

Introduction: A renewed character education following the pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine

1. Has the pandemic taught us anything?

A short time ago, at the beginning of September 2022, the Johns Hopkins University published a listing according to which there had been 580 million cases of Covid-19 worldwide and 6,4 million people had died as a result. These numbers are lower than the numbers of cases and deaths which really occurred; in fact, the OMS itself estimates that the real numbers could be two or three times the official figures, because there has been a notable lack of reliable tracking of the impact of the illness, in part for political reasons. We might bear in mind, as a basis for comparison, that all the Napoleonic wars — with which we Spanish are well acquainted — produced a total of between five and seven million deaths.

It would seem wise to reflect on what we have learned from this worldwide catastrophe and what effect it may have on matters of great importance, such as our concept of the human being, the measures in respect of research which should be taken in the future or our understanding of education after the pandemic.

If we analyze the many papers produced in the field of education because of the pandemic, it seems unfortunate that very few of them appear to address these basic issues. Worthy of mention is Curren's observation when he states that "Pandemic social distancing underscores the importance of asking whether direct and embodied interpersonal exchanges remain important to development and learning across the lifespan" (2022, p. 23). But to speak, as others have done, about ways of facing adversity, brings nothing

new to the debate; the same can be said of the secondary importance of studying ways to achieve a greater and better digitalization of teachers, students and teaching methods.

For our part, however, we feel that reflection on the pandemic in the field of education should lead us to the consideration that this disaster which has affected the whole world has manifested certain realities regarding human beings which many would prefer to ignore but which have regained their true importance, if we wish to devote our energies to the education of the younger generations.

We consider that there are five principal realities on which we need to focus.

In the first place, we need to remember that no education can be called authentic if it does not encourage the learner to reflect on the meaning of life. Indeed, a paper which appeared in this journal at the beginning of the pandemic alerted that the virus “is the source of numerous opportunities to ask ourselves, as Ivan Illich did shortly before his untimely death, whether we have lived as we should have “ (Ibáñez-Martín, 2020, p. 182). We have witnessed the imposition of a culture which maintains that any type of life is as worthy as any other; as a result (and helped by internet), the most degraded forms of life have appeared, from people who offer themselves to be eaten by others, something which has actually happened, to young people who declare that they have *ni foi ni loi* (neither faith nor law), or singers such as Sabina who recently declared that in his youth his only thoughts were about “sex, drugs and rock and roll”. This culture has not disappeared. But the unforeseen death of loved ones, of all ages, has led many to ask themselves about the type of life which is worth living.

Secondly, the vulnerability which characterizes the human condition has acquired a special notoriety. The *Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language* defines vulnerable as susceptible to wounds or injury, physical or moral. Traditionally, the need for protection from injury has always been recognized, whether the injury should come from crossing the street where we shouldn't or from celebrating the Nation's Day holding the wrong flag in an independence-minded neighborhood. But on some occasions reasonable protection is not enough. It is evident that in certain circumstances a person's vulnerability is greater; this is, for example, the case of a mentally handicapped person, who is simply not equipped to defend himself. Sellman (2005) is right when he presents nursing care as an answer to that greater vulnerability: the extra care must take into account the dignity of the person and his protection, avoiding any kind of paternalism, and giving careful consideration to the lines which must not be crossed.

That said, the pandemic has helped us to discover our profound dependence on Nature. The May 68 revolution produced the idea that the difference between man and woman was irrelevant. Later on, the idea began to circulate that we were going to live a thousand

years; that scientific progress would necessarily lead to a transhumanism which would allow us to overcome intellectual and biological limitations; genetic engineering would allow us first to choose the characteristics we wanted for our children and then to ensure a much longer life for them. But reflection on the pandemic has led many to think that it is a mistake to confront nature and ignore the limits which it places on us.

This question is related in its turn to that of the limits of human autonomy. Kant, known for his defence of autonomy, maintained that it is the property of the will by which it becomes its own law. The idea was taken up again by Rawls in his famous book *A theory of justice*, published in 1971, and quoted no fewer than 105,095 times; he states that “to act autonomously is to act according to principles which we would consent to as relational, free and equal beings” (p. 516). The evolution of these ideas over the last fifty years has led to the belief that, as a basic aim of education, it is necessary to defend autonomy understood as limitless freedom in which the wish (to do something) is the only principle to be followed. However, this is perhaps not the most accurate interpretation of the concept of human autonomy. Using Fukuyama’s words, taken from his recent book *Liberalism and Its Discontents*, we would say that

the reign of autonomy has expanded constantly over time, from the freedom to obey rules within an existing moral framework, to the invention of rules by oneself. But respect for autonomy was destined to guide and mediate in the competition between deeply rooted beliefs, not to replace those beliefs in their entirety. Not all humans believe that maximizing their autonomy is the most important objective in life or that to disregard all forms of authority is necessarily a good thing. (p. 152)

Fourthly, we find that the pandemic has shown with great clarity the evils of the individualism which permeates our present day society. Many philosophical schools have pronounced warnings against the error of forgetting that we are political and social animals, believing that we are isolated monads and insisting on presenting our own likes or interests as rights which should be recognized. Some years ago, Robert Putman became well known for an article he wrote entitled “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital” (1995). In the article, Putman complained about the lack of participation in civic activities and that, although the number of people who bowled had increased, it was none the less true that many of those who played bowled alone; he considered this to be a symptom that there are more and more “virtual” friendships and fewer and fewer real friendships. It is also quite clear that the number of people who have died completely alone during the pandemic, either in hospital or at home, has been another cause for serious reflection. Which brings us to the fifth and final point.

Indeed, it is necessary to stress the degree to which the importance of solidarity and care has increased. The response of a large part of the world to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is an important manifestation of solidarity, which might not have happened in earlier times. That

solidarity is expressed even by bringing Ukrainian families with their children into people's homes without a thought about how they are going to be fed. And we have witnessed that solidarity in the fact that many doctors and nurses have lost their lives as a result of the attention they have given to Covid patients; many priests have also exposed themselves to grave risks in their attention to infected people in hospitals and at home. Another example of solidarity has been that many people decided to bring food to elderly neighbors and even to look after ill people with whom they had had very little prior contact.

As Christians we should remember the parable from the Gospel: my neighbor, who I should love as I love myself is anyone who is in need of help that I can give. It is, of course, quite clear that there are beliefs other than Christianity which express love of my neighbor. But it is evident that in the Incarnation and death of Jesus Christ we encounter a luminous account of the love which God has for men and which gives us the assurance that there is someone who loves me and that, as Benedict XVI states (2005, n^a 17), doing a reference to the classics, that authentic love is to want the same thing and to reject the same thing, having common thoughts and desires. God loved us first and when we discover that love, we discover the meaning of our life, and we seek God's love and the exclusive and definitive love expressed in the marriage bond.

None of these ideas should be forgotten. On the contrary, they should form the basis of a renewed education of character which has learned lessons from the dramatic pandemic we have suffered. So let's continue by looking at how we could go about designing a sound education which rises to the challenges of our times.

