Cultivating Two Aspects of Intellectual Humility: Openness and Care

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Abstract: We believe that intellectual humility is an essential intellectual virtue for university students to foster. It enables them to excel as students of philosophy and other disciplines, to navigate the fast-changing world inside and outside academia, and to flourish in interaction with others. In this paper, we analyze this virtue by singling out two distinct but related aspects: the openness aspect and the care aspect. The former makes one value a dialogue with those who have different views from one's own. The latter aspect involves searching for implicit assumptions one brings to encounters with one's object of inquiry and trying to study this object as unique and irreducible. We discuss four learning activities we developed for the philosophy bachelor course "Who are we? Philosophical views on humans and the gods" at University College Utrecht (the Netherlands). Throughout this paper, we show extracts from the students' assignments, reflections, and evaluations. These extracts indicate that students developed both aspects of intellectual humility—openness to different views and care for the uniqueness of each object of inquiry—and acknowledged their importance.

1. Introduction

Since we started reflecting on developing the virtue[1] of intellectual humility in our students, we noticed how intellectual humility is rapidly becoming a hot topic. It is not only a concept of interest for virtue ethicists and other philosophers,[2] but also educators and psychologists.[3] This paper involves both a theoretical reflection on what this virtue is and practical suggestions on how this virtue can be fostered in a philosophy class.

On the theoretical level, this paper reflects on openness and care, which we see as the two main aspects of intellectual humility. We in-

troduce them in the following working definition. Intellectual humility is awareness of the limits of one's own perspectives.[4] This awareness fosters *openness* to dialogue with those who hold different perspectives and *care* towards the object of one's inquiry, seen as unique. This uniqueness entails that the reduction of one's object of inquiry to any number of pre-existing categories will not result in exhaustively understanding it.

On the practical level, this paper could be of interest to other philosophy teachers who want to stimulate the development of both aspects of intellectual humility in their students. I.e., teachers who want to equip their students not only with a sound disciplinary grounding,[5] but also with an attitude that contributes to making philosophy students the highly valuable interdisciplinary researchers, colleagues, and employees we know them to be.[6] We will share the learning activities that we devised for a specific philosophy course and tested on a group of students, along with the reflections on their learning experiences, we asked them to produce.

We selected learning activities that could facilitate what Jack Mezirow, a sociologist specialized in adult education, has called "transformative learning." Two major processes that stimulate transformative learning are relevant here. The first entails critical assessment of and reflection on one's assumptions and frames of reference, while the second involves acquiring the ability to participate fully and freely in dialectical discourse.[7] Mezirow suggests that "Transformative learning imparts not only changes in what we know but also changes how we know." By approaching the study of philosophy as transformative, we try to help our students develop intellectual virtues that allow them to grow as thinkers and as human beings, while letting them achieve a deeper understanding of the philosophical texts, concepts, and arguments under discussion. Transformative learning involves "reflecting critically on the *consequences* of assumptions, our own and others." One of the bad consequences of our assumptions that we might be able to counter through transformative learning is the tendency to reject new ideas because they are at odds with our unconscious assumptions and cultural, social, linguistic, or educational frames of references.

We teach philosophy at an international and intercultural college, where our bachelor students major in at least two disciplines. For the students in our class, therefore, philosophy is only one discipline they study among others. In such a setting, it is crucial that students not only learn to reflect on how personal, but also disciplinary assumptions might influence their learning process and their approach to what they study and encounter. Such assumptions might involve, for instance, the assumption that human behavior is only determined by one's hormones, or that human behavior is always rational. Furthermore, these

disciplinary assumptions might take the form of biases, such as a bias against qualitative research as opposed to quantitative, or one towards empirical research over argumentative disciplines.

We will describe four learning activities which share a dialogical format. We implemented them in the spring semester of 2018 in the bachelor course "Who are we? Philosophical views on humans and the gods" at the University College Utrecht (Utrecht University, the Netherlands). The dialogical format is, firstly, aimed at developing the awareness that there are many ways of looking at the same issue. Secondly, it was meant to train the ability to enter in dialogue with those who hold different views by asking questions. Getting to know and embody other perspectives might result in developing a taste for epistemic friction between perspectives, which might well correct and complete our own. We will quote some extracts from students' assignments, which illustrate how they applied their newly learned attitude and skills.

We assessed our success in initiating the development of intellectual humility, both by analyzing student's work and student's reflections. The methodology of this paper is interdisciplinary: it makes use of humanities tools, such as analysis of concepts, and social science tools, such as analysis of qualitative data from students' reflections and evaluations. We use some quotations to illustrate their development of various aspects of intellectual humility and recognition of its benefits. To our delight, the clear majority of our students mentioned aspects of intellectual humility as goals they achieved.

We are very fortunate to teach at a college where students often approach a philosophy course as an occasion to grow, not only as academics but also as persons. They see it as an opportunity, not only to increase their knowledge but also to develop their character. We, as educators, agree both with these students and with Baehr[8] and Vaidya[9] that life-long learners and good citizens of the world need to develop intellectual virtues.[10] There might be colleagues who do not think that it is the teacher's task to cultivate virtues in students. We reply to them that character building is one of our duties as teachers of philosophy since intellectual virtues are needed to be good philosophers. The virtue of intellectual humility will, for instance, significantly enhance one's capacity to understand in-depth arguments by recognizing assumptions that are different from one's own. It encourages students not to approach such arguments as expressions of what a past philosopher 'believed,' but as serious alternatives to their everyday assumptions.

Moreover, being able to reflect, be open to dialogue across differences, and expand and correct one's views are crucial skills for the next generation to have. These are also exactly the skills that philosophy and humanities in general can help them develop. We need to prepare

students for life in a world with no impassable boundaries. Students will need to cross increasingly more disciplinary boundaries since more than one discipline is often needed to solve complex problems. They might also need to cross geographical boundaries—since moving around the globe and encountering people with different backgrounds is becoming not only common but sometimes even necessary.

