotions" (ibid., 60; 66).

The BJW findings suggests not only that justice-based emotions exist, but further that they are universally prevalent from childhood, which also implies that it is at least possible to cultivate this emotion into the virtue of justice which is itself a "dispositional version of that emotion" (Sanderse 2012, 185). Indeed, by emotionalising the virtue of justice, and thereby tying it to our psychological make-up, Kristjánsson is able to argue that the education of virtue is empirically realistic, so long as it can be shown to children exactly which emotion the virtue is a cultivation of (ibid.). As a consequence of BJW it can also be argued that the education of particular virtues is reliant on a pupil's understanding of which emotion(s) is attached to it-if the relevant emotion cannot be identified, then the virtue cannot be developed (ibid.). In short, if pupils have a particular emotion, then it is at least possible for teachers to help cultivate it into the corresponding virtue; if pupils do not have the emotion, then the cultivation of the virtue will not be possible. This of course does not rule out differences in how strongly inclined pupils are to respond with the given dispositional emotion.

Kristjánsson's argument that many shared emotions are "potential virtues or ingredients in virtues" (2006b, 66) has a number of encouraging implications for education, particularly as regards its ability to acknowledge pluralism without sliding into relativism. As mentioned, the prevailing trend in moral education had been to assume that the observation of moral diversity implied moral subjectivity, and that as a consequence there could be no objective standard to evaluate moral judgements. Not so, Kristjánsson's position makes visible how despite cultural diversity, the fact that people are all members of the same species entails that they share emotional and thus psychological reactions to the same world. Whilst the precise "thick" content of a moral debate may indeed be furnished with relevance to a particular context or culture, the essential ingredients of this debate can be determined by our common human

nature-that is, they *ought* to be about "virtuous functioning in spheres of emotional experiences" (Sanderse 2012, 200). In light of this psychological unity, Kristjánsson maintains that the pluralism thought to be so prevalent in society may not be as ingrained as previously thought. He argues that where there is a moral conflict, this is usually about different interpretations of *shared* virtues, rather than which character traits ought to be considered virtues in the first place (ibid., 188). If correct, this implies that it is the "thick" interpretation of virtue that is the cause of disagreement, not the "thin" more universally applicable account of it.

This idea of thick and thin ethical concepts will be useful to briefly explain (see Williams 1985, 152; Väyrynen 2016). In short, a *thin* concept is one which is purely evaluative; whilst a *thick* concept has both descriptive content and is also evaluative (ibid.). In virtue ethical terms, the general virtue of justice, for example, can be considered a thin concept because it clarifies which disposition is appropriate for a particular sphere of experience; whilst the thick practical interpretation of it is dictated by the particular context. This means that the teaching of virtue can allow for disagreement as to application, whilst still maintaining a criteria and objective standard from which to evaluate such debate. The general virtue remains objective, but its application and precise way the virtue is practiced depends on the context. This suggests Kristjánsson's form of character education is applicable even in a pluralistic society.

Objections

However, this position is not without criticism, and in light of scope I shall concentrate on two objections that I consider the most important. Firstly, it has been highlighted that Kristjánsson's psychological virtue-based naturalism, in mainly focusing on an objective "thin" account of virtue, fails to give meaningful guidance when applied in concrete situations (Sanderse 2012, 189). Secondly, its relevance for educational public policy can further been questioned due to issues with the possible measurability of flourishing and subsequent evaluation of character education programmes. In response to the first point of tension, whilst it may be correct to assert that Kristjánsson's emphasis is on the thin idea of objective virtue, it does not follow that he thinks the thick account is irrelevant. His ideas can be meaningfully compared to the early ideas of Nussbaum, who, in explaining Aristotle's support of non-relative virtues, argues that:

The "thin account" of each virtue is that it is whatever it is to be stably disposed to act appropriately in that sphere. There may be, and usually are, various competing specifications of what acting well, in each case, in fact comes to. Aristotle goes on to defend in each case some concrete specification, producing, at the end, a full or "thick" definition of the virtue (1988, 5).

Whilst Aristotle's support of something does not make it true, it often does mark it out as something which is "a plausible candidate for the truth" (Nussbaum 1988, 3).

For Kristjánsson, this implies that by grounding his psychological realism in objectively thin accounts of virtue, he is able to provide a foundation for a particularist and thus practical application of the virtue. Without such a distinction, it would be unfeasible to argue for an account of objective virtue that is in anyway appealing in a pluralistic setting. Where there is a disagreement about how one ought to go about being, for example, just in a given situation, at least on this account Kristjánsson and his supporters can maintain that these people are arguing about essentially the same thing, about "competing specifications of the same virtue" (Nussbaum 1988, 6). They can then use the framework of the objective standard to evaluate the various interpretations of the virtue, and then use this to guide a process of elimination and revision until a compatible course of action is arrived at. Structuring inquiry in this manner may therefore be enough to remain useful without being dogmatic or indoctrinational.

Furthermore, this position can also be defended with reference to the various examples Kristjánsson gives which attempt to specify the "thick" concrete account of virtue he is accused of ignoring. Much like in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle first specifies the virtue, before expounding what it may demand practically, Kristjánsson does do with reference to his psychologically grounded virtues and their application to the domain of moral education. More specifically, Kristjánsson sets out ways in which emotional education and the associated virtue cultivation may be *taught* in schools. He cites methods including direct teaching, role modelling, the arts, ethos modification, emotion contagion and cognitive reframing, thus furnishing his thin account with some thick practical methodological guidance (Kristjánsson 2018, 176). Kristjánsson's position, as defended, may therefore be considered to support both thick and thin ideas of the good. It is *at least* possible to both defend the idea of objective virtue and to offer guidance as to how this might play out in people's lives, or in this context in character education.

