

# Respect as an Intellectual Virtue

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It is commonly observed that one key ingredient of civility missing from much public discourse is respect. The term ‘respect’ can refer to an attitude, a judgment, a manner of behavior, or a feeling—a family of concepts in which the unifying theme is *the appreciation of excellence or worthiness*. But there is also a moral virtue of respect and an intellectual variant of that virtue.<sup>1</sup> Arguably, no intellectual virtue is more important for advancing civil discourse than respect. Yet, while philosophers and psychologists have paid a good deal of recent attention to traits like intellectual humility, open-mindedness, and intellectual courage, little of their work has focused on respect as an intellectual virtue. Here, we take a step toward filling this lacuna by sketching an analysis of the intellectual virtue of respect.

Our analysis begins with a distinction between two species of broadly moral respect: egalitarian respect for human dignity, and special esteem for distinctive excellence.<sup>2</sup> Whereas all people deserve basic respect in virtue of their equal moral worth (or dignity), one’s worthiness of special esteem depends on the comparative value of one’s excellences and achievements. Insofar

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<sup>1</sup> Pelser discusses the moral virtue of respect in “Respect for Human Dignity as an Emotion and Virtue,” *Res Philosophica* 92, no. 4 (2015): 743–63.

<sup>2</sup> Our distinction between egalitarian respect for human dignity and special esteem for distinctive excellence should not be confused with Stephen Darwall’s influential distinction between recognition respect and appraisal respect (see Stephen L. Darwall, “Two Kinds of Respect,” *Ethics* 88, no. 1 [1977]: 36–49). Darwall defines “recognition respect” as “a disposition to weigh appropriately some feature or fact in one’s deliberations [concerning how one ought to act]. ... Thus to have recognition respect for persons is to give proper weight to the fact that they are persons” (39). By contrast, appraisal respect “consists in a positive appraisal of a person or his qualities.” He continues, “Unlike recognition respect, one may have appraisal respect for someone without having any particular conception of just what behavior from oneself would be required or made appropriate by that person’s having the features meriting such respect. Appraisal respect is the positive appraisal itself” (39). On our view, both egalitarian respect for intellectual dignity and special esteem for intellectual distinction can involve elements of both recognition respect and appraisal respect.

as the inherent, non-comparative worth of all humans and the comparative excellences of some humans are both broadly human excellences, each properly inspires respect. As Robert Roberts puts the point, “If we are rational, we feel greater respect for persons of integrity and high moral achievement than for moral slackers and the vicious. But the moral life, in some traditions, requires a respect for people that is blind to such differences (while still being an attribution of a broadly moral property).”<sup>3</sup> In keeping with Roberts’s insight, we distinguish two kinds of intellectual respect: equal basic respect for all epistemic agents, and special respect that is properly reserved for subject-matter experts, the intellectually virtuous, and the otherwise intellectually excellent. Both varieties of intellectual respect can be differentiated from their broadly moral counterparts in at least two ways. First, the *basis* of intellectual respect—the reason such respect is due—is itself an intellectual matter: namely, the intellectual excellence of the respected person. And second, intellectual respect applies directly to, and/or is fittingly expressed in, an intellectual *context*. (We are using the term ‘intellectual’ broadly here, as having to do with the life of the mind, the exchange of ideas, and so on—and not necessarily as that pertaining to formal settings of teaching and learning). The person with the intellectual virtue of respect is intelligently disposed to both egalitarian and comparative intellectual respect.

In what follows, we consider the two kinds of respect in turn, exploring how each is relevant to the intellectual virtue of respect. Along the way, we consider the connections and differences between intellectual respect and related traits. We then conclude with reflections regarding the cultivation of this underappreciated virtue.

### **Egalitarian Respect for Intellectual Dignity**

The intellectually respectful person appropriately respects all epistemic agents *as rational persons*. Minimally, this involves believing that others might have ideas worth considering and, therefore, listening to them or reading what they’ve written carefully and charitably. Rather than dismissing another’s views at the first sign of a flaw in her reasoning, the intellectually respectful person listens patiently, with the assumption that the speaker might arrive at a valuable insight—simply *because* the listener takes the other to be *worthy* of such treatment. Robert Roberts and

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<sup>3</sup> Robert C. Roberts, *Emotions: An Essay in Aid of Moral Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 266–67.

Jay Wood suggest that respect is an important aspect of other intellectual virtues, such as intellectual charity. They observe that “if one reads a text charitably, one is reading the text *as* coming from an author who would like to be treated with respect and goodwill.”<sup>4</sup> Such respectful reception of ideas tends to come easily when our interlocutors wear their intellectual greatness on their sleeves, or even better, share our views. But when interacting with one’s ideological opponents, or those whom society casts as intellectually substandard, it requires a special sort of character.