2. What can we ask of education today?

We have examined the relevant ideas which the pandemic has brought home to many, although there also may be some, even many, who would like to close their eyes to reality. In these circumstances, we are bound to reflect on the criteria which should be taken into account in respect of education, because up to now education has been limited to the areas of access to scientific knowledge, skills competencies or civics. By no means do we wish to disqualify these educational activities. Our aim is to emphasize the need to look for a renewed character education which will lead youth to attain the most profound development of their being.

This renewal has recently been the subject of study from a variety of different perspectives, and it would perhaps be useful as an introduction to indicate three areas of special interest at the present time.

In the first place, the best character education introduces the moral element into the field of education. This fact has three main consequences which have an important effect on the curriculum, on teaching practice and on the students.

- a) The curriculum ceases to be, as Nodding's points out (2019), a mere accumulation of contents that must be learned. What's more, if the moral criterion is not present in the selection of contents, then the selection becomes arbitrary, circumstantial or, in the best of cases, simply an expression of the position of the majority. But experience has shown that majorities do not always respect human dignity (Nussbaum, 2012). Therefore, although the ethical element is also debatable, basically in respect of its essence, it should not be omitted in the selection of curricular content: a moral element should be present in the design of the curricula.
- b) In today's world, the teacher acquires a renewed relevance for two reasons: it will no longer be sufficient for the teacher to transmit uncritically what is accepted by the majority or prescribed by others. He will cease to be a mere dispenser of the curriculum (Pring, 2016) and become a transmitter of culture, a promoter of critical thinking and a guarantor both quality of the content transmitted and of his ability to promote the rounded development of his students' personalities.
- c) On their side, the students will have a different view of the teaching institution and of their teachers. These will no longer be simply places and agents who enable them to acquire knowledge which will help them to earn a living, but something of much greater importance — they will help them to find the meaning of their existence.

Secondly, character education allows us to deal with some of the historical problems, both theoretical and practical, which have beset moral education. Let's look at three of those problems.

- a) Perhaps we can begin with the one which has proved to be the most difficult: while many teachers recognize the importance of helping their students to become good people, they admit their inability to approach the task for two reasons. On the one hand, they are afraid of falling into illegitimate indoctrination. On the other, they are afraid of entering into the sphere of family education or they have received no specific training in that area. In this sense, character education allows for a clear and accessible language on moral questions, and through the teaching of virtues it is possible to make moral learning operative and adapted to specific everyday situations and in a way which is shared by students' families.
- b) Secondly, character education draws attention to the behavior of the teachers themselves, not only in what is commonly termed their professional duties, that is their commitment to fulfil the terms of their work contract, but also in respect of the manner of being of the educator in a wider sense. The reason is that no individual can teach others what he himself does not understand, and it is not possible to fully understand virtues if they are not practiced (Carr, 1991). The idea that being a good educator is

related to being a good person (Martínez, Esteban, Jover, & Payá, 2016), is upheld by the theory of behavioral transfer, which posits that educators cannot establish strict limits between their professional and their personal lives. It also upholds the dignity of the profession itself and the enormous influence, which is characteristic of the teaching profession, in that inadequate behavior would affect a number of young people whose process of maturity could be seriously compromised (Ibáñez-Martín, 2017).

- c) Finally, the renewed character education will allow educators to overcome the dichotomy of cognitivism-emotivism which has paralyzed moral education and divided researchers and educators. Kohlberg's model was questioned on the grounds of its excessive Kantian based rationalism and its universalism to the detriment of the particular, and also because of its inherent inability to promote moral behavior. On the other hand, the proposals of the emotivist inheritors of Hume, which first arose in response to intellectualist models, suffered from excessive subjectivity and were opposed to the identification of objective criteria as references for full human development. The proposals for character education can overcome these problems since they contemplate both rational and affective criteria in determining the moral response (Carr, 2005), which must take circumstances into account and be moderated by the virtue of prudence.

These are the ideas which are at present under discussion in the field of character education. We believe that the emerging proposals in character education are opening hopeful new horizons for an education which will be truly comprehensive and facilitate formation in the widest sense of the word. Every father, mother or teacher is well aware of the difficulty of providing a good education for their children or students, and it is likely that their deepest concerns are not limited simply to achieving good grades at the end of the school year, something which on occasion is used by those in political power, supposedly to save itself problems; but also, and more importantly, they would like to be able to say that the younger generation are well formed people, who are not carried away by passing fashions, who are capable of using their intelligence and managing their emotions. Fully aware that every individual is responsible for his or her own life, we cannot, as educators, close our eyes to the difficulties which many are facing today - those who find it difficult to discover what it means to be male or female currently and in view of their own circumstances. It is therefore important to offer scenarios which propitiate ways and means to achieve the plenitude to which we all aspire, the full development of personality which is required of education by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It is evident that character education does not have the key to resolve all educational problems. We believe, however, that without it we would simply not be facing up to and trying to solve some of the most worrying issues of our times.

Naturally, one monograph in a journal cannot claim to address all the problems which character education attempts to solve. Therefore, we are going to offer a summary of the various articles which we have published, from very varying viewpoints and countries.

This issue begins with an article by Professors Aurora Bernal Martínez de Soria and Concepción Naval on “Flourishing as the aim of character education”. The objective of this article is to investigate whether human flourishing is the aim of character education. The authors analyse publications on flourishing and moral education in the Anglo-American area and conclude that not every concept of flourishing is an aim of education, and that character education is insufficient to promote human flourishing in a most clearly moral sense.

Next there is a paper by Randall Curren on “Overcoming what divides us: Global Civic Friendship and ‘Full development of the Human Personality’”. Professor Curren states that character education is not solely a question of cultivating virtues; it should also promote global civic friendship through the formation of educational communities and friendships. This formative work requires the participation of the whole school; it should respect justice and promote contacts and friendship between different groups.

Professors Edward Brooks and Jorge L. Villacís, from different countries, are the authors of an article entitled “To educate citizen and citizen-leaders for our society. Renewing character education in universities”. The authors propose a renewal of character education with the aim of educating leaders who can materialize what the SDG4 proposes in respect of enhancing citizen ethics, while respecting sustainable development and the building of global citizenship. They propose a return to the cultivation of virtue in character education since education in values and attitudes is an essential component of education for global citizenship and leadership.

The following article, written by Francisco Esteban Bara and M.^a Carmen Caro, is entitled “The cultivation of critical thinking through university tutoring: A new opportunity after Covid-19”. The authors indicate that the reality of the pandemic has produced a suggestive revision of the university tutorial which reexamines its usefulness; because it had become an exclusively academic tutorial at the present time, its usefulness is questioned. The authors propose that the meetings between the tutor and the tutored student should prioritize character education, helping them to think and encouraging them not tire of seeking the truth and to concentrate their search on the common good. The authors also contribute some practical suggestions on how to cultivate the spirit through the promotion of critical thinking.

This monograph would be incomplete without an article on character education in the classical world. Professor David Hernández de la Fuente analyses this aspect of the subject in “Educational reforms for a crisis. On the education of character in Plato and

Aristotle”. The author analyses the crisis which our society is suffering and affirms that the solution it demands is character education; he would like to see a recovery of what Plato and Aristotle stated in respect of how to develop and strengthen good character through the discharge of civic obligations. Through an analysis of the principal texts on character education of the two thinkers, the author suggests solutions to improve education in this turbulent world in which we must live.

