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Educating for Intellectual Virtue in a Vicious World

Abstract

I offer an overview of Alessandra Tanesini’s discussion of how best to educate for intellectual virtue in the final chapter of her book *The Mismeasure of the Self*. I identify the unifying theme behind most of her objections to existing approaches, namely that they fail to instil the proper motivations for intellectual virtue, and I raise an issue about whether Tanesini’s preferred approach, self-affirmation, avoids this worry. I argue that it is not clear that it does; in particular, it’s left unclear how self-affirmative interventions are meant to encourage a person’s evaluations of their own intellectual achievements and capacities to be motivated by accuracy or knowledge, as Tanesini requires them to be if they are to be intellectually virtuous rather than vicious.

Keywords: education; intellectual virtue; intellectual vice; arrogance; exemplarism; self-affirmation
1. Introduction

In her talk to the Joint Session of the Aristotelian Society and the Mind Association in 2016, Alessandra Tanesini introduced her topic as part of a bigger project called ‘When things go wrong’, a project she commended as worth thinking about because ‘they often do’. Her recent book, *The Mismeasure of the Self*, is a wide-ranging and forensic investigation of one central way in which things often go wrong for us, epistemically speaking. Exercising our epistemic agency properly requires us to have a well-calibrated sense of our own epistemic achievements and our intellectual capacities. Moreover, we do not exercise this agency in a social vacuum, but rather as part of larger groups and communities. Success in our epistemic endeavours, then, requires us to have a good sense of where we stand in relation to others, both in terms of who is better placed to get at truth, knowledge, and understanding of some matter, and in terms of how others assess us in these regards. However, these kinds of self-assessments aren’t something most of us are naturally good at. We’re prone to two kinds of intellectual vices of self-assessment: the vices of superiority (such as *superbia*, arrogance, vanity, and narcissism) and the vices of inferiority (such as servility, self-abasement, timidity, and fatalism).

Tanesini’s detailed study of these intellectual vices incorporates an argument for a distinctive version of vice epistemology, which sees these vices as ways of exercising one’s epistemic agency based on improper motivations; rather than being motivated by truth, accuracy, or knowledge, one is motivated by a desire to protect one’s ego, to maintain a favourable intellectual impression of oneself, to be admired by others (or at least to avoid their disesteem), and so on. On Tanesini’s account, epistemic vices each have characteristic motivational components, and she goes through each of the vices of self-assessment to take a
close look at the kinds of motivations involved and how they will typically be manifested in someone’s responses and behaviour. The vices of self-assessment are ubiquitous, and Tanesini argues that they are not only obstacles to their possessors exercising their epistemic agency successfully, but are responsible for a number of wrong and harms done to others they interact with and to the epistemic communities to which they belong.

It’s worth paying attention to when things go wrong because they often do—but also because we want to know if and how we can fix things when they do go wrong, especially if this is something that happens a lot. Tanesini spends the closing chapter of her book looking at different strategies for educating people in ways that we might hope will guide them away from the vices of self-assessment, towards more virtuous pictures of themselves. Despite the significance of this topic, particularly in light of Tanesini’s discussion of the harms and wrongs done by epistemic agents having badly attuned self-assessments, this final chapter is the shortest of the book, and arguably the place where further discussion and development is most needed. This is where I’ll focus my attention. In the next two sections, I’ll give an overview of Tanesini’s argument in the final chapter of her book, with section 2 looking at her criticisms of three strategies for teaching intellectual virtue, and section 3 outlining her own proposal. The final two sections turn to discussion of Tanesini’s views. In section 4, I question whether Tanesini’s proposal avoids the main objection she levels at the other approaches. In its initial form, this worry with Tanesini’s argument fails to land, and so in order to sharpen the worry, section 5 delves more deeply into the details of her vice epistemology and her account of what’s required for the intellectual virtue of humility.