In her book *Team of Rivals*, Doris Kearns Goodwin highlights the ways Abraham Lincoln exemplified virtuous habits of respectful asking and listening, even—indeed, especially—with his most virulent critics. Frederick Douglass, for instance, publicly denounced Lincoln for failing to address discriminatory military policies that inhibited the recruitment of black soldiers, such as unequal pay and no opportunity for black soldiers to be commissioned as officers. Still, as the following account of their first meeting suggests, Lincoln’s respect for Douglass was palpable:

Finding a large crowd in the hallway, Douglass expected to wait hours before gaining an audience with the president. Minutes after presenting his card, however, he was called into the office. “I was never more quickly or more completely put at ease in the presence of a great man than in that of Abraham Lincoln,” he later recalled. . . .

Douglass laid before the president the discriminatory measures that were frustrating his recruiting efforts. “Mr. Lincoln listened with earnest attention and with very apparent sympathy,” he recalled. “Upon my ceasing to speak [he] proceeded with an earnestness and fluency of which I had not suspected him.” Lincoln first recognized the indisputable justice of the demand for equal pay. When Congress passed the bill for black soldiers, he explained, it “seemed a necessary concession to smooth the way to their employment at all as soldiers,” but he promised that “in the end they shall have the same pay as white soldiers.” As for the absence of black officers, Lincoln assured Douglass that “he would sign any commission to colored soldiers whom his Secretary of War should commend to him.”<sup>5</sup>

Given Lincoln’s greater political power, and the intimidation that naturally accompanies meeting the president (in the White House, no less!), a less respectful Lincoln might have sought the intellectual upper hand by belittling Douglass, say, by letting him sweat it out in the waiting area

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<sup>4</sup> Robert C. Roberts and W. Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 73; italics original.

<sup>5</sup> Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 551–52. Thanks to Paul Carrese for pointing us toward Goodwin’s book.

or by putting on airs to keep him from feeling at ease. And, given the desire for (eventual) justice that secretly motivated the indisputably unjust (but intentionally temporary) remuneration policy, a less respectful Lincoln might have contemptuously disregarded a complaint so insensitive to the ways of incremental justice. And, given the racial sensibilities of the day, a less respectful Lincoln might have allowed the culture's systemic devaluation of African Americans to taint his reception of Douglass.<sup>6</sup> But the real Lincoln was alive to Douglass's dignity and demonstrated it through remarkably respectful conduct. This was not lost on Douglass.

In subsequent speeches, Douglass frequently commented on his gracious reception at the White House. "Perhaps you may like to know how the President of the United States received a black man at the White House," he would say. "I will tell you how he received me—just as you have seen one gentleman receive another." As the crowd erupted into "great applause," he continued, "I tell you I felt big there!"<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Lincoln's respectful behavior fostered at least three intellectual goods: the fruitful exchange of ideas, reciprocal respect from Douglass, and self-respect in Douglass. This result should not surprise us. As Tom Morris observes, "One of the most ennobling gestures any of us can make toward another human being is to ask her, sincerely, what she thinks about what we are doing together. What is her take on the truth? When we ask, wanting to hear, we treat the other person with a fundamental respect, and this behavior is then much more likely to be mirrored back to us."<sup>8</sup>

Despite the potential impediments to respectful treatment noted above, respecting Douglass was no doubt eased by the fact that he was an intellectual giant. The egalitarian form of respect we're considering in this section, though, also befits the intellectually unimpressive. Consider Jenny, a second-grade teacher at the local elementary school. Jenny's seven- and eight-year-old pupils aren't among society's best and brightest. In addition to the intellectual limitations that inherently come with youth (lack of education, dearth of experience, and so on), many of these children aren't particularly "intellectually respectable" (in the comparative sense)

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<sup>6</sup> As Miranda Fricker points out, societal prejudices can push even non-racists toward unjust underestimations of the epistemic credibility of members of another race. See her *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup> Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, 553.

<sup>8</sup> Tom Morris, *If Aristotle Ran General Motors: The New Soul of Business* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), 27.

even for their own reference class (say, lower-elementary school students in suburban Los Angeles). What would it mean for Jenny to treat these students with intellectual respect? For starters, she'd field their questions and comments with a default seriousness. Roberts and Wood note that one virtue that "supports comprehensional openness is a basic respect for others—the assumption that, until proven stupid, the interlocutor from another discipline or another historical period or culture"—and we might add, another age group or level of intelligence—"is likely to have something intelligent to contribute."<sup>9</sup> As a respectful teacher, Jenny operates under this kind of assumption: "Every one of these kiddos is a *thinker*; as such, their ideas—even their wildest ones that seem to have traveled from the farthest reaches of left field—deserve a fair and charitable hearing. There's even a decent chance that their classmates and I will learn something from them." This mindset might motivate Jenny to put her imagination and intellectual energy to work in teasing out the kernels of truth and interesting implications that are latent in her students' inchoate ideas. In this way, Jenny's virtuous respect will be aided and expressed by certain intellectual skills or powers (such as creativity and perceptiveness) and will tend to cluster with other intellectual virtues (such as intellectual generosity, which disposes her to give credit to her students for the insights she draws from their comments, rather than using such opportunities to show off—to her students or to herself—just how smart *she* is).