2. *The Virtue of Intellectual Humility*

We start with an introduction to intellectual humility, which we approach in line with Whitcomb, Battaly, Baehr, and Howard-Snyder.[11] That is to say, as an *intellectual* virtue, because it makes one "appropriately motivated to pursue epistemic goods, e.g., truth, knowledge, and understanding." Throughout this paper we will discuss the development of intellectual humility, by analyzing it in the two related but distinct aspects of (#1) openness and (#2) care. Our formulations of these two aspects emerged from our joint analyses of the scholarly literature we refer to in this section, and the student reflections we deal with in Section 3 and 4.

2.1. The Openness Aspect of Intellectual Humility

Whitcomb, Battaly, Baehr, and Howard-Snyder[12] suggest that open-mindedness and intellectual humility are two related virtues. They argue that "Intellectual Humility increases a person's propensity to consider alternative ideas, to listen to the views of others, and to spend more time trying to understand someone with whom he disagrees. . . . Intellectual Humility increases a person's propensity to seek help from other sources about intellectual matters." Thus, owning our intellectual limitations—rather than living in blissful oblivion of the partiality of our view on the matter at hand and complete arrogance originated from the belief of holding the measure all things—will result in openness to and active engagement with other sources. The openness aspect of intellectual humility readies one to practice epistemic[13] friction. Vaidya[14] defines this concept as "engagement with other points of view for the purposes of discovering whether epistemic correction or completion is required for improving one's own point of view, as well as others." He investigates the relations between openness, humility, and epistemic friction by referring to the Jain doctrine of intellectual *ahiṃsā* ('non-violence'). Intellectual *ahiṃsā* is a version of openness that involves a kind of respect for the views of others that results in open engagement rather than mere toleration. Vaidya[15] defines intellectual *ahiṃsā* as "a dispositional attitude of open inclusiveness to epistemic friction from distinct points of view, which is ultimately grounded in (i) an acknowledgement of epistemic humility and coupled with (ii)

a desire for epistemic friction for the purposes of understanding and knowledge building." Vaidya exemplifies this virtue with the parable of the elephant. This story tells us of a group of blind men put around an elephant and asked by the king to judge what they have before them. The one says a rope, the other a tree, the other a wall. Vaidya imagines the progress that the blind men could make if they would have a conversation among them, in which they would exhibit intellectual *ahiṃsā*. That is to say, if each of them would display epistemic humility, recognition of the perspectival nature of his knowledge and desire for correcting, and completing his view after having engaged with the view of others.

Thus, fostering intellectual humility in student entails helping them to develop *openness*. In order to develop *openness*, one needs to realize that one's perspectives are necessarily partial and need to be developed in dialogue with others; that epistemic friction, or engagement with alternative points of view, which might well correct and complete one's perspective, is to be welcomed. This attitude allows us to escape the "prison of our prejudices"[16] and value diversity in various contexts. Appreciating non-western voices, both in the expanding philosophy curriculum and in one's immediate surroundings, is an example of this. Furthermore, escaping this prison of our prejudices is a prerequisite for being capable of embarking on interdisciplinary endeavors, being equipped with the right mindset to collaborate with others to approach complex problems, and thriving in any multi-cultural context. By creating some critical distance from one's points of view, intellectual humility engenders the kind of openness that often results in creativity and out-of-the-box approaches. Moreover, after becoming more aware of our own perspective, we might also feel inclined to stick to it in a more profound awareness of the reasons why.

2.2. The Care Aspect of Intellectual Humility

The (#2) care aspect of intellectual humility, after making us realize the partiality and the perspectival nature of our views, encourages us to pay attention to how we are *related* to our object of inquiry and the uniqueness of such an object. Scholars of intellectual virtues such as Vrinda Dalmya[17] have suggested reflecting on intellectual humility as *relational* humility that expresses itself as care for the object of inquiry. In Dalmya's paper "Why should a knower care?,"[18] caring is described at length as a dyadic relation that involves various aspects. These include "epistemic vigilance not only about the direct object of care but also about the nature and motivations for the caring." The display of relational humility[19] is grounded in realizing how our background relationality impacts our knowing. Epistemology of caring stresses not only the importance of the awareness of our perspective

and our motivations for the choice of a particular object of inquiry. It also stresses the awareness of the uniqueness of such an object and the necessity of care for it. By trying to pigeon-hole this object of inquiry through whatever framework we use to study it, we will inevitably do this uniqueness some harm.

In other words, since one of the poles in the inquiry-process is the *inquirer*, learning to *own* one's relationality allows the inquirer to become aware, not only of their methodology and the goal of their inquiry but also of their motivations. The intellectually humble inquirer tries to know and to *articulate how they are related to the object of their inquiry*, rather than imagining they occupy a neutral space and have reached an entirely objective birds-eye view. Through a process of reflection, caring brings about self-knowledge on what our motivations are for knowing. This self-knowledge involves knowledge of the habitual framework we might automatically apply while trying to understand our object of inquiry. Such an attitude would result in seeing the object of inquiry 'simply' a token of a type, rather than unique and never fully reducible to any category or label. This takes us to the other pole of the process: the *object* of inquiry. Intellectual humility encourages the attempt "*to cognize the particularity and individuality of the cared-for*" (43, italics mine): a reflection on the uniqueness of the inquired object. Firstly, caring allows us to reflect on our way of framing our object of inquiry and on our motivations. It then encourages us to observe and listen to what we have in front of us, without immediately reducing it to something else. Dalmya[20] suggests that caring also makes one a competent inquirer because it involves the ability to create space for the other. This amounts to a type of selflessness that allows our object of knowledge and care to present itself in its own terms as much as possible.