2. The Limits of Explicit Education, Habituation, and Exemplarism
As noted in the introduction, I want to focus mostly on the final chapter of the book, where Tanesini considers our options for addressing epistemic vice via education. These options, she argues, are much more limited than often supposed; most of the proposals found in the literature fail to take the vices they are intended to address seriously enough, in particular offering little that might help in interventions to aid those with the most entrenched epistemic vices, and not even showing much promise with respect to those not yet so epistemically vicious.

Tanesini first looks at and critiques three proposals found in the literature: explicit education; habituation; and exemplarism. She raises a number of problems with each of these, but there are two common themes running throughout her objections which are worth picking out before we get into the details. The first is that, as we’ve already seen in the introduction, virtues have a crucial motivational component for Tanesini, and so any successful strategy for imparting virtue to a person will have to affect their motivations in the right way; merely giving people knowledge about what virtue calls for without any of the right motivations falls far short of what’s required. The second is that such educational strategies should have some meaningful contribution to make to rescuing the most viciously entrenched from their vices; it’s not enough to only address those who haven’t yet acquired intellectual vices, or who possess them to a relatively slight degree. In fact, Tanesini sees these two points as intimately related, since she takes the challenge behind the second worry to be that of meaningfully intervening with people who already have the misguided motivations which are, on her view, associated with epistemic vice. So a common theme in most of Tanesini’s objections to the various proposals is that they fail to adequately address the motivational side of intellectual virtues and vice, leaving it unclear how they could effectively encourage virtue and, where necessary discourage vice; this is, she writes, the ‘main obstacle to self-improvement’ (2021,
202). Let’s see how Tanesini employs these objections against appeals to explicit education, habituation, and exemplars, and that will put us in a position to see the motivations for her own proposal more clearly.\textsuperscript{iv}

Consider first the proposal that we should explicitly instruct people about what intellectual virtue requires, in the hope that this will induce these virtues in those who receive this instruction. Tanesini is sceptical this has any potential at all, largely due to way the two points just highlighted apply to it. Explicit instruction in virtue seems to have little if any power to impart the right kinds of motivations, which renders it mostly hopeless as a method of instilling virtues, as Tanesini conceives of them. Moreover, those already epistemically vicious are unlikely to be genuinely helped by this kind of explicit instruction, since they will tend not to be suitably open-minded, or will lack the requisite self-awareness, motivation to change, or strength of will required to change (2021, 195-196). For example, the person who is closed-minded doesn’t think of himself of closed-minded, yet will not be open to instruction on how to achieve the virtue of open-mindedness; his viciousness is self-perpetuating in this sense.\textsuperscript{v} Tanesini lodges a third point against attempting to explicitly educate for intellectual virtues, namely that some of these virtues seem impossible to aim at directly: the very attempt would be self-undermining. For example, we might worry that it’s not possible for a person to aim at the virtue of humility, since the feeling that one was on the right track would seem to show that one isn’t very humble after all.\textsuperscript{vi}

The second form of educating for virtue that Tanesini considers is habituation, which involves repetition of virtuous actions designed to instil virtuous habits. Tanesini argues that in each of the various forms it can take, it’s as likely to lead to vice as virtue. If what’s on offer is anything like Pavlovian training—being trained to near-mechanically produce certain
behaviour in response to particular stimuli through repetition and reinforcement—then it seems to instil a certain sort of ‘mindless repetition’ which seems in tension with virtues like ‘inquisitiveness, intellectual courage, autonomy, integrity, and critical thinking’ (2021, 197).

On the other hand, if we have a more relaxed, less deterministic picture of habituation (one that is, as Tanesini notes, more in line with the Aristotelian picture which inspires most contemporary proposals), we also run into problems. We might think that habituation is an extended process involving creating repeated opportunities for a person to exercise virtue, but these will also be opportunities to indulge in vice. Think, for example, of the conditions under which one might act in a way that accords with the virtue of intellectual courage; these will be challenging conditions, under which it might well be easier to instead behave in a cowardly manner (2021, 197). It might be possible to stack the deck here by incentivising choosing virtue, in the hope that this will lock-in good habits that don’t need to be incentivised in this manner at some later point. However, the role of incentives seems troubling even as a short-term device, since students are not learning to pursue truth for its own sake; there’s a mismatch between the motivations reinforced by the process and the kind of motivations the process is meant to habituate, which seems like a recipe for failure (2021, 197).

