European Character and Virtue Association

ECVA

European Character and Virtue Association

CONFERENCE

Trnava

24-26th JUNE
2026



ECVA *Trnava 2026*






TRNAVA 2026







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Welcome

Dear Colleagues and Delegates of the ECVA Conference 2026,

We are delighted to be part of the rapidly growing ECVA community and to contribute to its dynamic development by hosting this annual conference. Following the inspiring gatherings in Madrid, Rome, and Vienna, we are now pleased to welcome you to Trnava—a small and charming Slovak university town where, almost 400 years ago (1635), Trnava University was founded, and on whose campus we are privileged to meet today.

Following a hiatus of more than 200 years, the university was re-established as part of the democratic transformation that took place after the collapse of the communist regime. The decades of authoritarian rule that preceded these changes left a complex moral legacy, the effects of which continue to be examined in public life, education, and scholarly reflection. Holding this conference for the first time in a post-communist country therefore offers a valuable opportunity not only for academic exchange, but also for a deeper engagement with the ethical questions arising from this historical experience.

This year's conference, Knowledge–Action Gap in Character Development, addresses a theme with a history stretching back more than two millennia. One might wonder what remains to be said about such a longstanding topic. Yet the large number of carefully focused contributions submitted by conference participants demonstrates that the issue is far from resolved—either theoretically or practically. Bridging this divide is a complex task, compounded by the dynamic, deeply personal, and context-sensitive nature of character formation.The challenge lies not only in developing integrative and interdisciplinary approaches but also in discerning the boundaries of what can and cannot be shaped within human experience, behaviour, and dispositions. In this sense, practical wisdom and character friendship serve not merely as means of overcoming the gap between knowledge and action. Practical wisdom enables us to discern what can and cannot be changed, while character friendship allows us to accompany one another in the pursuit of virtue, accepting our limitations without abandoning the aspiration to grow. Together, they help us find the Aristotelian golden mean between moral scepticism and moralizing, between nihilism and uncompromising activism.

If character education is to become truly fruitful and effective, it must listen carefully to philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, neuroscientists, and many other scholars. Only then can it fully realize its significance in the fundamental task of fostering human growth and flourishing.



Over the next three days, we wish you many moments of insight—those valuable “aha” experiences that illuminate some aspect of our understanding of character and its development. Equally, we hope that you will encounter concrete examples of character in action through the relationships, conversations, and acts of mutual support that continue to flourish within this community.

We wish you a stimulating, enriching, and enjoyable conference.

Warm regards

The Organizing Committee



THE ECVA *conference*

"Knowledge–Action Gap in Character Development"

After Madrid, Rome, and Vienna, it is now Trnava University's turn to host the annual conference of the European Character and Virtue Association (ECVA). This prestigious international event will bring together leading scholars and practitioners from around the world who are at the forefront of research and debate on character education.
We are honoured that this conference has received the patronage of

Tomáš Drucker
Minister of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic

Miloš Lichner
Rector of Trnava University in Trnava

Jozef Viskupič
Governor of the Trnava Self-Governing Region

NIVAM
the National Institute of Education and Youth

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE AND STUDENT SUPPORT



Martin Brestovanský
Head of the organizing team



Andrej Rajský
Conference Coordinator



Marek Wiesenganger
Conference Coordinator



Alexandra Kocianová
Marketing and Design Coordinator



Veronika Javorková
Financial Coordinator and Communication with Participants



Peter Kusý
Technical Support

Baričičová Natália	Maršalová Alena
Bilická Laura	Micíková Katarína
Fidesová Patrícia	Mrázová Regina
Gáliková Viktória	Repáňová Ema
Maderičová Natália	Rychlý Martin
Machničová Nikola	Zbončáková Natália

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

The conference is hosted by

Trnava University

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in cooperation with

European Character and Virtue Association

European Character and Virtue Association

PRIVATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF TEACHER EDUCATION OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES AUSTRIA

University College of Teacher Education of Christian Churches

THE JUBILEE CENTRE FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES

The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues

Universidad Francisco de Vitoria UFV Madrid Virtue and Values Education Centre

Universidad Francisco de Vitoria

PROGRAMME

24.06.2026 - Wednesday

(Aula Pazmaneum - University Square, Trnava, Slovakia)

11:00 am. Press conference
(The Rector's Conference Room, Hornopotočná street 23 - Main Building)

11:00 am. – 1 pm. Registration
(Ground floor, University Square)

12:00 pm. - 1pm. Lunch
(Hornopotočná street 23 - Main Building)

1:00 pm. Start of the conference
(Aula Pazmaneum)

1:30 pm. – 3:00 pm. Policy panel
(moderated by James Arthur)
(Aula Pazmaneum)

3:00 pm. – 3:30 pm. Coffee break
(Aula Pazmaneum)

3:30 pm. – 4:30 pm. Keynote speaker 1
Tobias Krettenauer
(Aula Pazmaneum)

4:45 pm. – 6:15 pm. Session no. 1
(4 different rooms)

6:30 pm. – 7:30 pm. Dinner
(*Hornopotočná street 23 - Main Building)*

7:30 pm. – 9:00 pm. Hands-on workshops
Great Works Academy,
(Miroslava Duranková; participation is optional; Hornopotočná street 23 - Main Building)

25.06.2026 - Thursday

(Smolenice Castle)

8:30 am. – Bus departs from the Holiday Inn; transfer to Smolenice Castle

9:00 am. – Organizational introduction

9:30 am. – 10:30 am. Keynote speaker 2
Maria Silvia Vaccarezza
(Conference Hall)

10:30 am. – 11:00 am. Coffee break
(On the grounds of Smolenice Castle)

11:00 am. – 12:30 pm. Session no. 2
(5 different rooms)

12:30 pm. – 1:30 pm. Lunch
(*The Castle Dining Room)*

1:30 pm. – 3:00 pm. Break: outdoor walk

3:00 pm. – 4:00 pm. Keynote speaker 3
Matúš Adamkovič
(Conference Hall)

4:00 pm. – 4:30 pm. Coffee break
(On the grounds of Smolenice Castle)

4:30 pm. – 6:00 pm. Session no. 3
(5 different rooms)

6:30 pm. – Toast and concert
(Voci Allegre choir)
(*Castle Garden)*

7:30 pm. – Celebration Dinner
(*The Castle Dining Room)*

10:00 pm. – 12:00 am.
Return to Trnava (by bus, university cars, or private transportation)

26.06.2026 - Friday

(Aula Pazmaneum - University Square, Trnava, Slovakia)

8:30 am. – 9:30 am. Keynote speaker 4
James Arthur
(Aula Pazmaneum)

9:45 am. – 11:15 am. Session no. 4
(4 different rooms)

11:15 am. – 11:30 am. Coffee break
(Aula Pazmaneum)

11:30 am. – 12:15 pm. ECVA General Assembly
(Aula Pazmaneum)

12:15 pm. – 12:45 pm. Conference conclusions
(Aula Pazmaneum)

12:45 pm. – 1:45 pm. Lunch
(*Hornopotočná street 23 - Main Building)*



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

We are honored to welcome a distinguished group of keynote speakers whose expertise, research achievements, and professional experience have significantly contributed to their respective fields. Tobias is one of the leading voices in the global discussion on moral development and moral identity. The idea of inviting him as a keynote speaker emerged immediately after we announced the theme of this conference, during a lunch conversation with Kristján Kristjánsson at last year's ECVA 2025 conference in Vienna. Maria Silvia's work is exceptionally well known within our character-focused community, and it was truly high time to invite her to present her original ideas in a keynote address at an ECVA conference. Without exaggeration, Matúš is one of the rising stars in the field of social science research methodology. We need his contribution if we are to conduct research on moral character with methodological integrity, as this area of inquiry is particularly vulnerable to various forms of motivated bias. His lecture may not even contain the word phronesis, yet genuinely truthful research must itself be phronetic in nature. And then there is James. It would almost seem inappropriate to attempt to introduce him within this community. Without his seminal contribution, it is highly unlikely that anything like the Jubilee Centre—and subsequently ECVA—would ever have come into being. We are therefore delighted that we will finally have the opportunity to hear, in a comprehensive way and in his own words, the story of what lay behind this remarkable journey.