Professor José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín entitles his paper “The plural concept of good character”, in which he illustrates the differences between the English meaning of *good character* and the diverse meanings of *buen carácter* (good character) in Spanish, pointing out the different qualities which identify these meanings. To this end, he carries out a philological, philosophical, and psycho-pedagogical analysis. After, he defends the importance of the good literature in character education and proposes a transcended reading of *Don Quixote* (*The Ingenious Knight Don Quixote of La Mancha*), as a relevant expression of Spanish culture, to study the principal human qualities of good character to be found therein.

Doctor Juan Luis Fuentes and Jorge Valero-Berzosa write on “New digital virtues or virtues for the digital context. Do we need a new model of character education?” The authors wish to address the question of why technology has colonized our lives. The article attempts to answer the question of whether it is necessary to elaborate a new template of virtues for the new digital world, which would require, as a solution to the evils of the digital paradigm, the promotion of critical thinking. They conclude that a substantial change to the classical pattern of virtues is not necessary, but they stress the special need to foment critical thinking, responsibility, and the safeguard of privacy.

Professors Zaida Espinosa Zárata, Josu Ahedo Ruiz and Miguel Rumayor address the subject of “Friendship and character education: A systematic review”; they attempt to answer the question of whether friendship can be useful in the development of virtues. This systematic review of scientific articles published between 2007 and 2021 endeavors to identify what type of relationship exists between character and friendship. A psychological focus is predominant in the articles reviewed, but the cultivation of friendship requires a philosophical-moral focus which underlines the humanizing potential of friendship, given that it is a good in itself.

Hailing from different continents, Professors Juan P. Dabdoub, Aitor R. Salaverría and Marvin W. Berkowitz write about “Identifying practices to promote character development in university residential settings: The case of Colegios Mayores”. The authors wish to answer the question of whether it is necessary to integrate training programs of character education in university halls of residence. Through the answers to a questionnaire given by 19 directors of Halls of Residence (Colegios Mayores) in

Spain, they investigate how the six educational practices proposed by Étienne Wenger have been put into effect.

This issue closes with a paper by María José Ibáñez Ayuso, who presents another perspective in respect of the halls of residence and shows that character education does not terminate at the end of the secondary school cycle. The title of the article is “The Spanish Colegios Mayores: The pedagogical value of a longstanding institution”; it stresses the need to revalue the importance of the formation received by the students in the halls of residence. Working from an interpretive viewpoint and centering on character education, the author concludes that the halls of residence are spaces which generate innumerable opportunities to cultivate character, to foment critical thinking in search of truth and to experience a synthesis of knowledge and an encounter with tradition.

To all the above, our most sincere gratitude.

José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín and Josu Ahedo

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Presentación: Una educación renovada del carácter tras la pandemia y la invasión de Ucrania

1. ¿Nos ha enseñado algo la pandemia?

Hace poco tiempo, a principios de septiembre del 2022, se publicaba un recuento de la Universidad Johns Hopkins según el cual se han producido 580 millones de casos de ataques de la Covid-19 en el mundo y han fallecido 6.4 millones de personas. No es preciso decir que estos datos son inferiores a los realmente producidos, hasta el punto de que la misma Organización Mundial de la Salud estima que los datos reales pueden ser dos o tres veces mayores que el recuento oficial, pues ha habido una notable falta de un seguimiento fiel del impacto de la enfermedad, sin que hayan faltado razones políticas. Conviene no olvidar, como término de comparación, que todas las guerras napoleónicas —de las que los españoles sabemos bastante— produjeron entre cinco y siete millones de muertos.

Parece razonable reflexionar sobre lo que hemos aprendido de esta catástrofe mundial y qué incidencia puede tener en asuntos de gran importancia, como el concepto del ser humano, las medidas sobre la investigación que deben tomarse para el futuro o el modo de entender la educación después de la pandemia.

Desgraciadamente, si analizamos los numerosos trabajos dentro del mundo de la educación que la pandemia ha suscitado, muy pocos de ellos han entrado a considerar estos asuntos básicos. Cabe señalar la observación realizada por Curren cuando afirma que «El distanciamiento social pandémico subraya la importancia de preguntarse si los intercambios interpersonales directos y encarnados siguen siendo importantes para el desarrollo y el aprendizaje a lo largo de la vida» (2022, p. 23). Pero no aporta nada nuevo hablar, como han hecho otros, de los modos de enfrentarse a la adversidad, así como tiene importancia secundaria estudiar los modos de conseguir una mayor y mejor digitalización de los profesores, de los alumnos y de los métodos pedagógicos.

Pensamos, por el contrario, que una reflexión educativa sobre la pandemia nos debe llevar a la idea de que este desastre mundial ha puesto de manifiesto algunas realidades sobre los seres humanos que muchos querían ignorar y que ahora vuelven a tener importancia, si queremos dedicarnos a la tarea de promover una buena educación a las jóvenes generaciones.

Las principales realidades que consideramos necesario sacar a la luz son cinco.

En primer lugar, es preciso tener en cuenta que no hay educación auténtica si no se anima a una reflexión sobre el sentido de la vida. En efecto, en un trabajo que apareció en esta revista, ya que en los inicios de la pandemia, se advertía que el virus «es fuente de numerosas oportunidades para plantearnos, como le ocurre a Iván Illich poco antes de su temprana muerte, la cuestión de si hemos vivido como debíamos» (Ibáñez-Martín, 2020, p. 182). Se ha querido imponer la ideología de que cualquier tipo de vida es igualmente digna y así ha aparecido, ayudada por Internet, la fauna más degradada posible, desde personas que se ofrecen a ser comidas por otros, lo que incluso consiguen, a jóvenes desenvueltos que declaran no tener *ni foi ni loi* (ni fe ni ley), o cantantes, como recientemente declaró Sabina acerca de su juventud, que solo pensaba en «sexo, droga y rock and roll». No es una ideología que haya desaparecido. Pero las imprevistas muertes de personas queridas, de todas las edades, han llevado a muchos a volverse a plantear la pregunta socrática acerca de la vida que vale la pena vivir.

En segundo lugar, ha adquirido un especial relieve la vulnerabilidad que caracteriza a los seres humanos. La Real Academia define que ser vulnerable es poder ser herido o recibir lesión, física o moral. Ha sido tradicional reconocer la necesidad de protección para esas heridas, que podían provenir de ser atropellado si cruzábamos por donde no debíamos, o ser insultados si paseábamos el día de la fiesta nacional con la bandera equivocada en la mano dentro de un barrio independentista. Pero, en ocasiones, no basta la protección razonable. Es evidente que en ciertas circunstancias hay una mayor vulnerabilidad, como cuando se tiene una enfermedad mental, ante la que no disponemos personalmente de medios para protegernos de ella. Tiene razón Sellman (2005) cuando presenta la actividad de las enfermeras como una respuesta a esa mayor vulnerabilidad humana, ante la que se debe responder cuidando la dignidad de la persona y estudiando una protección, que ha de distinguirse del paternalismo, meditando con cuidado las barreras que no deben superarse.