In response to the second measurability objection, I offer the following rejoinder: virtuous character, as defended, is a matter of degree, comprising of "mixed traits" which develop *over time*, thus evaluating whether a pupil is flourishing in a neo-Aristotelian sense may be beyond the remit of any moral educational programme, since this evaluation entails the need to survey life as a whole. *However*, whilst it is notoriously difficult to quantify precisely how close to virtue and flourishing an individual pupil's mixed character is, one may be able to empirically assess the shorter-term effectiveness of the methods used in character education in virtue of the fact that psychological virtue-based naturalism is metaphysically realist and thus a candidate for empirical measurement. This possibility of measurement (which Kristjánsson (2015) devotes an entire chapter to), even if not straightforward, could then act as a starting point for policy justification. If successful, this could mean that Kristjánsson is able to retain the idea that ACE is psychologically realistic, without needing to measure flourishing per se, but more the effects of possible character educational strategies on moral progress. Unsurprisingly, this position raises a number of questions, these include: which empirical methods are able to meaningfully assess virtue development? In measuring virtue is there a danger of instrumentalising character education and failing to acknowledge it as something of intrinsic value, as has been the culture in most elements of modern education?

Possible answers to these questions can be gathered from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, where leading moral educationalists have investigated both how virtue might be measured for educational purposes specifically, and how character education could be included in public policy (see Jubilee Centre 2012, 2014). In essence, the measurement of virtue can take the form of high-stakes testing, the evaluation of character educational programmes or routine pupil assessments (Curren and Kotzee 2014, 266). Due to the instrumentalism issue, high-stakes testing is generally considered counter-productive and thus not a suitable measurement strategy (ibid. 276). However, it is argued that the latter two may offer more promise. Yet in order to measure virtue in any meaningful way, the components of virtue must be defined. Taking inspiration from Kristjánsson, Curren and Kotzee propose that virtue involves the following abilities:

- Acute moral perception (being able to see and distinguish morally important features in a situation);
- Appropriate moral emotion (having the right emotional response to the situation)
- Correct moral belief and reasoning (knowing or being able to work out what is appropriate and best to do in the situation);

- Active moral motivation (being motivated to do what one determines is the appropriate and best thing and to persist in seeing one's action through) (ibid., 270).

Measuring these things in a scientifically meaningful way is made easier by the metaphysical realism of character and also furthers the position that traits, in this case mixed-traits, are explanatory and have empirical significance (ibid., 271). Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to delve too deeply into the measurability issue, it does seem reasonable to suggest that an approach to measurement which combines the mixed-methods of programme evaluation and pupil assessment is possible, making character education a plausible candidate for policy integration.

The first method of character programme evaluation aims to establish the efficacy of the programme itself on the school as a whole through pre and post intervention assessments (ibid., 277). This could take the form of pupil focus groups or essays written on valued character traits, both of which would aim to track the progress of ethical attunement and moral judgement (ibid.). Policy makers may also look to other indicators of improved character, such as reductions in poor behaviour (measured in terms of the amount of detentions and other sanctions as a result of violent and abusive behaviour such as bullying) and further mental health indicators of improved well-being, such as fewer councillor appointments (see Flay 2014). In addition, this could be supported by individual pupil assessments, such as those which aim to measure how ethical discernment and judgement have improved from teaching virtue thorough educational strategies such as role modelling (see Curren and Kotzee 2014, 278-9; Sanderse 2014; Walker 2014; Kristjánsson 2015, 60-84; Miller 2017, 195-209). For example, a research project at Birmingham University's Jubilee Centre aims to assess character development in pupils aged between 14 and 15 in UK schools using a combination of moral dilemma tests, self-reporting measures and teacher interviews (Walker 2014; Kristjánsson 2015, 63). Whilst not in any way exhaustive, I hope that the aforementioned considerations in support of measurement give a flavour of what might be possible, thus paving the way for policy integration and retaining ACE's appeal as a psychologically realistic form of moral education.

Section 2 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented two central arguments in favour of neo-Aristotelian character education, and their corresponding counter arguments. The first argument involved defending

how virtuous character contributes to the flourishing of both self and others. I argued that it was reasonable to conceive of well-being in eudaimonist terms and further that character ought to be understood as comprised of mixed-traits, thus undermining the situationist objection and making visible the need for moral educational programmes dedicated to character development. The second argument enhanced the first and aimed to further illuminate how character education was both empirically justifiable and psychologically realistic.

Largely drawing upon the work of Kristján Kristjánsson, I argued in favour of psychologically grounded virtue-based naturalism. This realist position provided an antidote to the prevailing culture of subjectivism in moral education by proposing a "thin" objective foundation from which to evaluate virtue, which could then be used to structure thicker practical interpretations. Finally, I took seriously the importance of measurability for including character educational programmes in public policy, by appealing to the inherent metaphysical realism of ACE and the idea that a mixed-method approach could in theory measure moral progress. However, it should be noted that these reflections intend to provide a pro tanto reason to support ACE. Exploration of other concerns, which lie outside the scope of this paper, would be required to assess if it is desirable all-things-considered. Having defended the position that ACE is desirable, I will now proceed to advance the element of my thesis which concerns the method of role modelling.

3 Role Modelling by Senior Leadership as a Required Component of ACE

> It is often said that we remember teachers as much for the kinds of people they were than for anything they may have taught us, and some kinds of professional expertise may best be understood as qualities of character (Carr 2007, 369).

I have so far demonstrated that character education is conducive to living a flourishing human life, and correspondingly that the development of virtue is key to actualising pupil and societal well-being. However, I have not yet expounded upon the *methods* of teaching moral character in sufficient depth, and it is to this pursuit that the following section will be dedicated. Importantly, whilst there are many plausible and empirically supported ways to educate for virtue, such as the previously mentioned "getting the word out" strategy (Miller 2017, 209) or through Socratic dialogue (Sanderse 2012, 149), I intend to focus on the use of moral role models, a method that many consider to offer particular promise. More specifically, by moral role models I mean teachers as moral exemplars. However, it should be noted that other forms of moral exemplarism, such as that involving stories of "truly extraordinary moral agents"

known as moral saints (Carbonell 2009, 376), or other exemplars from literature such as the parable of the Good Samaritan, are also employed in character education. Notably, these people can be exemplars because of the lives they have led as a whole, because of a single action, or because of what they would have done in a particular situation (Miller 2017, 199).

