Rewards, Justice, and Dialogue:

Addressing the Dilemma Inherent in the Neo-Aristotelian Model of Moral Development

1. Introduction

Teaching is an inescapably moral activity, yet many teachers report feeling unprepared for the moral aspects of the role (e.g., Maxwell & Schwimmer, 2016; Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013). Thus, in this essay, I attempt to answer the following overarching question:

> *How might teachers be prepared to address a pervasive character-based dilemma in which one child's moral development comes at the expense of another child's moral development?*

In section 2, I offer a virtue ethical, developmentally-focussed definition of "character-based dilemma," before identifying such a dilemma at the heart of the neo-Aristotelian model of moral development (Jubilee, Centre, 2022), which I illustrate with an example from my own practice as a teacher. In section 3, I propose a practical approach – namely, a reflective journal that draws on a hybrid model of reflection – that could be used to reflect on the dilemma, before presenting a summary of my reflections to date. These reflections culminate in the hypothesis that the dilemma might be resolved by engaging upper-trajectory students in conversations about justice. Thus, in section 4, I describe a professional development activity that would familiarise preservice teachers with Socratic dialogue.[1]

2. Character-Based Dilemma

A character-based dilemma could be defined as "a situation that requires a judgement between two or more moral imperatives, all of which have merit" (Watts, 2024). Theoretically speaking, this definition is rather muddled. "Character" is a virtue ethical concept (Aristotle, 2004), whereas "imperatives" are deontological (Kant, 1785/2019). These two theories often come into conflict when it comes to ethical decision-making. In particular, virtue ethics

[1] Given the reflective nature of this essay, especially Section 3, much of it is written in the first person (see Moon, 2010).

emphasises the development of virtues, whereas deontology focuses on adherence to rules (regardless of character).[2] The first thing I will do, therefore, is propose an alternative definition of "character-based dilemma," one which is faithfully virtue ethical.

A moral dilemma might be defined *formally* (i.e., without commitment to a particular substantive moral theory) as follows:

> *A situation in which an agent is required to choose between two or more equally unwelcome courses of action*. (Banks, 2012, p. 20; see also Vogler, 2020)

What makes a course of action "unwelcome" will vary from one moral theory to another.[3] According to virtue ethics (Aristotle, 2004), a course of action would be unwelcome if it impeded *flourishing*, which is constituted by the ongoing realisation of *virtues*: most specifically moral virtues (e.g., courage, justice, honesty, compassion, gratitude, citizenship), but also intellectual virtues (e.g., curiosity, critical thinking, *phronesis*) and performance virtues (e.g., cooperation, resilience) (Kristjánsson, 2017). Each virtue comprises a unique set of components: perception, emotion, desire, motivation, behaviour and style (Kristjánsson, 2017). Thus, a character-based dilemma might be defined in faithfully virtue ethical terms as follows:

> *A situation in which an agent is required to choose between two or more courses of action which equally impede the realisation of virtue or some component of virtue*.

A distinguishing feature of virtue ethics is its emphasis on development. The Jubilee Centre (2022) offers a neo-Aristotelian model of moral development, which describes two paths to becoming virtuous: an upper trajectory and a lower trajectory. The upper trajectory is for children who have been raised with positive moral habits, who therefore readily internalise virtues. The lower trajectory is for children who have been raised with negative moral habits,

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[2] Although I acknowledge that many thinkers reject clear-cut divisions between moral theories (e.g., Carr, 1999; Nussbaum, 1999)

[3] A course of action would be unwelcome, according to utilitarianism (Mill, 1863/1998), if it resulted in suffering, or more generally failed to maximise overall happiness; according to deontology (Kant, 1785/2019), if it failed to adhere to a set of rules or principles.

who therefore require practical habituation. Thus, our virtue ethical definition of a character-based dilemma might be given the following developmental emphasis:

> *A situation in which an agent is required to choose between two or more courses of action which equally stall or reverse the internalisation of virtues.*