Ahora bien, la pandemia nos ha facilitado descubrir nuestra profunda dependencia hacia la naturaleza. La revolución del 68 incitó a la idea de que era irrelevante la diferencia entre el hombre y la mujer. Más adelante, comenzó a propagarse la idea de que íbamos a vivir mil años y de que los inventos científicos nos conducían necesariamente a un transhumanismo que nos llevaría a superar las limitaciones intelectuales y biológicas, gracias a la ingeniería genética, que nos permitiría, primeramente, elegir las características

de nuestros hijos y luego nos llevaría a un importante aumento de duración de la vida. Es patente que esa ideología sigue presente e incluso se defiende con ciertos instrumentos legales. Pero una reflexión sobre la pandemia ha llevado a muchos a pensar que es un error enfrentarse a la naturaleza, desconociendo los límites que nos impone.

Relacionado con esta cuestión nos aparece el tema de los límites de la autonomía humana, que defendió especialmente Kant, manteniendo que era la propiedad de la voluntad por la cual es para sí misma una ley, y que fue retomada por Rawls en su famoso libro *A theory of justice*, publicado en 1971, y que hoy día ha sido citado 105 095 veces, quien afirma que «actuar autónomamente es actuar según principios que consentiríamos como seres relacionales, libre e iguales» (p. 516). La evolución en este medio siglo de estas ideas ha llevado a la extendida creencia de que es preciso defender, como meta básica de la educación, una autonomía entendida como libertad sin referentes, en la que el deseo es el único principio que se ha de seguir. Ahora bien, quizá no ha sido esta la más correcta interpretación del concepto de la autonomía humana. Utilizando palabras de Fukuyama, en su reciente libro *Liberalism and its discontents*, diremos que

El reino de la autonomía se ha expandido constantemente a lo largo del tiempo, ampliándose desde la libertad de obedecer reglas dentro de un marco moral existente, hasta inventar estas reglas por uno mismo. Pero el respeto por la autonomía estaba destinado a manejar y moderar la competencia de creencias profundamente arraigadas, y no a desplazar esas creencias en su totalidad. No todos los seres humanos piensan que maximizar su autonomía personal es el objetivo más importante de la vida, o que desbaratar todas las formas de autoridad existentes es necesariamente algo bueno (2022, p. 152).

En cuarto término nos encontramos con que la pandemia ha puesto de manifiesto los males del individualismo, tan presente en la sociedad actual. Son numerosas las filosofías que han advertido sobre el error que significa olvidar que somos animales políticos y sociales, creyendo que somos mónadas aisladas, empeñadas en presentar los propios gustos o intereses como derechos que deben ser reconocidos. Hace años se hizo famoso el artículo «Bowling alone: America's declining social capital» (1995), en el que Robert Putnam se quejaba de la falta de participación en actividades cívicas, y que si bien había crecido el número de quienes juegan a los bolos, era preciso reconocer que hoy son muchos más los que los que juegan solos, como expresión de que cada vez son más las amistades «virtuales» y menos las reales. Es evidente que el número de personas que en estos años de pandemia han muerto absolutamente solos, en su casa o en un hospital, ha movido a muchos a una reflexión, que origina el último punto.

En efecto, en último término es preciso subrayar cómo se ha despertado la importancia de la solidaridad y del amor. La respuesta de gran parte del mundo al ataque de Rusia a Ucrania es una importante manifestación de solidaridad, que no se hubiera producido en tiempos anteriores. Esa solidaridad se expresa incluso trayendo a la propia casa a

ucranianas con sus hijos, sin que se sepa cómo se les va a dar de comer. Y esa solidaridad la hemos visto en la pandemia cuando tantos médicos y enfermeros han fallecido atendiendo a los enfermos o cuantos sacerdotes han acudido a hospitales dedicados a los infectados, con grave riesgo de su vida. Más aun, son muchas las personas que se han decidido a llevar alimentos a vecinos ancianos o incluso atender a quienes se encontraban enfermos en su casa, teniendo antes con ellos muy escasas relaciones.

Los cristianos podemos recordar la parábola del Evangelio: mi prójimo, al que debo amar como a mí mismo, es cualquiera que necesita la ayuda que puedo proporcionarle. Por supuesto, es obvio que hay otras fuentes, distintas del cristianismo que explican el amor al prójimo. Pero es indudable que en la Encarnación y muerte de Cristo encontramos una clara historia del amor que Dios tiene a los hombres, lo que nos puede dar la seguridad de que hay alguien que me ama, y que en todo auténtico amor se da, como dice Benedicto XVI (2005, n.º 17), refiriéndose a los clásicos, un querer lo mismo y rechazar lo mismo, un pensar y desear común. Dios nos amó primero y al descubrir ese amor descubrimos también el sentido de nuestra vida y buscamos el amor a Dios, y el amor exclusivo y definitivo, expresado en el vínculo matrimonial.

Todas estas ideas señaladas no deben olvidarse, sino que tienen que estar en la base de una renovada educación del carácter, que haya sacado lecciones de la dura pandemia que hemos sufrido. Pasemos, por tanto, a estudiar cómo debemos diseñar a la buena educación, que esté a la altura de nuestro tiempo.

2. ¿Qué podemos pedir hoy día a la educación?

Hemos visto unas ideas relevantes que la pandemia ha puesto de manifiesto a los ojos de muchos, aunque haya también muchos que pretenden cerrar los ojos a la realidad. Ahora bien, esto nos obliga a una reflexión sobre los criterios que deben tenerse en cuenta a la hora de la educación de los seres humanos, que ha pretendido cerrarse dentro del ámbito de los saberes científicos, de la educación de las competencias o de la educación cívica. No se trata de descalificar a ninguna de estas actividades educativas, sino de subrayar que es preciso iniciar una renovada educación del carácter que facilite a la juventud alcanzar un más profundo desarrollo de su ser.

Esta renovación ha sido estudiada recientemente desde diversas perspectivas. Quizá es oportuno en estas palabras introductorias señalar tres ámbitos que tienen especial interés hoy día.

En primer lugar, la educación del carácter introduce de nuevo en el ámbito educativo la conversación moral, lo que tiene tres consecuencias principales que inciden de modo relevante tanto para el currículum, como para el ejercicio docente y como para los estudiantes:

- a) El currículum deja de ser, en palabras de Noddings (2009), una mera acumulación de contenidos que deben aprenderse. Además, si el criterio moral desaparece en su selección, esta se convierte en arbitraria, circunstancial o, en el mejor de los casos, simple expresión de la postura mayoritaria. Pero la experiencia muestra que las mayorías no siempre respetan la dignidad humana (Nussbaum, 2012), por lo que, aunque lo ético sea también un elemento discutible, fundamentalmente en lo que concierne a su esencia, no debe dejar de considerarse en la elección de los contenidos curriculares, lo que supone atender a un criterio moral en el diseño curricular.
- b) Por su parte, el docente adquiere una relevancia renovada en la acción educativa en un doble sentido. Ya no le será suficiente con transmitir acríticamente lo mayoritariamente aceptado, prescrito por otros, sino que actuará como mediador crítico y ético, dejando de ser así mero dispensador de currículum (Pring, 2016), para ejercer de transmisor cultural, de promotor del pensamiento crítico y de garante de la calidad de los contenidos y de su capacidad de promover el pleno desarrollo de la personalidad de sus alumnos.
- c) Y, por otro lado, los estudiantes tendrán una visión diferente de la escuela y los docentes, que no serán para ellos únicamente lugares y agentes que posibilitan aprender conocimientos que les ayudarán a ganarse la vida, sino algo incluso más importante que esto, pues contribuirán a otorgarles sentido a su existencia.

