A Neo-Aristotelian Approach to Educating Virtues with Reference to Gratitude

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Abstract: A neo-Aristotelian approach to educating virtue – and more specifically the virtue of gratitude – will first require a degree of familiarity with key Aristotelian concepts. In the first part of this paper, the concept of 'phronesis' (φρόνησις, or practical wisdom), and the doctrine of 'The Golden Mean' will be discussed in relation to Aristotle's understanding of virtues. Having laid the conceptual ground, the paper will proceed in a practical vein by applying this reconstructed approach (hence the term *Neo*-Aristotelian) to gratitude – a quality Aristotle did not himself identify as a virtue. Aristotle assigned a place to the thinking of both 'the Wise' and the 'the Many' (Aristotle, 1985) and this paper will follow his lead there too in bringing conceptual theorizing about gratitude (the opinions of 'the Wise') into dialogue with empirical research on gratitude involving the participation of ordinary 'lay' people ('the Many').

Keywords: Gratitude, phronesis, the Golden Mean, prototype analysis, MCGM (Multi--Component Gratitude Measure).

1 Introduction

A neo-Aristotelian approach to educating virtue – and more specifically the virtue of gratitude – will first require a degree of familiarity with key Aristotelian concepts. In the first part of this paper, the concept of 'phronesis' (φρόνησις, or practical wisdom), and the doctrine of 'The Golden Mean' will be discussed in relation to Aristotle's understanding of virtues. Having laid the conceptual ground, the paper will proceed in a practical vein by applying this reconstructed approach (hence the term *Neo*-Aristotelian) to gratitude – a quality Aristotle did not himself identify as a virtue. Aristotle assigned a place to the thinking of both 'the Wise' and the 'the Many' (Aristotle, 1985) and this paper will follow his lead there too in bringing conceptual theorizing about gratitude (the opinions of 'the Wise') into dialogue with empirical research on gratitude involving the participation of ordinary 'lay' people ('the Many').

2   An Aristotelian Understanding of Virtues, Phronesis and the Golden Mean

According to Aristotle, virtues (and vices) are enduring states of character (ἕξεις, hexeis) that are made up of multiple components encapsulating a morally admirable (or deplorable) set of attention, emotion, desire, behaviour, and style of expression (Aristotle, 1985, especially Book 1). These components combine in a person who embodies the virtue fully, though it should be noted that not *all* the components may be strictly necessary to attribute a given virtue to its possessor. Kristjánsson (2013) uses the example of a person who is paralyzed and therefore incapable of the direct action or expression components of the virtue of compassion. Such a person nonetheless possesses the virtue of compassion if the relevant emotion (pain at another's suffering) is experienced, alongside the desire to help (see Kristjánsson, 2013, Chapter 1.5).

More recently, the *Jubilee Centre for Character & Virtues* put forward a 'Framework for Character Education in Schools' that identifies seven components of virtue (2022, p. 10). These are virtue *perception* (noticing situations involving or standing in need of the virtues); virtue *knowledge* and *understanding* (understanding the meaning of the virtue term and why the virtue is important); virtue *emotion* (feeling the right virtue-relevant emotion in the right situation in the right way); virtue *identity* (understanding oneself as strongly committed to the virtues); virtue *motivation* (having a strong desire to act on the virtues); virtue *reasoning* (discernment and deliberative action about virtues, including in situations where virtues conflict or collide) and virtue *action* and *practice* (doing the right thing in the right way).

Peterson and Kristjánsson (2023) acknowledge other schools of thought regarding precisely how many components of virtue can be identified; Howard Curzer proposes ten: perception, passion, reason, choice, goals, action, feedback loops, imagination, focus and cooperation (Curzer, 2016, p. 11 cited in Peterson and Kristjánsson, 2023). While the inclusion of individual constituents may be debatable – perhaps some components may be seen to overlap with one another – the fundamental point is that on an Aristotelian reading, virtues are not unitary constructs (Aristotle, 1985, Book 1). This has clear pedagogical implications for educating virtues since their cultivation calls for attention to be paid to *each* of their components.