Thus, fostering intellectual humility in students entails helping them approach their object of inquiry—be it a person, an argument, or a text—with the utmost *care*. The students will learn to recognize that any object of inquiry is *unique* and impossible to be fully described or reduced to any set of labels or categories. No previous knowledge enables one to understand what is unique entirely. They need, first, to reflect on their pre-existing categories, frameworks, discipline-specific methodology, and anything they bring to the encounter with their object. If the object of their inquiry is a text, for example, they need to approach it with patience and read it closely, while knowing that no interpretation will ever exhaust its meaning.

In the next section, "Learning Activities," we will see how each learning activity contributed to the development of openness and care in students.

3. Learning Activities

"Who are we? Philosophical Views on Humans and Gods" (Phi25) is a 7,5 EC, Bachelor level 2 course, taught at University College Utrecht, the selective Liberal Arts and Sciences College of Utrecht University. The course deals with multiple ontological models of the human person, developed in different traditions (Western, Indian, Chinese, and Japanese) and at different times. See: https://cursusplanner.uu.nl/course/UChumphi25

We will describe four learning activities that share a dialogical format and explain how they were intended to contribute to the development of intellectual humility.

3.1. Learning Activity 1: Lectures in Dialogical Format

> *I liked the great variety of philosophers discussed from different cultures and time frames, and the radically opposing ideas they represented.*
> *—Student of Phi25, anonymous evaluations*

A deeper understanding of the theories of the philosophers can be reached if they are presented as different answers to the same question, that is as if the two proponents of the different views were in dialogue with each other. Students prepared for class both by reading the selected texts and by discussing them on an online platform. In lectures, the teacher then tackled the readings with a specific methodology that was explicitly addressed. This methodology included close reading, accuracy of interpretation, and hypothetical appropriation of the models and concepts under discussion.

Models reflecting on the ontology of a person, developed in different traditions and at different times, were presented in terms of a question or alternative. One of the advantages of this structure is that a question that can lead to very different conceptions of who we are is experienced as more meaningful and momentous: students are encouraged to realize the implications of different answers. They do so by reflecting on what difference it would make 'to you and me' if a specific conception of the human being were the true one, to paraphrase what William James famously said about the function of philosophy.[21] By comparing them to each other, it becomes clear how much is at stake. See, for instance: "If I am not what I appear to be, am I fundamentally (a.) an immortal, impersonal, aware, self or (b.) an immortal, knowing, reasoning soul? Upaniṣads and Plato's *Phaedo*." "If I am a social animal, am I fundamentally (a.) an individual who enters in relations with others, without whom he cannot survive and flourish, or (b.) am I my roles and relations, from which an individual can be abstracted? Aristotle and Confucius."

Organizing readings and lectures in terms of questions or alternatives was intended to stimulate comparison and a deep understanding of the texts. We will now elaborate on how this structure contributed to the development of intellectual humility.

(#1) One of the goals of juxtaposing views on the same topic was the development of openness: the attitude that leads one to welcome exposure to views that are different from ours, realizing that even to understand what we might agree with, it is crucial to know an alternative view. This approach promotes knowledge of different frameworks, expanding the students' knowledge of what is possible; and encourages them to take each framework seriously as a serious alternative to one's, to look for the possible consequences of this conceptualization, rather than being satisfied with an attitude of: 'this philosopher believed that . . ."

(#2) We trained our students in reading texts closely, singling out and interpreting arguments made by philosophers. This process already started before class while doing the readings and asking or answering questions about them on an online platform. When reviewing their online assignments on the readings (due twice a week, before each class), the teacher consistently made students aware that every claim they made needed to be supported by a precise reference to the primary text involved. Approaching a primary text with care can be trained before one has internalized the virtue of intellectual humility, and will possibly lead to the development of this virtue. This approach differs fundamentally from being contented with labeling a certain text as "empiricist," "Buddhist," "rationalist," based on secondary literature making that claim—and believing that is enough for understanding any point made by the philosopher. Secondary literature is welcome, but their claims must always be tested against the primary text. This involves recognizing the uniqueness of the object of inquiry and explicit awareness of our relation to it. We might, for example, be inclined to believe a particular interpretation, but we still need to see if the philosopher's text allows it. The care students learn while reading and re-reading texts pays off while writing papers: first as drafts, then receiving feedback, and finally submitting an improved version of their paper. This aspect of care was labeled 'slow teaching' by a colleague who firmly believes in the need for this approach in education. One can only recognize the uniqueness of a text or argument with a slow and in-depth approach.

3.2. Learning Activity 2: Dialogues

> *I think the philosopher's dialogues were amazing! It was so cool to see peers embody the characters and viewpoints of the philosophers we were studying. I really loved the way that the interactions took place, and how students could really present their favorite philosophers that way.*
> —*Student of Phi25, anonymous evaluations*

Students were asked to perform oral dialogues to enable them to gain a deep understanding of different assumptions, definitions, arguments, which yield different views on who we are as humans. Two teams of two or three students impersonate a philosopher and ask questions to each other. This embodiment of different views leads to in-depth knowledge of the material, fosters intellectual humility, and shows the benefit of intellectual humility, both as openness and care.

(#1) The development of openness is first encouraged by experiencing how epistemic friction between different views on the same topic results in a clarification of the differences between similar positions. Secondly, students were encouraged to open up to the philosophers' views and take them seriously by applying these views to real life. Finally, openness is practiced while exploring common ground during a dialogue, which shows the benefits of collaboration.

(#2) Care is needed and developed while representing the view of the philosopher one impersonated with precision. This exercise, therefore, results in in-depth knowledge of assumptions and arguments in specific texts from different systems, schools, and philosophers.