En segundo lugar, la educación del carácter permite afrontar algunos de los problemas históricos de la educación moral, que son tanto de naturaleza teórica como práctica. Analicemos tres de estos problemas.

- a) Comencemos por uno de los que ha levantado mayores dificultades, consistente en que, si bien muchos profesores reconocen la importancia de ayudar a sus alumnos a ser buenas personas, admiten no saber bien cómo afrontar esta tarea, tanto por el miedo a caer en adoctrinamientos ilegítimos, como por temer entrar en el terreno de la educación familiar o por no haber recibido una formación específica sobre el tema. La educación del carácter permite, en este sentido, un lenguaje claro y accesible sobre cuestiones morales, y mediante las virtudes es posible operativizar aprendizajes morales adaptados a situaciones concretas y cotidianas, de manera compartida con las familias de los estudiantes.
- b) En segundo término, la educación del carácter pone la atención en el comportamiento de los propios educadores, no solo en el habitualmente denominado como profesional, que limita su compromiso al establecido nítidamente por su horario laboral, sino a la forma de ser de la persona del educador en sentido pleno. Esto es así porque el individuo no puede enseñar a otros lo que él mismo no comprende, y no es posible comprender bien las virtudes si no se practican (Carr, 1991). La idea de que ser un buen educador está relacionada con la de ser un educador bueno (Martínez, Esteban,

Jover y Payá, 2016), encuentra sustento en la teoría de la transferencia de conductas, que supone que los educadores no puedan establecer límites estrictos entre su vida profesional y personal, en la dignidad de la propia profesión y en la gran discrecionalidad que caracteriza a la función docente, en la que los daños de un comportamiento equivocado abarcarían a un gran número de jóvenes cuyo proceso madurativo podría verse comprometido (Ibáñez-Martín, 2017).

- c) Por último, la nueva educación del carácter permite superar el dualismo cognitivismo-emotivismo que ha atenazado a la educación moral y ha dividido a investigadores y educadores. El modelo de Kohlberg fue cuestionado por un excesivo racionalismo de raíz kantiana y un universalismo que no atendía a la particularidad, así como por su insuficiencia para promover por sí mismo el comportamiento moral; mientras que las propuestas emotivistas herederas de Hume, que surgieron como respuesta primeramente a modelos intelectualistas, han adolecido de una excesiva subjetividad, oponiéndose a la identificación de criterios objetivos como referencia para la plenitud humana. Las propuestas de educación del carácter permiten salvar estos problemas en cuanto que contemplan tanto criterios racionales como afectivos en la determinación de la respuesta moral (Carr, 2005), que debe tener en cuenta las circunstancias, y que ha de ser dirigida por la virtud de la prudencia.

Estas ideas que se han señalado se encuentran en el horizonte actual de la educación del carácter. Consideramos que las propuestas emergentes de educación del carácter abren un nuevo horizonte esperanzador a una educación que sea realmente integral y facilite la formación humana en el sentido más profundo de la palabra. Cualquier padre, madre o docente conoce la dificultad que tiene educar bien a sus hijos o a sus alumnos, y entre sus preocupaciones más profundas no cabe limitarse únicamente a buscar unas buenas calificaciones al final del curso, que, en ocasiones, ofrece el poder político presuntamente para ahorrarse problemas. En efecto, los padres, en gran medida, desean que pueda decirse de sus hijos que son personas de bien, que no se dejan llevar por las modas ambientales, sino que saben usar su inteligencia y dirigir sus emociones. Con plena conciencia de que cada uno es responsable de su propia vida, los educadores no podemos cerrar los ojos ante las dificultades por las que hoy pasan muchos, a quienes se les hace muy difícil descubrir qué significa ser mujer o varón en los tiempos actuales, considerando las propias características. Por ello, hay que ofrecer ambientes que analicen cómo ofrecer pistas y métodos para conseguir alcanzar la plenitud a la que todos aspiramos, el desarrollo pleno de la personalidad que requiere para la educación la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos.

Es obvio que la educación del carácter no pretende resolver todos los problemas educativos. Pero pensamos que sin ella dejaríamos sin resolver algunos de los temas más preocupantes de nuestros días.

Naturalmente, un número monográfico de una revista no puede pretender abordar todos los problemas que la educación del carácter intenta resolver, por lo que vamos a ofrecer un breve resumen de los distintos artículos que publicamos, realizados desde perspectivas y países muy distintos.

Comienza el número con un artículo de las profesoras Aurora Bernal Martínez de Soria y Concepción Naval sobre «El florecimiento como fin de la educación del carácter». El objetivo de este artículo es investigar si el florecimiento humano es el fin de la educación del carácter. Para ello, se analizan las publicaciones sobre florecimiento y educación moral en el ámbito angloamericano. Se concluye que no todo concepto de florecimiento es un fin educativo y que la educación del carácter es insuficiente para promover el florecimiento humano en su sentido más netamente moral.

A continuación, tenemos a Randall Curren, que presenta un trabajo sobre «Superar lo que nos divide: la Amistad Cívica Global y “El pleno desarrollo de la Personalidad Humana”». El profesor Curren señala que la educación del carácter no es únicamente cultivar virtudes, ya que debe también promover una amistad cívica global a través de la formación de comunidades y amistades escolares. Esta tarea formativa requiere la implicación de toda la escuela, respetando la justicia y promoviendo contactos de amistad intergrupales.

Los profesores Edward Brooks y Jorge L. Villacís, de países distintos, escriben un trabajo titulado «Formar ciudadanos y ciudadanos-líderes para nuestra sociedad: renovando la educación del carácter en las universidades». Los autores proponen la renovación de la educación del carácter para educar líderes que sean capaces de trabajar lo que el ODS4 propone respecto a promover una mejora ética de los ciudadanos, respetando el desarrollo sostenible y a lograr una ciudadanía global. Se propone volver a cultivar la virtud para educar el carácter, dado que la educación en valores y actitudes es un componente esencial de la educación para la ciudadanía global y el liderazgo.

El siguiente artículo se escribe por Francisco Esteban Bara y M.^a Carmen Caro, con el título «El cultivo del pensamiento crítico a través de la tutoría universitaria: una nueva oportunidad tras la Covid-19». Sus autores señalan que la realidad de la Covid-19 ha permitido una sugerente revisión de la tutoría universitaria, reflexionando sobre su utilidad, ya que se ha convertido actualmente en una mera tutoría académica, de uso escaso. Se postula la pertinencia de que los encuentros entre el tutor y el tutelado prioricen la educación del carácter, ayudándoles a pensar para que no se cansen de buscar la verdad, centrando esa búsqueda en el bien común. Además, los autores aportan algunas pautas de cómo lograr el cultivo del espíritu a través del fomento del pensamiento crítico.