Character educationists often refer to the "internalisation" of virtues (e.g., Berkowitz, 2022; Watts et al., 2021), but seldom (if ever) elaborate on its meaning. I will now offer an explanation. One of the components of virtue is motivation – that which energises and gives direction to behaviour (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Some behaviours are performed for their own sake, in which case the motivation is *intrinsic*; other behaviours are performed instrumentally for some separable outcome, in which case the motivation is *extrinsic* (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Thus, it seems sensible to suggest that:

> *A virtue is internalised as the motivation for its associated behaviours shifts from extrinsic to intrinsic.*[4]

For example, if a child is kind initially on the promise of a reward, but in time comes to be kind for its own sake, then this shift in motivation – from extrinsic to intrinsic – would comprise an internalisation of compassion.

Intrinsic motivation is indeed essential for virtue. For Aristotle, an act is virtuous only if it is chosen for its *own* sake (2004, p. 37 [1105a30–34]). This idea is echoed in the Jubilee Centre's (2022) neo-Aristotelian model of moral development: Children on the upper trajectory are guided primarily by intrinsic motivation, whereas children on the lower trajectory require more extrinsic motivation. So, if virtue internalisation is best understood in terms of motivation, as I contend, then character educationists ought to pay special attention to factors which facilitate, versus those which undermine, the shift from extrinsic to intrinsic motivation. The most contentious among these factors is that of external rewards.

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[4] This definition could be operationalised via Deci's (1971) free-choice paradigm (see also Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Rewards have been shown to undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci et al., 1999; Reeve, 2023).[5] Ryan and Deci explain this effect as follows: "Whereas initially participants had been doing the activity because it was interesting and enjoyable, those in reward conditions came to view the activity as something they did in order to get a reward" (2017, p. 127). This undermining effect has been replicated within the context of virtuous (or prosocial) behaviours in young children (Warneken & Tomasello, 2008). These findings have led some character educationists to denounce any use of rewards in character education (e.g., Berkowitz, 2022). Others argue that rewards may yet have a use in cases where motivation is initially very low (e.g., Watts et al., 2022).[6] Less open to debate, however, is the effect that such strategies have on others. In a study on motivational spillovers, Gubler et al. (2016) implemented an attendance award programme at an industrial laundry plant. While the award had positive (albeit short-lived) effects on employees who previously had poor attendance, it was found to undermine the intrinsic motivation of employees who previously had excellent attendance.

I am now in a position to present my character-based dilemma (as defined above). This is no ad hoc dilemma, but rather a necessary entailment of the neo-Aristotelian model of moral development (Jubilee Centre, 2022) for any teacher with a *mixed*-trajectory class:

> *Should lower-trajectory children be rewarded for virtuous (or non-vicious) behaviour, or not?*

Reward them, and risk undermining the intrinsic motivation of upper-trajectory children (Gubler et al., 2016); do not reward them, and risk stalling their (purported) progress along the lower

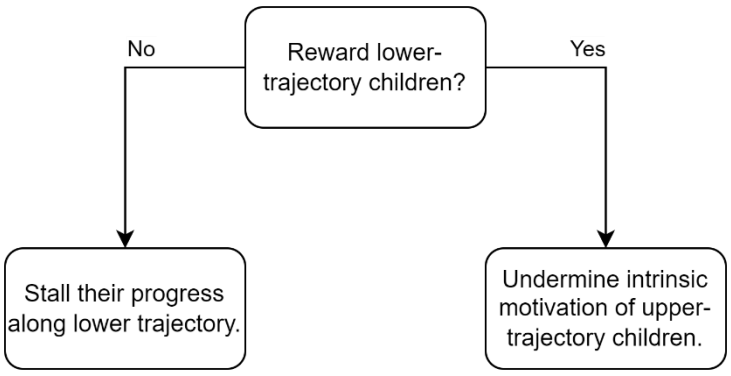
[5] I am operating within the framework of self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2017). There are other theoretical frameworks (e.g., functional analysis) that would call into question the very notion of intrinsic motivation.