Tobias Krettenauer
(Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada)



Maria Silvia Vaccarezza
(University of Genova, Italy)



Matúš Adamkovič
(Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovakia;
Charles University, Czech republic;
University of Jyväskylä, Finland)



James Arthur
(Harvard University, USA)

OVERCOMING THE FRAILTY OF MORAL AGENCY

Tobias Krettenauer

The gap between moral judgment and action is sometimes described as a bug in the system of human morality that, if fixed, would make this world a much better place. In this invited address, I want to discuss the moral judgment action gap from a different, broader perspective.

Human agency is complex. There are three main components that come together when acting morally: moral sensitivity, moral decision-making ability (which includes but is not limited to moral judgment), and the capability to enact one's decisions. These three components are highly integrated on the level of intuitive, automatic processes. But they gain independence (and have to!) when the demand characteristics of a given situation require slower and more deliberative processing. As a consequence, gaps emerge not only between moral judgment and action, but also between moral sensitivity and decision-making, and sensitivity and action. In this situation, reinforcing basic processes (e.g., emotions, judgment, will-power) will strengthen specific components of moral agency but will not necessarily allow for a better integration of them. It needs higher-level constructs that exert some top-down influence for coordinating major components of moral action and for overcoming the frailty of moral agency. Moral identity understood as the long-term goal of wanting to be a (good) moral person is such a construct. It can shape moral sensitivity, inform moral decision-making and motivate the implementation of moral action.

But moral identity does not do this automatically because it serves a different function in the morality system initially. Morality requires identity for establishing personal continuity. Only if people can track individuals' identities over time, they know whom to praise or blame for their actions, to whom to be thankful, and whom they owe. Personal continuity connects morality with identity. However, this is a minimal form of identity that has little to do with wanting to be a moral person. Thus, the crucial question is: How is this minimal form of moral identity that is sufficient for establishing personal continuity over time transformed into an aspirational goal of striving to be moral person that is effective in coordinating major components of moral agency? In theory, it is assumed that this transformation is a developmental process in which a relatively concrete, externally motivated and prevention-focused moral identity goal that is established in middle childhood gradually becomes more abstract, internally motivated and promotion-focused in adolescence and beyond. Supporting this developmental process is key for addressing the gap between moral judgment and action. It will not fix a bug but will allow people to bring their moral agency to its full potential.

BRIDGING THE GAP AS UNDERGOING CHANGE. CULTIVATING PHRONESIS AS A TRANSFORMATIVE VIRTUE

Maria Silvia Vaccarezza

In my talk, I will address the knowledge-action gap problem by considering one way the gap is phenomenologically bridged in real-life: by experiencing moral transformation. Be it moral maturation or, more radically, proper conversion, undergoing transformation means building one's moral identity or embracing a new configuration thereof, and experiencing integration between beliefs and motivations, between knowledge and action; in a word, feeling 'one' with oneself. I will start by presenting an objection to Aristotelian character education, namely that it is conservative in nature, since it cannot accommodate, let alone promote, radical moral changes. I will then present a framework to illustrate that character development has the potential of being deeply transformative, both as it involves cognitive and emotional dimensions, and since it is an enabling condition of different forms of moral change, including radical transformation or conversion. Then, I will show the role of phronesis in all such instances, and argue that it can be considered paradigmatic of a category of virtues that I label as 'transformative'. Therefore, I will conclude that character education, by educating phronesis, can in fact promote not only moral development, but also transformation, and that this is one of the most powerful ways to bridge the knowledge-action gap.

ON THE QUESTIONABLE CREDIBILITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH: THE ROLE OF MEASUREMENT

Matúš Adamkovič

Doing science is difficult. Publishing credible knowledge is even more so. The deeply rooted, self-reinforcing system of (often bizarre) academic incentives and pressures creates a fundamental mismatch between what is true and what is publishable, making the available literature a biased representation of the research actually conducted. The resulting credibility crisis has hit particularly hard in the social sciences, which focus on phenomena that are often impalpable, ephemeral, and context-dependent. In this talk, I will first summarize the current evidence on the three pillars of quantitative research credibility: reproducibility, empirical robustness, and replicability, drawing especially on findings from the large-scale project SCORE (Center for Open Science) and discuss potential causes of these shortcomings. From there, I will turn to a frequently underestimated source of credibility problems: measurement. While much of the reform debate has focused on statistical practices, transparency, and replication, the quality of measurement—particularly in survey designs—is often taken for granted in everyday research practice. Yet unclear construct definitions, insufficient attention to content validity, and the routine application of widely used instruments with questionable properties can undermine inference long before data are analyzed. Using examples primarily from research on problematic gaming, I will illustrate major flaws in seemingly valid procedures and their potential real-world implications—with underlying principles that are easily transferable to research on character and virtues. I will conclude with a set of practical recommendations for making social science research more credible.

BUILDING A GLOBAL CHARACTER EDUCATION MOVEMENT: THE JUBILEE CENTRE AND BEYOND

James Arthur

Regarding character education, policymakers generally ignore the theoretical literature, while many academics remain apathetic about doing policy-relevant work. Consequently, the educational assumptions underpinning practice in schools often remain implicit. In this talk, my understanding of character education is primarily rooted in Neo-Aristotelian virtue theory – a theory that has practical usefulness for the purpose for which it was formulated, not least the idea that a person's good and the common good are constitutive of each other. A clear understanding of character education aids the creation of practical policies in schools and emphasises the interrelations between theory, policy, and practice. This Neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics theory can be adapted to the language used in official education policy at both national and local school policies. This talk reviews the cross-fertilisation of character education ideas across international borders and how this has influenced the rapid advance of policy ideas. It examines how the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues has acted as a major player in this field and how it has inspired and guided many governments and empowered local actors to participate in the character education movement.

The Jubilee Centre has given considerable space and legitimacy to character education and has encouraged many international calls for the revitalisation of character education. Its Framework for Character Education (2022) has proved popular internationally because it identifies common threads that run through diverse ethical systems across continents and thus emphasises common ground in moral character. The talk will also look at how transnational policies in character education communities have arisen, comprising experts and professionals who share their expertise through interaction and building alliances to effectively advocate for character education. This talk will cover: (1) the history of character education from an international perspective, and (2) the international development of character policy and ideas through the eyes of the Jubilee Centre's key role in bridging the national and international domains of policy through its networking ability



PARALLEL SESSION 1

24. 6. 2026
Wednesday

4.45 pm. - 6.15 pm.

A ROOM: AULA PAZMANEUM

Chair: Kristján Kristjánsson

Kristján Kristjánsson (UK)
Cultural sensitivity - and knowing what to do

Yan Huo (CN)
Dialogue of Chinese and Western Moral Education: Wang Yangming's "Unity of Knowledge and Action" in Response to the Knowledge-Action Gap

Jan Hábl, Vojtěch J. Hábl (CZ)
Educating the Whole Person": Unity of Knowledge, Will, and Action in J. A. Comenius's Philosophy of Education

B ROOM: 4P1, MAIN BUILDING

Chair: Róbert Toth

Róbert Toth, Margita Kollárová, Jakub Betinský, Ján Tomaštík, Mária Kolesárová (SK)
Bridging the Knowledge–Action Gap in Medical Ethics Education with Lind's Moral Competence: Experimental Findings and Conceptual Analysis

Barbara Ciccarello (IT)
Unfit for the future? Moral Bioenhancement and the Problem of Moral Agency

Ana Maria Ganev (IT)
Beyond Knowing What's Right: Psychedelics and the Neuroscience of Moral Motivation

C ROOM: 4P2, MAIN BUILDING

Chair: Christopher Clyne

Christopher Clyne (UK)
Developing a Character Curriculum Across 56 Secondary Schools

Karin Sonnleitner (AT)
Needs-oriented enhancement of psychosocial well-being in schools

Joana Corrêa Monteiro (PT)
Real Assent, Moral Perception, and Virtue: a redescription of the Knowledge–Action Gap following cues from J. H. Newman and Alasdair MacIntyre

D ROOM: 4S1, MAIN BUILDING

Chair: Andrew Aberdei

Paloma Redondo-Corcobado (ES)
Character Education through Active Learning: A Theoretical Framework for the Active Character Education Model (ACEM)

Andrew Aberdein, Heidi Hatfield Edwards, Lars Jones, Nikki Souris, Kat Tavares, Eva Yuan (US)
Foundations for Virtue Selection in STEM Character Education

Marius Bytautas (LT)
Character Education from a Teacher's Standpoint: Epistemic Grounding of Incrementally Epiphanic Approach

PARALLEL SESSION 2

25.6.2026
Thursday

11.00 am. - 12.30 pm.