No podía faltar en este monográfico un artículo sobre la educación del carácter en el mundo clásico. Así, el profesor David Hernández de la Fuente analiza el tema

«Reformas educativas para una crisis. Notas sobre la educación del carácter en Platón y Aristóteles». El autor muestra la crisis actual que padece nuestra sociedad, afirmando que se necesita, como solución, la educación del carácter y recuperando lo que Platón y Aristóteles señalan respecto a cómo fomentar un buen carácter en relación con cómo se puede desarrollar el carácter a través de las obligaciones cívicas. Mediante el análisis de los principales textos sobre educación del carácter en ambos pensadores se trata de iluminar una solución para la mejora de la educación en este mundo turbulento que nos ha tocado vivir.

El profesor José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín titula su trabajo «El plural concepto del buen carácter», donde se muestran las diferencias entre el significado inglés de *good character* y los diversos sentidos que el buen carácter tiene en español, señalando las cualidades que los identifican. Para ello, se hace un análisis filológico, filosófico y psicopedagógico. Luego, se señala la importancia de la literatura en la formación del carácter y se propone una lectura trascendida de *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha*, estudiando las cualidades humanas centrales del buen carácter que allí se descubren, como expresión relevante de la cultura española.

Los profesores Juan Luis Fuentes y Jorge Valero-Berzosa escriben sobre «Nuevas virtudes digitales o virtudes para el contexto digital: ¿es necesaria una nueva educación del carácter?». Los autores desean responder a la pregunta de por qué la tecnología ha colonizado nuestras vidas. En el artículo se trata de responder si es necesario abordar un nuevo esquema de virtudes en este nuevo mundo digital, el cual requiere, como solución a los males del paradigma digital, fomentar el pensamiento crítico. Se concluye que no es necesario un cambio sustancial en el esquema clásico de las virtudes, pero se subraya la necesidad de fomentar especialmente el pensamiento crítico, la responsabilidad y el cuidado de la intimidad.

Los profesores Zaida Espinosa Zárata, Josu Ahedo Ruiz y Miguel Rumayor abordan el tema «Amistad y educación del carácter: una revisión sistemática», que desea responder a la cuestión de si puede la amistad ser útil para desarrollar las virtudes. Esta revisión sistemática de artículos científicos publicados entre 2007 y 2021 trata de identificar qué tipo de relación se establece entre carácter y amistad. En los artículos revisados predomina un enfoque psicológico, pero el cultivo de la amistad requiere un enfoque filosófico-moral que remarque el potencial humanizador de la amistad, dado que es un bien en sí mismo.

Los profesores, de continentes diversos, Juan P. Dabdoub, Aitor R. Salaverría y Marvin W. Berkowitz escriben sobre «Identificación de prácticas para promover el desarrollo del carácter en contextos residenciales universitarios: el caso de los Colegios Mayores». Los autores desean responder a la cuestión de si es necesario integrar programas formativos de

educación del carácter en las residencias universitarias. Así, a través de las respuestas a un cuestionario relleno por 19 directores de Colegios Mayores, en España, investigan de qué modo se trabajan las seis prácticas educativas que propone Etienne Wenger.

El número se cierra con un trabajo de María José Ibáñez Ayuso, quien presenta otra perspectiva sobre los Colegios Mayores, mostrando cómo la educación del carácter no termina con la enseñanza secundaria. Su título es «Los Colegios Mayores: el valor pedagógico de una institución centenaria» y en él se subraya la necesidad de revalorizar el valor pedagógico de la formación que reciben los universitarios en los colegios mayores. Con un enfoque hermenéutico-interpretativo, centrado en la educación del carácter, se concluye que los colegios mayores son realmente espacios en los que se generan múltiples oportunidades de cultivar el carácter, de fomentar el pensamiento crítico en la búsqueda de la verdad, dándose una síntesis de saberes y el encuentro con la tradición.

Vaya hacia todos ellos nuestro más cordial agradecimiento.

José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín y Josu Ahedo

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Introduction: A renewed character education following the pandemic and the invasion of Ukraine

1. Has the pandemic taught us anything?

A short time ago, at the beginning of September 2022, the Johns Hopkins University published a listing according to which there had been 580 million cases of Covid-19 worldwide and 6,4 million people had died as a result. These numbers are lower than the numbers of cases and deaths which really occurred; in fact, the OMS itself estimates that the real numbers could be two or three times the official figures, because there has been a notable lack of reliable tracking of the impact of the illness, in part for political reasons. We might bear in mind, as a basis for comparison, that all the Napoleonic wars — with which we Spanish are well acquainted — produced a total of between five and seven million deaths.

It would seem wise to reflect on what we have learned from this worldwide catastrophe and what effect it may have on matters of great importance, such as our concept of the human being, the measures in respect of research which should be taken in the future or our understanding of education after the pandemic.

If we analyze the many papers produced in the field of education because of the pandemic, it seems unfortunate that very few of them appear to address these basic issues. Worthy of mention is Curren's observation when he states that "Pandemic social distancing underscores the importance of asking whether direct and embodied interpersonal exchanges remain important to development and learning across the lifespan" (2022, p. 23). But to speak, as others have done, about ways of facing adversity, brings nothing

new to the debate; the same can be said of the secondary importance of studying ways to achieve a greater and better digitalization of teachers, students and teaching methods.

For our part, however, we feel that reflection on the pandemic in the field of education should lead us to the consideration that this disaster which has affected the whole world has manifested certain realities regarding human beings which many would prefer to ignore but which have regained their true importance, if we wish to devote our energies to the education of the younger generations.

We consider that there are five principal realities on which we need to focus.

In the first place, we need to remember that no education can be called authentic if it does not encourage the learner to reflect on the meaning of life. Indeed, a paper which appeared in this journal at the beginning of the pandemic alerted that the virus “is the source of numerous opportunities to ask ourselves, as Ivan Illich did shortly before his untimely death, whether we have lived as we should have “ (Ibáñez-Martín, 2020, p. 182). We have witnessed the imposition of a culture which maintains that any type of life is as worthy as any other; as a result (and helped by internet), the most degraded forms of life have appeared, from people who offer themselves to be eaten by others, something which has actually happened, to young people who declare that they have *ni foi ni loi* (neither faith nor law), or singers such as Sabina who recently declared that in his youth his only thoughts were about “sex, drugs and rock and roll”. This culture has not disappeared. But the unforeseen death of loved ones, of all ages, has led many to ask themselves about the type of life which is worth living.

Secondly, the vulnerability which characterizes the human condition has acquired a special notoriety. The *Dictionary of the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language* defines vulnerable as susceptible to wounds or injury, physical or moral. Traditionally, the need for protection from injury has always been recognized, whether the injury should come from crossing the street where we shouldn't or from celebrating the Nation's Day holding the wrong flag in an independence-minded neighborhood. But on some occasions reasonable protection is not enough. It is evident that in certain circumstances a person's vulnerability is greater; this is, for example, the case of a mentally handicapped person, who is simply not equipped to defend himself. Sellman (2005) is right when he presents nursing care as an answer to that greater vulnerability: the extra care must take into account the dignity of the person and his protection, avoiding any kind of paternalism, and giving careful consideration to the lines which must not be crossed.