[6] It is this intuition, speculative though it is, that underpins the lower trajectory of the neo-Aristotelian model of moral development (Jubilee Centre, 2022).

trajectory (Figure 1). We are thus confronted with a dilemma in which one child's moral development comes at the expense of another child's moral development.[7]

Figure 1

The dilemma inherent in the neo-Aristotelian model of moral development (Jubilee Centre, 2022)

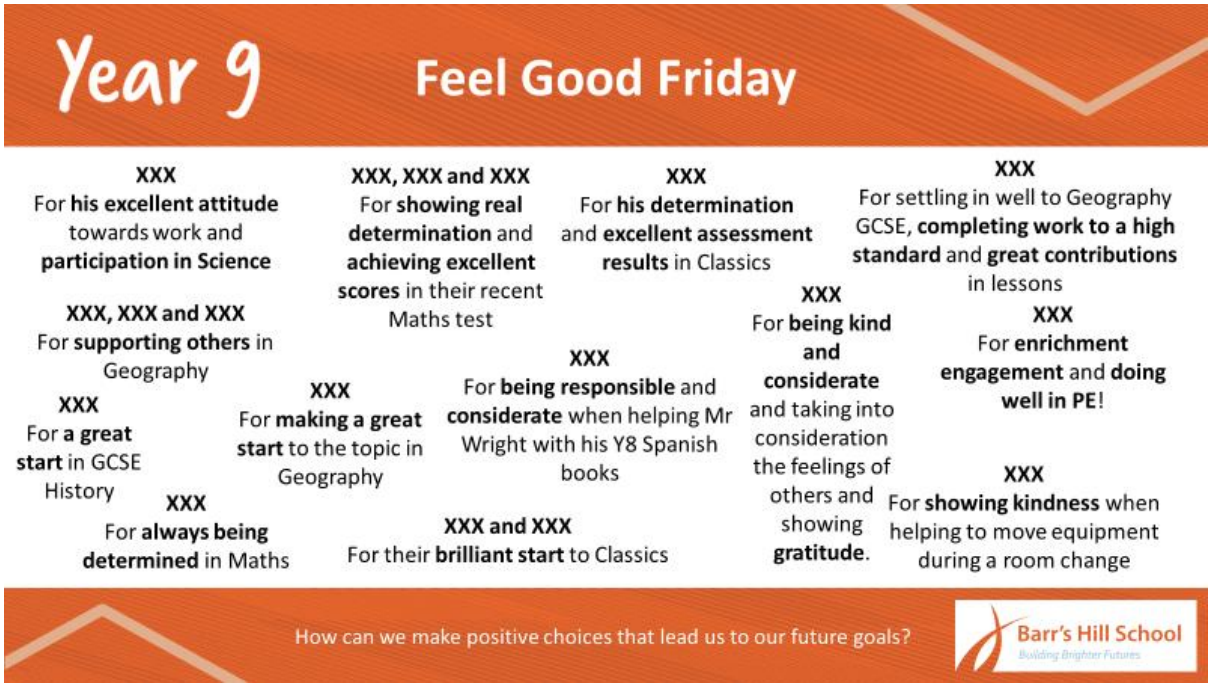


I have experienced the effects of this dilemma firsthand in my practice as a classroom teacher, specifically, a Year 9 tutor. An award programme – "Feel Good Friday" (FGF) – was introduced to celebrate and promote good behaviour across the year group. Staff could nominate students, who were then entered into a prize draw for a dessert party. Each Friday, the names of nominated students, along with the reasons for their nominations, would be displayed during tutor period (Figure 2). After a few weeks, a pattern began to emerge: Staff were disproportionately nominating lower-trajectory students, and often for only non-bad (rather than overtly good) behaviour. This pattern began to breed resentment among upper-trajectory students. Some would complain, "That's not fair!" Some began to show an increased concern with being nominated for FGF. The award programme remains in place at the time of writing, and the pattern continues.