Pointers for students, inspired by Angelo and Cross[22] included the suggestion that both teams would agree beforehand on the central theme or question to be discussed and 4 or 5 sub-questions of the issue under discussion; they would ask questions to each other (rather than just representing their own position), e.g., 'why is it you think x?'; they would listen very carefully to the answer and the words used to articulate it and refer as much as possible to the exact words used (e.g., 'I hear you say that . . . but how do you define x'?); before the end of the dialogue both teams would work towards harvesting shared questions, concepts, values ('would you agree that we both . . . ?'), and that both teams would work towards articulating differences. One expresses care, for instance, by not assuming one has a comprehensive understanding of another's position or all layers of a text. As a consequence, one keeps asking questions to the other, or the text. One also expresses care by continuously applying the principle of charity, that is, by assuming that the view of the other makes sense, even if one might not yet have understood how. The only way to go about it is, once more, to keep asking questions.

Some students decided to write their individual papers in a dialogue format, in which two views on a topic could be compared and con-

trasted. Some dialogues were written to show similarities among views of philosophers from different traditions, rather than present strongly opposed views. For instance, Samuel van der Lugt, who wrote the following paper, decided to stage a dialogue between a student who is eager to dismiss the Buddhist doctrine of karma at first and Merleau Ponty. The French philosopher shows his student how such a doctrine is quite compatible with his own phenomenology. He even provides some valuable insights on how our relation to our environment and our continuous transformation is a consequence of our actions within our environment. We will quote at length from this paper:

> **Student:** . . . I think I know now why you wanted me to read non-Western philosophy. It is now clear to me that I should not make the same mistakes the Indians made when they thought up karma. . . . They think there is some outside force called "Karma," which judges your actions and changes the circumstances in your life, so good things happen to you if you [perform] good actions, and bad things happen to you when you [perform] bad actions. They write that when someone kills someone else, he'll reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell, or he'll be reborn and be shortlived in his next life.[23] . . . These primitive thoughts outraged me so much that I stole five eggs from my neighbor this morning and had them for breakfast. I did this hours ago, and nothing bad has happened to me because of it. I've disproven that Karma exists.

> **Merleau-Ponty:** You make many mistakes, student of mine. In fact, Karma and my philosophy are quite similar and compatible with each other. I recently . . . read a paper by a scholar named MacKenzie, who beautifully linked my phenomenology to Karma.

> **Student:** I've never heard you make assumptions like in the Karma readings. How would you justify saying that my stealing of my neighbor's eggs would affect my life in a bad way?

> **Merleau-Ponty:** As I have tried to teach you, before we engage in the activity of reflecting, there is only the world as a field of experience. . . . We don't objectively see the things outside of us as if we were a CCTV camera. . . . We act in a certain way, which makes us perceive things and decide what they are, which in turn influences the way in which we act. . . . Experience is always bilateral in the sense that it consists of what the world outside of us immediately brings to it, but also of what we ourselves put into it by projecting [our] past, future, and all circumstances we are in. We always see the objects around us as what they mean for us. I don't just see the mug I hold in my hand as the porcelain object with a hollow shape which it objectively is, but I see something that I can drink from. Because I know I used these objects to drink from in the past, I see an object for drinking from when I look at the mug now. In the same way, you see your neighbor as someone you can steal from. Because of this, you'll also be more anxious that he is going to steal from you, and you will not be able to leave your house without locking your door. . . . You could also have seen your neighbor as a friend. This would have caused you to make contact with him and get to know him, which would then

have [led] you to trust each other. . . . Your world would have had way less thievery and more trust because of your actions.

Student: Okay, that sounds reasonable, but how would you ever justify the aspect of rebirth. The texts literally say that people are reborn. You can't say that you actually believe that people come back to life and experience the fruits of the action they've undergone in past lives in their present life? I just can't accept that.

Merleau-Ponty: We are in the constant process of enacting ourselves. The person I am now is not the person I will be in the future. I create that future version of myself with my experiences and actions at this moment. 'Reborn' doesn't mean I come out of the womb again, but it simply means that the person I am is always shifting. I am always in a flow of becoming a new person. The person I am now is shaped by my past experience, and the person I will become is shaped by my current experience. By stealing eggs from your neighbor, you have enacted yourself as a person who steals. If you continue to do this, you will eventually be 'reborn' as a thief, and therefore your world will carry thievery and mistrust.

It is interesting to notice how Samuel did *not* write a dialogue between Merleau-Ponty and the Buddha (or Vasubandhu), but rather between Merleau-Ponty and a student who, at first, dismissed the Buddhist doctrine of karma as primitive. Throughout the dialogue, we not only learn about the similarities between phenomenology and Buddhist thought, but we also assist in the transformation of a student (the character in the dialogue) who is shown how intellectual humility pays off. He learned how to apply the principle of charity to his non-Western readings, not to superimpose his flawed and popular view of karma on them. He read *Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta* and Vasubandhu (quoted in the footnotes) carefully until he understood how to see this Buddhist concept is not only compatible with French phenomenology but also complementary to it and relevant to a reflection on how we create our world.

3.3. Learning Activity 3: Presentations on Other Disciplines' Approach

> *I think it was really nice that we had the presentations, relating the question 'what is a human being?' to other classes.*
> *—Student of Phi25, anonymous evaluations*

Reflection on disciplinary differences was stimulated through an exercise in which students had to reflect on the question "what is a human being in discipline x, which is not philosophy." In a five-minute presentation, they tried to answer the following questions:

- How does this discipline (or: this branch of this discipline) study human beings (What methodology)?

- How does this discipline define the human being (or what assumptions does it have about what a human being is, what model of the human being does it use)?

- What questions does this discipline ask about human beings?

This exercise was intended to make them aware of the different frameworks and methodologies that can be used to approach the questions about the human being outside of the boundaries of philosophy.