A ROOM: CONFERENCE HALL

Chair: Liz Gulliford

Liz Gulliford (UK)
The Knowledge-Action Gap cannot be Bridged but it can be Navigated

Ryan S. Olson (US)
Habituation without Habitat: An Aristotelian Diagnosis of the Knowledge-Action Gap

Andrea Blaščíková, Rastislav Nemec (SK)
On Aristotelian prudence (phronêsis) between action and contemplation – some critical notes on (different) meanings

B ROOM: THE RED ROOM

Chair: Evelyn Kropfreiter

Evelyn Kropfreiter, Suzana Hinic, & Denise Mata Dona (AT)
Mentoring, Practical Wisdom, and Character Leadership: An Attempt to Bridge the Knowledge–Action Gap in an Austrian and a Spanish school

Patricia Messa Gaya (ES)
From norm to desire: the affective root of action and the intelligibility of moral will

Miroslava Duranková (SK)
Bridging the Knowledge-Action Gap through Moral Imagination: A Methodological Framework for Educational Research

C ROOM: THE ROUND SALON

Chair: Tonća Jukić

Agnes Schwarzenberger-Berthold (AT)
From Knowledge to Disposition: Self-Efficacy and Agency as a Bridge Between Theory and Practice – Empirical Findings from the PERMA.teach Pilot Study

Tonća Jukić (HR)
Action Research Aimed at Developing Children's Empathy: Experiences of Future Preschool Teachers

Štefánia Ferková (SK)
Teachers' Perspectives on Moral Education in Primary Schools: Conditions and Professional Training

D ROOM: THE HUNTING LOUNGE

Chair: Pía Valenzuela

Thomas Giourgas (GR)
Why Knowledge Is Not Enough: Aristotle on Emotion and the Formation of Character

Pía Valenzuela (ES)
Educating emotions: bridging the knowledge–action gap

Juan Andrés Mercado (IT)
Passions, Will, and Practical Reason: Aristotle, Hume, and the renewal of accompaniment

E ROOM: LIBRARY

Chair: Ernesto Schobesberger

Adrian Zaorski (PL)
Pathways to the Polish judiciary in the perspective of action-knowledge gap and virtue jurisprudence

Miroslava Jirásková (CZ)
Character Education in the Czech School System: Representative Perspectives of Parents and Teachers

Ernesto Schobesberger (AT)
Learning Ethical Entrepreneurship in Primary School

PARALLEL SESSION 3

25.6.2026
Thursday

4.30 pm. - 6.00 pm.

A ROOM: CONFERENCE HALL

Chair: Belén Mesurado

Belén Mesurado (ARG)

The intellectual virtues and prudence as protective factors of maladaptive personality traits among adolescents

Francisco Moller (ES)

Strengthening Peer Support in Adolescence: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial of a Narrative-Based Classroom Intervention

Anna Sádovská, Andrej Rajský, Martin Brestovanský, Lucia Kočišová, Veronika Javorková (SK)

Respect in Thought and Action: Preliminary Insights into Virtue Integration

B ROOM: THE RED ROOM

Chair: Ivo Jirásek

Ivo Jirásek (CZ)

Character education within outdoor education: Ideals, ideas, and practice

Nadja Lanzerath (DE)

Aretē without Guarantee: Moral Knowledge and Practical Efficacy in Plato's Meno

Sara Martínez Mares (ES)

Against moral impotence. King Priam's final reason to change the course of violence

C ROOM: THE ROUND SALON

Chair: Roland Bernhard

Roland Bernhard, Gloria Comisso, Carmen Gómez-Fiegl, Evelyn Kropfreiter (AT)

Service Learning as a Bridge Between Moral Knowledge and Moral Action: A Qualitative Study of Character Formation in Two European Schools

Maria José Ibáñez Ayuso (ES)

Citizenship without character? Paradigmatic tensions in Spanish civic education reforms and textbooks

Valentina Furino (IT)

Service-Learning as a pedagogical pathway for civic and character education in Italy

D ROOM: THE HUNTING LOUNGE

Chair: Juan Luis Fuentes

Juan Luis Fuentes (ES)

Forgiveness as key experience in character and civic education for polarized societies

Ján Kaliský (SK)

Compassion as a Driver of Moral Action in School Education Bridging the Knowledge – Action Gap

Vittoria Martignago (IT)

Bridging Virtue Ethics and Philosophical Inquiry in Childhood: Reclaiming Phronesis as an Antidote to Educational Illiteracies

PARALLEL SESSION 4

26. 6. 2026
Friday

9.45 am. - 11.15 am.

A ROOM: AULA PAZMANEUM

Chair: Claudia E. Vanney

Jeremy Pang, Gloria Stephens (SG)
Surfacing Moral Incoherence: A Digital Sandbox to Foster Metacognitive Reflection in Students

Rebecca Park (US)
Character Across the Curriculum: Equipping Faculty to Design Courses for Educating Character

Claudia E. Vanney (ARG)
Building Intellectual Character: Temporal Dynamics and Sequencing of Virtues in Higher Education

B ROOM: 4P1, MAIN BUILDING

Chair: Verónica Fernández

Verónica Fernández, Carlos Granados and Maria José Ibáñez (ES)
Accompanying Moral Development Through Life Stages

Matthew Post (US)
How respecting students' freedom to do the wrong thing may nevertheless help address the moral knowledge–action gap

Dávid Laco (SK)
From Kitchen Conflict to Friendship: Lived Experiences of Relational Openness in Residential Communities

C ROOM: 4P2, MAIN BUILDING

Chair: Manuel Joaquín Fernández González

Manuel Joaquín Fernández González (LV)
Latent Profiles of Parents' and Teachers' Views on Values-Based Sexuality Education in Latvian Schools

Marianna Berinšterová (SK)
Satisfaction of Psychological Needs and Emotional Well-Being as Predictors of Adolescents' Proactive Attitude

Yen-Hsin Chen (TW)
Exploring Demographic Differences in Practical Wisdom among Taiwanese Primary School Teachers

D ROOM: 4S1, MAIN BUILDING

Chair: Daniel Doyle Sánchez

Maryam Ishani Thompson, Howard Thompson (US)
Why We Know So Much and Do So Little: Closing the Moral Imagination Gap

Daniel Doyle Sánchez (ES)
From Practical Orientation to Purpose: Frankfurt, Wolf, and the Knowledge–Action Gap in Character Education

Alma Gonzalez (ES)
The Knowledge–Action Gap as Neurofunctional Fragmentation: A Coordination Thesis for Adult Virtue Education

ABSTRACTS *for* SESSION 1

Andrew Aberdein, Heidi Hatfield Edwards, Lars Jones, Nikki Souris, Kat Tavares, Eva Yuan

Foundations for Virtue Selection in STEM Character Education

As character education becomes more prominent, institutions face a persistent challenge: how to select virtues in a way that is legitimate, coherent, and transferable. This paper examines the virtue-selection process behind a grant-funded character education initiative at a small, private STEM university. We identify four common approaches—top-down, bottom-up, expert-driven imposition, and derivation from university core documents—and compare their results using a mixed qualitative methodology. Analyzing areas of convergence and divergence across methods offers a practical framework for institutions seeking to design character education programs grounded in institutional integrity and broad stakeholder engagement.
Keywords: Character education, Virtue selection, Institutional decision-making, Higher education curriculum, STEM education

Marius Bytautas

Character Education from a Teacher's Standpoint: Epistemic Grounding of Incrementally Epiphanic Approach

In this theoretical paper, I dialectically consider two routes to character development—incremental and epiphanic. As a critique to Kristjánsson (2025), I firstly demonstrate that ontological questions do arise in comparing these two approaches. More importantly, these questions shape the epistemological narrative of teachers and pupils regarding the identification and understanding of pupil character development. Having stated that, I nevertheless turn my attention the lived experiences of teachers and describe two phenomenally different modes of being—agentic and attunement—that define any character education effort. Finally, I conclude that character education, as experienced by an engaged teacher, is incrementally epiphanic.
Keywords: character education, incremental, epiphanic, teacher, epistemology.