[7] Within Shapira-Lishchinsky's (2011) taxonomy of ethical dilemmas in teaching, this dilemma would fall into the second category, where the principle of equal treatment comes into conflict with the principle of differential treatment.

Figure 2

The "Feel Good Friday" (FGF) award programme, as shown in tutors' weekly slides. (Student names have been omitted.)



3. Reflection Approach

In the previous section, I identified a dilemma at the heart of the neo-Aristotelian model of moral development (Jubilee Centre, 2022; Figure 1), which I illustrated with an example from my own practice as a teacher (viz., the FGF award programme). I will now propose a practical approach that could be used to reflect on the dilemma, before presenting a summary of my reflections to date.

A dilemma is an expression of an inconsistency in our beliefs or values. Encountering a dilemma thus throws us into a higher level of cognition, from which we can look down or back upon our beliefs, values and experiences in order to resolve the inconsistency. This metacognitive process is known as "reflection" (Dewey, 1933).[8] Beyond the resolution of dilemmas, reflection can also facilitate deeper understanding (Smith & Jack, 2005) and encourage greater responsibility for learning (Boud, 2001). One might even argue that reflection is valuable for its *own* sake. Reflection is a component of *contemplation*, after all, which for Aristotle (2004) is constitutive of flourishing.

Reflection is often facilitated by reflective writing, a form of exploratory writing in which one thinks back on, describes, and analyses personal experiences (Bean, 2011). The main vehicle of the present reflections was a daily reflective journal (Moon, 2010), accumulated over a period of months with the intention of illuminating, if not resolving, the dilemma in question. This journal also involved regular second-order reflections (Moon, 2010), in which I looked through previous entries for meaningful connections (see also Smith & Jack, 2005).

The present reflections draw on two models of reflection. First, for *structure*, Dewey's (1933) model of reflective thinking, which involves the following steps: (1) experiencing a problem; (2) observing and reflecting on the experience; (3) forming a hypothesis or solution; (4)

[8] Schön (1987) distinguishes between reflection-*on*-action (retrospective) and reflection-*in*-action (in the moment). I would argue, however, that the difference here is not one of kind, but rather degree: Both forms of reflection are in fact reflection-*on*-action, just over different timescales.

testing and evaluating the solution through action.[9] Second, for *content*, Brookfield's (2017) four lenses of critical reflection, each of which illuminates a different part of teaching: (i) students' eyes; (ii) colleagues' perceptions; (iii) theory; (iv) personal experience. Brookfield's first three lenses will furnish the second step of Dewey's model. The final lens (personal experience) is included within Dewey's first step (experiencing a problem).

It is worth observing the resemblance between the proposed Dewey-Brookfield hybrid model of reflection and Warnick and Silverman's (2011) case-analysis framework, which offers a basis for discussion of moral dilemmas in education. Both models have the benefit of being theoretically neutral.[10] However, the hybrid model is more streamlined than the case-analysis framework (Warnick & Silverman, 2011). Whereas the latter involves nine steps, some of which seem redundant, the former involves only six.

I will now present a summary of my reflections in accordance with the Dewey-Brookfield hybrid model of reflection.

3.1. Experiencing a Problem (iv. Personal Experience)

The first step of Dewey's (1933) model of reflective thinking underscores the foundational role of personal experience in initiating the reflective process. According to Brookfield (2017), despite often being dismissed as "anecdotal," personal experience can be a legitimate source of knowledge. For my personal experience of the dilemma, please refer to Section 2 (above), especially the final paragraph.

3.2. Observing and Reflecting on the Experience

The second step of Dewey's (1933) model emphasises the importance of observation, questioning, and active reflection in making sense of the experience. This step will be subdivided according to Brookfield's (2019) first three lenses of critical reflection.