The ability of role models to positively influence character has long been stressed by respected educationalists (e.g., Lickona 1991b; Kristjánsson 2006a, 2015, 2018; Carr 2011; Sanderse 2012, 2013; Zagzebski 2017; Miller 2017; Engelen *et al.* 2018; Walker 2020). This has further found support in the developmental psychology of Lawrence Kohlberg (1987) who promoted a pedagogy involving role modelling from those in more advanced stages of moral reasoning (Engelen *et al.* 2018; 346). Additionally, it has been a prominent feature of the social learning theory of Albert Bandura (1963), which cites role modelling as a fundamental method of disposition cultivation, thus emphasising how observing and emulating others is key to development. This broad endorsement from academia motivates my focus on role modelling as a key method for cultivating virtuous character, yet I shall aim to add something further to the already lively discussion by concentrating on elements of the method which remain underarticulated or absent in current literature and educational theory. Primarily these include reference to the often neglected link between the well-being of self and others, which I shall argue can be illuminated by the relationship between teacher and pupil; and additionally the importance of role modelling from senior leadership for both promoting a cohesive ethos of character education through role modelling in schools, and as role models for subject teachers. Before I proceed with this line of argument, it should be noted that I do not mean to suggest that role modelling by teachers (and, as I shall argue, senior leaders) is the only feasible way to educate children's characters, indeed the most effective methods are likely to involve a multifaceted approach combining many techniques, yet it is beyond my current scope to evaluate these.

In standard form, my argument can be formulated as follows:

1. Neo-Aristotelian Character Education is desirable.
2. Emulating the virtues of others is a central method of character cultivation.
3. Teaching children to be virtuous depends in part on emulating virtuous adults.
4. Therefore, in order to be the subject of emulation, a teacher ought to role model virtuous character traits.

5. Similarly, the cultivation of teachers' characters can be enhanced through emulating moral role-models.

6. In the context of a school, these role models will be senior leaders.

7. To ensure effective and cohesive character education, senior leaders ought to be role models to both staff and pupils.

8. Therefore, role modelling by senior leadership is a required component of ACE.

As this is partly an inductive argument, the truth of the premises will *at best* make the conclusion probable. In light of this, I seek to defend the most contentious of these premises, in order to maintain that my conclusion (8) is highly probable. Given that I have already argued at length for Premise 1 in Section 2, I shall not reiterate this here. Instead I shall concentrate on those premises which need justifying though further argumentation. These are primarily premises 3, 4, and 7. It should be noted that the promotion of teachers and senior leaders as role models does not imply that they must be moral saints of full virtue. In line with the empirical recognition of mixed character traits, role models committed to active virtue cultivation and positively progressing is enough. Indeed, even a teacher's moral failings, if suitably explained and subsequently rectified, might be able to act as a source of moral guidance.

In focusing on role modelling, a number of central questions arise, namely: What part ought role modelling play in character education? Why are teachers suitable role models? How can schools best facilitate character education though role modelling? What does it mean for a senior leader to be a role model? My arguments in the following section will aim to address some of these.

3.1   Teaching Children to be Virtuous Depends in Part on Emulating Virtuous Adults

In Section 2 I drew attention to the ability of virtuous character cultivation to contribute to the well-being of both self and others. Indeed, Aristotle highlights how educating children in the virtues of practical wisdom, courage, justice and temperance will both contribute to personal eudaimonia and further benefit the *polis*, or society, which they are part of (Sanderse 2012, 205). Character cultivation then becomes valuable not only because it contributes to one's own flourishing, but also because practicing the virtues helps others live well too. In the context of education, the immediate polis is the school community, with the wider polis being the society

in which this is situated. Whilst it may be self-evident to assert that being virtuous helps others, this connection remains underdeveloped. The precise nature of this interaction within a school therefore needs elaborating. In essence, Premise 3 *"teaching children to be virtuous depends in part on emulating virtuous adults"* is dependent on the connection between the well-being of self and others. This is because in cultivating their own virtuous character, the (in this case) teacher role model is able to display behaviour which is worthy of emulation from the pupil, which will in turn help them develop their own virtuous character, and subsequently feel, think and act well in their immediate and wider society. In this sense, then, teacher role modelling, pupil character development and societal flourishing are interconnected.

I shall now aim to expound the precise nature of this pupil-teacher connection by first drawing upon the emotion of admiration. It seems that role models influence character development because they encourage one to care about being a better person, i.e. they inspire admiration of their character. Being worthy of admiration, conjures up feelings of elevation which can motivate us to want to become more like them (Miller 2017, 200). For example, I might admire the generosity and (right) ambition of Sir Captain Tom Moore who, at 100 years old, walked 100 laps of his garden to make £33 million for the NHS (Murray 2020). Crucially, admiration is associated with the feeling of emulation which I have already mentioned in relation to the skill analogy in Section 1. I do not simply want to be like the role model, but I want to emulate their deeds and motivations for these deeds. The feeling of admiration thus inspires me to emulate their positive characteristics and expand my moral imagination in order to be more like them in feeling, thought and action (ibid.). In short, admiring a person can motivate the emulation of their character. Emulation is a creditworthy way of both acquiring and developing a virtue because it enables the learner to respond and reflect upon situations as the exemplar would (Croce 2019, 238). This implies that moral role models are not only good for the polis because of the positive actions which they do, but further because of their ability to influence and educate moral character progress in others. Through emulating their way of thinking, caring and perceiving the world role models enable character cultivation (Miller 2017, 201).

Fortunately, there is a significant amount of empirical support for role modelling as a means for behaviour improvement. To give an example, psychologists J. Philippe Rushton and Anne Campbell conducted a study into the effects of role modelling on blood donation (ibid., 2002). When people saw someone else sign up for blood donation first, 18/20 participants also

did so. Conversely, without such a role model, nobody in the control group gave blood. This, and other similar studies, gives strong initial support for focusing on role modelling as a means to cultivate virtue in children. *If* pupils are similarly receptive to the influence of role models, *then* one may expect them to emulate their behaviour and subsequently improve their character. This means that the well-being of the self is intrinsically related to the well-being of others, and further indicates that character education though the emulation of moral role models is key to actualising this.