On a Christian worldview, intellectual respect is properly due to all people as creatures made in God's image. Our cognitive capacities were all made by the same hand, and all of us—even the least mentally "capable"—bear the imprint of God's rationality in our nature as rational persons. Moreover, biblical teachings such as God's use of the ineloquent Moses to bring his message to Pharaoh (Exodus 4:1–16) and Paul's teaching that God uses the weak and foolish things of the world to shame the strong and wise (1 Cor. 1:18–31) provide the Christian with additional motivation for giving a respectful hearing to everyone, including the simple and uneducated. Jesus himself indicated that spiritual truths are not always best grasped by the putatively sagacious when he prayed, "I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children" (Matt. 11:25, ESV). Therefore, in addition to the common observation that profound insights sometimes come from unexpected sources, Christians have theological reasons not to be

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<sup>9</sup> Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 206.

dismissive of the ideas of others on account of their age or lack of education, not to mention their race or contrary point of view.

In a sense, we have, so far, been filling out Roberts's and Wood's suggestive remark that intellectual respect "supports comprehensional openness." But respect and openness (or open-mindedness) are distinct virtues. According to Jason Baehr's influential account, "an open-minded person is characteristically (a) willing and (within limits) able (b) to transcend a default cognitive standpoint (c) in order to take up or take seriously the merits of (d) a distinct cognitive standpoint."<sup>10</sup> But one's mind can be open for various reasons, and virtuously open minds can vary in texture. For instance, Lincoln might count as virtuously open-minded if he were disposed to take Douglass's *point of view* seriously, perhaps out of a virtuous desire for the truth, even if he did not respect *Douglass*. The respectfully open-minded, though, do not so neatly separate ideas from their sources; rather, they give ideas a fair hearing (in part) because the *people* who offer those ideas are worthy of such treatment. In this way, respect can both motivate and color open-mindedness (even if it need not), and open-minded actions can express respect (or not). Perhaps the support relation can go the other way as well; it may be, for instance, that Lincoln's disposition to respect Douglass developmentally depended (in part) on his open-mindedness, given his culture's default cognitive standpoint vis-à-vis African Americans.

Another way intellectual respect may differ from open-mindedness is that the latter virtue arguably pertains to a narrower range of intellectual endeavors: namely, receiving or entertaining ideas. But the intellectual virtue of respect also impacts the manner in which its bearers *disseminate* knowledge.<sup>11</sup> When Jenny plans tomorrow's lesson, she is not prepping a mere time-killer or a dressed-up babysitting session. Rather, she is preparing to help budding thinkers—little chips off the divine block, with all the (potential) rationality that entails—to understand the world in which they live and move and have their being. These little tikes might not be geniuses, but like all humans—if Aristotle is right—they desire to know; and they are capable of doing so. (As Charlotte Mason puts it, "Children no more come into the world without provision for

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<sup>10</sup> Jason Baehr, "The Structure of Open-Mindedness," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 41, no. 2 (June 2011): 202.

<sup>11</sup> This paragraph was inspired by thoughts expressed on "Quiddity," the podcast of the Circe Institute.

dealing with knowledge than without provision for dealing with food.”<sup>12</sup>) So Jenny prepares with care, under the assumption that these students are worthy of such preparation. One element of her respectful preparation and teaching will be acting as though her students, as divine image-bearers, are not mere receptacles for receiving and piling up data. Respecting the image of God in them includes treating them not as droids preparing for standardized tests but as *humans*: real people with histories, families, dreams, and emotions; people who need not just information but also understanding and wisdom; and people who will learn well only if approached humanely—with opportunities for rest and play (after all, we are bodily creatures), a workload that befits their age, abilities, and needs (after all, we are developmental creatures), a physical and attitudinal atmosphere that encourages learning (after all, we don’t thrive in just any environment), and so on. One way teachers (often unintentionally) intellectually disrespect their students is by treating them like computers, and the teaching-learning context like an upload-download transaction.<sup>13</sup>

Now, intellectual respect for agents does essentially involve a willingness to listen carefully to their ideas, to interpret them charitably, and to present ideas to them in a way that befits their dignity. But it also involves an affective component. On this score, Jenny’s colleague, Matt, is deficient in intellectual respect. Matt has observed Jenny’s treatment of her students and covets the positive results she appears to be getting. After all, as we saw with Lincoln and Douglass, respect tends to produce certain intellectual and social rewards, such as a more open atmosphere in which to discuss ideas, and thereby a greater ability to discover truth, not to mention a more generally respectful and self-respecting community, perhaps via a kind of responsive or mimetic trickle-down effect. (Jenny’s classroom, like Lincoln’s Oval Office, is likely a place where one feels one’s “bigness,” and the “bigness” of one’s fellows.) So Matt has started imitating many of Jenny’s outwardly respectful practices, to some good effect. Inwardly, though, Matt does not intellectually respect his students. This is not to say that he does not care for his students; he does, and wants them to succeed. But Matt has a bit of a Nietzschean streak, and really only has moral/emotional categories for respecting distinctive excellence. Since his

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<sup>12</sup> Charlotte Mason and Karen Glass, *Mind to Mind: An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education* (self-pub., CreateSpace, 2015), 6. Thanks to Karla West for pointing us to this quote.