Of the three approaches Tanesini critiques, the one she has the most sympathy for is the suggestion that exemplars or role models might have a significant role to play in educating for intellectual virtue, via eliciting feelings of admiration that inspire emulation. While she seems to think that explicit education and habituation should play little or no role in educating for intellectual vices, she thinks exemplarism, suitably developed, has some limited promise—but its limitations are, she thinks, significant. One issue Tanesini raises links back
to the motivational component of virtues and vices on her account. We want to avoid creating mere mimics who can learn to copy virtuous behaviour, or hero-worshippers, motivated by the desire to be like the exemplar rather than for the sake of truth, knowledge, and other epistemic goods. However, the main worry Tanesini has with exemplarism relates to her worries about whether we’re being offered anything with any potential to help those already mired in intellectual viciousness:

In this section, I argue that this approach might be of some help to those who are already well-motivated and possess at least some aspects of virtue. It is however most likely on its own to be totally ineffective to assist those who are most in need of character change because of their entrenched tendencies to vice. (2021, 198, and see also 199)

There are two claims here. The first is a concession that exemplarism has potential to be effective when directed at individuals who aren’t already in the grip of the vices of self-assessment, and in particular with those who have some of the right motivations. For instance, those who are motivated to improve themselves may find comparing themselves to positive role models to be inspiring, so long as it seems feasible for them to close the gap between themselves and the example being set for them (Tanesini 2021, 201).

We can frame Tanesini’s argument for her second, more pessimistic claim as a dilemma, with the horns confronting different conceptions of what exemplars are like. On the more standard conception, exemplars are near-superhuman paradigms of intellectual virtue—the epistemic analogues of saints in the domain of morality. These, Tanesini contends, are liable to ‘elicit spiteful envy or egoism rather than emulation’ from those who suffer from the vices of
superiority, and may ‘elicit despondency’ from those suffering from the vices of inferiority (2021, 200). That is to say, the vices of self-appraisal will prevent such a figure from being able to play the role of an ideal; someone it’s worth aspiring to be like and possible to aspire to be like, in the relevant respects. Suppose, then, that the exemplars offered are more down-to-earth: good examples of what it would take to intellectually improve in the relevant respects, but still recognisably limited and flawed human beings. This seems like it might improve our chances of reaching those trying to overcome the vices of inferiority, who would no longer be presented with what’s likely to seem to them like unattainable excellence. Still, and this is the second horn of the dilemma, it’s not clear we’re any better placed to reach those suffering from the vices of superiority. More realistic and attainable exemplars will hopefully seem less threatening to those who are, say, arrogant, but that’s likely only because such a person will think they are already like the exemplar in the relevant respects: perhaps they’ll even regard themselves as intellectually even better than such realistic exemplars (2021, 200). Either way, whether we appeal to ideal exemplars or realistic ones, those already struggling with the vices of superiority will be hard to reach.

3. Self-Affirmation Interventions

Finally, we have the proposal that Tanesini thinks we should get behind. The limitation she argues the other proposals all share in common is that they lack the potential to reach those who are already pretty far down the path of epistemic viciousness. Moreover, as noted above, Tanesini views this primarily in terms of the difficulty of turning around those who already have motivations other than truth, accuracy, and knowledge:
Individuals who do not have the measure of themselves have strong motivations to self-enhance, to seek others’ approval, or to avoid social exclusion, that prevent them from learning from exemplars or benefit from explicit education about virtue. (2021, 202)