Objections

However, this position is not without criticism. Indeed, it has been argued that exemplarism in moral education is in danger of amounting to mere hero worship or imitation (Kristjánsson 2006a, 40; 2018, 179). It is quite possible that in presenting a role-model, and luring pupils into admiration, they may emulate them by simply copying. This presents a methodological problem:

> if character educationists do not aim higher than simply wanting to replace copycat vice with copycat virtue, they seem to be presenting an unsophisticated, undemanding and uncritical – almost infantilising – model of emulation, essentially devoid of cognitive content (ibid.).

This implies that imitation is not sufficient for virtue cultivation, it is an "ethically impotent form of admiration" (ibid., 41). To ensure admiration and subsequent emulation is more than mere imitation or habituation of a charismatic leader, pupils must understand and be able to explain what qualities make someone a subject for emulation. In this sense, role models represent, but do not constitute, moral virtue. Critically and knowledgably emulating the *ideals* (virtues) embodied by role models, rather than the actual person, is thus essential if this method is to remain intellectually appealing.

Correspondingly, actualising this understanding in pupils will require teachers to explain the virtue by *giving reasons* about *why* it is the appropriate course of action and, due to the Aristotelian emphasis, *how* it contributes to human flourishing-a point echoed by Annas in relation to the learning of a skill (2011, 19). The giving of reasons then enables the learner to extend the virtue to different contexts, rather than confining it to exactly the same situation. In addition, referring to reasons helps to develop a pupil's understanding of the good life and the role the virtues have to play in it by highlighting objective standards which are independent of the exemplar (Kristjánsson 2006a 48). Merely pointing to a good example would neither

have the desired cognitive clout, not ability to make this key consideration visible. Kristjánsson (ibid.) further notes that this emphasis on ideals and the giving of moral reasons is often absent from role model literature, it is therefore of utmost importance that character educational programmes make this clear to avoid the charge of hero worship.

It should be noted that due to space constraints I have highlighted and responded to just one criticism relating to Premise 3. Additional problems largely involve the idea that admiration is fallible and thus an unreliable stimulant for emulation. We do not know how long the effects of admiration last, nor whether admiration can have an impact beyond the particular situation (Miller 2017, 203). If emulation is to be taken seriously as an educational strategy further psychological research will be needed. Despite to my knowledge this not yet having been done, I hope to have made clear that the emulation of virtuous character traits in adults is a promising way to develop virtue in children. In light of this potential, I shall now move on to a defence of why teachers specifically ought to be role models.

3.2 To be the Subject of Emulation a Teacher Ought to Role Model Virtuous Character Traits

Whilst role modelling can take multiple forms, I am concerned specifically with the idea of teachers as moral role models and of role modelling as a didactic educational strategy. By teachers I mean subject teachers, form tutors, heads of house or year, teachers of moral education specifically or indeed anyone who has an influence on pupil development within a school context. By didactic strategy I mean a teaching method which uses the teacher as a moral guide and source of information. I will argue, in support of Premise 4, that teachers specifically ought to be role models because of the apparent lack of relatable *moral* role models in modern society. Furthermore, I will argue that their ability to model particular virtues and provide reasons as to why and how these virtues ought to be cultivated, enables pupils to apply moral learning to new situations.

Interestingly, Anton Bucher's extensive survey of 1150 young people aged between 10-18 in Germany and Austria found that most young people recognise people from their immediate social setting (primarily parents and other relatives), religious figures or those from music and sport as their role models (1998, 619). Only 10% of pupils sighted teachers as role models (ibid., 625). Bucher's findings support the claim that role models can "vary moral attitudes, increase moral sensibility, stimulate more moral actions, and, last but not least, be

conductive to moral identity", yet also highlight how this is only effective if subjects perceive models as "worthy enough to be emulated" (ibid., 620-1). The same study also suggested that an important characteristic of role models was that pupils were able to identify with them (ibid.). However, most of the reasons given in the study for picking particular role models lacked moral content: "my sister was my model, because she could bike so well"; or if they did refer to moral reasons crudely distinguished between good and evil: "he fought against the wicked and helped the good" (ibid., 624).

What this demonstrates is that, whilst role models can have a powerful influence on development, often the method is somewhat ad hoc, left to chance and non-moral. It is usually done implicitly by family members, and is thus prone to the aforementioned problems of moral relativism and hero worship. In this sense, unregulated role modelling may not actually help cultivate pupils into *being good people,* either because the role models that children have are not *explicitly moral* ones, or because not all children have adequate moral role models growing up. These factors motivate the need for teachers to fill this ethical void by explicitly teaching virtue and, through doing do, highlight themselves (or the ideals they represent) as deserving objects of emulation. Just because young people do not always recognise teachers as role models at the time, does not negate the potential impact they might have on them in retrospect (Sanderse 2012, 128). Indeed, perhaps the lack of initial recognition highlights further the potential for teachers to contribute to moral development through more explicit role modelling-they are an untapped moral source.

The inability of most young people to identify moral role models beyond the vicinity of their own homes stimulates the need for role modelling by teachers. Like parents, teachers are relatable, yet unlike parents, teachers trained in neo-Aristotelian character education will be committed to modelling *specific* and empirically supported virtues (such as those specified by the Jubilee Centre) and will aim to explicitly enhance pupils' cognitive moral development though the giving of reasons. Regarding the importance of relatability, this is key if pupils are to be able to apply moral learning to real life contexts and extend it to new situations:

> Attainable exemplars provide the students with the perception that they can emulate the model without excessive effort, while relevant exemplars belong to the students' environment (e.g., family, school, sports team, or community), thereby exercising their virtues in situations familiar to the children (Croce 2019, 295).

Teachers seem to fulfil this relatability criteria. They need not be moral saints, but are real people who exhibit at least versions of virtues which are relevant to a pupil's life. Perhaps if role modelling were higher on the teacher education agenda and teachers were better role models, pupils would be able to identify more teachers as moral role models.