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[9] Dewey's ideas on reflective thinking were influential in the fields of education and philosophy, inspiring many later models of reflection (e.g., Gibbs, 1988; Kolb & Fry, 1975; Schön, 1987).

[10] Unlike Bohlin's (2022) practical wisdom framework, say, which commits itself to virtue ethics. Committing to a particular substantive moral theory too soon can restrict the reflective process.

3.2.i. Students' Eyes

Brookfield (2015) argues that the most important pedagogic knowledge that teachers need is an awareness of what is going on in students' heads (see also Cummings et al., 2007). The FGF award programme accentuates the bifurcation between lower- and upper-trajectory students. I will consider each in turn.

First, FGF is aimed primarily at lower-trajectory students, who are therefore overrepresented among FGF nominees. These students generally seem to like the programme: the increased levels of attention, not to mention the prospect of attending a dessert party. Some of them have shown improvements in behaviour, although these positive effects are typically short-lived.[11]

Upper-trajectory students are underrepresented among FGF nominees. Many of these students believe that the award programme is unfair, specifically, it is unfair that generally badly behaved students should be rewarded for a few fleeting instances of improved behaviour when other students, such as themselves, are always well behaved with no reward whatsoever. This attitude seems to precipitate an increased focus on rewards. Indeed, some (formerly?) upper-trajectory now regularly enquire about FGF nominations.

3.2.ii. Colleagues' Perceptions

For Brookfield (2017), critical reflection is a collective process: Talking to colleagues can open us up to new ways of thinking. I spoke, first, with other Year 9 tutors. It transpires that I am not the only one who has experienced this problem. Many tutors have noticed the negative effects of the award programme. Indeed, after extended discussions with expert colleagues, this seems to be one of the perennial problems of education: How do teachers motivate badly behaved students without demotivating well behaved students?

I then raised these concerns with Year 9 leaders, those responsible for introducing the FGF programme, and other leaders across the school. Leaders tend to respond in two ways.

[11] This aligns with Gubler et al.'s (2016) findings.

First, they explain that FGF is an *equity*-based programme, by which they mean it is aimed at those who need it most (i.e., generally badly behaved students). Second, they acknowledge the negative impact that such programmes can have on well behaved students. Year 9 leaders, in particular, have committed to increase recognition and rewards for such students outside the FGF programme.

3.2.iii. Theory

Brookfield (2017) suggests, first, that reading theory can help us articulate our problems. Indeed, it was only by synthesising the neo-Aristotelian model of moral development (Jubilee Centre, 2002) and cognitive evaluation theory (Gubler et al., 2016; Reeve, 2023) that allowed me to articulate the dilemma in terms of intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. Brookfield (2017) also suggests that reading theory can help unearth and challenge our assumptions. This will be key to unlocking the dilemma.

The dilemma concerns motivation, yet upper-trajectory students raise concerns about fairness. Is there a connection, then, between motivation and fairness (or justice)? In their study on motivational spillovers, Gubler et al. (2016) suggest that intrinsic motivation might be undermined as *a result of* perceived unfairness.[12] Within educational settings, there is little direct research on this relationship (and seemingly none at all within the character educational literature). I found only two studies – Chory-Assad (2002) and Kazemi (2016) – both of which found that student perceptions of justice are positively correlated with motivation. However, neither author acknowledges that perceptions of justice are not fixed. Indeed, our perceptions are determined by our concepts (Hansen et al., 2006), and our concepts change over time. Within the framework of neo-Aristotelian character education, justice is a virtue, and virtues are

[12] The psychology here is interesting, and seemingly underexplored. The effect might be explained in terms of Piaget's theory of equilibration (Boom, 2009), roughly as follows: the perception of injustice is essentially a perception of imbalance (disequilibrium); imbalance engenders the desire to restore balance (equilibrium); in some circumstances, restoring balance might be achieved by increasing one's share of rewards; hence the shift from intrinsic to extrinsic motivation.

educable (Kristjánsson, 2017). Thus, if a certain conception of justice is having negative effects, it makes sense to try educating a different conception.