What’s needed then, on Tanesini’s diagnosis, is an intervention which somehow weakens those motivations. Her proposed remedy is self-affirmation, which involves ‘interventions that direct people to reflect on the values that are most central to them as people’ with the aim of better understanding ‘which values they endorse and the reasons why these are important to them’ (2021, 202). As she notes, this can seem counterintuitive. Someone suffering from the vices of superiority surely needs to be taken down a notch: to have it demonstrated to them the ways in which their self-assessments are overly generous. A dose of ‘self-affirmation’ can sound like it’ll only reinforce such a person’s inflated self-assessments. But that’s the kind of reasoning that led us to proposals that seem likely to trigger defensiveness in those in the grip of the vices of superiority and despair in those suffering from the vices of inferiority; perhaps self-affirmation techniques are just the alternative we need.

The main reason Tanesini thinks we should take this proposal seriously is that there is empirical evidence available showing that this kind of intervention actually reduces the defensiveness of those subject to it, helping these people be more open to correction and change (2021, 202). She acknowledges that there’s more investigation needed into the mechanisms by which self-affirmation has this effect on people, but her accounts of the virtues and vices of self-appraisal and their characteristic motivations offers a basis for beginning to understand why it might be so effective:
I have argued that the main barrier posed by vice to the acquisition of virtue is motivational. I have proposed that we can overcome this obstacle by helping individuals to become less defensive and less fearful of social exclusion. This approach recommends encouraging people to focus on what they value. Focusing on personal values and how these are reflected in one’s own behaviour can be seen as a means to educate for humility. The humble person has the measure of herself because her self-assessments are not biased by egocentric motivations of ego-defence or of social-adjustment. On the contrary she evaluates herself by the measure of her values. Value affirmation promotes this stance to oneself because it contributes to making one’s sense of self-worth depend on how one measures up to values one would reflectively endorse. (2021, 204)

There’s a lot to unpack in this passage, and we’ll return to it in more detail below, once I’ve made an initial attempt to spell out a worry with Tanesini’s appeal to self-affirmation interventions.

4. The Limits of Self-Affirmation?

With this summary of Tanesini’s discussion of how to best educate for intellectual virtue on the table, I want to raise an issue with it. Roughly put, the worry is that I’m not sure how much Tanesini’s proposal advances things over the appeal to exemplars when it comes to offering interventions that could benefit the most intellectually vicious, since one of her objections to that latter proposal seems, on the face of it, like it should apply to her own proposal too. In this section, I’ll offer an initial attempt to spell this worry out as an objection,
and I’ll then point out some shortcomings of this attempt; the following section will try to develop the worry further.

Recall that one worry Tanesini expressed with exemplars is that if they appear as too virtuous, they will trigger a defensive reaction in those suffering from the vices of superiority, and in particular from arrogant individuals. Intellectual arrogance isn’t just a matter of having an overly inflated sense of one’s own accomplishments and capacities, on Tanesini’s account of this vice. Arrogance combines this overinflation with an underlying insecurity and lack of confidence, so that the arrogant individual is motivated in their self-assessments, not towards truth, accuracy or knowledge, but rather towards protecting their ego. That’s why Tanesini thinks that they will respond to a clearly much more virtuous exemplar as a threat, rather than as an admirable role model. However, we saw above that this objection is really one horn of a dilemma, with the other horn being that possessors of the vices of superiority will tend not to find more realistic exemplars motivating; they won’t see such role models as posing a threat and so won’t react so defensively, but this is a two-edged sword, since for the very same reasons they also won’t see them as admirable or be motivated to emulate them in the relevant respects.