In the case of gratitude, while people may feel the *emotion* of gratitude readily, they may need to fine-tune their *understanding* of what gratitude is and what it requires of them in terms of *motivation,* moral *identity,* and *action.* People may need to be more precisely attuned to *perceiving* when gratitude is appropriate, which will require *reasoning* about virtue. We have elsewhere referred to this as knowing 'the conceptual grammar' of gratitude (Carr, Morgan, Gulliford, 2015; Morgan, Gulliford, Carr, 2015).

Virtues of character are excellences of the non-rational part of the soul. However, their full possession is dependent upon the possession of *phronesis,* which is an excellence of the rational part of the soul (Aristotle, NE 1140a26–29, 1140b4–6, 1141b30–31, 1143a8–9, 1144b30–32). Whereas *sophia* (σοφία, wisdom) is an intellectual virtue that is

concerned with what is universal and unchanging, *phronesis* describes the intellectual virtue concerned with reasoning about particulars in the changing world of contingent things (Aristotle, NE 1139a). *Phronesis* therefore refers to 'practical' as opposed to theoretical wisdom. Its purpose is reasoning about action; that is, what to *do* in a given set of circumstances.

Practical wisdom presides over which virtues of character might be called for to act rightly in a situation; for example, whether to exhibit the virtue of kindness or honesty in response to a friend's request for an opinion on an ill-fitting suit for the job interview they are about to attend. Since it is a virtue that adjudicates over the deployment of other virtues, *phronesis* can be designated a 'meta-virtue.' Elsewhere I have used the analogy of a concert orchestra to convey the relationship between phronesis and other virtues (Gulliford, 2017). Practical wisdom is cast in the role of the conductor who stands apart from the orchestra and signals when the different sections are to come in and how loudly to play. The conductor is indeed part of the orchestra, but she also stands apart from it. Similarly, phronesis is taken to be 'of' the virtues, but to stand somewhat outside them as well – at last on an Aristotelian reading[1].

The person who possesses *phronesis,* will know just how much of a virtue is required to meet the needs of the circumstances faced; according to the orchestra analogy, 'how loudly to play.' Their response will avoid the extremes of both deficiency and excess. The classic, uncontentious example of this is the virtue of courage, which represents a mid--point between cowardice (deficiency) and foolhardiness (excess; NE 1115a28–35). This encapsulates Aristotle's doctrine of 'The Golden Mean' – not a statistical mean or exact mid-point but some sense of a medial sweet-spot of virtue between unvirtuous extremes.

The function of practical wisdom is therefore to determine the Golden Mean by means of experience and reasoning. The briefest definition of *phronesis* would thus be 'excellence in ethical deliberation about the mean' (Darnell et al., 2019). At this juncture it ought perhaps to be acknowledged that the goodness of fit between the 'Golden Mean' and individual virtues may vary. The idea works well for courage where a clear mid-point can be identified between too much and too little. However, the 'Golden Mean' cannot be straightforwardly applied to the virtue of justice, for it is not possible to have *too much* justice though manifestly possible to have too little.

Notwithstanding the question of the applicability of the 'Golden Mean' to *all* virtues, Aristotle's doctrine is helpful insofar as it highlights the need for a discriminating approach to the education of virtues. The idea of the 'Golden Mean' draws attention to the fact that having 'more' of a character strength is not necessarily better; you can perhaps be *too* kind, *too* forgiving, *too* hopeful, or *too* humble, for example. Aristotle's doctrine of the 'Golden Mean' is extremely helpful insofar as it stimulates and encourages reflection

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[1]   In this currently unpublished paper, I explored the idea that the focus on the virtue of practical wisdom as 'master virtue' has resulted in an over-emphasis on explicit and intellectual processes in moral thinking and suggested that in many cases the courses of action we take are an 'emergent property' resulting from virtues being repeatedly deployed in concert with one another, finding their harmonious solutions without conscious direction.

on the appropriate and optimal degree to which individual virtues should be expressed by the virtuous agent in a particular set of circumstances.