<sup>13</sup> For further educational implications of the fact that “children are born persons,” see Susan Schaeffer Macaulay, *For the Children’s Sake: Foundations of Education for Home and School* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1984), chap. 2.

students, like Jenny's, are rather intellectually substandard, he doesn't see them (with the eyes of his heart) as being worthy of his respect. So, when one of Matt's students reveals her ineptitude by asking a truly off-the-wall question, he feels annoyed and perhaps even mildly offended by her ignorance and lack of sophistication, and is inclined to roll his eyes and correct her in a somewhat condescending tone. But he checks himself—not because he's cut to the heart and is working on his respectfulness, but because he's observed that contemptuous responses seem not to work very well. In the teacher's lounge, we might find out how he really feels about little Sally, who obviously wasn't paying much attention during Matt's riveting lesson about iguanas.

What is different about Jenny? For one thing, to borrow Robert Adams's language, she is “for” her students' dignity and intellectual interests. Adams has pointed out that a person can *be for* a good, such as intellectual dignity, in a variety of ways, including “loving it, liking it, respecting it, wanting it, wishing for it, appreciating it, thinking highly of it, speaking in favor of it and otherwise intentionally standing for it symbolically, acting to promote or protect it, and being disposed to do such things.”<sup>14</sup> As we've seen, Jenny's *being for* her students' intellectual dignity and interests has a number of behavioral implications. But it also has emotional implications, insofar as it underwrites her affective awareness of her students' worthiness.

Following Roberts, we take emotions to be “concern-based construals”<sup>15</sup>: perceptual states wherein the subject's loves (what they are “for”) take up residence in the subject's way of seeing her situation. Generally speaking, when we construe an object (whether emotionally or not) in one way rather than another, we are mentally organizing its complex features so as to make sense of it. For example, we might construe Jastrow's famous duck-rabbit either as a duck or as a rabbit, depending on whether we see the hump-like protrusions as a beak or as ears. Emotions constitute a subset of construals: the concern-based ones. That is, via our emotions, we construe our situation as valuable or disvaluable in some particular way (e.g., as a loss, as offensive, as disgusting, as satisfying, etc.), insofar as it impinges upon our concerns. Fear, for example, is a construal of some object as a threat (as dangerous) to our own wellbeing or to the wellbeing of someone about whom (or something about which) we are concerned. The concerns in which emotions are based include desires, loves, attachments, and other ways of “being for.”

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<sup>14</sup> Robert Merrihew Adams, *A Theory of Virtue: Excellence in Being for the Good* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 15–16.

<sup>15</sup> Roberts, *Emotions*.

The concern fundamental to the intellectual virtue of respect is a deep appreciation and valuing of the intellectual worthiness of others. Because Jenny cares about the intellectual dignity of others, she is disposed not merely to *believe* that they have worth, but to *see* them *in terms of* their worth. Sometimes, this will be by way of the emotion of respect, when the other's dignity is focal in her emotional vision. But the intellectual dignity of others can enter her emotional vision in other ways as well. For instance, we can imagine that when Jenny overhears Matt's condescending rant about little Sally, she'll get angry, seeing Matt as a blameworthy offender against Sally's dignity (and his own). In fact, her students' inherent dignity will tend to color all of Jenny's emotional perceptions of them, even when she isn't attending to their dignity as such. Jenny thus will tend to be patient with struggling students, often feeling compassion, rather than frustration, when they fail to grasp a concept or master a new intellectual skill. When they lazily refuse to exert intellectual effort, though, Jenny might feel disappointed (construing them as failing to live up to her hopes for their intellectual growth), sad (construing them as having missed a valuable intellectual opportunity), or even angry (construing them as offending against their own dignity).

Different moral outlooks will diverge in their prescriptions regarding emotions of respect. The Kantian or Christian will think that such emotions can fit more targets than will, say, the Nietzschean, who is anything but egalitarian. Moreover, the internal structure of the prescribed emotions will vary. The perceptual view of emotions, according to which emotions are conceptually structured, nicely illuminates this point. Since concepts and narratives from particular moral outlooks can enter into one's emotional life, there can be such a thing as an explicitly Christian emotion (and virtue) of respect (where the subject views the other as a creature made in God's image) as well as a distinctively Kantian emotion (and virtue) of respect (where the subject sees the other as a rational end in herself).<sup>16</sup> This isn't to say that all putative "virtues" really are virtues; that'll depend on the nature of reality.<sup>17</sup> But by Christian lights, a key aspect of growth in the intellectual virtue of respect is learning to care about and see the dignity of others in explicitly Christian terms. (More on this below.) Articulacy about such theological matters, though, seems not to be a necessary condition for having the virtue in a less-than-ideal

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<sup>16</sup> Compare Pelsler, "Respect for Human Dignity," 746–49.

<sup>17</sup> As Roberts points out in his essay in this volume, some features of the Aristotelian "virtue" of pride actually seem quite vicious.

form. That is, one might possess and exhibit the virtue to a rather impressive degree without being able to articulate with much sophistication the doctrine of the *imago Dei*. If asked why she listens to people so indiscriminately and with such interest, such a person might simply say something to the effect that all people are God’s children and that wisdom can come “out of the mouth of babies” (Ps. 8:2, ESV; cf., Matt. 21:16).