The moral suggested by the dilemma is that an education that reaches those most ensnared by the vices of superiority needs to do more than merely reduce their levels of defensiveness, since by itself this won’t instil the kinds of motivations required to turn them in the direction of intellectual virtue. It’s this point that tells against the claim that replacing ideal exemplars with more realistic ones will allow us to offer a more effective version of exemplarism. However, this moral also seems to tell against Tanesini’s appeal to self-affirmation interventions. Her discussion suggests otherwise, since from the fact that such interventions
are effective at reducing people’s self-defensiveness, she infers that it might help them be more open to change and self-improvement (2021, 202-203). Indeed, she writes:

> If, as I argued here and in Chapters 5 and 7, defensiveness is the motivation that biases the self-assessments carried out by arrogant individuals, any intervention that reduces this motivation should help to make these people more open to change. (2021, 202)

So a key question, not explicitly taken up in Tanesini’s discussion, is why she thinks the moral I’ve drawn from her dilemma is telling against exemplarism, but not against her own proposal. Let’s consider some answers Tanesini might give to this.

A first suggestion is that the appearance of a tension here is due to me playing fast and loose with the idea of ‘reducing a person’s defensiveness levels’. It might be true in some vague sense that both appealing to realistic exemplars and self-affirmation techniques reduce defensiveness, but the thought is that this common description is misleading since it means different things in each case. Using realistic exemplars reduces defensiveness relative to the use of more ideal exemplars, whereas the claim made on behalf of self-affirmative interventions is that they can make someone a less defensive person—less disposed to react defensively to information that challenges their self-conception—and that this change is potentially a long-term one (2021, 202). Equating these is a mistake, and when Tanesini writes that self-affirmation reduces defensiveness in a way that may make them open to change and self-improvement, there’s no real tension with the moral I’ve drawn from her dilemma; to think otherwise is just to equivocate, and exemplarism doesn’t really reduce defensiveness in the sense that’s relevant.
Moreover, it may be that what’s significant for Tanesini is not just the sense in which self-affirmation reduces defensiveness, but the way it does this. As noted earlier, Tanesini acknowledges that her account here is somewhat speculative, but in the passage quoted above, we found the suggestion that what happens is that self-affirmation is value affirmation, and it encourages one to start to measure oneself with respect to the values that one reflectively endorses:

The humble person has the measure of herself because her self-assessments are not biased by egocentric motivations of ego-defence or of social-adjustment. On the contrary she evaluates herself by the measure of her values. Value affirmation promotes this stance to oneself because it contributes to making one’s sense of self-worth depend on how one measures up to values one would reflectively endorse. (2021, 204)

This again suggests that the parallel I tried to draw earlier between realistic exemplarism and Tanesini’s appeal to self-affirmation is shaky. Her suggestion isn’t just that self-affirmation lowers a person’s defensiveness, but rather that the way that self-affirmation seems to do this also explains why it promises to enable people to better get the measure of themselves. I can try to make this response to my worry a bit more precise by looking at what Tanesini says about the primary virtue of self-assessment, intellectual humility, in chapter 4 of her book; this will take us a bit deeper into Tanesini’s account of the psychological side of intellectual virtues and vices than we have gone so far.

5. Attitudes, Humility, and Self-Affirmation
In order to make sense of Tanesini’s account of intellectual humility, we need to first understand something of her proposal that the psychological bases of epistemic virtues and vices are attitudes. Attitudes, in the relevant sense, are the psychological states that underlie virtues and vices on Tanesini’s account, and they’re to be thought of as evaluations, akin to likes and dislikes or preferences. Strong attitudes, in the relevant sense, are ones which are accessible, in the sense that representations of the evaluated object reliably trigger one’s positively or negatively valanced response. Attitudes have a range of different functions, and Tanesini cashes this function-talk out in terms of motivations. Four of these functions are particularly relevant here. Attitudes serve the knowledge function when their ‘formulation and revision is guided by the motivation to have an accurate account of the target object’ (2021, 54). They serve an ego-defensive function when they are motivated by identifying threats to the self, and a social-adjustment function when motivated by a need for social acceptance, and these motivations can bias the evaluations involved in forming attitudes, interfering with those attitudes serving the knowledge function; someone whose evaluations are too motivated by the possibility of threats to their ego or by what might lead to social acceptance or rejection will struggle to be properly guided by accuracy (2021, 54-55), but may not realise that their evaluations are biased in this manner. Finally, attitudes serve a value-expressive function when they are motivated by the need to give expression to one’s deeply held values (2021, 55). Presumably, just as ego-defensive and social-adjustive motivations can get in the way of attitudes successfully serving the knowledge function, they can also interfere with them successfully serving the value-expressive function; one’s evaluations can be motivated by defensiveness, for example, to such a degree that they don’t any more express one’s values, and again this can happen without one realising it. To the extent that one’s evaluations are overly motivated by the need for ego-defence or social-
acceptance, they will be accurate and express one’s closely-held values only by luck, not due to being properly motivated.