Barbara Ciccarello

Unfit for the future? Moral Bioenhancement and the Problem of Moral Agency

Philosophical reflection has long grappled with the persistent gap between moral knowledge and moral action. Virtue ethics has addressed this problem by emphasizing habituation and practical exercise rather than mere intellectual understanding. However, such moral development is often slow. Persson and Savulescu argue that, in a technologically advanced world marked by unprecedented capacities for harm, this slowness renders virtue ethics insufficient, motivating their proposal for moral bioenhancement (MBE). This paper critically examines their position, focusing on objections concerning freedom and moral agency. It ultimately argues that moral growth cannot dispense with virtue ethics, highlighting the central and non-enhanceable role of phronesis in bridging knowledge and action.
Keywords: Moral Bioenhancement, Virtue Ethics, Phronesis, Moral Agency

Christopher Clyne

Developing a Character Curriculum Across 56 Secondary Schools

United Learning is developing a Character Curriculum for its 56 secondary schools, based on the principle of "character plus intelligence." The curriculum promotes both being of good character (integrity, moral courage, ethical decision-making) and having character (resilience, grit, perseverance). Delivered through assemblies and tutor time from Years 7–10, it provides a progressive framework while allowing schools flexibility to adapt resources to their context. Aligned with the Pupil Charter, it aims to embed character education across school life. Assessment data will evaluate impact. Following a pilot in five schools, full implementation is planned for September 2026.

*Keywords: c*haracter curriculum, character plus intelligence, ethical decision-making, pupil charter, student character development

Ana Maria Ganev

Beyond Knowing What's Right: Psychedelics and the Neuroscience of Moral Motivation

This paper examines whether psychedelic experiences can illuminate the nature of moral motivation—the link between moral understanding and moral action. While virtue ethics emphasizes habituation and character formation, many individuals remain unable to act on their moral convictions. Drawing on neuroscientific research, the paper explores how psychedelics disrupt rigid neural patterns and self-referential thinking, potentially fostering compassion, concern for others, and new forms of motivation. Through the lenses of virtue ethics and neuroscience, it investigates whether such changes reflect authentic moral development or temporary effects. Psychedelics are considered not as solutions but as tools for understanding moral motivation.

Keywords: moral motivation, psychedelics, virtue ethics, neuroplasticity, ego dissolution, moral enhancement

Jan Hábl, Vojtěch J. Hábl

Educating the Whole Person": Unity of Knowledge, Will, and Action in J. A. Comenius's Philosophy of Education

A recurring problem in virtue ethics and character education is the knowledge–action gap: knowing what is good does not reliably generate doing what is good. This paper argues that the gap is not merely a psychological weakness or a didactic failure, but a symptom of a deeper loss of wholeness - both in the person and, more fundamentally, in the way (post)modernity construes the world. Reading Jan Amos Comenius with Radim Palouš's interpretation assitance, we reconstruct a Comenian ontology of order and panharmonia in which reality is a meaningful nexus (rerum nexus) and the world is 'school' not metaphorically but literally: a formative domain where truth, goodness, and purpose belong together. Against modern subject–object fragmentation and (pseudo)value-neutral objectivism, Comenius binds cognition, volition, and action within a teleological framework and interprets education as the restoration of integrity. The paper develops this account as a conceptual contribution to contemporary debates on virtues and character, offering a philosophical vocabulary for 'educating the whole person' without reducing character education to formation technique.

Keywords: Comenius; Palouš; wholeness; character education; virtue ethics; panharmonia; knowledge–action gap; teleology; moral integrity

Yan Huo

Dialogue of Chinese and Western Moral Education: Wang Yangming's "Unity of Knowledge and Action" in Response to the Knowledge-Action Gap

Traditional moral education rests on a linear model, positing moral knowledge led to moral action; yet a persist moral gap between moral cognition and conduct has been acknowledged, named variously in academia and deemed complex beyond one-size-fits-all solutions. Neo-Aristotelian phronesis is a mainstream bridge, with multi-component models now prioritized. This gap is not unique to Western scholarship; this paper touches on Chinese philosopher Wang Yangming's thought of "Unity of Knowledge and Action", holds moral cognition inherently entails moral will and practice, that inaction means incomplete knowledge, and that consistent unity fosters moral character development, offering an alternative theoretical approach to this longstanding gappiness problem.
Keywords: Wang Yangming, unity of knowledge and action, gappiness problem, Chinese philosophy

Kristján Kristjánsson

Cultural sensitivity - and knowing what to do

When neo-Aristotelians enter the debate on the knowledge-action gap, they assume: a) Moral virtues, such as compassion, are universal. b) These virtues are the mainstay of cordial human interactions. c) Every decent human being understands these virtues. d) For those people, failure to act correctly is caused by weakness of will or lack of phronesis. I question assumption b). I argue that one of the reasons why generally knowledgeable and morally mature persons fail to act correctly is that various important virtues, which are grounded in local/cultural/sub-cultural norms and manners, are not universal and require considerable multicultural sensitivity to adhere to correctly.
Keywords: Knowledge-action gap; neo-Aristotelianism; universal virtues; manner-and-norms-driven virtues; multicultural sensitivity

Joana Corrêa Monteiro

Real Assent, Moral Perception, and Virtue: a redescription of the Knowledge–Action Gap following cues from J. H. Newman and Alasdair MacIntyre

This paper reinterprets the knowledge–action gap through John Henry Newman's distinction between notional and real assent. Much moral "knowledge" remains merely notional: agents can endorse moral propositions without apprehending them as practically real. The gap between knowing and doing is therefore a gap between modes of knowing, not between belief and motivation. Bringing Newman into dialogue with MacIntyre's account of practices and institutions, I argue that teacher education typically produces discursive moral competence without the formation of the corresponding habitus. Overcoming the gap requires practices, exemplars, and forms of imagination that cultivate real assent and moral perception.
Keywords: Real Assent (Newman), moral perception, practices (A. MacIntyre), attention and imagination

Paloma Redondo-Corcobado

Character Education through Active Learning: A Theoretical Framework for the Active Character Education Model (ACEM)

This paper presents the Active Character Education Model (ACEM), a theoretical framework for integrating CE into active learning methodologies in higher education. While active pedagogies are often associated with ethical and civic learning outcomes, their contribution to character development frequently remains implicit or incidental. Drawing on virtue ethics and moral education, the ACEM delineates key pedagogical components, subcomponents, and practical strategies through which active learning can be intentionally oriented toward the acquisition of virtues. By addressing the gap between moral understanding and moral action, the model offers a theoretically grounded approach to fostering ethical–civic competence through active pedagogies.
Keywords: Character Education, Moral Education, Active Learning, Higher Education

Karin Sonnleitner

Needs-oriented enhancement of psychosocial well-being in schools

The project 'Wohlfühlzone Schule in Kärnten' operationalizes the current demands of the OECD's 'Education for Human Flourishing' (2025) framework at a regional level within Carinthia. By shifting the focus from mere knowledge transmission to strengthening resilience, agency, and relationship building, it implements the OECD's neo-Aristotelian vision, establishing subjective well-being and ethical competence as essential foundations for future social participation. Integrated approaches like PERMA.teach and the transformation of schools into psychosocial ecosystems align with international 'High Performing Systems for Tomorrow', which conceptualize education not merely as human capital production, but as the facilitation of a flourishing life.
Key words: Human Flourishing, mental health days, school improvement consultancy, well-being

Róbert Toth, Margita Kollárová, Jakub Betinský, Ján Tomaštík, Mária Kolesárová

Bridging the Knowledge–Action Gap in Medical Ethics Education with Lind's Moral Competence: Experimental Findings and Conceptual Analysis

Moral competence is increasingly emphasized in medical education. Using Lind's Moral Competence Test, we compared first- and fourth-year medical students in Bratislava to examine the progression of moral competence. We related results to religiosity, volunteering, and healthcare experience, and critically assessed Lind's theory. Our analysis highlights an overlooked issue that morality involves two dilemmas: reductionism versus holism, and the deeper question of whether morality is teachable. Lind's pedagogical claims, while grounded in Plato, underestimate Plato's doubts about teaching virtue. Measured gains in moral reasoning may not equal moral virtue, suggesting ethics education must address both dilemmas explicitly.
Keywords: character education, moral competence, medical ethics, virtue ethics

ABSTRACTS *for* SESSION 2

Andrea Blaščíková, Rastislav Nemec

On Aristotelian prudence (phronêsis) between action and contemplation – some critical notes on (different) meanings

The intellect as a faculty is a central concept in Aristotle's philosophy, whether the questions are ethical, political or metaphysical. Aristotle distinguishes between the roles of the intellect, depending on their subject, as either theoretical or practical. This paper attempts to demonstrate how the general role of the intellect (to perceive something general in terms of genus) can be applied in practice, despite some Aristotelian statements (e.g. EN II, 4, 1105b2) about the differences between aisthesis and theoría, and to show their interconnectedness. The paper attempts to present this on the basis of medieval Latin interpretation (Thomas Aquinas) and contemporary reinterpretation of these motifs (J. Pieper, H.-G. Gadamer).