That said, the pandemic has helped us to discover our profound dependence on Nature. The May 68 revolution produced the idea that the difference between man and woman was irrelevant. Later on, the idea began to circulate that we were going to live a thousand

years; that scientific progress would necessarily lead to a transhumanism which would allow us to overcome intellectual and biological limitations; genetic engineering would allow us first to choose the characteristics we wanted for our children and then to ensure a much longer life for them. But reflection on the pandemic has led many to think that it is a mistake to confront nature and ignore the limits which it places on us.

This question is related in its turn to that of the limits of human autonomy. Kant, known for his defence of autonomy, maintained that it is the property of the will by which it becomes its own law. The idea was taken up again by Rawls in his famous book *A theory of justice*, published in 1971, and quoted no fewer than 105,095 times; he states that “to act autonomously is to act according to principles which we would consent to as relational, free and equal beings” (p. 516). The evolution of these ideas over the last fifty years has led to the belief that, as a basic aim of education, it is necessary to defend autonomy understood as limitless freedom in which the wish (to do something) is the only principle to be followed. However, this is perhaps not the most accurate interpretation of the concept of human autonomy. Using Fukuyama’s words, taken from his recent book *Liberalism and Its Discontents*, we would say that

the reign of autonomy has expanded constantly over time, from the freedom to obey rules within an existing moral framework, to the invention of rules by oneself. But respect for autonomy was destined to guide and mediate in the competition between deeply rooted beliefs, not to replace those beliefs in their entirety. Not all humans believe that maximizing their autonomy is the most important objective in life or that to disregard all forms of authority is necessarily a good thing. (p. 152)

Fourthly, we find that the pandemic has shown with great clarity the evils of the individualism which permeates our present day society. Many philosophical schools have pronounced warnings against the error of forgetting that we are political and social animals, believing that we are isolated monads and insisting on presenting our own likes or interests as rights which should be recognized. Some years ago, Robert Putman became well known for an article he wrote entitled “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital” (1995). In the article, Putman complained about the lack of participation in civic activities and that, although the number of people who bowled had increased, it was none the less true that many of those who played bowled alone; he considered this to be a symptom that there are more and more “virtual” friendships and fewer and fewer real friendships. It is also quite clear that the number of people who have died completely alone during the pandemic, either in hospital or at home, has been another cause for serious reflection. Which brings us to the fifth and final point.

Indeed, it is necessary to stress the degree to which the importance of solidarity and care has increased. The response of a large part of the world to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is an important manifestation of solidarity, which might not have happened in earlier times. That

solidarity is expressed even by bringing Ukrainian families with their children into people's homes without a thought about how they are going to be fed. And we have witnessed that solidarity in the fact that many doctors and nurses have lost their lives as a result of the attention they have given to Covid patients; many priests have also exposed themselves to grave risks in their attention to infected people in hospitals and at home. Another example of solidarity has been that many people decided to bring food to elderly neighbors and even to look after ill people with whom they had had very little prior contact.

As Christians we should remember the parable from the Gospel: my neighbor, who I should love as I love myself is anyone who is in need of help that I can give. It is, of course, quite clear that there are beliefs other than Christianity which express love of my neighbor. But it is evident that in the Incarnation and death of Jesus Christ we encounter a luminous account of the love which God has for men and which gives us the assurance that there is someone who loves me and that, as Benedict XVI states (2005, n^a 17), doing a reference to the classics, that authentic love is to want the same thing and to reject the same thing, having common thoughts and desires. God loved us first and when we discover that love, we discover the meaning of our life, and we seek God's love and the exclusive and definitive love expressed in the marriage bond.

None of these ideas should be forgotten. On the contrary, they should form the basis of a renewed education of character which has learned lessons from the dramatic pandemic we have suffered. So let's continue by looking at how we could go about designing a sound education which rises to the challenges of our times

2. What can we ask of education today?

We have examined the relevant ideas which the pandemic has brought home to many, although there also may be some, even many, who would like to close their eyes to reality. In these circumstances, we are bound to reflect on the criteria which should be taken into account in respect of education, because up to now education has been limited to the areas of access to scientific knowledge, skills competencies or civics. By no means do we wish to disqualify these educational activities. Our aim is to emphasize the need to look for a renewed character education which will lead youth to attain the most profound development of their being.

This renewal has recently been the subject of study from a variety of different perspectives, and it would perhaps be useful as an introduction to indicate three areas of special interest at the present time.

In the first place, the best character education introduces the moral element into the field of education. This fact has three main consequences which have an important effect on the curriculum, on teaching practice and on the students.

- a) The curriculum ceases to be, as Nodding's points out (2019), a mere accumulation of contents that must be learned. What's more, if the moral criterion is not present in the selection of contents, then the selection becomes arbitrary, circumstantial or, in the best of cases, simply an expression of the position of the majority. But experience has shown that majorities do not always respect human dignity (Nussbaum, 2012). Therefore, although the ethical element is also debatable, basically in respect of its essence, it should not be omitted in the selection of curricular content: a moral element should be present in the design of the curricula.
- b) In today's world, the teacher acquires a renewed relevance for two reasons: it will no longer be sufficient for the teacher to transmit uncritically what is accepted by the majority or prescribed by others. He will cease to be a mere dispenser of the curriculum (Pring, 2016) and become a transmitter of culture, a promoter of critical thinking and a guarantor both quality of the content transmitted and of his ability to promote the rounded development of his students' personalities.
- c) On their side, the students will have a different view of the teaching institution and of their teachers. These will no longer be simply places and agents who enable them to acquire knowledge which will help them to earn a living, but something of much greater importance — they will help them to find the meaning of their existence.

Secondly, character education allows us to deal with some of the historical problems, both theoretical and practical, which have beset moral education. Let's look at three of those problems.

- a) Perhaps we can begin with the one which has proved to be the most difficult: while many teachers recognize the importance of helping their students to become good people, they admit their inability to approach the task for two reasons. On the one hand, they are afraid of falling into illegitimate indoctrination. On the other, they are afraid of entering into the sphere of family education or they have received no specific training in that area. In this sense, character education allows for a clear and accessible language on moral questions, and through the teaching of virtues it is possible to make moral learning operative and adapted to specific everyday situations and in a way which is shared by students' families.
- b) Secondly, character education draws attention to the behavior of the teachers themselves, not only in what is commonly termed their professional duties, that is their commitment to fulfil the terms of their work contract, but also in respect of the manner of being of the educator in a wider sense. The reason is that no individual can teach others what he himself does not understand, and it is not possible to fully understand virtues if they are not practiced (Carr, 1991). The idea that being a good educator is

related to being a good person (Martínez, Esteban, Jover, & Payá, 2016), is upheld by the theory of behavioral transfer, which posits that educators cannot establish strict limits between their professional and their personal lives. It also upholds the dignity of the profession itself and the enormous influence, which is characteristic of the teaching profession, in that inadequate behavior would affect a number of young people whose process of maturity could be seriously compromised (Ibáñez-Martín, 2017).