Indeed, empirical support for teacher role models already exists. A study by Timmerman (2009), which interviewed 13 teacher educators in the Netherlands about who their teacher role models were in secondary school, aimed to assess what qualities pupils admired in teachers. It transpired that pupils (in this case retrospectively) value teachers who show their character through their behaviour in the classroom, who were not only subject-knowledge experts, but also "allowed students to see them for who they were" (ibid., 232). Whilst this study was directed at what was valued generally in teachers, it would be reasonable to suggest that this interest in personal attributes supports the idea that teachers could also be role models of virtuous conduct. In addition, the study highlighted how pupils often spend a lot of time with their teachers, which further supports the potential for teachers to have an impact on pupil moral development (ibid., 230). In light of this, it would be interesting to conduct a psychological study which measured how many teachers were considered role models pre and post the implementation of a character educational programme focused on role modelling.

This initial argument into the suitability of teachers as moral role models raises two main questions: How ought teachers to be role models? What ought teachers to be a model of? Addressing the first question begins with the recognition that character traits are important for distinguishing who is morally exemplary (Sanderse 2012, 129) and is furthered though appeal to the previously explained notion of emulation. A teacher's moral personality, or self, bridges the gap between public and private morality which implies that who they are as a person cannot be separated from their professional role (ibid. 2013, 29). This intertwining of their private and professional characters is made visible though the virtuous traits they exhibit. In light of this, modelling virtuous emotions and actions is the central method of cultivating versions of these virtues in children. This means that as role models, teachers must be able to both inspire admiration *and* provide reasons as to how and why the virtues they display are important and conducive to flourishing.

As regards admiration, this relates to the affective component of emulation. Teacher role models must try to "evoke in moral learners an inwardly experienced, emotionally driven demand for self-transformation" (Kristjánsson 2006a, 48). This feeling will be experienced by pupils as a "pain at their relative lack of the desired moral quality", which then lays the foundations for teachers to demonstrate how this pain can be alleviated by "taking reasonable and realistic steps themselves to acquire the quality in question" (ibid.). In terms of the other element, the giving of reasons, this is required because "knowing why virtue is important is pivotal to the development of virtue" (Besser 2020, 1). When role models articulate the reasoning associated with moral dilemmas, the cognitive skills of children are stimulated (Sanderse 2013, 35). The modelling of moral emotions and actions combined with the giving of reasons will therefore enable pupils to emulate teachers in a cognitively enhanced manner. Indeed, both Sanderse 2013, 36) and Kristjánsson (2006a, 47) note that pedagogically one can only become virtuous through emulating role models, even though the virtues can be justified independently of them. To summarise, then, education through emulation of character traits is the core method for facilitating moral development in pupils.

Helping teachers to role model effectively will require practical solutions. One such idea comes from Wood and Geddis (1999) who suggest that teachers should give "meta-comments" which involve verbalising feelings and actions to explain to pupils what choices are being made and the reasons for them. Second, teachers could do lesson observations of each other specifically dedicated to noticing how teachers put virtues into practice in the classroom (Sanderse 2013, 38). The feedback from these observations could then highlight which virtues were displayed, how they were explained, and possible considerations for future modelling of virtues. Third, teachers could dedicate time to reading literature on role modelling and neo-Aristotelian character education prior to its introduction into a school. Understanding the theoretical underpinnings of what they are doing may enhance a teacher's ability to talk about the moral aspects of teaching (Willemse et al., 2008). Finally, it is imperative that teacher educational programs better prepare teachers for the moral aspects of the profession (Willemse et al., 2005). If initial teacher training could explicitly focus more on moral education, then teachers would be better equipped to develop the virtues and skills essential for being good role models (Sanderse 2013, 38). These ideas are by no means exclusive, but do give a flavour of what might be possible.

Now to the question of what teachers ought to be a model of, i.e. the specific virtues they should aim to exhibit for pupils to emulate. As I have already expounded this point in Section 1, I will not dedicate too much time to it here. But let us remember that in essence, due to this form of character education's neo-Aristotelian roots, the virtues taught will be justified because they are considered necessary for human flourishing. Further, they will be grounded in an identifiable emotion, in line with Kristjánsson "Belief in a Just World" theory. Unless a pupil has a corresponding emotion, they will likely be unable to cultivate it into the relevant virtue, or at least progress towards the virtue. In light of these two central considerations, the following examples of moral virtues, derived from the Jubilee Centre's *Character Curriculum* (2019), seem to be promising, but by no means exclusive, candidates:

- Compassion
- Courage
- Gratitude
- Honesty
- Justice
- Humility
- Integrity
- Respect

Importantly, these virtues are able to be cultivated though role modelling because of emulation. Kristjánsson considers emulation to be an emotional virtue particularly of the young, rooted in the feeling of admiration (2006a, 45). Linking back to Section 2, the thin account of virtues can then be furnished with contextually relevant thick content from the specific school polis and wider lives of the pupils.

Note that I have here focused on moral virtues; this is reasonable because my thesis is concerned with promoting *morally good* character. However, role modelling could also include intellectual (e.g. autonomy, critical thinking, curiosity), civic (e.g. neighbourliness, volunteering, service) and performance (e.g. motivation, resilience, teamwork) related virtues (Jubilee Centre 2019), so long as teachers explain to pupils that these virtues gain their ultimate value from "serving morally acceptable ends, in particular from being enablers and vehicles of the moral virtues" (Kristjánsson 2015, 17). Ultimately, developing these virtues is done in conjunction with the meta-virtue of practical wisdom, or *phronesis*. As much as I would adore to expound these additional virtues further, they lie outside the purview of this paper.