In sum, then, respect for human dignity has bearing on the intellectual virtue of respect in that the intellectually respectful person cares about—is “for”—the intellectual dignity of all persons, has eyes to see each person’s worthiness, and acts accordingly, both in giving and receiving ideas.

### **Special Esteem for Intellectual Distinction**

The foregoing does not imply that the intellectually respectful person is blind to differences in people’s epistemic excellence. No, she is also intelligently disposed to feel and give special esteem on a sliding scale, so to speak, in cases where epistemic authorities, the intellectually virtuous, and the otherwise intellectually excellent are “more worthy” of such respect than are the uninformed, the intellectually vicious, and the unintelligent.

Consider Sam, a first-year graduate student in philosophy, who has read one book and a handful of articles on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He knows the general contours of the issues at stake but is surely no expert. That debate comes up in conversation with one of his fellow graduate students, Joy, who voices a decidedly pro-Palestinian position. Sam isn’t convinced. He somewhat forcefully objects to Joy’s view, repeating an argument he remembers reading last week, with the intention of not only correcting Joy but also revealing to her that she is less informed than she realizes. Sam’s response expresses basic respect for Joy’s dignity as a thinker, for he doesn’t belittle her, and he takes her seriously as someone who can consider counterarguments. Sam also feels and shows some measure of special esteem for Joy’s intellectual distinction. She is, after all, a fellow grad student, and she has even shown herself to be Sam’s intellectual superior during their time together. But he isn’t obsequious or excessively timid—Joy is uninformed on this issue and may be overly dogmatic given her lack of careful study, and Sam responds accordingly.

Now imagine that Sam attends a lecture by Nicholas Wolterstorff, a prominent Christian philosopher who, through his research and role as a public intellectual, serves as an outspoken

advocate for the rights of Palestinians. Say Wolterstorff voices the same position that Joy did, perhaps using the very same words. During the Q&A, Sam saunters to the microphone and marshals the same argument against Wolterstorff that he used to put Joy in her place, insinuating by his manner that Wolterstorff is in the learner's seat. By acting as though Wolterstorff is as ignorant of the issues as Joy was (even if he "recognizes," in a thin, merely cognitive sense, that Wolterstorff is an expert), Sam fails to treat Wolterstorff with the special esteem that such a distinguished scholar deserves. This is not to say that Sam shouldn't raise his objection; there is nothing inherently disrespectful about disagreeing with an expert, even one who is well known for his intellectual accomplishments. Indeed, as with Joy, so with Wolterstorff: voicing objections can express respect. But in disagreeing with a thinker of Wolterstorff's caliber, the intellectually respectful will feel proper emotions of respect, and will demonstrate, in both the manner and matter of his disagreement, that he appreciates the expert's special worthiness. For instance, Wolterstorff's epistemic excellence will loom large in the respectful subject's emotional vision by way of emotions like admiration or even a kind of reverent fear. Moreover, the respectful graduate student's posture, both attitudinally and physically, will show that he stands ready to take the place of the pupil: there will be no sauntering; his language will express openness to, and may even explicitly invite, correction; if he sees fit to refer to the relevant literature, he won't preface his verbal footnote with condescending caveats about how, "*of course* you're aware of the argument found in the latest issue of *Ethics*"—a common and disrespectful way of feigning respect—but will simply give the argument, cite the source, and politely ask for and listen carefully to Wolterstorff's response.

In his interaction with Wolterstorff, Sam not only lacks respect; he also lacks humility. But the respective "lacks" are doing different work in his psychology. Humility, on our understanding, is itself a lack: an intelligent lack of the various forms of vicious pride.<sup>18</sup> So, when we say Sam "lacks humility," we really mean that he *fails* to lack something he *should* lack: namely, vicious concerns for his own intellectual status, glory, etc. Sam's lack of respect, by contrast, is more straightforward: he simply fails to appreciate Wolterstorff's intellectual status and thus fails to treat him appropriately (i.e., respectfully). As Roberts points out in his essay in this volume, vicious pride tends to function like an astigmatism, wherein our illicit self-

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<sup>18</sup> See Roberts's essay in this volume, "The Virtues of Pride and Humility: A Survey."

focus distorts our perception.<sup>19</sup> This is just how Sam's pride works here: his attention to his own intellectual status blinds him to Wolterstorff's. If Sam could lose some of his intellectual arrogance and vanity, then he might have eyes to see Wolterstorff for the great scholar he is; and if, in spite of his prideful state, Sam could somehow catch a glimpse of Wolterstorff's comparative eminence, he might be duly humbled. In this way, humility and respect are distinct and mutually reinforcing intellectual virtues.