Keywords: Aristotle, aisthesis, Aquinas, prudentia

Miroslava Duranková

Bridging the Knowledge-Action Gap through Moral Imagination: A Methodological Framework for Educational Research

This paper addresses the persistent knowledge–action gap in character education, defined as the discrepancy between virtue literacy and virtuous action. It argues that bridging this gap requires the cultivation of moral imagination, understood as an integrative capacity linking perception, reasoning, identity, and desire. Drawing on interdisciplinary accounts of moral imagination, the study examines conceptual convergences across pedagogy, business ethics, and bioethics. The paper presents a research methodology designed to operationalize and empirically examine components of moral imagination within an extra-curricular school intervention based on stories and art. The aim is to strengthen methodological rigor and clarify moral imagination's role in character development.

Keywords: moral imagination, character education, virtue literacy, knowledge–action gap, schooling of desire, educational intervention

Štefánia Ferková

Teachers' Perspectives on Moral Education in Primary Schools: Conditions and Professional Training

The aim of this paper is to present selected findings of a quantitative research study focused on primary school teachers' perspectives on the conditions and training related to moral education in Slovakia. The research was conducted on a sample of 371 primary school teachers from various regions of Slovakia. Data were collected using a self-designed questionnaire and analysed using descriptive statistical methods. The results indicate that teachers perceive the conditions for the implementation of moral education as to be less than adequate and report a lack of methodological materials as well as limited access to professional training in this area.

Keywords: Moral education; Primary school; Teachers' perspectives; Teacher training; School conditions

Patricia Messa Gaya

From norm to desire: the affective root of action and the intelligibility of moral will

In this article, we aim to analyse moral action from within, emphasising the primacy of appetite and the resulting affective dynamics that give necessary direction to the choice and realisation of good. The gap between thought and action reveals a lack of knowledge of the pre-elective sphere of action, where affectivity is decisive and reason exercises a hermeneutic function. Action must be understood as the result of the subject's inner dispositions and affective orientation towards the end, and not exclusively as the extrinsic application of norms. Finally, we propose a pedagogy of desire in order not only to understand the dynamics of action, but also to effectively restore harmony between reason and inclination.

Keywords: good, affective dynamics, imagination, intention, pedagogy of desire

Thomas Giourgas

Why Knowledge Is Not Enough: Aristotle on Emotion and the Formation of Character

Why does knowledge fail to guarantee right action? This paper compares Socratic intellectualism, Platonic psychic harmony, and Aristotle's account of akrasia in order to address the knowledge–action gap in character education. Whereas Socrates reduces moral failure to ignorance and Plato emphasizes rational control of desire, Aristotle locates weakness of will in the misalignment between judgment and habituated emotion. By distinguishing intellectual from moral virtues and assigning emotions a constructive role in virtue, Aristotle offers a more psychologically realistic framework for moral formation. Effective character education, the paper argues, must integrate epistemic development with the habituation of affect.

Keywords: Akrasia, Aristotelian virtues, intellectualism, emotion, character education

Liz Gulliford

The Knowledge-Action Gap cannot be Bridged but it can be Navigated

We cannot bridge the gap between knowing and doing the good because human nature is often perverse, unreasonable and rebellious, prone to compulsive behaviours, obsessive thoughts and habits that sometimes cause us to act against our own and others' interests. Phronesis ought to be cultivated but it cannot completely bridge the knowledge-action gap because human agents are not so formed as to predictably act wisely or 'magnanimously'. Opportunities for moral growth can come, however, from the lapses of reason and kindness to which humans are prone if we learn from the legacy of bad decisions ('character wrought'). There is no dependable bridge between knowing and doing the good but phronesis provides stepping stones that help navigate the course.

Keywords: Knowledge-action gap, practical wisdom (phronesis), personhood

Miroslava Jirásková

Character education in the Czech School System: Representative perspectives of parents and teachers

This paper presents findings from two nationwide representative surveys examining parents' and teachers' perspectives on character education in the Czech Republic. The studies were conducted in cooperation with the research agency STEM (2024, within the TEPACE project) and Tomas Bata University in Zlín (2025). The combined dataset (N > 2000) captures perspectives across levels of schooling, from kindergartens to primary education. Respondents identify decency, respect, and empathy as key virtues and consider character education at least as important as academic learning. The study provides representative stakeholder data and contributes to current discussions on character education in Czech schooling.

Keywords: Character education, representative survey, parents and teachers, educational levels, Czech education

Tonća Jukić

Action Research Aimed at Developing Children's Empathy: Experiences of Future Preschool Teachers

This paper presents a qualitative study examining future preschool teachers' experiences of conducting action research focused on developing children's empathy within early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. The research involved primary school teachers enrolled in a retraining program to obtain the qualification of preschool teacher, who implemented social-emotional learning activities in kindergarten settings. After completion of the action research, participants reflected on their experiences and understanding of the process. Findings indicate predominantly positive experiences, highlighting the effectiveness of experiential learning activities and the value of action research for both children's empathy development and future preschool teachers' reflective practice and professional growth.

Keywords: character development, ECEC, experiential learning, professional development, social-emotional learning

Evelyn Kropfreiter, Suzana Hinic, Denise Mata Dona

Mentoring, Practical Wisdom, and Character Leadership: An Attempt to Bridge the Knowledge–Action Gap in an Austrian and a Spanish school

This paper examines mentoring as a relational response to the knowledge–action gap in moral and character education. Drawing on neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics and the Oxford Character Project's framework for character leadership, mentoring is conceptualised as a context that fosters practical wisdom (phronesis). The paper introduces an ongoing qualitative study in an Austrian school implementing mentoring within a character-based leadership programme. Data from interviews are analysed using qualitative content analysis. Preliminary insights explore how mentoring may support moral deliberation, responsible agency, and the development of leadership grounded in virtues and relational commitment.

Keywords: Moral education, mentoring, knowledge–action gap, character education, character leadership

Juan Andrés Mercado

Passions, Will, and Practical Reason: Aristotle, Hume, and the renewal of accompaniment

Book VI of the Nicomachean Ethics analyses phronesis as the intellectual virtue guiding deliberation (bouleusis) and decision (prohairesis), presupposing a conception of human agency grounded in rational initiative. By contrast, in Book III of the A Treatise of Human Nature, David Hume situates moral principles in the passions, thereby attenuating the distinctive role of the will. This paper argues that recent developments in practical philosophy, enriched by Carl Rogers's accompaniment based approach, offer a fruitful integration of classical wisdom (phronesis, sophia) with contemporary coaching and educational practice.
Keywords: Phronesis, practical Wisdom, moral psychology, Coaching and Accompaniment, Aristotelian Ethics

Ryan S. Olson

Habituation without Habitat: An Aristotelian Diagnosis of the Knowledge-Action Gap

Character education successfully teaches virtue literacy yet often fails to produce virtuous action. This paper argues that prevailing solutions—pedagogical refinement, better assessment, more reflection—misdiagnose the problem. Reading Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics alongside Politics and ancient evidence reveals that habituation required immersion in coherent institutional ecologies: the polis provided stable conditions for disposition formation through repeated action. Contemporary programs violate this insight by treating virtue as transmissible knowledge rather than socially embedded practice, abstracting formation from supporting institutions, and ignoring the coherence requirement when students navigate morally fragmented ecosystems. The knowledge-action gap is fundamentally 'environmental', not merely cognitive or motivational.
Keywords: character education, moral ecology, knowledge-action gap, habituation, Aristotle

Agnes Schwarzenberger-Berthold

From Knowledge to Disposition: Self-Efficacy and Agency as a Bridge Between Theory and Practice – Empirical Findings from the PERMA.teach Pilot Study