We have arrived at last at the source of the dilemma: Students tend to think of justice in terms of brute equality, whereas staff – for example, the Year 9 leaders who introduced FGF – think of justice in more equitable terms.[13] In particular, staff seem implicitly to endorse Rawls's (1971) difference principle, whereby inequalities in the distribution of goods (viz., rewards) can be just, as long as they are to the benefit of the least advantaged (viz., lower-trajectory students).

Before hypothesising a solution to the dilemma, I will briefly consider (and dismiss) some other options. First, instead of rewards, why not use strategies that are effective in building intrinsic motivation, such as positive relationships, role-modelling, and high expectations (Berkowitz, 2022)? Because not all children are receptive to such strategies. Indeed, it is for the sake of these children's moral development that the lower-trajectory exists in the first place. Second, why not segregate lower- and upper-trajectory children? Because, though it may be obvious at the extremes, for many children it would be difficult (if not impossible) to determine whether they were lower- or upper-trajectory. One child may even occupy different trajectories with respect to different virtues (e.g., upper- for honesty, but lower- for kindness). Even if they were identified and segregated, there is still no guarantee that upper-trajectory children would not find out about extrinsic reward programmes in lower-trajectory classes (or schools).[14]

3.3. Forming a Solution or Hypothesis

The third step of Dewey's (1933) model involves forming a hypothesis or possible solution based on the reflections made during the previous step. First, a summary: intrinsic

[13] Arthur et al. (2015) report widespread agreement among teachers that fairness is one of the most important virtues for good teachers (see also Colnerud, 2006).
[14] There is another option. A dilemma is an obstacle, and obstacles presuppose a goal. Thus, one way to resolve (or dissolve) a dilemma is to abandon the goal. The goal here, however, is no less than the flourishing of children, and there are good reasons not to abandon this goal (see Kristjánsson, 2019).

motivation can be undermined by perceptions of injustice (Chory-Assad, 2002; Gubler, et al., 2016; Kazemi, 2016); justice is educable (Kristjánsson, 2017); inequalities in the distribution of goods can be just, as long as they are to the benefit of the least advantaged (Rawls, 1971). This points to the following hypothesis:

> *Instilling a Rawlsian conception of justice in intrinsically motived students could reduce their susceptibility to the undermining effects of extrinsic reward programmes.*

3.4. Testing and Evaluating the Solution Through Action

The final step of Dewey's (1933) model involves testing the hypothesis or solution through action. So, I decided that the next time a student complained about FGF being unfair, I would challenge their conception of fairness. There have now been several conversations, and a script has begun to crystallise:

Student:	"That's not fair!"
Me:	"What do you mean?"
Student:	"Why should they [a lower-trajectory student] be rewarded when we aren't?"
Me:	"You think that everyone should be treated the same?"
Student:	"Yes!" [I refer to this view as "brute" equality.]
Me:	"So, imagine you were in charge of sharing some food between two people. How much would you give each of them?"
Student:	"Half each."
Me:	"Now imagine that one person has just enjoyed an all-you-can eat buffet, while the other hasn't eaten in a week. Would you change your answer?"
Student:	"Yes. I would give more food to the second person."
Me:	"So, sometimes it is fair to treat people differently, according to their need?"
Student:	"Yes, but that's different."

Me: "How?"

At this point, conversations usually diverge as the student tries to explain how the lower-trajectory student in question is not comparable to the imagined person. However, the conversation has already served its purpose in showing the student that their conception of justice as brute equality is flawed; there are other (better) conceptions of justice, according to which disproportionately rewarding lower-trajectory students might not be unfair.