The intellectual virtue of respect disposes its bearers to give special esteem not only to scholars like Wolterstorff, but also to those who may not have much by way of formal education, but who exhibit uncommon expertise in a particular domain or general wisdom about how to live well. It is in this vein that Aristotle encourages a kind of default intellectual esteem for the elderly and those with a great deal of life experience, even if they cannot give persuasive arguments for their views: "the unproved assertions and opinions of experienced and elderly people, or of prudent men, are as much deserving of attention as those which they support by proof; for experience has given them an eye for things, and so they see correctly."<sup>20</sup> Thus, unless she has some overriding reason not to, the person with the intellectual virtue of respect will give special weight to the experienced mechanic's car maintenance advice, the seasoned doctor's medical assessment, the established colleague's professional guidance, and the counsel of those who demonstrate, through their own well-lived lives, a significant amount of practical wisdom.

So, the intellectually respectful appreciate intellectual excellences that warrant special esteem. But they are also sensitive to intellectual deficiencies, even in those they otherwise greatly respect. Reflecting on his longstanding disagreement with fellow philosopher Robert Nozick over an issue that both thinkers considered basic and beyond contention (despite their diametrically opposed convictions!), Hilary Putnam goes so far as to suggest that when someone whose intellectual virtue we highly respect appears to be exhibiting a fundamental error in her thinking or emotional vision (a kind of irrationality), the appropriate responsive attitude (emotional perception) is a kind of contempt:

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<sup>19</sup> Roberts, "Virtues of Pride."

<sup>20</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.11, 1143b11–14.

I say I respect Bob Nozick's mind, and I certainly do. I say I respect his character, and I certainly do. But, if I feel contempt (or something in that ballpark) for a certain complex of emotions and judgments in him, is that not contempt (or something like it) for *him*? This is a painful thing to explore, and politeness normally keeps us from examining with any justice what exactly our attitudes are towards those whom we love and disagree with. The fact is that none of us who is at all grown up likes and respects *everything* about *anyone* (least of all one's own self). There is no contradiction between having a fundamental liking and respect for someone and still regarding something in him as an intellectual and moral weakness, just as there is no contradiction between having a fundamental liking and respect for oneself and regarding something in oneself as an intellectual and moral (or emotional, etc.) weakness.

I want to urge that there is all the difference in the world between an opponent who has the fundamental intellectual virtues of open-mindedness, respect for reason, and self-criticism, and one who does not; between an opponent who has an impressive and pertinent store of factual knowledge, and one who does not; between an opponent who merely gives vent to his feelings and fantasies (which is what all people commonly do in what passes for political discussion), and one who reasons carefully. And the ambivalent attitude of respectful contempt is an honest one: respect for the intellectual virtues in the other; contempt for the intellectual or emotional weaknesses (according to one's own lights, of course, for one always starts with them). "Respectful contempt" may sound almost *nasty* (especially if one confuses it with contemptuous respect, which is something quite different). And it *would* be nasty if the "contempt" were for the other as a person, and not just for one complex of feelings and judgments in him. But it is a far more honest attitude than *false relativism*; that is, the pretense that there is no giving reasons, or such a thing as better or worse reasons on a subject, when one really does feel that one view is reasonable and the other is irrational.<sup>21</sup>

At first glance, Putnam's categories of respectful contempt and contemptuous respect appear paradoxical—the emotional equivalents of square circles. For, in their basic forms, respect and contempt are as opposed to each other as two emotions can be. Whereas respect presents its object to the subject as dignified or comparatively excellent, contempt's object looks low, deserving of scorn, or even worthless to the subject. Macalester Bell offers an insightful analysis of one particularly foul form of contempt, which we call "global contempt."<sup>22</sup> Global contempt takes a *whole person* as its target (rather than an individual trait or action), insultingly and dismissively presenting her (full stop) to the subject as being *inferior to* the subject—the kind of

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<sup>21</sup> Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 165–66; italics original. Thanks to Michael Pace for bringing this passage to our attention.

<sup>22</sup> Macalester Bell, *Hard Feelings: The Moral Psychology of Contempt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

person the subject “would not stoop to be”<sup>23</sup>—on account of some failure of character. Putnam calls global contempt “nasty,” and it isn’t hard to see why. In virtue of its totalizing negativity and reflexively comparative evaluation, such contempt utterly blinds the subject, at least temporarily, to the other’s excellences (including her dignity as a divine image-bearer) by presenting her solely in terms of her worst qualities—qualities that are taken to indicate that she not only fails to measure up to some objective standard of goodness but also is *beneath me* (the subject). Nasty indeed.

But even if global contempt looks incompatible with respect, as Putnam suggests, one might feel a more circumscribed contempt for some *aspect* of another person, such as her morally detestable or irrational behavior or character (including her judgments and perceptions), without defining that person (unqualifiedly) in terms of that aspect. This is why Putnam’s *prima facie* paradoxical phrase “respectful contempt” is apt. It is contempt insofar as it presents its object (“a certain complex of [Nozick’s] emotions and judgments,” not Nozick simpliciter) as grossly falling short of respectability. It is respectful insofar as the contempt is filtered through a lens of general respect for the other’s basic dignity and perhaps even a great deal of special esteem for the other’s distinctive excellences (such as Putnam expressed for Nozick). By contrast, we might think of contemptuous respect as a limited (perhaps even begrudging) respect for some excellence of another, filtered through a lens of global contempt.<sup>24</sup> A racist, for example, might find it difficult not to respect an intellectual opponent’s painfully obvious intelligence, even while globally contemning her for her race. With Putnam, we take contemptuous respect to be vicious in a way that respectful contempt is not (which is not to say that we endorse the latter).

