RESPONSE TO COMMENTARIES BY
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The insightful commentaries to our contribution offered by Alessandra Tanesini and Lani Watson highlight some important aspects of the work that philosophers, education theorists, and educators should carry out to strengthen the theoretical and practical advantages of the educational approach we have proposed. The questions they raise would deserve a more in-depth treatment than we can offer here, but it seems important briefly to address a few points that could set the grounds for future investigations on intellectual virtue-based approaches to education and their social dimensions.

As Tanesini points out, our contribution is only a first step of a long journey into a social epistemology of education. From a truly social perspective—Tanesini argues—one might expect that the primary epistemic goal of education is the epistemic wellbeing of the community as opposed to the epistemic wellbeing of the individual learner. Her proposed comparison between the collective educational approaches of the pre-industrial settings and the ones we have adopted in Western industrialized societies reveals that imitation of exemplars or role-models plays a relevant role in both cultures albeit one that sacrifices individual flourishing to secure the wellbeing of the community at large.

This remark is helpful in that it helps us show that imitation of intellectual exemplars, at least in the educational model that we propose in the paper, drastically departs from this common feature of the two cultures that Tanesini considers. A key feature of the virtue-based approach to education we favour is that it prevents the fostering of unquestioning attitudes in the learners via the emulation of mature members of one's community. Quite to the contrary, imitation of exemplars in an educational

approach grounded in the social cultivation of intellectual virtue provides learners with the dispositions and intellectual resources to flourish as intellectual agents, and therefore as human beings.

In this respect, the educational approach we propose might in fact differ from the standard model of education in Western industrialized societies as we do not see the educational role of intellectual virtues as a way to induct learners into a particular culture, albeit one that makes room for innovation. Relatedly, we think that emulation of role models does not—or, at least, should not—reduce to sheer mimicking. The view of education we have put forth is one in which the epistemic wellbeing of the community cannot do without ensuring that its members flourish at the individual level. Tanesini is right that the solution of problems arising in large-scale communities in Western industrialized societies requires a level of specialization and a cognitive division of labor that call for the exercise of intellectual virtues both at an individual and a collective level. Nonetheless, a social approach to education in a community need not forget about or sacrifice the intellectual flourishing of its members as a fundamental epistemic aim. For that would be too high a price to pay for proponents of a social epistemology of education.

That said, these considerations about the relationship between the goals of education at a collective and individual level can, at best, serve as a basis for future investigations into this issue. Two further questions raised by Watson add to this list: namely, what it means to emphasize the role of intellectual exemplars in education for both educational theory and educational practice.

As regards the former, Watson is surely right that educational theories that promote relational interactions between teachers and learners sit well within the approach we have proposed. It is also true that this might speak in favor of reducing the students-teachers ratio where it is possible. Yet, the fact that we highlight the role of direct exemplars in intellectual character education should not lead one to think that our approach is necessarily bound to direct instructional methods, if what we mean by that is an old-fashioned teaching approach based on taught classes delivered by the teacher. It is surely key to an intellectual virtue-based approach to education that the students learn what the virtues are, how they work, and why we need them. But prominent examples like the *Intellectual Virtues Academy* (Long Beach, California), the *Anteater Virtues Project* (University of California, Irvine), and the education programs that the *Institute for the Study of Human Flourishing* (University of Oklahoma) conducts with schools in the Oklahoma City area reveal that character education is compatible with a wide variety of strategies to help students learn and develop moral, intellectual, and civic virtues.[1]

As regards the latter question, it is surely helpful to think about which intellectual virtues the teachers should exercise and which virtues, as Watson argues, they should avoid exercising for the epistemic good of their students. Allowing space for them to become inquisitive epistemic agents might well require that the teacher refrains from modeling the virtues of good questioning and curiosity. This interesting case allows us to highlight the importance of involving the students themselves in the role-

modeling phase of virtue development. Rather than indulging in an explanation or an exemplification of how an inquisitive person asks questions, the teacher would be particularly helpful in highlighting those episodes in which some students, with their questioning or curious attitudes, can serve as intellectual exemplars for their classmates. No matter what set of intellectual virtues proves to be fundamental for teachers *qua* role models, the above considerations reveal that teachers cannot do without one of the most complex virtues, namely practical wisdom. For in most cases, the choice between various possible strategies to help the students develop their virtues will be determined by peculiar features of the classroom and the social environment. Practical wisdom allows the teacher to tailor their teaching strategies to the overall situation of their class and coordinate the joint activity of several intellectual virtues that are key to maintaining such a dynamic approach. Interestingly enough, then, teachers cannot but practice an overarching intellectual virtue that the students will be able to recognize only once they have developed several other intellectual virtuous traits.

REFERENCES

Orona, G. A., *&* Pritchard, D. H. (*Forthcoming*). 'Inculcating Curiosity: Pilot Results of an Online Module to Enhance Undergraduate Intellectual Virtue', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*.

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[1] For a recent educational study of the Anteater Virtues project at the University of California, Irvine, which also summarises the pedagogical strategies employed and attempts to measure their effects on student learning outcomes, see Orona *&* Pritchard (*forthcoming*).