Objection

Despite the recognition that neo-Aristotelian role modelling by teachers, whilst challenging, is a valuable tool for moral education, alone it is not enough to ensure ACE is effective. What I mean by this is that without embedding an emphasis on character education though role modelling into a school ethos, subject teachers will be unlikely to role model with the necessary efficacy or indeed at all. This implies that the school as a whole will be unable to use role modelling to cultivate virtuous character, thus undermining the aims of character education. This could be because of a number of factors including a lack of understanding regarding how to role model or of what to role model, a lack of support, a lack of training, a lack of time, or indeed because teachers themselves do not have access to the appropriate moral or professional role models to emulate. What this implies is that, to ensure a cohesive approach to moral role modelling, those in a position of leadership ought to both support role modelling as a method of moral character cultivation *and* act as role models themselves to subject teachers to aid their moral development and help them be better role models for pupils. Responding to the aforementioned objection, and defending the idea that role modelling from senior leadership is a required component of effective character education, will be the focus of my next argument.

3.3   Senior Leaders Ought to be Role Models

Now that I have furthered the idea that teachers specifically ought to be moral role models, I shall now respond to the objection that teacher role modelling alone is not enough for role modelling to be an effective method of neo-Aristotelian character education (ACE). In doing so, I primarily aim to support Premise 7. My rejoinder will be composed of two parts, which combined will aim to advance the conclusion that *"role modelling by senior leadership is a required component of ACE".* The first part suggests that role models are important in all phases of life, and especially useful in professional settings. Therefore, for teachers to be good role models, it will be useful for them to have role models themselves. In the context of a school these will be predominately senior leaders, who, due to their wealth of experience, are well placed to provide the professional guidance and practical wisdom needed to inspire admiration and subsequent emulation in their staff. The second part takes a broader perspective on the use of role modelling as a method of moral character cultivation and focuses on the need for cohesion. If a school is to effectively implement character education through role modelling, then it will be imperative that this is embedded in the school's ethos. Ethos creation is usually driven by the vision of senior leaders, so it is essential that they too buy into the idea of ACE

through role modelling. I hope that through convincingly arguing for the aforementioned two points I will be justified in making an inductive inference to the (italicised) conclusion.

Teachers Need Role Models Too

Role modelling is important for both children and adults. However, to date the empirical research into the effects of role modelling on *virtuous character* has focused primarily on young people (Sanderse 2012, 134). This said, there is a wealth of evidence to support role modelling as a strategy for *self-concept* construction in professional contexts. A self-concept is a "set of beliefs *about* his or her real self", it is a subset of character (ibid.). To give an illuminating example, Herminia Ibarra's study at Harvard University into how junior investment bankers and consultants adapt to new roles shows that 91% of participants observe role models to help develop their professional identities (1999, 773). Many use multiple role models to select "bits and pieces of skills and styles" to craft "a more self-tailored persona" (ibid., 778). The findings also showed that it was not merely professional attributes that were emulated, but also moral virtues such as trustworthiness and integrity (ibid., 774). A second example can be drawn from Donald Gibson's study into the effects of role models in developing professional self-concept in early, middle and later career stages (2003). He discovered that people observe role models throughout their careers and often "aggregate" admired skills, styles, behaviours and values from multiple role model sources (ibid., 959). Importantly, personal traits such as integrity and care were highlighted (ibid., 598), as was the importance of the role model being someone of authority and experience (ibid., 602). If these findings translate to educational contexts, it shows that teachers will also have role models throughout their careers and further that it is possible for these adult role models to be moral role models.

In a school setting it has been argued that "professional identities cannot be understood in full isolation from moral identities" (Kristjánsson 2015, 132). This implies that a professional teacher and a moral teacher are equivalent. However, many teachers, in finding themselves in the inescapable position of role model, lack moral confidence and suffer from "moral ambivalence" (ibid., 130). In addition, whilst many teachers choose a career in teaching because of the moral dimension, often this explicitly moral component of the role is not adequately addressed either during teacher training or though continual professional development (ibid.). This results in a lack of understanding regarding what being a moral exemplar involves and confusion regarding their "dual capacity as moral *persons* and moral

teachers" (ibid., 131). If subject teachers are going to act as role models to pupils, it is therefore essential that this problem is addressed. One way of doing this is by providing teachers with appropriate professional*,* and thus moral, role models. This would then facilitate the development of their own virtuous characters, which they could model to pupils. Due to factors such as seniority, life experience and advanced practical wisdom, these role models will most likely be senior leaders.

The virtues to be modelled ought to primarily be those listed in the previous section (compassion, courage, gratitude etc.). This is because if senior leaders want these virtues to be modelled by teachers, it is important that teachers are provided with the appropriate role model stimulus to develop these traits themselves. In addition, senior leaders may also model traits more closely related to the teaching profession, yet it is, again, outside the scope of this paper to discuss these here. What is relevant is that the moral character of *both* the senior leader and a teacher is key to their role as character educators. This is in line with the neo-Aristotelian view which sees no clear division between professional morality and professional practice-the two are interconnected, meaning that one's profession cannot be so easily disentangled from one's moral character (ibid., 142). Furthermore, given that "character education is a life-long process" is it imperative that teachers are given the opportunity to "improve their characters in order to enhance their own flourishing" (ibid., 139). In the words of Kristjánsson, "character education is too important to waste it all on the kids" (ibid.). The role of senior leaders in facilitating this flourishing is key to their professional role.

It might be helpful to visualise this process as an emulation pyramid with the senior leadership team at the top, then teachers and finally pupils. A sort of top down approach to character cultivation. Crucially, this is not to say that teachers must hero worship those in positions of senior leadership (indeed senior leaders may well emulate traits in their staff, or staff in pupils), but more that senior leaders ought to be mindful that teachers need moral and professional role models too if they are going to be sources of pupil admiration and emulation. Senior leaders then, have an extra responsibility to think, feel and act in ways which are conducive to being a moral role model and *good person*. In schools they ought to represent the epitome of moral exemplarism. This indicates that role modelling is a key component of educational leadership, especially leadership committed to promoting character education though role modelling. In short, this can be called "character based educational leadership". However, effectively cultivating virtuous character through the "emulation pyramid" requires

senior leaders to explicitly embed an emphasis on role modelling in the school ethos. This will be the subject of my next argument.