This study examines how theoretical knowledge becomes action-guiding practice through the concepts of self-efficacy and agency. Within a mixed-methods design, the PERMA.teach intervention was implemented in 14 ECEC centers in Vienna. Data included PERMA-Profiler assessments, observations, written responses, and focus group interviews. Results showed improvements in educators' well-being, self-efficacy, emotion regulation, and pedagogical practice. Educators reported greater ability to respond reflectively rather than reactively, supporting children's learning and development. Observations revealed increased child engagement, joy, and motivation. Findings suggest that strengthened self-efficacy facilitates agency, enabling the translation of knowledge into sustained pedagogical action.
Keywords: Self-efficacy, Agency, Teacher well-being, PERMA.teach intervention, Early childhood education (ECEC)

Ernesto Schobesberger

Learning Ethical Entrepreneurship in Primary School

In response to the growing influence of Artificial Intelligence, global instability and the limits of rule-based education, this paper presents ecoco – Fairytale Economics, a newly developed, narrative-based approach to ethical entrepreneurship and basic economics education for children aged 8 to 10. Building on the tradition of animal fables, ecoco closes the gap between economic literacy, character education and socio-emotional learning. Through 30 stories in which children encounter talking animals that communicateeconomic competencies and virtues, core entrepreneurial concepts are explored in an ethically meaningful way. The approach supports virtue perception, virtue reasoning, intercultural awareness and responsible economic thinking, offering a child-friendly and non-ideological contribution to character-oriented education.
Keywords: Character Education, Basic Economics, Ethical Entrepreneurship, Narrative Learning, Socio-Emotional Learning

Pía Valenzuela

Educating emotions: bridging the knowledge–action gap

The knowledge–action gap is an ancient problem. Against Socratic intellectualism, Aristotle recognised that knowing the good does not ensure doing it. Moral knowledge lacks force without will, practical wisdom, and affective integration. Drawing on a (neo-)Aristotelian framework, this paper argues that educating emotions and orienting them toward a coherent self-ideal fosters intrinsic motivation. Through affective education and meaningful personal projects—such as interest-driven pursuits—moral values become internally compelling rather than externally imposed. Character formation thus aims not merely at regulation, but at human flourishing: aligning understanding, desire, and action in the pursuit of the good life.
Keywords: Emotion (education); intrinsic motivation; virtue (ethics); self-ideal; knowledge-action gap

Adrian Zaorski

Pathways to the Polish judiciary in the perspective of action-knowledge gap and virtue jurisprudence

The paper examines the action–knowledge gap in legal philosophy through the lens of virtue jurisprudence, focusing on pathways to judicial office in the Polish legal system. The primary aim is to analyse existing routes to becoming a judge. A secondary objective is to assess and improve the framework of judicial education. The paper posits that an exclusive emphasis on theoretical knowledge is inadequate for virtuous judicial practice. The text goes on to explore the judicial virtues and the role of practical knowledge, moral autonomy, and exemplars. The final section of the text evaluates three current pathways to determine which best promote virtuous judges.
Keywords: judicial virtues, moral education, judicial appointment

ABSTRACTS *for* SESSION 3

Roland Bernhard, Gloria Comisso, Carmen Gómez-Fiegl, Evelyn Kropfreiter

Service Learning as a Bridge Between Moral Knowledge and Moral Action: A Qualitative Study of Character Formation in Two European Schools

This paper examines service learning as a practice-oriented approach to bridging the knowledge–action gap in character education. Drawing on Aristotelian virtue ethics, it conceptualises service learning as habituated participation in morally meaningful practices that foster responsibility, civic commitment, and practical wisdom. Preliminary findings from an ongoing qualitative study in two European schools, in Austria and Spain, are presented. Data include student diaries, semi structured interviews, and document analysis, examined through qualitative content analysis. Initial results will indicate if embedding service learning within whole school programmes may support the transformation of ethical understanding into lived moral experience.

Keywords: Moral education, service learning, knowledge–action gap, character education, practical wisdom

Juan Luis Fuentes

Forgiveness as key experience in character and civic education for polarized societies

Contemporary societies face polarization and moral fragmentation, posing significant challenges for moral and civic education. This paper examines interpersonal and social forgiveness as an educable virtue capable of interrupting cycles of resentment, regulating coexistence and repairing moral damage. Drawing on Aristotelian virtue ethics and contemporary character education, forgiveness is conceptualized as a disposition formed through habituation that bridges abstract moral norms and enacted practice over time. An interdisciplinary framework integrating philosophical, theological, and psychological perspectives clarifies forgiveness as a distinctive moral capacity rather than excuse, justification, or moral weakness. The paper further explores the limits of collective forgiveness and proposes an educational model that understands this disposition as a structured moral process essential for sustained responsible action and reconciliation in contexts of social conflict.

Keywords: forgiveness, democracy, character, polarization

Valentina Furino

Service-Learning as a pedagogical pathway for civic and character education in Italy

This contribution examines the integration of civic and character education within the Italian school curriculum, analysing the regulatory framework, cultural roots, and emerging pedagogical practices. Within Law 92/2019, the introduction of civic education as a compulsory, cross-curricular subject does not constitute a national novelty, but rather a point of innovation. Among the methodologies promoted by the Ministry of Education to implement civic education, Service-Learning (SL) is identified as an effective approach for fostering moral dispositions and prosocial attitudes by combining active learning with community engagement. The analysis shows how teaching civic education through SL supports character education towards participation.

Keywords: Civic education, Character education, Service-Learning, Prosocial attitudes, Democratic participation

Maria José Ibáñez Ayuso

Citizenship without character? Paradigmatic tensions in Spanish civic education reforms and textbooks

Civic education increasingly promotes ethical awareness and global responsibility, yet research highlights a persistent knowledge–action gap between moral understanding and behavior. This study examines whether Spanish civic education is grounded in character formation or dominated by paradigms of civic knowledge, competencies, and abstract moral discourse. Using a virtue ethics framework, we analyze major education laws (1985–2020) and representative contemporary textbooks. Findings reveal rhetorical emphasis on justice and responsibility but structural privileging of cognitive instruction over virtue cultivation and action-oriented learning. The dominance of non-character paradigms contributes to moral incoherence, underscoring the need for character-centered, multi-component civic curricula.
Keywords: character education, civic education, citizenship paradigms, curriculum analysis

Ivo Jirásek

Character education within outdoor education: Ideals, ideas, and practice

Character education has largely focused on formal schooling, while the potential of non-formal and leisure-time contexts remains underexplored. This paper examines traditions of outdoor education in the Czech Republic—turistika, tramping, scouting, woodcraft, Foglar-inspired movements, and Lipnice experiential courses—as distinctive models of character development. Grounded in experience, community, and engagement with nature, these traditions emphasize responsibility, courage, solidarity, and respect for life. Character is formed through repeated action in demanding situations, supported by shared norms, voluntary discipline, and reflective practice. From the perspective of the knowledge–action gap, outdoor education offers functional models that effectively link moral understanding with lived ethical action.
Keywords: nature, community, experience, non-formal education, experiential situation

Ján Kaliský

Compassion as a Driver of Moral Action in School Education Bridging the Knowledge – Action Gap

This paper examines whether compassion can bridge the gap between moral knowledge and moral action in school education. While moral learning is often treated as knowledge acquisition, classrooms require students to translate values into behavior. Drawing on research in prosocial motivation and compassion training, the study investigates whether compassion predicts observed prosocial behavior beyond moral attitudes, norms, and ethical knowledge. It explores mechanisms linking compassion to action, including reduced empathic distress and increased affiliative engagement, while examining moderating factors such as moral identity, classroom climate, cognitive dissonance, and perceived helping costs. The findings clarify compassion's role in moral education.
Keywords: compassion, moral education, prosocial behavior, moral motivation, moral action gap

Nadja Lanzerath

Aretē without Guarantee: Moral Knowledge and Practical Efficacy in Plato's Meno

This paper examines Plato's Meno as an early analysis of the problem now described as the knowledge–action gap. By reconstructing the aporia surrounding the teachability of aretē, it argues that the dialogue reveals a fundamental tension between moral insight and reliable moral action. Plato's distinction between knowledge and true belief shows that correct cognition alone does not secure virtuous conduct. Rather than offering a motivational explanation, the Meno highlights a structural difficulty concerning the practical efficacy of moral knowledge. The paper emphasizes the relevance of this ancient perspective for contemporary debates on moral education and character development.
Keywords: moral knowledge, aretē, Plato, Meno, knowledge–action gap

Vittoria Martignago

Bridging Virtue Ethics and Philosophical Inquiry in Childhood: Reclaiming Phronesis as an Antidote to Educational Illiteracies

In Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, phronesis emerges as a central resource for educating future citizens, particularly in contexts of social and political crisis. In the contemporary global decline of peace and democracy, the spread of critical, ethical, and emotional illiteracies undermines civic agency and democratic life. This paper argues that cultivating phronesis through the Community of Inquiry within the Philosophy for Children approach offers a promising pedagogical pathway. By fostering dialogical, reflective, and emotionally attuned practices of thinking, it contributes to the development of more critical, democratic, and flourishing societies.
Keywords: Character Education, Phronesis, Educational Illiteracies, Philosophy for Children

Sara Martínez Mares

Against moral impotence. King Priam's final reason to change the course of violence

Michael Stocker has philosophically described the knowledge-action gap as 'modern moral schizophrenia'. "Not being moved by what one values — what one considers to be good, pleasant, right or beautiful — indicates a sickness of the spirit. Likewise, not valuing what moves one indicates a sickness of the spirit.' My working hypothesis is that a lack of motivation to act well in an obvious moral scenario may be due to an absence of appropriate perception. One solution to this moral impotence is to recognise the unique value of strong human bonds, as they inform the judgements that precede moral emotions, which I have termed the 'King Priam's final reason'.
Keywords: moral impotence, moral motivation, moral schizophrenia, perception

Belén Mesurado

The intellectual virtues and prudence as protective factors of maladaptive personality traits among adolescents

This study examined the role of intellectual virtues and prudence in adolescents' maladaptive personality traits. Using a sample of 302 adolescents, results showed that both virtuous intellectual character and intellectual humility were positively associated with prudence. In turn, prudence was negatively related to maladaptive personality traits, including negative affect, antagonism, disinhibition, and detachment. Importantly, prudence fully mediated the relationship between intellectual virtues and maladaptive personality traits. These findings highlight prudence as an integrative virtue that connects intellectual dispositions with adaptive personality development. Promoting intellectual virtues may therefore help adolescents deliberate beyond immediate rewards and support their long-term cognitive and emotional flourishing.
Keywords: Prudence, Intellectual virtues, Intellectual humility, Maladaptive personality traits, Adolescent development

Francisco Moller

Strengthening Peer Support in Adolescence: A Cluster Randomized Controlled Trial of a Narrative-Based Classroom Intervention

Adolescents' peer relationships are central to their flourishing, yet rigorously evaluated school-based interventions targeting these relationships remain scarce. This study examines the effects of Humans of Our Class, a classroom-based narrative intervention designed to strengthen peer connectedness through structured storytelling and reciprocal listening. Using a matched-pair cluster randomized controlled trial across 52 classrooms in Spain and the United Kingdom (N = 609), multilevel analyses show that students who completed the intervention reported significantly higher perceived peer support. Subgroup analyses indicate that effects were strongest among students at risk of social disconnection and low well-being, highlighting the intervention's potential as a targeted, developmentally attuned approach to fostering adolescent peer support.
Keywords: Character education, Peer support, Randomized controlled trial, moral development, school intervention

Anna Sádovská, Andrej Rajský, Martin Brestovanský, Lucia Kočišová, Veronika Javorková

Respect in Thought and Action: Preliminary Insights into Virtue Integration

This research note presents preliminary findings from a quasi-experimental intervention (N = 144 students; 8 teachers) examining the development of respect for others and the gap between declared values and behaviour. The program draws on the allocentric conception of respect proposed by Gulliford & Roberts, conceptualized as affective participation, personalistic normativity, and behavioural practice. We report data from two instruments assessing (1) students' reasoning about respect in everyday situations and (2) respectful behaviour (self-, peer-, and teacher-reports). The reasoning measure builds on the intermediate concept framework (Thoma et al., 2013) within James Rest's model of moral judgment (1983). Behavioural scales showed good reliability (α = .853) and supported a unidimensional structure.
Keywords: character education, respect for others, knowledge-action gap, reasoning about respect

ABSTRACTS *for* SESSION 4

Marianna Berinšterová

Satisfaction of Psychological Needs and Emotional Well-Being as Predictors of Adolescents' Proactive Attitude

A proactive attitude reflects the belief that one can influence the future and may be considered a meta-virtue combining wisdom, responsibility, courage, industriousness, and conscientiousness. Conceptualized by the Self-Determination Theory, this study examined whether satisfaction and frustration of the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as well as well-being, are associated with adolescents' proactive attitude. Data from 293 adolescents (Mage = 17.69; 62.5% women) were analyzed using linear regression. The model explained 47.3% of variance in proactive attitude. Need satisfaction positively predicted proactive attitude, whereas need frustration was unrelated. Well-being showed a negative association with proactive attitude. The paper is part of the project VEGA 1/0656/25 project Fulfillment of Psychological Needs in Mentoring Relationships and Adolescent Identity.

Keywords: Proactive attitude, Psychological need satisfaction, Self-Determination Theory, Adolescent well-being, Positive youth development

Yen-Hsin Chen

Exploring Demographic Differences in Practical Wisdom among Taiwanese Primary School Teachers

This study focuses on cultivating the professional ethics of teachers for primary schoolteachers through an empirical research on the development of teachers' practical wisdom. The researchers investigated primary schoolteachers' phronesis and examined differences across demographic and professional background variables. A total of 254 primary teachers from central Taiwan participated in the study and completed an online survey. Teachers' practical wisdom was assessed using the Short Phronesis Measure (SPM). These results highlight the importance of higher education and sustained professional practice in fostering teachers' moral judgment and emotional regulation, and provide empirical implications for teacher education and in-service professional development.

Keywords: Practical wisdom (phronesis), primary school teacher, professional ethics for teachers, the Short Phronesis Measure (SPM)

Verónica Fernández, Carlos Granados and Maria José Ibáñez

Accompanying Moral Development Through Life Stages

This paper explores the pedagogical value of rites of passage for character education and human flourishing. From a normative and philosophical perspective, rituals are understood as symbolic, communal acts that mark life transitions and support the development of virtues appropriate to each stage of life. Drawing on a review of the literature, we propose an educational conception of rites of passage within a narrative and teleological pedagogy aimed at the integral formation of the person. We outline criteria for designing meaningful school-based rituals and discuss their role in moral and personal growth. Rites of passage may foster meaning, belonging, responsibility, and commitment, particularly in contemporary societies.

Keywords: rites of passage, flourishing, character education, maturity, virtues, moral development

Alma Gonzalez

The Knowledge–Action Gap as Neurofunctional Fragmentation: A Coordination Thesis for Adult Virtue Education

This paper advances a coordination thesis for adult virtue education, arguing that the knowledge–action gap reflects fragmentation across executive regulation, affective valuation, attentional salience, and habit-forming systems. Drawing on Aristotelian virtue ethics and cognitive-affective neuroscience, it introduces neurofunctional coherence as the progressive integration of these domains required for reliable moral enactment in adulthood. By specifying the functional conditions that enable stable virtue performance, the paper offers an integrative explanatory account linking virtue ethics with contemporary moral psychology and contributes to interdisciplinary efforts to clarify the conditions for stable virtue enactment.
Keywords: Neurofunctional Coherence, Knowledge–Action Gap, Adult Virtue Education, Moral, Fragmentation, Phronesis

Manuel Joaquín Fernández González

Latent Profiles of Parents' and Teachers' Views on Values-Based Sexuality Education in Latvian Schools

The study aims to identify and describe latent profiles among teachers and parents and to compare their understandings and needs regarding the implementation of values-based sexuality education focused on family formation in Latvian schools. Using data from a nationwide online survey conducted in 2025 (N = 1198), latent class/profile analysis will be applied to identify distinct respondent groups and predictors of profile membership. Differences between parents' and teachers' views will be examined using appropriate comparative statistical tests. The study addresses gaps between prevailing sexuality education approaches and family formation values, contributing to evidence-based dialogue, cooperation, and policy development in education.
Keywords: Values-based sexuality education, Family formation, Latent profile analysis, Parents and teachers, School–family cooperation

Dávid Laco

From Kitchen Conflict to Friendship: Lived Experiences of Relational Openness in Residential Communities

Residential learning communities often value relational openness, yet participants report a knowledge-action gap in enacting it in public and group settings, especially amid tension. Drawing on IPA-inspired thematic analysis of end-of-year interviews with 17 emerging adults in two Slovak residential programmes (five followed longitudinally), this paper conceptualises otvorenosť as a virtue-adjacent, phronetic relational capacity. Findings identify a relationally mediated gap between endorsed openness-as-norm and enacted openness-in-practice, best read as responsive agency within a moral ecology. Participants test risk, delay vulnerability, set limits, and build conflict competence, with reported transfer beyond the programme.
Keywords: relational openness (otvorenosť), practical wisdom (phronesis), residential learning communities, emerging adults

Jeremy Pang & Gloria Stephens

Surfacing Moral Incoherence: A Digital Sandbox to Foster Metacognitive Reflection in Students

This paper addresses the knowledge–action gap through a digital intervention grounded in Rest's Four-Component Model, focusing on moral sensitivity and judgement. Using a behavioural sandbox informed by Social Domain Theory, students move from theoretical principles to simulated action. A post-simulation questionnaire facilitates metacognitive monitoring, prompting students to reconcile in-game choices with their underlying drivers. The tool identifies "moral incoherence" through non-judgemental, inquiry-based feedback. By fostering reflection on simulated choices, the intervention explores the potential to build the cognitive foundations and self-regulatory skills necessary for students to align their stated values with future real-world actions.