3   Applying an Aristotelian Approach to the Virtue of Gratitude

As noted, Aristotle did not himself consider gratitude to be a virtue of the *megalopsychoi* (the paragons of virtue he describes in Book 4 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*), so at first blush selecting this for a worked example of an Aristotelian approach to virtues may seem an odd choice! With that said, it is possible to examine and apply Aristotle's approach to any enduring disposition, even those that might not even have been recognized during his lifetime (such as teamwork or social intelligence), or virtues which developed from a different worldview than that to which Aristotle belonged.

In what follows, I will demonstrate a Neo-Aristotelian approach to gratitude that characterized the work of the interdisciplinary 'Attitude for Gratitude' research project at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, University of Birmingham (2012 – 2015). The project utilized a wide range of methodologies to examine the research questions: What is gratitude? When and why is gratitude experienced? What value do the British public place on gratitude? What are British people grateful for and to whom are they grateful? What kinds of people tend to be grateful? And, finally, do the British public believe gratitude can be promoted across a range of contexts, and if so, how might this be achieved? The full report (Arthur et al., 2015) is available for download from the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues' website.

In this paper, however, and in keeping with the Jubilee Centre's Aristotelian approach to character education, I focus on those findings that exemplify an Aristotelian approach to gratitude, highlighting the work of my colleagues on the 'Attitude for Gratitude' research project, Dr Blaire Morgan, and Professor Kristján Kristjánsson.

As noted, a neo-Aristotelian approach acknowledges that virtues are multi-componential. The virtue of gratitude has a cognitive component: that is, we place cognitive conditions on when gratitude might (or might not) be deemed appropriate. We have opinions (attitudes) about the importance of gratitude and the will to express it (conation). Gratitude also has affective (emotional), and behavioural components. In addition to appraising when gratitude is appropriate, gratitude requires an accompanying feeling to be authentically realized. This is a necessary (though not a sufficient condition) of gratitude (see McConnell, 1993). Moreover, to be truly grateful requires something of us behaviourally (saying thank you or reciprocation, for example).

We incorporated all these components of gratitude in our 'Multi-Component Gratitude Measure' (Morgan, Gulliford & Kristjánsson, 2017). Furthermore, in our treatment of gratitude, we endorsed the Aristotelian recommendation to consult the Many (laypeople) and the Wise (experts in philosophy and psychology and education). Finally, our treatment recognized that gratitude needs to be discriminate and discerning and (to some extent) proportionate, recognizing the notion of mediality. Hence our treatment of the virtue of gratitude is thoroughly Aristotelian, as will be shown now in detail below.

3.1 Multiple Components of Gratitude and the Multi-Component Gratitude Measure (MCGM)

We begin our examination with the cognitive component of gratitude. Gratitude is a highly cognized emotion. When we make a grateful attribution, we likely consider the following conditions – usually implicitly, though possibly explicitly too. Was the person who benefitted us doing their job, or did they go beyond duty to benefit us? In our 2013 paper (Gulliford, Morgan & Kristjánsson, 2013) we labelled this 'the *supererogation* condition.' Did the person who conferred the benefit have genuinely benevolent *intentions,* or might they have been looking for a return favour down the line – an 'ulterior motive?' It is important to note, however, that at a given point in time we can only ever impute the motives of others, which may be revealed more clearly with the passage of time.

A third condition that may impact on our gratitude appraisals is how much *effort* the benefactor expended in rendering the benefit. We might also build the following two considerations into our appraisal: how *valuable* is the benefit judged to be by the beneficiary; and was the intention to benefit us finally *realized?*

There are different ways of construing these conceptual conditions: some people might want to assign them the status of being *necessary* conditions of gratitude; for instance, gratitude necessarily requires that a benefactor acts in a supererogatory fashion to benefit us. On the other hand, people could construe these conditions as *filters* or *amplifiers* of gratitude; for example, the amount of effort someone expends in seeking to benefit another person increases the gratitude experienced by the beneficiary.