Some of the students with whom I have had this conversation have stopped complaining about the FGF programme; some have shown less concern with being nominated for FGF and receiving other external rewards. This is a promising start. If the intervention is to be properly evaluated, however, it must be subject to a randomised controlled trial (Harrison et al., 2016). In light of the foregoing, it is easy to see what shape such an evaluation might take. One could introduce an attendance award (à la Gubler et al., 2016) at a school and randomly assign students to one of two conditions: *intervention*, in which students have conversations about justice; or *control*, in which students have conversations about something else. Students' intrinsic motivation could be measured pre- and post-intervention via the free-choice paradigm (Deci, 1971) and/or the Intrinsic Motivation Inventory (Ryan et al., 1983; see also Ryan & Deci, 2017), and then compared across conditions via a mixed-ANOVA.[15]

4. Professional Development Activity

The reflections in the previous section culminated in the hypothesis that the dilemma in question (Figure 1) might be resolved by engaging upper-trajectory students in conversations about justice. Thus, one issue connected to the dilemma is that of *conversation*, which is itself a form of moral education (Noddings, 1994). The conversation recounted above is an example of Socratic dialogue. Thus, in this section, I will describe a professional development activity that would familiarise teachers with the tenets of Socratic dialogue.

[15] At the end of this reflective section, it is worth noting that Dewey's (1933) model of reflection is an iterative process (if not a cycle per se), where the output of one iteration provides the input for the next. In this section, and indeed this essay, I take myself to have completed only one iteration.

Almost all contemporary approaches to moral and philosophical education recommend dialogue as an essential method for the education of moral and intellectual virtues (Watts, 2024). Kristjánsson (2017) argues that dialogue is a key element of the Aristotelian method, in particular. *Socratic* dialogue makes use of the Socratic method, which Socrates describes as "midwifery" because it is used to help deliver knowledge from his followers (Plato, 2014). Via questioning, Socrates drives his interlocutors into self-contradiction, thus freeing them of their false preconceptions. In the conversation recounted above, the false preconception was the idea that justice consists in brute equality; the critical question was, essentially, "Would you divide food equally between a full person and a starving person?" Several educational approaches have made explicit use of Socratic dialogue, including the Philosophy for Children movement (e.g., Pritchard, 1996) and the Nelson and Heckman tradition (e.g., Knežić et al., 2010). In particular, Knežić et al. (2013) found that familiarity with Socratic dialogue had a positive effect on teacher-learner interactions. It is the intervention in this study that will provide the main source of inspiration for the proposed professional development activity.

Thus, I propose the following core activity: a seven-week course in Socratic dialogue offered to university students preparing to enter education (e.g., PGCE students in the UK). The course will consist of weekly two-hour sessions, with a different topic/concept each week. The concept will be announced at the start of each session as a question (e.g., "What is learning?"). The group will think of incidents in which the concept played a role; the most suitable incident will be chosen by participants. Clarificatory questions will follow, and then the Socratic dialogue proper. The facilitator will employ Heckman's (1981) six pedagogical strategies, for which see Knežić et al. (2013, p. 492).[16] The session will end with a common definition.[17] An ancillary activity will involve a weekly journal entry in which participants reflect on the session.

[16] I omit the six strategies here due to space restrictions, although I discuss the sixth strategy explicitly in the penultimate paragraph of this section.
[17] The quality of the sessions could be assessed via Knežić et al.'s (2013) Socratic dialogue assessment form.

There are several benefits to this approach. First, it targets preservice teachers. As Marshall (2001) explains, the best way to train teachers in character education is to reach them before they ever get into the classroom. Second, it is a sustained programme. Evidence suggests that sustained, coherent programmes of personal development have greater impact on pupil outcomes than one-off, stand-alone activities (DfE, 2016). Third, it would help bridge the gap between student teachers' teaching practice and the theoretical concepts they learn (Jubilee Centre, 2016; Van Stekelenburg et al., 2020; Wubbels, 1992). Fourth, given that participants suggest the topics and choose which incident to discuss, it would enhance autonomy, which for Kennedy (2014) would be a benefit.[18] Fifth, it would address what Richardson (2003, p. 8) calls the "biggest challenge" for all trainee teachers, namely, helping them become more sceptical about their own beliefs.