- c) Finally, the renewed character education will allow educators to overcome the dichotomy of cognitivism-emotivism which has paralyzed moral education and divided researchers and educators. Kohlberg's model was questioned on the grounds of its excessive Kantian based rationalism and its universalism to the detriment of the particular, and also because of its inherent inability to promote moral behavior. On the other hand, the proposals of the emotivist inheritors of Hume, which first arose in response to intellectualist models, suffered from excessive subjectivity and were opposed to the identification of objective criteria as references for full human development. The proposals for character education can overcome these problems since they contemplate both rational and affective criteria in determining the moral response (Carr, 2005), which must take circumstances into account and be moderated by the virtue of prudence.

These are the ideas which are at present under discussion in the field of character education. We believe that the emerging proposals in character education are opening hopeful new horizons for an education which will be truly comprehensive and facilitate formation in the widest sense of the word. Every father, mother or teacher is well aware of the difficulty of providing a good education for their children or students, and it is likely that their deepest concerns are not limited simply to achieving good grades at the end of the school year, something which on occasion is used by those in political power, supposedly to save itself problems; but also, and more importantly, they would like to be able to say that the younger generation are well formed people, who are not carried away by passing fashions, who are capable of using their intelligence and managing their emotions. Fully aware that every individual is responsible for his or her own life, we cannot, as educators, close our eyes to the difficulties which many are facing today - those who find it difficult to discover what it means to be male or female currently and in view of their own circumstances. It is therefore important to offer scenarios which propitiate ways and means to achieve the plenitude to which we all aspire, the full development of personality which is required of education by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

It is evident that character education does not have the key to resolve all educational problems. We believe, however, that without it we would simply not be facing up to and trying to solve some of the most worrying issues of our times.

Naturally, one monograph in a journal cannot claim to address all the problems which character education attempts to solve. Therefore, we are going to offer a summary of the various articles which we have published, from very varying viewpoints and countries.

This issue begins with an article by Professors Aurora Bernal Martínez de Soria and Concepción Naval on “Flourishing as the aim of character education”. The objective of this article is to investigate whether human flourishing is the aim of character education. The authors analyse publications on flourishing and moral education in the Anglo-American area and conclude that not every concept of flourishing is an aim of education, and that character education is insufficient to promote human flourishing in a most clearly moral sense.

Next there is a paper by Randall Curren on “Overcoming what divides us: Global Civic Friendship and ‘Full development of the Human Personality’”. Professor Curren states that character education is not solely a question of cultivating virtues; it should also promote global civic friendship through the formation of educational communities and friendships. This formative work requires the participation of the whole school; it should respect justice and promote contacts and friendship between different groups.

Professors Edward Brooks and Jorge L. Villacís, from different countries, are the authors of an article entitled “To educate citizen and citizen-leaders for our society. Renewing character education in universities”. The authors propose a renewal of character education with the aim of educating leaders who can materialize what the SDG4 proposes in respect of enhancing citizen ethics, while respecting sustainable development and the building of global citizenship. They propose a return to the cultivation of virtue in character education since education in values and attitudes is an essential component of education for global citizenship and leadership.

The following article, written by Francisco Esteban Bara and M.^a Carmen Caro, is entitled “The cultivation of critical thinking through university tutoring: A new opportunity after Covid-19”. The authors indicate that the reality of the pandemic has produced a suggestive revision of the university tutorial which reexamines its usefulness; because it had become an exclusively academic tutorial at the present time, its usefulness is questioned. The authors propose that the meetings between the tutor and the tutored student should prioritize character education, helping them to think and encouraging them not tire of seeking the truth and to concentrate their search on the common good. The authors also contribute some practical suggestions on how to cultivate the spirit through the promotion of critical thinking.

This monograph would be incomplete without an article on character education in the classical world. Professor David Hernández de la Fuente analyses this aspect of the subject in “Educational reforms for a crisis. On the education of character in Plato and

Aristotle”. The author analyses the crisis which our society is suffering and affirms that the solution it demands is character education; he would like to see a recovery of what Plato and Aristotle stated in respect of how to develop and strengthen good character through the discharge of civic obligations. Through an analysis of the principal texts on character education of the two thinkers, the author suggests solutions to improve education in this turbulent world in which we must live.

Professor José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín entitles his paper “The plural concept of good character”, in which he illustrates the differences between the English meaning of *good character* and the diverse meanings of *buen carácter* (good character) in Spanish, pointing out the different qualities which identify these meanings. To this end, he carries out a philological, philosophical, and psycho-pedagogical analysis. After, he defends the importance of the good literature in character education and proposes a transcended reading of *Don Quixote* (*The Ingenious Knight Don Quixote of La Mancha*), as a relevant expression of Spanish culture, to study the principal human qualities of good character to be found therein.

Doctor Juan Luis Fuentes and Jorge Valero-Berzosa write on “New digital virtues or virtues for the digital context. Do we need a new model of character education?” The authors wish to address the question of why technology has colonized our lives. The article attempts to answer the question of whether it is necessary to elaborate a new template of virtues for the new digital world, which would require, as a solution to the evils of the digital paradigm, the promotion of critical thinking. They conclude that a substantial change to the classical pattern of virtues is not necessary, but they stress the special need to foment critical thinking, responsibility, and the safeguard of privacy.

Professors Zaida Espinosa Zárata, Josu Ahedo Ruiz and Miguel Rumayor address the subject of “Friendship and character education: A systematic review”; they attempt to answer the question of whether friendship can be useful in the development of virtues. This systematic review of scientific articles published between 2007 and 2021 endeavors to identify what type of relationship exists between character and friendship. A psychological focus is predominant in the articles reviewed, but the cultivation of friendship requires a philosophical-moral focus which underlines the humanizing potential of friendship, given that it is a good in itself.

Hailing from different continents, Professors Juan P. Dabdoub, Aitor R. Salaverria and Marvin W. Berkowitz write about “Identifying practices to promote character development in university residential settings: The case of Colegios Mayores”. The authors wish to answer the question of whether it is necessary to integrate training programs of character education in university halls of residence. Through the answers to a questionnaire given by 19 directors of Halls of Residence (Colegios Mayores) in

Spain, they investigate how the six educational practices proposed by Étienne Wenger have been put into effect.

This issue closes with a paper by María José Ibáñez Ayuso, who presents another perspective in respect of the halls of residence and shows that character education does not terminate at the end of the secondary school cycle. The title of the article is “The Spanish Colegios Mayores: The pedagogical value of a longstanding institution”; it stresses the need to revalue the importance of the formation received by the students in the halls of residence. Working from an interpretive viewpoint and centering on character education, the author concludes that the halls of residence are spaces which generate innumerable opportunities to cultivate character, to foment critical thinking in search of truth and to experience a synthesis of knowledge and an encounter with tradition.

To all the above, our most sincere gratitude.

José Antonio Ibáñez-Martín and Josu Ahedo

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