With this background and terminology in place, we can turn to Tanesini’s account of intellectual humility. She writes:

Intellectual humility is, in my view, based on a cluster of strong attitudes (together with their informational bases) towards the self and elements of the subject’s cognitive make-up that are driven by knowledge and value-expressive motivations appraising the self and its features for their strengths and weaknesses. (2021, 73)

So humility involves attitudes towards oneself and one’s own intellectual capacities which are strong (accessible), and where one’s motivations for those attitudes are to have an accurate picture of oneself in the relevant regards and to express one’s values. In particular, Tanesini holds that humility involves two other epistemic virtues: modesty about one’s intellectual accomplishments and capacities and acceptance of one’s limitations (2021, 73). However, Tanesini (2021, 74-84) argues that modesty isn’t a matter of ‘ignorance of one’s own intellectual good qualities’, but rather of having positive attitudes towards some of one’s intellectual qualities that are motivated by the need for accuracy and expressing one’s values (while accepting one’s limitations is to have similarly motivated negative evaluations of some of one’s intellectual qualities).

Let’s return to our main thread of argument. We can now, I hope, see more clearly what Tanesini is proposing in the passage I quoted above concerning how self-affirmation might nudge a person in the direction of humility. The idea is that self-affirmation techniques can
encourage people’s evaluations of their own intellectual qualities to serve a value-expressive function—to be driven by a need to express values they reflectively endorse—and can reduce the degree to which they serve ego-protective and social-adjustive functions; it’s supposed to be an intervention that can shift the function of the targets’ attitudes concerning relevant aspects of themselves, from the functions associated with the vices of superiority to a value-expressive function associated with intellectual humility. What continues to puzzle me is why there’s no mention of the knowledge function of such evaluations in what Tanesini says in the quoted passage; there’s no mention of the fact that on her account, the humble person’s evaluations of their own intellectual qualities are driven by a concern for accuracy (or knowledge, etc.). This is where I think there’s more to be said; if self-affirmation interventions are genuinely to nudge people suffering from the vices of superiority towards intellectual humility, they seem to need to have some promise to instil a motivation to accurately evaluate their own epistemic achievements and capacities, but I’m not yet seeing what about self-affirmation is meant to have this power.

6. Concluding remarks

It’s time to sum up. My initial worry was that it wasn’t clear how an appeal to value-affirmation marked an improvement over exemplarism in its most plausible version; both offer strategies for reducing defensiveness, but if Tanesini is right that this doesn’t mean that exemplarism is able to instil the right kinds of motivations for intellectual virtue, it’s hard to see how self-affirmation advances things. In this form, the worry proved superficial, since the sense in which self-affirmation techniques reduce defensiveness is different and more far reaching than what exemplarism has to offer, and moreover, the way that Tanesini suggests self-affirmation accomplishes this promises an explanation of why self-affirmation
encourages self-evaluations that have some of the proper motivations for intellectual humility: those associated with the value-expressive function of such evaluations. However, on her account the virtue of humility doesn’t just involve self-evaluations motivated by value-expression, but also by accuracy or knowledge, and nothing in self-affirmation interventions seems to help instil this kind of motivation—at least, it’s unclear to me what the account is here. So a version of my original worry may still have some force; contrary to what I initially suggested in section 4, Tanesini’s preferred proposal does seem like it makes advances on exemplarism, but the virtues of self-appraisal require that one is motivated to form an accurate picture of one’s intellectual qualities, and nothing in the process of affirming someone’s reflectively-held values seems to encourage such motivations. I don’t mean to suggest that Tanesini is proposing self-affirmation interventions as a comprehensive standalone strategy for reliably producing virtuous epistemic agents out of vicious ones; that’s clearly not the idea (see in particular 2021: 203). However, if there are systematic limitations to what self-affirmation can hope to achieve in these regards, more needs to be said about what makes up the shortfall, and the details here matter since this again raises the question of why the other proposals that Tanesini rejects, such as exemplarism, cannot also be supplemented in the same way.\textsuperscript{xi}