Let’s press a bit further. What about instances when one’s interlocutor shows no signs of “the fundamental intellectual virtues of open-mindedness, respect for reason, and self-criticism,” signally lacks “a pertinent store of factual knowledge,” and unwaveringly “gives vent to his feelings and fantasies”? Might not global intellectual contempt fit its object then?

Consider the following case. Sam meets Rick when they are seated next to each other on a flight. Rick casually mentions his support of the Palestinians when prompted by a news story

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<sup>23</sup> Bell, *Hard Feelings*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> We cannot be sure, but we suspect Putnam had something like this in mind.

about the conflict, and in response Sam voices the same objection he raised to Joy and Wolterstorff. Over the course of their conversation, Sam discerns from Rick's heated, illogical, and factually misinformed replies that Rick is no model interlocutor (to put it kindly). Whatever good reasons there are for policies advancing the Palestinian cause, they don't seem to enter into Rick's dogmatic and sloppy thinking. Out of respect for Rick's dignity as a thinker, we think Sam should not respond in a demeaning or condescending way. At the same time, though, Rick does not deserve to be taken seriously on this issue (at least for now; but see below). Realizing that Rick is willfully deaf to arguments against his view, Sam might gently (or, if the situation calls for it, firmly) suggest that Rick's reasons for his view are not good; or he might just decide to end the conversation by politely changing the subject. Either way, he would be following the wisdom of Proverbs 26: "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes" (vv. 4–5, ESV). If Sam feels any emotions toward Rick—as he surely will if he cares deeply about the issue at hand—they won't be emotions of respect or admiration, but rather negative ones like disappointment (that might shade into anger), or even some form of contempt (which might be the best emotion-term we have for what we feel when another impresses us with his foolishness). In seeing Rick in this unfavorable light and choosing not to consider his bad arguments, Sam is not necessarily being disrespectful. Indeed, like the grateful person whose virtue of gratitude can be expressed in a *lack* of gratitude upon receiving a thoughtless or manipulative gift, Sam might actually be manifesting the intellectual virtue of respect in his discriminating recognition that Rick is (in some ways) an intellectual lowlife, but a precious lowlife made in God's image.

In our view, the respectful caveat just mentioned will be ever-present in the fully virtuous agent's moral perception, thus keeping his contempt from being genuinely global.<sup>25</sup> Still, in the heat of the moment, Rick's badness might become so pungent that Sam's contempt for him takes on something approaching global scope—say, if Rick shows himself to be not merely illogical but also unrepentantly anti-Semitic. (It may be that totalizing contempt in response to radical evil

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<sup>25</sup> Bell argues that global contempt is compatible with the kind of respect that Darwall has termed "recognition respect," inasmuch as people can "acknowledge the moral and legal rights of those they contemn" (see *Hard Feelings*, 168–77; quote from 171). But even if that is so, global contemnors lack the *emotional* sensitivity to their target's dignity that we've suggested partially constitutes the moral and intellectual virtues of respect. Thus, we think respect for human dignity and global contempt are ultimately incompatible (unless the qualified contempt we mention counts as global).

is a recalcitrant feature of human psychology, at least for those with a passion for the good.) But, just as informed people aren't inclined to believe that the sun literally rises, despite ineliminable appearances to the contrary, so also Sam will know better than to assent to his heart's global assessment of Rick. Moreover, if Sam does feel something like global contempt, that mental state will be inherently unstable. For, if Sam is really "for" Rick's dignity (and thus emotionally sensitive to it), Rick's inherent worth will have a way of shining through to Sam over time. And if Sam's respect is buttressed by other virtues (such as contrition and compassion), situational factors that don't relate intrinsically to respect will tend to enter his emotional vision as well, thereby defusing his contempt and coloring it while it remains. Were this to occur, his contempt would become not only respectful (i.e., filtered through a lens of respect for Rick's dignity) but also contrite (i.e., imbued with the heartfelt sense that Rick is Sam's *fellow* lowlife, at least in some respects) and compassionate (i.e., suffused with the appreciative understanding that Rick's lowliness is a source of suffering for him that ought to be alleviated).