These are snippets from their reports on their own presentations: Economics: "It is assumed that we are absolutely rational, and we make choices that are in our self-interest (altruism then is simply also just a form of selfishness)"; Law: "A natural person is also a legal person: at birth, every human being automatically acquires legal personhood. This legal personhood is a prerequisite to legal capacity, which is the ability to enter into rights and obligations"; Biology: "human beings as being members to the *Homo sapiens* species, in the animal kingdom."

Students appreciated this exercise. At first, some students did not realize that almost all disciplines had their own definition of—or at least implicit assumptions about—the human being, and their own specific methodology to study it. They found it interesting that some definitions and assumptions from other disciplines corresponded to the theories of one or more philosophers we tackled, whereas others did not.

Intellectual humility helps one view alternative frameworks and methodologies with (#1) openness and eagerness to have one's perspective complemented or to gain more awareness of one's favorite approach. It also helps one approach one's object of inquiry with the utmost (#2) care, remembering that no account on what a human being is will ever yield a definitive answer about human beings in general or any specific individual. By reflecting on the assumptions of another discipline that the student is becoming proficient in, they become aware of what views they might bring to encounters with philosophical texts. This awareness will allow them to reflect on their relation to their philosophical object—an essential aspect of care.

3.4. Learning Activity 4: Group Assignment: "Smart Summary"

> *I really liked the short summary assignment because the idea is to make it one coherent whole, so you try to really see the links and similarities and see how theories build on each other. You also have the opportunity to review each other's work and get feedback yourself. I think it resulted in a very holistic, course wide assignment, with enough freedom to not make it a really troublesome to make.*
> —*Student of Phi25, anonymous evaluations*

Students in this course, besides writing an individual paper, also had to submit a group assignment: a "smart summary" (circa 5000 words) of everything covered. Groups consisted of four students, whose majors were as different as possible. They had to highlight the most important *concepts*, *questions*, *frameworks*, *arguments*, *and definitions* involved in finding out who we are, according to various philosophers. They could choose, for instance, to deal with eight concepts (e.g., self, soul, living like a god, happiness, mortality, body, embeddedness in the environment, and embeddedness in society) and explain what role each concept plays for two philosophers in understanding who we are. In the "smart summary," students had to juxtapose at least two treatments of each of the concepts they chose and explain how the philosophers argued for their position. Moreover, the students needed to argue for their choice of concepts and philosophers.

After each lecture, some class time was allocated for them to discuss the material covered and to start working towards this final assignment. Intellectual humility in its aspects of openness and care was trained while carrying out this assignment. Students were stimulated to value diversity (#1) not only in the material but also in their class-mates. They practiced collaborating across different ways to approach readings, research, group work, and carefully listening to each other's suggestions and contributions (#2). From the evaluations, it became clear that the students profited from discussing the material in small, diverse groups and working towards a document that helped them achieve an overview of the material covered. They were all convinced of the usefulness of such an assignment. However, some of the groups would have liked more instructions. This was especially the case for students who were unused to starting on assignments early on in the semester. They would especially have appreciated more guidance with being more disciplined and able to focus their oral discussions in class on the final assignment more specifically from the beginning of the semester.

We will now quote extracts from two smart summaries, which show how students benefited from the dialogical format of the course. The first extract is taken from the assignment by Janis Korn, Louis Noomen, Cassius Smith-Frazer, and Yaël Pool, which looks at different answers

to the question "Can we find the self by looking at conscious experience?" The students are explicit in mentioning that the Buddhist position was different from their intuition. Nevertheless, they show great care in representing it; and one can see from their treatment that they take it as seriously as the position to which they initially felt drawn. We also quote their conclusion, which shows that students have not only learned the importance of openness to other views but have also trained to put it into practice throughout the course.

> [I]t seems to be our awareness of our own existence that causes us to pose the question: What (or who) am I aware of? My intuitive understanding here is that the entirety of our experiential life is consciously perceived through a constant, first-person perspective—from which I and several other thinkers think it natural to conclude that this conscious perspective has to be at least part of an account of what we call the self. However, alternative accounts, for example, from Buddhist schools of thought, present a very different role for experience and consciousness in describing their notion of (no) self. To clarify and summarize who thinks what, the following section of our smart summary shall aim to emphasize the most salient arguments, assumptions, definitions, and questions that philosophers have employed in approaching questions on who we are by looking at experience and consciousness. For this purpose, the role and application of these concepts will be discussed for Jean-Paul Sartre, John Locke, Dan Zahavi, and selected Buddhist thinkers (as interpreted by Gethin). . . . Most Buddhist thinkers will most likely not be convinced by Sartre's and Locke's appeals to continuity of experience and pre-reflective consciousness' role in his account of the self. They are critical of the general notion of a self that underlies all experience as an unchanging and constant entity, especially because this understanding is engraved in our linguistic usage and thus automatically finds wide acceptance. From this point of departure, they tend to approach the question of what the self could be mainly by eliminating dimensions and notions that the self is not. They see three different possibilities for the self to relate to experience: Either, as Sartre sees it, it is an attribute of experience, or it may be the same as experience, or maybe it is apart from experience. (Gethin, 1998) However, all three options seem fatally flawed in their own way: If experience and the self were the same, then our self would constantly be changing. If they were completely apart from one another, how could someone think they exist without having had any experience? This clearly falls short as well. As for the self as an attribute of experience, it would need to be distinguishable from experience. There appears to be no ground for doing this, and again the problem remains that one cannot think about oneself existing without reference to specific experiences. The fourth option that remains then is that the search for an entity underlying experience is misguided, that it is a linguistic superimposition upon the world that there needs to be an agent to action. This is exactly the argument Zahavi made when he said that an experience requires an experiencer. To demonstrate what this means, consider the sentence 'it is raining.' We understand that there is no agent doing the raining, yet the way we express it in language necessarily includes a subject. The

Buddhist point then is that the subject of experience, just as for the rain, is not actually there—there is only rain, and there is only experience. There is no agent connecting our experiences or underlying the connectedness of our experiences. Instead, there is only the connectedness.