Cohesion and Ethos Building through Virtuous Leadership

There is another way in which virtuous senior leadership is required for character education through role modelling. This concerns senior leaders' ability to create cohesion and ethos. Regarding cohesion, it can be argued that without strong leadership which a) sees the value in character education, b) provides opportunities for teachers to develop their own moral characters, c) teaches teachers how to role model character traits and d) role models these traits themselves, it is unlikely that character education will be effective or even present in the school at all. Even if one or two teachers were committed to ACE this would be undermined in a school environment which did not value or actively promote such an initiative. Individual whim is not sufficient for ACE through role modelling to be effective, it requires a whole school commitment and cohesive approach which must be championed by those in positions of seniority.

Regarding ethos creation. If schools are going to effectively educate for character, this will require a commitment to developing virtuous character as a mode for human flourishing in the school ethos. Through character based educational leadership, senior leaders will not only be required to role model virtuous character traits themselves, but also facilitate the implementation of policies, practices and training to enable everyone within the school to develop a virtuous character (or at least improve their mixed character) and flourish. Practically speaking this could involve setting aside dedicated lessons in the timetable for character education, giving assemblies an explicitly virtuous twist, and employing teachers for their perceived moral as well as academic credentials. Understanding character education's Aristotelian roots, the way role modelling can be used to teach character, and other important educational methods, will also be essential for senior leaders in their quest for ethos creation.

Furthermore, the drought of teacher moral education in both initial teacher training programmes and continuing professional development initiatives has long been highlighted by educationalists including Carr (2007), LePage *et al.* (2011), Sanderse (2012) and Kristjánsson (2015). It is therefore crucial to acknowledge that:

a lack of engagement with moral and character issues in the field of teacher training may be the biggest practical obstacle in the path of successful school-based efforts at character education (Kristjánsson 2015, 143).

This emphasises the need for teacher training explicitly in moral character education. In support of this need, Carr has noted that moral virtues of character may not only be useful for good teaching but constitutive of it (2007, 370). Indeed, whilst Aristotle considered early education as necessary for character cultivation, he does not consider this sufficient for virtue cultivation (ibid. 384). The latter requires, amongst other things, deep contemplation about the moral purposes of human life, which is only possible if one develops and practices *phronesis* (ibid.).

What this indicates is that, for Aristotle and his proponents, practical wisdom is required for virtue. As phronesis requires lifelong learning, Carr maintains that professional teacher training ought to offer scope for developing *phronesis,* in order for teachers to be better character educators (ibid.). ACE therefore requires that teachers are not only able to teach virtue, but that they have developed, through *phronesis,* these character traits themselves. At a local level, senior leaders must therefore be able and committed to encouraging and promoting this development. This could take the form of dedicated inset sessions regarding character education (and in particular role modelling), in school teacher character educational programmes, or lesson observations which include reference to modelled and explained virtues. Actualising this will require senior leaders to commit to character education in their school ethos, and through role modelling inspire other teachers to do this too.

Objections

This vision for moral education is notoriously ambitious. Some critics have thus objected that overall role modelling by teachers, and by analogy senior leaders, is too demanding and further that it can lead teachers to concentrate too much on the cultivation of their own character, rather than that of pupils' characters.

As regards the "demandingness" issue, proponent of care ethics Nel Noddings remains cautious about employing role modelling as a method of character education (2010, 147). In her view, neo-Aristotelian character education recommends that teachers consistently embody full virtue, a responsibility which may be too demanding for most. Combined with the pressures and time constraints already problematic in the profession, teachers saddled with the constant

burden of exemplification may have reservations about the use of role modelling as a primary means of virtue cultivation (Sanderse 2012, 137). Indeed, burnout is already a key reason that teachers cite for leaving, which usually takes the form of emotional exhaustion (stress, fatigue, frustration) (Kristjánsson 2015, 136). In the United Kingdom for example, the number of teacher vacancies in state-funded schools has risen since 2011, as much as 33% of teachers leave within their first five years of teaching, with the ten-year retention rate fluctuating between 36% and 40% since 1997 (Foster 2018, 11). Understandably, putting a greater emphasis on the importance of teachers' moral character could exacerbate this issue and create a culture of perfectionism which many teachers will find unsustainable. Another objection concerns the importance of cultivating one's own virtuous character prior to and during acting as a moral role model. As a care ethicist, Noddings feels that there is a danger that the teacher's position as role model could "overwhelm their actual caring" (2010, 147). In promoting this approach, the cultivation of teacher virtues may take precedence, leading teachers to become obsessed with personal virtues to the detriment of their pupils, or in the case of senior leadership, staff.

In response to such objections I offer the following rejoinders which apply in much the same way to teachers as to senior leaders. First, I concede that teaching virtue though role modelling is demanding, but maintain that education will be all the richer for it. Like ethics itself, developing one's own moral character and teaching others how to do so is no simple task (see Goodin 2009; Swanton 2009). It would therefore be naïve to think that character education would be easy. This said, it is important to acknowledge the support that all involved in the process of role modelling will need in order for them to do it with confidence. Proper training, allocated lesson time and opportunities for reflection and discussion will be key if the method is to be employed successfully. In addition, the emphasis on teaching virtue through role modelling as central to a school's ethos means that this perceived moral burden can be shared amongst staff. This distribution of responsibility indicates it is not simply up to one teacher or subject to educate pupils' characters, but a collective effort.

Second, Noddings' view that teachers must be models of full virtue is mistaken. As I have already argued at length for the existence of mixed character traits, it would be illogical to presume that teachers must somehow be anomalies in this empirically observed phenomenon. As role models teachers, must of course be committed to virtue cultivation and perhaps, as objects of admiration, closer to full virtue than many people, but they do not need

to be moral saints. What is important, however, is that teachers are able to demonstrate that they have strong value commitments and that they are "imperfect but progressing" moral agents (Sanderse 2012, 148). In demonstrating this they will be able to show pupils what a moral life ought to be like, and encourage them to follow suit. Even a teacher's moral failings, if later recognised, rectified and explained to pupils, may act as fodder for role modelling. Yet this will rely on the willingness of teachers to be open with pupils about many aspects of their lives (ibid.). Importantly, whilst full virtue is not required, these moral failures should not outweigh a teacher's positive traits, as this would undermine their role model credentials. In light of these rejoinders, it is reasonable to maintain both that teachers and senior leaders ought to be role models.