In the case of supererogation, philosopher Robert C. Roberts (2004) deemed supererogation a necessary condition of gratitude, while Terry McConnell (1993) – also a philosopher – did not believe going above and beyond duty was a requirement for gratitude. Most philosophers are of the view that gratitude requires benevolent intentions. However, the late Buddhist philosopher, Patrick Boleyn Fitzgerald (1998), made the provocative suggestion that benevolent intention is *not* a requirement; indeed, there are rare cases where people might even be grateful for things that were motivated by malicious intentions.

Few people would contest that putting more effort/cost into a benefit should make us more grateful, though people are often grateful for small things achieved with little effort. Psychologists, Tesser, Gatewood & Driver (1968) tested the differential effects of cost and value of a benefit on reported gratitude. While people may be more grateful for more valuable gifts, we are often grateful for things that are not especially valuable (though this to some extent, depends on the individual in question) just as we are grateful for intended benefits that did not materialize, such as a nomination for an award ultimately won by someone else.

It seems intuitively likely (and empirically testable) that people's views about conditions placed on gratitude differ and perhaps change over the course of development. For example, as cognitive capacities become more developed, we would expect young people's thinking about when gratitude is warranted to become more sophisticated

(Morgan & Gulliford, 2017). Moreover, people's views concerning necessary and sufficient conditions of gratitude could be subject to empirical disconfirmation, as will be shown.

Given that there are multiple components involved in gratitude, measures of gratitude should aim to incorporate as many components as they can. Many popular measures tend to operationalize gratitude reductively as simply 'grateful feeling.' However, there is something amiss if little (if anything) is known about the cognitive conditions people place on gratitude, and whether they engage in behaviours that demonstrate putatively authentic feelings of gratitude. Without this behavioural element, gratitude is arguably indistinguishable from the feeling of appreciation, as Navarro & Tudge (2020) contend.

To tap these multiple dimensions of gratitude, my former colleagues and I created the 'Multicomponent Gratitude Measure' (Morgan et al., 2017) which assesses the underlying *concept* of gratitude an individual holds, the degree of grateful *feeling* they experience, their *attitude* towards the importance of gratitude and will to express it, and self-reported *behaviours* associated with gratitude. Obviously, we cannot know for sure these behaviours are enacted but it does take us a step closer to measuring gratitude related behaviours.

3.2   The Many and the Wise : Theoretical and Empirical Work on Gratitude

Who has the right to define concepts? Should it be the Wise ('experts' in philosophy, psychology, and education, for example), or should the voices of the Many ordinary language users carry the day? Should it be both? In the 'Attitude for Gratitude' project, we emphasized the importance of assessing lay understanding of gratitude alongside the conceptual analyses of 'experts' by means of three methodologies: a prototype analysis of gratitude with student participants; a vignette questionnaire for participants aged 11 years and upwards (to tap adolescents' and adults' conceptual understandings of gratitude) and gratitude stories (to gain an insight into younger participants' comprehension of when gratitude might – or might not – be a fitting response).

3.2.1 Prototype Analysis of Gratitude

The first step of a prototype analysis calls for people to list the words they associate with a given concept, building a 'bottom-up' analysis of the defining features of that concept (in this case, gratitude). This kind of analysis affords a key insight into how ordinary people understand a concept – something which is often overlooked (see Gulliford, Morgan & Jordan, 2021). In our prototype analysis of gratitude, we asked students at the University of Birmingham to rate the valence of each feature they identified from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive) to enable us to see whether gratitude is generally perceived in positive terms, or whether there might be any negatively-valenced features participants associated with it (Morgan, Gulliford & Kristjánsson, 2014).

After the initial collection of frequencies of features of the concept under scrutiny (Study 1), features arising from Study 1 are rated for their centrality to the given concept

(gratitude in this case), by a different group of participants (Study 2). A third study tests the hypothesis that feature centrality influences cognition of the concept; for example, one would expect more central features of gratitude to be recalled or recognized than less central features). This is, in fact, what we found (see Morgan et al., 2014).