However, the proposed approach also has some serious shortcomings, in light of which I will propose some amendments. First, in Knežić et al.'s (2013) course, participants choose their own topics. As such, there is no guarantee that they would choose the topic of justice, or any other moral virtue. Thus, I propose that topics are instead provided: Each session would concern a different prototypical moral virtue (see Kristjánsson, 2017, pp. 16–17), including that of justice.[19] Knežić et al. (2013) set a precedent for this practice: In the final session of their course, the topic was chosen for participants – that topic being learning gains from the course, thus allowing participants to reflect on what they had learned. I will extend the practice of choosing topics for participants to all sessions. This would limit participant autonomy, but only to an extent. Participants would still think of relevant incidents, which may even include moral dilemmas (Fullard & Watts, 2019), and choose the most suitable incident among themselves.

[18] Although autonomy does presuppose a minimal level of competence, which Kennedy (2014) seems to overlook in his analysis of teacher CPD.
[19] Philosophical jargon would be kept to a minimum, in line with Kristjánsson et al.'s (2020) recommendation.

Moreover, the goal of these sessions is to *free* participants of false preconceptions, which is an inherently autonomy-enhancing exercise.

Second, Kristjánsson (2017) criticises the Nelson and Heckman tradition (e.g., Knežić et al., 2010, 2013) for being Socratic in name only: Whereas Socrates aims at objective moral truth (or at least the refutation of objective moral falsehoods), this approach aims merely at consensus among discussants. This is a serious problem. For even after participants have been given the topic of justice, there is no guarantee that they would arrive at anything even approximating Rawl's (1971) difference principle. Thus, in addition to providing the topics, I propose that discussions are guided by facilitators towards particular learning objectives: in the session on justice, towards Rawl's (1971) difference principle. Again, there is a precedent for this within work on Socratic dialogue: Heckman's (1981) sixth pedagogical strategy states that the facilitator should "intervene as appropriate in order to steer the dialogue in a fruitful direction" (Knežić et al., 2013, p. 492). Perhaps Kristjánsson (2017) was too harsh in his criticism, after all.

Finally, professional development should be underpinned by robust evidence (DfE, 2016). While there is some evidence that training in Socratic dialogue can improve student outcomes (Knežić et al., 2010, 2013), there is currently no empirical evidence that it might help address the dilemma in question (Figure 1). Indeed, as far as I am aware, the dilemma itself has never before been formulated in these terms. My hypothesis – that instilling a Rawlsian conception of justice in intrinsically motivated students (via Socratic dialogue) could insulate them from the undermining effects of extrinsic reward programmes – is a novel hypothesis. Thus, I refer back to the RCT proposed at the end of the previous section. If my hypothesis is supported, then this would underpin the professional development activity described above. Even then, however, the evidence base would be far from "robust." Though it may kindle a promising line of research.

5. Summary

In Section 2, I defined “character-based dilemma” as a situation in which one must choose between two courses of action which equally stall or reverse the internalisation of virtues, before identifying such a dilemma at the heart of the neo-Aristotelian model of moral development (Jubilee Centre, 2022), namely: Should lower-trajectory children be rewarded for virtuous (or non-vicious) behaviour, or not (Figure 1)? I illustrated this dilemma with an example from my own practice as a teacher. In section 3, I proposed a Dewey-Brookfield hybrid model of reflection, along with a reflective journal, via which I hypothesised that the dilemma might be resolved by engaging upper-trajectory students in conversations about justice. Thus, in section 4, I described a course (adapted from Knežić et al., 2013) that would familiarise preservice teachers with Socratic dialogue. The overarching and general implication of this essay is that the virtuous teacher is one who is prepared to engage their students in difficult conversations about moral matters.

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