Keywords: Moral Reasoning, Multiple Perspectives, Digital Simulation, Metacognition, Character Education

Rebecca Park

Character Across the Curriculum: Equipping Faculty to Design Courses for Educating Character

The Character Across the Curriculum workshop was designed to equip faculty to integrate character education into their disciplinary teaching and support individuals through a process of workshopping a curricular course. This presentation reports findings from a two-phase evaluation examining both the immediate impact of the workshop and insights from participants after teaching their courses. We will provide an overview of the workshop, outline the mixed-methods research design, and provide a rich exploration into the quantitative and qualitative results, emphasizing insights that other faculty may consider when seeking to integrate character pedagogy into curricular courses.

Keywords: faculty development, applied research

Matthew Post

How respecting students' freedom to do the wrong thing may nevertheless help address the moral knowledge–action gap

A new validated survey instrument for undergraduate students, based on research in character education and self-determination theory (SDT). My research partners and I had two main goals: 1. Develop research suitable for informing educational practices that cultivate sustainable virtuous conduct. 2. Address pressing social problems, including isolation and incivility. Among other things, the research has found evidence for: a kind of virtuous motivation (VM) based on traditional (including Aristotelian) accounts and distinct from the standard SDT types; the connection between VM and sustainable virtuous engagement; how autonomy-supporting environments foster VM; and how VM positively correlates with mental wellbeing.

Keywords: Character education, Virtuous motivation, Autonomy, Mental wellbeing

Daniel Doyle Sánchez

From Practical Orientation to Purpose: Frankfurt, Wolf, and the Knowledge–Action Gap in Character Education

A central challenge in character education is the gap between moral knowledge and moral action. Classical accounts—from Aristotle's prohairesis tou biou to Kant's Gesinnung—emphasize rational alignment but leave unresolved why agents often fail to act ethically. Drawing on Harry Frankfurt's reasons of love and Susan Wolf's notion of meaningfulness, this paper develops purpose as a stable, identity-shaping source of practical reasons. Moral failure arises not from lack of knowledge but from misalignment between ethical understanding and what agents genuinely care about. Purpose thus bridges knowing and doing, offering a rigorous framework for understanding moral agency.
Keywords: Moral knowledge, Moral action, Knowledge–action gap, Practical reason, Purpose

Maryam Ishani Thompson, Howard Thompson

Why We Know So Much and Do So Little: Closing the Moral Imagination Gap

This paper explores Consciousshood™'s response to the moral knowledge–action gap, arguing that the true crisis is the erosion of lived spaces where ethical behavior is practiced and witnessed. Consciousshood turns homes, classrooms, and even work-spaces into "moral studios" that promote character development through regular practice by using ideogram-based tools and reflective practices. Drawing from spiritual and psychological frameworks, the model reframes community spaces as sanctuaries of ethical development, cultivating moral fluency and emotional resonance across generations. This approach suggests that reactivating the ethical commons is essential to transforming moral understanding into moral identity.
Keywords: Moral imagination, Ethical commons, Character education, Moral fluency, Moral practice

Claudia E. Vanney

Building Intellectual Character: Temporal Dynamics and Sequencing of Virtues in Higher Education

Intellectual virtues—curiosity, attentiveness, carefulness, open-mindedness, and autonomy—shape how students think, learn, and engage in higher education. Despite their importance, little is known about how these virtues develop or interact over time. In a sample of 521 Argentine university students, network and cross-lagged analyses revealed that curiosity serves as a foundational virtue, driving attentiveness and autonomy, while attentiveness mediates the development of subsequent virtues like carefulness and open-mindedness. These findings suggest a structured temporal sequence of intellectual virtues, offering actionable insights for character education: nurturing foundational traits first may amplify the growth of higher-order capacities.
Keywords: intellectual virtues, character education, higher education, longitudinal development, temporal sequence of virtues.

WORKSHOP

Miroslava Duranková

Educating Heart and Mind: A Practical Workshop by Great Works Academy on Character Development Through Art

In character education, engaging with great stories and art serves as a powerful catalyst for human flourishing. This experiential workshop introduces the methodology of the Great Works Academy (Akadémia veľkých diel), a nationwide educational program of the Collegium of Anton Neuwirth in Slovakia. The initiative is dedicated to cultivating young, virtuous individuals to long for wisdom and beauty.

Through an interactive discussion centered around a specific piece of art or literature, participants experience a structured two-part pedagogical approach. The first part guides educators on how to help students slow down, focus, and deeply immerse themselves into a great story, thereby strengthening essential academic skills such as reading comprehension, concentration, and critical thinking. The second part bridges the artwork with real-life application, examining how classic narratives speak directly to contemporary life, influence personal motivation, and shape human emotions and character.

During the seminar, we will experience a discussion focused on a specific painting, uncovering one of the great stories of Western civilization. At the conclusion of the workshop, we will pedagogically analyze the seminar and the applied methodology, providing deeper insight into this approach to teaching and character development through art and narrative.

Registration Details:

- Date: 24 June 2026 at 19:30
- Capacity: Limited to a maximum of 20 participants.
- Registration Link: https://w95qbrcs.paperform.co
- Led by: Miroslava Duranková, co-founder and director of Great Works Academy

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The Gap Between Moral Reasoning and Action and Its Pedagogical Bridging in the Context of the Implementation of Ethical Education as a School Subject.

ECVA CONFERENCE 2027

The next ECVA Conference will take place in Stockholm, Sweden, from June 30 to July 2, 2027. The conference theme, “What Makes a School or University a Community of Character?”, will explore how educational institutions can foster environments that support character development, human flourishing, and a shared commitment to ethical values. The conference will be organized by ACEDEMEDIA, bringing together scholars, educators, and practitioners to discuss research, best practices, and innovative approaches to character education in schools and universities.

ECVA CONFERENCE CALL FOR PAPERS

WHAT MAKES A SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY A "COMMUNITY OF CHARACTER"?

The European Character and Virtue Association invites scholars, educators, school leaders, university teachers, policymakers, and practitioners to submit proposals for its forthcoming annual conference on the theme:

What makes a school or university a “community of character”?
In recent years, character education has gained increasing attention across schools, universities, and wider educational systems. Yet one of the central questions remains: how can educational institutions move beyond isolated programmes, individual initiatives, or occasional interventions, and become genuine communities in which character is intentionally cultivated, embodied, and sustained?

This conference seeks to explore what it means for a school or university to be a community of character: a place where virtues are not only taught explicitly, but also caught through relationships, culture, leadership, practices, traditions, and institutional ethos; and sought by students, teachers, leaders, families, and wider communities through reflection, commitment, and shared purpose.
We welcome theoretical, empirical, philosophical, theological, historical, and practice-based contributions that examine how character is formed within educational communities, and how schools and universities can become environments that foster human flourishing.

Central questions
Proposals may address, but are not limited to, the following questions:
What does it mean to call a school or university a “community of character”?
How are virtues cultivated through institutional ethos, relationships, rituals, curriculum, pedagogy, and leadership?
What role do teachers, university professors, school leaders, families, peers, and students themselves play in forming communities of character?
How can schools and universities avoid reducing character education to individual moral development alone, and instead understand it as a communal, cultural, and institutional task?
How can communities of character be sustained in pluralistic, digital, secular, religious, or culturally diverse contexts?
How can we evaluate whether an educational institution is truly fostering character and flourishing?



ECVA CONFERENCE

Trnava

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