In terms of feature frequency (Study 1), we found a greater incidence of negatively--valenced features (obligation, indebtedness, guilt, embarrassment, awkwardness) in our UK student study (Morgan et al., 2014) than an earlier US study had found with student participants in Florida (Lambert, Graham & Fincham, 2009). Replication with different populations helps determine whether this is suggestive of some possible cultural differences in people's understanding of gratitude. To this end, we repeated our study in Australia, where we found that Australian students' responses showed more similarity to US respondents than to UK respondents (Morgan, Gulliford & Waters, 2022).

Prototype analysis takes an important step towards defining concepts from a 'bottom-up' lay perspective, in contrast to a circumscription from a 'top-down,' 'expert' or 'specialist' point of view. In adopting this approach, we followed the Aristotelian maxim to consult the 'Many' and the 'Wise.' Prototype analyses may highlight incongruities between 'specialists'' understanding of concepts and those of ordinary people. Furthermore, the method can be used to examine individual and cultural differences in understanding concepts; while the virtue of gratitude might be generally viewed as positive, our research suggests that some people associate gratitude with negatively-valenced features, such as guilt, indebtedness, embarrassment, and awkwardness (Morgan et al., 2014). Having made this observation with regard to *student* samples, replication is needed to corroborate this finding with participants across the lifespan.

3.2.1 Gratitude Vignette Questionnaire

Alongside the prototype analysis, we also designed a vignette questionnaire to operationalize the conceptual conditions placed on gratitude outlined earlier (including supererogation, effort/cost, value, whether a benefit was realized etc.). These conditions underlie people's appraisals of gratitude, such that the questionnaire can be used to assess individual differences in factors influencing people's reported gratitude (see Gulliford & Morgan, 2016a).

We asked adolescents (aged 11–17 years) and adults (18 year and over) a baseline question, which we followed up with various manipulations which each operationalized a different conceptual condition placed on gratitude. At baseline, participants were presented with the statement: 'A colleague nominates you for an award at work. If you win, you will receive recognition of your hard work and a voucher.' We then asked participants three questions to gauge their level of reported gratitude. The first question called for participants to rate their level of agreement with the statement: 'You are grateful to the colleague who nominated you,' on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

We then asked participants to indicate the degree of gratitude they felt by placing a vertical mark on a horizontal line corresponding to the amount of gratitude they would feel from 0 (extreme left) to 100 (extreme right). Finally, we asked participants to respond to the normative statement: 'You should be grateful to the colleague who nominated you' on a five-point Likert scale.

By way of illustration, to tap how much an ulterior motive would impact on self-reported gratitude, the following statement was used: 'A colleague nominates you for an award at work. If you win, you will receive recognition of your hard work and a voucher. The colleague has nominated you because she wants you to repay the favor by helping her with her own workload.' Using a series of manipulations based on the original 'baseline scenario' (like this one) we were able to assess the degree to which gratitude appraisals were impacted by a benefactor's effort, intention, value of the benefit etc., relative to the baseline scenario. By finding a way of assessing conceptual conditions placed on gratitude empirically, we were able to test the intuitions of the Wise against the assessments of the Many, since the questionnaire was taken by hundreds of adults and adolescents in the UK and Australia (Gulliford & Morgan, 2016a; Gulliford & Morgan, 2016b; Morgan, Gulliford & Waters, 2022).

In a vignette questionnaire describing a rescue scenario, we were able to show that only a handful of individuals insist that gratitude requires individuals to go above and beyond duty to benefit another person, challenging the notion that 'supererogation' is a *necessary* condition of gratitude. Indeed, we found that laypeople deem gratitude warranted to others even when they benefit us through discharging their duties. Only 1.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they would be grateful to a lifeguard or firefighter for saving others in the line of duty (Gulliford & Morgan, 2016a, p. 205).

We were also able to test the assumption that people believe gratitude to be warranted only when it is benevolently motivated. We found that while malicious and ulterior motives undermined reported gratitude significantly, they did not disqualify it: over a fifth of respondents indicated that they would feel grateful regardless of whether a benefactor had an ulterior motive, and 12% said they would be grateful for a benefit which had a malicious motive (Gulliford & Morgan, 2016a, p. 206).