Here, a core difference in the philosophical approach of Buddhist thinkers and 20th century philosophers becomes apparent: Sartre [and Zahavi] see that pre-reflective consciousness is a continuous feature of our experience, from which [it] follows that it must be (a part of) what we call the self; The Buddhist thinkers also see that there is continuity, but they argue that it is only linguistic preconceptions that point to this continuity playing a role in an account of the self. . . .

Conclusion. Throughout this summary, it has become clear that there are many very different approaches to investigating who or what we are. . . . [B]y considering the multitude of different approaches as well as differences between philosophers within the same lens, one can crystallize common themes, distinguish underlying assumptions and thereby develop a more well-rounded and informed personal account of the self. Moreover . . . when one can identify a clear parallel between thinkers or schools of thoughts that are otherwise quite separate, this is a strong indication that philosophy can be viewed as an interconnected realm of creation—all looking to answer the same questions through different philosophical lenses. This merit of doing philosophy in a comparative manner, especially when the comparison takes place between different philosophical schools of thought or epochs, has become increasingly clear and is something that we are confident will enrich our philosophical methodology as well as our thinking about ourselves.

In the second extract, one can see the great care Nour Khairi, François Blom, James Weitkamp, and Inbar Preiss took in representing the arguments of the two compared philosophers and closely referring to the primary texts. It is clear that by comparing the two, greater clarity about both is achieved—for instance, Nietzsche's attack on the concept of cause encouraged them to look into the issue of causality in Kant's text.

One way we can attempt to answer the question 'Who are we?' is by exploring the concept of free will. What does it mean? Are we truly free in our actions? If not, what does this imply for morality? Two philosophers who tackle this issue are Kant and Nietzsche, whose conclusions on free will were radically different. This resulted in a conception of morality as either integral or a notion to be disregarded altogether. . . .

According to Kant, the Will is a causal attribute of rational beings.[24] Freedom is a property of the Will whereby the Will determines itself and produces effects, regardless of external or natural forces. Kant argues that the concept of freedom itself is not lawless. Freedom is also laboring under some laws; it is not entirely spontaneous, sporadic or disorderly. It is related to causality in that it, too, follows laws. However, these laws are not natural laws. Instead, they're self-determining, moral laws. Freedom, then, is the Will as the law that determines itself. The Will itself becomes a cause. . . .

Friedrich Nietzsche. . . . A[n] . . . error we fall into is seeing the Will as self-determining. For Nietzsche, the agent-ness spoken about earlier is nothing but a phantom, an illusion. The Will can never be the primary cause of anything but can only 'accompany' certain events. Nietzsche dismisses the Kantian concept of freedom because it requires a Will that can choose despite external factors, whose actions can be independent from natural causes. This is an error that has been argued for to justify punishment and praise, but mostly guilt. In order to hold humans accountable for their actions, we must argue that they are free. Nietzsche says: This isn't necessary. We don't need this concept of an intelligible freedom because it denies our complete absorption in the world of 'fatefulness'—for Kant, this would be the natural world. We can't isolate or separate ourselves from this world by assigning ourselves this unique capacity for producing effects, for being free rational agents. Nietzsche says: "there is nothing that could judge, measure, compare, or sentence his being, for that would mean judging, measuring, comparing, or sentencing the whole." Since we are the whole, individual guilt makes no sense; if we hold one man accountable, we're at the same time holding the whole accountable. Morality in the sense of free, personal choices becomes irrelevant here.

Freedom . . . can be seen as a state resulting from a Will unbound by natural causes, but by rational ones. Kant argues that this is impossible to argue away and essential for our conception of morality. To Nietzsche, however, freedom cannot exist since the agent itself is illusory. An agent being a substance separate from natural causality and able to be a producer of effects. Unlike Kant, Nietzsche thinks Free Will should not even be assumed since morality itself is not worth preserving. Morality is concerned with making us guilty on an individual basis when, in reality, we are just a part of the whole, subject to all the natural world's causal relations.

4. Analyzing Students' Reflections

Searching for evidence of the development of the virtue of intellectual humility, we used the reflections of the twenty-five students who attended the course. All students gave their consent to use these materials. The reflections were not graded, but the students needed to submit them at their earliest convenience. They were grateful for being given the opportunity to sit down and reflect on what they were doing. The reflection assignment consisted of three parts. At the start of the course, students were asked about their learning objectives. Then, halfway through the semester, they were asked to describe how the course fitted with the rest of their curriculum. Additionally, they indicated what they were getting out of the course, both academically and in personal experiences. Lastly, at the end of the course, reflections centered around personal growth. They were asked to talk about concepts, methods, skills, frameworks, or other elements of the course that allowed them to see things in a new way or deepen their understanding of something. This reflection was finished off by students

listing the goals they achieved. Although students were not asked explicitly to write about intellectual humility, all but two commented in implicit or explicit terms about developing this virtue in their second or third reflection. The reflections at the start of the course did not yield any comments on intellectual humility. Therefore, we left them out of our analysis.

We based the analysis of students' reflections on the description of the concept of intellectual humility mentioned in the theoretical background. First, we read all reflection documents, searching for comments referring to the concept of intellectual humility. In total, 48 comments were selected. Then, we read and discussed each of these comments, looking for similarities. This step resulted in the two aspects of intellectual humility described above: 'openness' and 'care.'

4.1. Indication of the Development of Intellectual Humility

Nearly all (twenty-three out of twenty-five) students' reflections showed indications of the development of intellectual humility. There were, however, differences in the depth and number of comments referring to this virtue.

We categorized all student comments that show awareness of their own framework, owning their limitations, valuing other perspectives, as (#1) *openness*. We selected the four following concise student quotations from their reflections as an illustration of openness.