Section 3 Conclusion

In this section, I hope to have convincingly made highly probable the conclusion of my argument: *role modelling by senior leadership is a required component of ACE.* I began by drawing upon my position in favour of ACE in Section 2, before using the relationship between role model and learner to make visible the connection between the well-being of self and others. With the importance of role modelling as an effective method of character education highlighted, I then invoked the notion of emulation to argue in favour of teachers specifically acting as moral role models. Here the giving of reasons and the importance of embodied traits were key to ensuring the emulation of role models was cognitively enhanced and more than mere habituation or hero worship. Whilst this focus on role modelling by teachers had got part of the character educational picture right, I suggested its efficacy was also dependant on senior leaders acting as role models and championing character education through role modelling in the school's ethos.

As in Section 2, I aimed to support these points with empirical evidence to ensure they were psychologically realistic. Whilst I was able to employ a number of relevant studies to aid my argument, it was clear that research into some of these areas was lacking. Furthermore, it should be noted that there may be other possible objections to my argument, yet it remains outside the purview of this paper to expound these here. In light of this, the arguments given are intended to provide a pro tanto reason to support my conclusion, but do not settle whether it is justified all-things-considered.

4   Recommendations

Whilst beyond the scope of this paper, it is intended that the arguments presented here could be used to stimulate further discussion about the importance of role modelling in ACE, particularly as concerns senior leadership. In light of this, I suggest a number of recommendations primarily to do with teacher training, further research and policy. In terms of teacher training, this can be subdivided into initial teacher training (ITT) and continuing professional development (CPD). As regards the former, I suggest it would be worthwhile to include the importance of role modelling, and specifically which virtues teachers ought to be a model of, in training programmes in order for all new teachers to be better equipped for the moral aspects of their role. Once qualified, schools must further facilitate the ability of their staff to act as moral role models. This could take the form of ACE insets or lesson observations with a role modelling focus, discussion groups aimed to enhance teachers' theoretical understanding of ACE, or focus sessions to gain teachers' input as to how it could be best implemented in the classroom. For senior leaders, it will be imperative that they too are offered training so that they are best able to champion and implement the approach, inspire their staff to do so, understand the importance of moral character role modelling in leadership, and select new employees partly on the basis of their perceived moral qualities. These ideas require further elaboration, but do give an insight into what might be possible.

As regards recommendations for further empirical research, the arguments I have expounded have exposed the need for additional studies into role modelling by teachers in schools. This research could investigate the effects of teachers modelling the stated virtues on pupils' moral development. It could also examine the duration and extent of emulation. Furthermore, it would be useful to consider how role modelling by senior leadership influences the professional and moral development of subject teachers. This could look into precisely how senior leaders could best model the virtues considered vital for moral character. In addition, whilst I would have liked to include more on the importance of practical wisdom, the constraints of the paper would not allow it. In light of this, further research into how teachers could develop and best model phronesis is desirable. Regarding policy, I hope to have highlighted the need for better moral education in schools and suggested ACE as a promising candidate. It would be wise for policy makers to acknowledge this and, providing there is appropriate empirical support, act to facilitate the introduction of ACE programmes which emphasise role modelling in schools more broadly.

5   Conclusion

In this paper I have furthered my position in favour of the claim that *role modelling by senior leadership is required for advancing a neo-Aristotelian account of moral education*. This argument was conditional on ACE being considered a desirable form of moral character education, a pursuit which became the focus of Section 2. Here, I sought to show that ACE was psychologically realistic and philosophically justifiable by drawing upon reputable examples from experimental moral psychology and leading character educational literature. Firstly, I argued that ACE was desirable because virtuous character cultivation contributes to both individual and societal flourishing. I made reasonable the idea that well-being could be understood in eudaimonist terms by demonstrating how virtues contribute to flourishing and supplementing this with research into positive psychology. Empirical support for mixed character traits then enabled me to rebut the situationist objection that character was non-existent and maintain the need for educational programmes designed to improve it.

Secondly, I furthered the empirical credibility of ACE by grounding it in a psychological form of virtue-based naturalism. I employed Kristjánsson's "Belief in a Just World" theory to illuminate how our shared basic emotional experiences could be cultivated into corresponding moral virtues. By advancing this idea, ACE's suitability for providing a "thin" objective foundation from which to evaluate moral judgements and "thick" practical contextually relevant normative guidance became clear. This basis then made possible a mixed-method approach to measuring moral progress, thus highlighting ACE as a viable candidate for inclusion in educational policy.

Finally, in Section 3 I added value to the debate surrounding how ACE ought to be taught by focusing on the method of role modelling. The process of emulation took centre stage and was used to make visible the link between the flourishing of self and others, make reasonable the idea that teachers specifically ought to be moral role models, and highlight role modelling by senior leadership as a required component of ACE. Regarding the latter, I demonstrated how the influence of role models extends to adulthood and that, in teaching, a professional and moral role model ought to be synonymous. To be moral role models to pupils, teachers need opportunities to cultivate their own virtuous characters. Therefore, senior leaders are required, both morally and practically, to be role models by acting as sources of moral admiration to their staff, and championing the implementation of ACE in their schools.

These reflections provide a pro tanto reason to support implementing ACE through the method of role modelling by both teachers and senior leaders. However, I have not settled whether these things would be justified all-things-considered, since doing so would involve analysing additional considerations and possible objections which lie outside the scope of this paper. I must also clarify that the approach I have taken to advancing my thesis has predominately taken place at the more abstract theoretical level. Whilst I have included a number of practical suggestions as to precisely how teachers and senior leaders ought to be role models, and what they ought to be a model of, this process requires further deliberation. Nevertheless, in introducing the importance of role modelling by senior leadership into the character educational agenda, I hope to have made progress in the quest to alleviate the character crisis. It is clear that the notions of a good teacher and a good person cannot be easily disentangled.

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