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i The paper Tanesini discussed on that occasion was published as (Tanesini, 2016a), though these remarks don’t feature in the published version.

ii Following Tanesini (2021, 1n1) and much of the other literature on epistemic virtues and vices, I use ‘epistemic’ and ‘intellectual’ interchangeably here.

iii For a broader overview and discussion of Tanesini’s book, and the issues it raises, see McGlynn (forthcoming). The present paper develops in detail a point made only in passing there.

iv I don’t attempt to do full justice to Tanesini’s discussion of each of these proposals; what follows is a sketch of what I take to be her main points for my discussion later in this paper.

v Cassam (2019) calls epistemic vices that interfere with their own detection ‘stealthy’ and intellectual vices that interfere in any attempts to rid the possessor of them ‘resistant’; see McGlynn 2019 for discussion of such vices and how they relate to social-situated ignorance and traditional sceptical challenges.

vi I find this last point unconvincing, for two related reasons. First, Tanesini likens feeling pleased that one is making progress towards humility to ‘humble-bragging’, but it’s not clear to me in what sense there is anything like bragging involved. Feeling pleased that one has done well on a test or has been given a hard-earned raise at
work isn’t the same as bragging about one’s performance or one’s improved salary, and it’s not clear to me why being pleased about progress towards humility would be any different. Second, elsewhere in Tanesini’s book she argues against the suggestion that modesty (one aspect of humility) requires ignorance of one’s ‘intellectual strengths and successes’ and she explicitly allows that one can take pride in and feel pleased about these strengths and successes without thereby lacking humility (2021, 75-77). It’s unclear to me why feeling pleased that one is making progress towards intellectual humility couldn’t sometimes be the same: a case of correctly getting the measure of oneself with the right kinds of motivations.

vii Croce (2019) recommends employing such ‘realistic exemplars’ in the context of educating for moral virtues.

viii These are attitudes towards objects, of any kind; they are not propositional attitudes in the sense philosophers are familiar with, though they can take propositions as objects if propositions are objects (just as they can be directed at bananas, or the city of San Francisco, or anything else). See Tanesini 2021, 49-51.

ix Tanesini notes that the notion of strength, as it applies to attitudes, isn’t a univocal notion, but she picks out accessibility in this sense as her main focus (2021, 58-59).

x I’m here identifying two ideas in Tanesini’s book; the idea that intellectual humility involves value-expressive motivations from chapter 4 and the idea that humility involves evaluations of oneself in light of values which one reflectively endorses. Tanesini doesn’t explicitly identify these, as far as I can tell, but the identification is natural, and in any case, I don’t think the point to be made in the text turns on it. The idea that educational interventions might work by affecting the function played by the target’s attitudes is perhaps more explicit in Tanesini’s earlier paper on this topic (2016b, 525) than in her book.

xi Tanesini’s earlier paper, which the final chapter of her 2021 book develops, concludes by suggesting that self-affirmation techniques are a ‘prerequisite’ for educating for intellectual virtue, allowing other approaches such as explicit education and exemplarism to ‘become effective in bringing about attitude change’ (2016b, 526-527). This way of thinking about self-affirmation and its relationship to the other educational strategies Tanesini discusses seems to have been mostly dropped by her book, and in particular she now seems to see almost no role for explicit education.