The following quotation demonstrates an awareness of one's own framework:

> Through this systematic skepticism of even the most basic conceptions, you gain a deeper understanding of the prejudices that are prebaked into society and your own thought processes.

This student seems prepared to entertain doubts about her own beliefs. Openness is, however, not merely a matter of acknowledging one's epistemic fallibility. It is a genuine desire to revise one's views in light of new information. The following quotation exemplifies this:

> I also really enjoyed questioning my own world view and having new concepts added to it, especially from the Eastern perspective that I don't usually have a lot of contact with. I think also in relation to science this is interesting because science is often quite rigid on their concepts and methods, and doesn't accept anything that is not based on scientific reasoning, and sometimes this is a very narrow and limiting view.

This comment is evidence of a student owning his limitations. It shows not only the readiness to revise his beliefs but even enthusiasm for doing so. This attitude manifests itself in admitting limitations to others, avoiding pretense, deferring to others, drawing inferences more cautiously, seeking more information, and considering counter-evidence

judiciously. Student comments indicated that they learned to value diverse perspectives, not just tolerate them. Openness also includes students' willingness to consider alternative perspectives on issues that are counterintuitive or even directly opposed to their own views. The following quotation indicates this:

> It took me a bit to get more comfortable with engaging with an argument when I profusely disagree with its assumptions and conclusions, but I think I'm slowly getting the hang of it.

Along with other student comments, this shows the efforts and emotional involvement of students who are becoming more open. These comments indicate that students were actively learning to be more intellectually humble and open-minded. Some students even stated they changed their perspectives:

> Overall, I love that in class, we often compare two or more philosophers from an entirely different time, place, and school of thought. It makes me see the connections I didn't make before and also makes me think from a very different perspective.

This student moved beyond the willingness to consider other views and changed his/her way of thinking.

The (#2) *care aspect* of developing intellectual humility, is characterized by putting energy into understanding the object of one's inquiry by identifying its uniqueness. The effort to engage truly and in-depth with every new perspective differentiates this aspect from the openness aspect. References to close reading of the texts—indicating the quest for depth in understanding new perspectives—were found in many of the comments:

> You have to look at the smallest details in each philosophical framework. You really have to get into each philosopher's minds and own their philosophies. Preparing the dialogues with my team also made me experience the same feeling. During our preparation, we had to closely understand each philosophy . . . [and] do further research trying to find answers. . . . It was such a philosophical quest! And as importantly, we had to clearly convey our questions/findings to our peers, and understand each other. It was such a nice exercise. I loved it and will do it again with my friends!

The need and willingness to spend time on close reading and trying to understand the other is expressed in the quotation above. It also shows the enjoyment of doing so. The fact that she plans to continue this with her friend promises a transfer of this attitude beyond the course. Comments in this category demonstrate the development of critical thinking: "to always analyze underlying axioms, assumptions, and definitions used by the author." Further, recognizing the uniqueness of other perspectives or people and the contextuality of knowledge was expressed in many comments that we placed in this category:

> [There is a] necessity to see the uniqueness of every situation, and [cultivate] the ability to find the only action that perfectly fits that context. [We should not be] driven by already existing scripts in our heads and have spontaneous, genuine interactions with each other.

This quotation testifies to the quality of listening without prejudice.

Other student comments referred to acknowledging the individuality of other people. They emphasized both the need to restrain labeling others and the awareness that one can never fully understand them.

> This made me think about Merleau Ponty, who argued for the importance of keeping the mysteries about others: we all have different perspectives, and we are never going to fully understand the other; what matters is to keep trying to have a better understanding.

Finally, some comments gave evidence of the development of intellectual humility as a virtue rather than a single skill used to survive in this course.

> Rather than just acquiescing viewpoints and situations, I am more and more scrutinizing the reasons and circumstances behind them. This has less to do with specific concepts I learned about than with the general mindset I developed throughout the course.

This student shows that the will to try and understand the other is not merely a skill, but a 'mindset' that, in all probability, transfers to other learning experiences as well.

5. *Conclusions*

Intellectual humility stems from a sound recognition of one's limits[25] and encourages one to "improve their own views or approach to a topic, by completing or correcting it."[26]

This recognition does not only include the limits relative to the data available to us and the perspectival nature of any collection of data, observation, or reasoning. It also requires recognition of the limits of any reduction of the object in front of us, whose uniqueness cannot be captured in words and categories. This recognition ideally stimulates us to continue investigating, knowing that more care yields better results and that there are always new frameworks we can study, engage with, and perhaps adopt to mitigate the inevitable limits of any approach.

In the course 'Who are we? Philosophical views on humans and the gods,' learning activities were designed to stimulate the development of intellectual humility in students. The student reflections indicated that we succeeded in doing that to a high extent. The development of a particular virtue cannot be the necessary effect of any specific cause. However, we saw that students often reached a deep understanding of the philosophical material offered to them and started to display an

attitude that might well be characterized as intellectual humility. Having engaged in activities that let them experience and embody different views, they became more *open* to engaging with arguments based on personal beliefs or disciplinary assumptions different from their own. Embodying this attitude liberates them from the limitations of being able to communicate exclusively with those 'like them.' It rids them of feeling threatened by other approaches or believing that they might only talk to experts in other disciplines if they mastered their method. The course enabled them to enact the principle of charity: the capacity to take an argument seriously even if they don't agree with its premises, its assumptions or its conclusions. They started to welcome confrontation with different assumptions as something they could learn from. Often, these confrontations resulted in more awareness of their habitual assumptions and approaches to their objects of inquiry. Furthermore, they developed patience and persistence in analyzing the unique details of each philosophical text they were exposed to. In other words, they developed an attitude of *care* towards their object of inquiry.