There is a reciprocal relationship between the understandings of the Wise and those of the Many. The views of the Many can influence the thinking of the Wise. A case in point is that of philosopher, Robert C. Roberts, who changed his understanding of gratitude in the light of our empirical research (Roberts, 2015). Roberts reported that his interaction with the Jubilee Centre's work had 'substantially advanced his thinking, not only about the empirical study of gratitude, but also about its grammar' (Roberts, 2015, p. 24). Kristjánsson (2018) understands that Roberts relaxed his earlier stance on supererogation, as our UK data had shown that only 1–2% of people (young or old) subscribed to the view that a proper application of gratitude requires the benefactor to have gone above and beyond duty in creating a benefit for the beneficiary.

Conversely, the views of the Wise can influence the Many. Let's not forget the 'philosopher's objection' that a thousand laypeople can all be wrong. Simply because the majority of people might believe something to be the case, does not mean they are right. Furthermore, laypeople may need to finesse the understanding of concepts they hold. A lot of laypeople confuse guilt and shame or envy and jealously. Hence, there is a place for both the wisdom of the Wise and the wisdom of the many, just as Aristotle opined (Aristotle, 1985).

3.2.1 Gratitude Stories for Children

To examine young people's understanding of the elements that influence gratitude, we manipulated the conceptual controversies in four specially written gratitude stories for children. Two hundred and sixty-nine school children from 6 schools in the UK participated Fifty one percent were female (Gulliford & Morgan, 2016a). Subsequently, we replicated our study with 531 Australian children, from 3 schools in Victoria. Again, fifty one percent were female (Gulliford & Morgan, 2016b). Children completed the story workbooks which consisted of a mixture of Likert scale responses, Yes/No questions, and open-ended responses.

Two stories we used featured nominations and covered similar content to the nomination vignette shown earlier. Akin to what we had found with the vignettes we had used with adolescents and adults, we found that ulterior motives did not rule gratitude out. Similarly, in a pool party rescue recounted in one of the stories, 'The Blue Oasis,' which was similar to a lake rescue vignette we had used with adolescents and adults, we also found that young people did not place a supererogation condition on gratitude; only a handful of children indicated that they would not be grateful to the lifeguard as she was simply doing her job (Gulliford & Morgan, 2016a; Gulliford & Morgan, 2016b).

We subsequently used one of the stories that featured a nomination (*The St Oscar's Oscars*) for a more detailed cross-cultural analysis (Morgan, Gulliford & Waters, 2022). Here we found that in terms of the ulterior motive, 29% of the UK sample and 51% of the AUS sample thought a boy would be grateful for a nomination that was motivated by someone who wanted to copy his answers in a spelling test (our means of operationalizing an ulterior motive young people could relate to). As we had included open-ended questions as part of the workbooks, we were able to examine the reasons young people gave for their answers. 69% UK respondents gave answers which showed they understood the nomination was motivated by an ulterior motive (the nominator wanting to copy the nominee's answers in a spelling test), in comparison with 46% of Australian children (Morgan et al., 2022, p. 211–212). This reasoning seemed to have impacted on reported gratitude with fewer UK children than Australian children believing that the boy would have been grateful to have been nominated.

We were also interested to know how experiencing mixed emotions impacted on reported gratitude. We found that that 60% of the UK sample and 73% of the Australian sample said they thought a boy (Ethan) would be grateful for a nomination which elicited feelings of obligation; the sense that he should reciprocally nominate his nominator, Jordan, even

though he'd originally had a boy called Dominic in mind. Though more Australian than UK children reported that this nomination would make Ethan feel happy, grateful, or glad than UK children (56% and 13% respectively), Australian children more often described feelings of being 'torn' and 'uncomfortable' than UK children, suggesting that they may have been more capable of tolerating the ambiguity occasioned by mixed emotions than the UK participants (Morgan et al., 2022, p. 213).

In addition to using these stories to tap young people's conceptual understanding of gratitude, they could also be used as teaching tools to explore comprehension of gratitude and help children learn about benefactors' motivations. Young people may fail to see non-benevolent intentions on the part of a benefactor, highlighting the importance of promoting 'discriminate' gratitude; that is a neo-Aristotelian approach where gratitude is predicated on right reasoning, and experienced to the right 'degree' through the arbitrating influence of the meta-virtue of phronesis.