We believe that the dialogical nature of all learning activities contributed greatly to sparking the development of intellectual humility. Some students referred to the 'smart summaries' as to what compelled them to question their assumptions and consider or compare different views, assumptions, and theories on a specific theme. Others mentioned the dialogues, which required students to adopt standpoints that might differ from their own. Their assignments and reflections show that some of them developed a real taste for trying to understand different views—also those that initially looked unfamiliar or unacceptable.

We are delighted not only with the development of the virtue of intellectual humility in many students but also their explicit recognition of the importance of aspects of it for their own growth as academics and human beings.

Notes

1. This conception of intellectual virtue is closer to how virtue responsibilists would conceive of it: "Virtue epistemologists can be divided into two groups. Virtue reliabilists conceive of intellectual virtues as stable and reliable cognitive faculties or powers and cite vision, introspection, memory, and the like as paradigm cases of intellectual virtue. . . . Virtue responsibilists conceive of intellectual virtues as good intellectual character traits, traits like attentiveness, fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, intellectual tenacity, and courage" (Baehr 2018). "Linda Zagzebski [virtue responsibilist] defines a virtue as a 'deep and enduring acquired excellence of a person, involving a characteristic motiva-

tion to produce a certain desired end and reliable success in bringing about that end.' . . . Intellectual virtues now become underlying motivation impelling us to acquire (among other things) truth-conducive dispositions and skills that ensure a desired cognitive end. The agent is held accountable for the entrenchment of these motivations into an integrated character and epistemic worth is traced primarily to this effort" (Dalmya 2002: 46).

2. Spiegel, "Open-Mindedness and Intellectual Humility," Battaly, "Teaching Intellectual Virtues," Whitcomb, Battaly, Baehr, and Howard-Snyder, "Intellectual Humility," Vaidya, "Making the Case for Jaina Contributions," and Dalmya, "Why Should a Knower Care?" Jason Baehr—in Vaidya, "Making the Case for Jaina Contributions," 254—a scholar who has done fundamental work in showing the role of education in helping students develop virtues such as "curiosity, attentiveness, perseverance, open-mindedness, and creativity," besides transmitting knowledge, does not mention intellectual humility.

3. See, e.g., https://digest.bps.org.uk/2019/04/03/people-with-greater-intellectual -humility-have-superior-general-knowledge/.

4. Cf. Whitcomb's definition: "proper attentiveness to, and owning of, one's intellectual limitations" (Whitcomb, Battaly, Baehr, and Howard-Snyder 2017: 520).

5. Including knowledge of the specific philosophical methodology: close reading of complex texts, recognition of assumptions, definitions, and arguments; knowledge of fundamental philosophical concepts, questions and very diverse answers.

6. Much has been written about the success of philosophy majors on the job market, see, e.g., Van Norden 2017: 111–13. See also https://www.theguardian.com/ education/2007/nov/20/choosingadegree.highereducation; https://www.nytimes .com/2013/09/15/magazine/how-to-get-a-job-with-a-philosophy-degree.html. These articles do not stress the role intellectual humility plays in this success. As we will show, intellectual humility is at the base of two things they insist on: the importance of accuracy of interpretation, which would belong to the care aspect, and the versatility, open-mindedness, questioning assumptions, and out-of-the-box thinking, which belongs to the openness aspect.

7. Mezirow 2009: 116–18. If the reader is interested in a TV series where transformative learning happens in dialogue between seven cross-cultural philosophers and seven young men and women, please visit https://www.food4thought.community/ and watch all episodes (in English): https://www.npostart.nl/de-boeddhistische-blik-food-for-thought/ KN_1707176.

8. Baehr 2018.

9. Vaidya 2018.

10. See, e.g., Baehr 2013: 249 (quoted in Vaidya 2018: 55): "[W]e can think of intellectual virtues as the personal qualities or characteristics of a lifelong learner. To be a lifelong learner, one must possess a reasonably broad base of practical and theoretical knowledge. But possessing even a great deal of knowledge is not sufficient. Being a lifelong learner also requires being curious and inquisitive. It requires a firm and powerful commitment to learning. It demands attentiveness and reflectiveness. And given the various ways in which a commitment to lifelong learning might get derailed, it also requires intellectual determination, perseverance, and courage. In other words, being a lifelong learner is largely constituted by the possession of various intellectual virtues."

11. Whitcomb, Battaly, Baehr, and Howard-Snyder 2017: 520.

12. Ibid, 524.

13. The words 'epistemic' and 'intellectual' are used interchangeably in this paper: they both signal a relation to knowledge.

14. Vaidya 2018: 67.

15. Ibid, 66.

16. Bertrand Russell famously wrote, "The man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason. To such a man the world tends to become definite, finite, obvious" (Russell 1912).

17. Dalmya 2016.

18. Dalmya 2002: 41.

19. Kirloskar-Steinbach 2018: 2–3.

20. Dalmya 2002: 47.

21. "The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one" ("William James, "What Pragmatism Means").

22. Inspiration for this exercise was found in Angelo and Cross 1993.

23. [i] "Here, student, some man or woman kills living beings and is murderous, bloody-handed, given to blows and violence, merciless to living beings. Because of performing and undertaking such action, on the dissolution of the body, after death, he reappears in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, even in hell. But if on the dissolution of the body, after death, he does not reappear in a state of deprivation, in an unhappy destination, in perdition, in hell, but instead comes back to the human state, then wherever he is reborn he is short-lived." (*Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta*, pt. 5). We deleted the six following footnotes of this extract, which contain precise references to the primary texts dealt with, for space's sake.

24. Immanuel Kant, Immanuel 2017. *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals*, edited by Jonathan Bennett (2017), http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/assets/pdfs/kant1785.pdf, 41. We deleted all following five footnotes of this extract, which contain precise references to the primary texts dealt with, for space's sake.

25. See Whitcomb, Battaly, Baehr, and Howard-Snyder 2017.

26. Vaidya 2018: 67.

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