While gratitude is widely (though not universally taken to be a virtue), teachers and educators may need to teach young people about the conceptual grammar of gratitude, as well as its potential to be used for manipulative ends. To this end we published two papers addressing the topic of educating gratitude (Morgan et al., 2015; Carr et al., 2015), and another on the potentially manipulative use of gratitude as an impression management strategy (ingratiation; Gulliford et al., 2019). On an Aristotelian reading, gratitude should be *reasoned* and *reasonable, discriminate,* and *proportionate.*

In due course, the four gratitude stories created for the 'Attitude for Gratitude' project inspired published story books for children that aimed to teach young people the 'conceptual grammar' of the virtues of gratitude (Gulliford, 2018), forgiveness (Gulliford, 2018), courage (Gulliford, 2019) and hope (Gulliford, 2019).

4   Conclusion

In our work on the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues', 'Attitude for Gratitude' research project we examined gratitude through a thoroughly Aristotelian lens. The Multi-Component Gratitude Measure (Morgan et al., 2017) is the first measure to explore conceptual understandings of gratitude alongside grateful emotions, attitudes towards gratitude, and self-reported gratitude behaviours engaged in by respondents. It offers an assessment of the cognitive appraisals people make about gratitude. This measure has been shown to be robust and offers a more nuanced, multi-componential understanding of gratitude which enables the underlying conceptions of gratitude people hold to be tapped. The measure has been translated into German (Hudacek et al., 2020) and Spanish (Gómez et al., 2022).

Second, we brought together expert and lay understandings in our work on gratitude, marrying the wisdom of the Many with the wisdom of the Wise. Along the way we also brought the existing research on gratitude in philosophy, psychology, and education into fruitful dialogue, enabling mutually enriching cross-disciplinary conversation to ensue (Gulliford et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2015; Gulliford & Morgan, 2016a; Gulliford, Morgan &

Kristjánsson, 2021; Gulliford & Morgan, 2021). Finally, in educational contexts, we recommended that gratitude be explored in a discriminating manner which allows young people to discern when gratitude is appropriate and fitting, and on this basis, what might be deemed an appropriate amount of gratitude, echoing Aristotle's concern with mediality.

Our interdisciplinary work has been cited in psychology, philosophy, and education journals and has inspired further theory and research on gratitude (see Gulliford & Morgan, 2021). The methods we used to examine gratitude which have been explained here exemplify an Aristotelian approach to virtue, as has been shown. However, as in all empirical research, replication is key, and while the findings of the studies may be suggestive of cultural differences in understanding gratitude, caution is required in extrapolating the findings beyond the largely student samples who participated. It is in recognition of this that we invite others to replicate these studies to further enhance our understanding of gratitude cross-culturally and to lay the groundwork for how this virtue of character might be cultivated in different cultural contexts.

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Bio

Dr Liz Gulliford is Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of Birmingham. Liz works with the *Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues* and currently teaches on the University of Birmingham's MA in Character Education. She is also an Associate Fellow of the Oxford Character Project. Liz has an interdisciplinary background with an MA in Theology (Trinity College Oxford), MPhil in Theology and Religious Studies (Queens' College, Cambridge), and a BPS-accredited BSc in Psychology from Anglia Ruskin University. Her PhD (Queens' College, Cambridge, 2011) established a firm, critical foundation for theoretical and practical work in positive psychology, positive education, and character education, upon which she has progressively built an international reputation.

During her tenure as an Associate Professor in Positive Psychology at the University of Northampton (2018–2023), Liz was Co-Pi on a John Templeton Foundation funded research project on 'The role of exemplar narratives in cultivating character' (2019–2023), which was part of a larger network grant on moral exemplars. Liz has carried out extensive conceptual and empirical work on gratitude, forgiveness, hope, optimism, courage, compassion, virtue ethics, moral development, positive psychology, positive education, character education and exemplarism. She has published in a wide range of

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