It might be objected at this point that while Rick deserves basic *moral* respect, he is not a proper object of *intellectual* respect.<sup>26</sup> For, while it might have been appropriate to treat him and his ideas seriously at first, he has shown himself to be so intellectually careless, irresponsible, and, indeed, disrespectful, that it no longer makes sense to feel or show *any* respect *for his intellect*. We agree that Rick no longer deserves much, if any, esteem for intellectual distinction. Nevertheless, a baseline of intellectual respect still befits him, for he is a rational creature made in God's image (however irrational his current intellectual behavior may be). Thus, even if Sam need not presently give Rick a hearing on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, it would be intellectually disrespectful of him to write off Rick as someone with nothing of value to say on *anything*. Moreover, Sam arguably ought to remain open to the possibility that he could learn something from Rick, even about the Middle East conflict, if only Rick could behave (intellectually) a bit less viciously. Suppose, for example, that Rick falls asleep for an hour and, upon awakening, expresses a desire to reengage Sam on the issue, but this time with quite a bit more gentleness and openness to Sam's arguments. Perhaps he even apologizes for his previous stubbornness, or simply displays a willingness to listen by sincerely asking Sam to explain his arguments again. In this scenario, Sam's finely tuned disposition to give due esteem will be reactivated, awakened by

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<sup>26</sup> Thanks to Gregg Ten Elshof for suggesting this objection.

the first signs of intellectual worthiness in Rick. The circumstances might be such that Sam will choose not to reengage; but he might. In this way, intellectual respect is supported by, and supports, yet another related and underappreciated intellectual virtue: intellectual forgivingness.

In carving out conceptual space for the virtuously respectful to respond to certain egregious failures of character with (non-global) contempt, we are not thereby *commending* contempt.<sup>27</sup> Rather, we are attempting to discern the outer limits of what intellectual respect permits; and, for the reasons given, we think it permits a nuanced form of contempt. In the end, it may be that, for reasons external to considerations of respect, the intellectually respectful should nevertheless refrain from all forms of contempt, perhaps favoring emotional takes on foolishness that are less nasty and more loving (like disappointment, compassion, and humor). One way or another, though, they'll be disposed to recognize fools for what they are and withhold from them the relevant forms of special esteem.

### **The Intellectual Virtue of Respect: A Synopsis**

Let's sum up. The intellectual virtue of respect, in its ideal form, involves (at least) the following:

- (1) An abiding concern for the intellectual dignity of all persons;
- (2) An abiding concern for intellectual goods (such as knowledge, understanding, virtue, and intelligence), excellence with regard to which render one worthy of special esteem;
- (3) A discriminating emotional-perceptual sensitivity to both kinds of worthiness (expressed not only in emotions of respect, but in a whole range of emotions);
- (4) A range of skills and action dispositions relevant to the respectful giving and receiving of ideas; and
- (5) The practical wisdom to integrate all of the above into a morally and intellectually good life.

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<sup>27</sup> Here again we part ways with Bell, who argues that we ought to *cultivate* global contempt as the best response to certain character failures (*Hard Feelings*, esp. chaps. 3–5). For an analysis of Bell's provocative case, and arguments against it, see Ryan West, "Contempt and the Cultivation of Character: Two Models," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 43, no. 3 (2015): 493–519.

The first three aspects together form what we might call the emotion disposition that characterizes this virtue: the intellectually respectful person is “for” others’ intellectual dignity, virtue, etc. (see 1 and 2), and so is emotionally attuned to their presence and absence (see 3). The concern summarized in (2) is shared by multiple intellectual virtues, but plays a special role here inasmuch as it underwrites the agent’s emotional responses vis-à-vis comparative worthiness. Of course, as summarized in (4), the intellectual virtue of respect involves dispositions not only to *feel* proper respect for others, but to *show* or *express* it across the various contexts of intellectual discourse (formal education, reading, writing, informal conversation, etc.). Both sets of dispositions will be informed and supported by other moral and intellectual virtues, such as intellectual humility (which removes prideful impediments to respect), open-mindedness (which disposes one to consider others’ ideas respectfully), intellectual generosity (which disposes one to promote the intellectual well-being of others, including their enjoyment of intellectual self-respect), and even intellectual forgivingness (which disposes one to overcome the anger and contempt that might otherwise impede respectful dialogue).

Grounded as it is in a concern for an aspect of the good (viz., intellectual dignity and worth), the virtue of respect belongs to the category of substantive or motivational virtues.<sup>28</sup> As with all substantive virtues, the action and emotion dispositions constitutive of intellectual respect are predicated on an appreciative understanding of the goods the virtue is “for.” The person with this virtue not only grasps and appreciates the intellectual dignity and excellences of others and of herself; she also understands how best to promote those goods in ways that foster (or at least do not unduly hinder the achievement of) other moral and intellectual goods. Such understanding involves a keen perceptual sensitivity to the ways that the various goods of human life intersect, as well as the ability to deliberate well about how to act in a variety of moral and intellectual contexts. As suggested by (5), the understanding central to the intellectual virtue of respect is thus a kind of wisdom, and an aspect of the virtue of practical wisdom.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> On the distinction between “substantive/motivational virtues” and “virtues of will power,” see Robert C. Roberts, “Will Power and the Virtues,” *Philosophical Review* 93, no. 2 (1984): 227–47.

<sup>29</sup> For a more complete discussion of the way that the wisdoms of the substantive/motivational virtues constitute the virtue of practical wisdom, see Robert C. Roberts and Adam C. Pelsler, “Emotions, Character, and Associationist Psychology,” *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 14, no. 6 (2017): 623–45, <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455243-46810069/>.

The foregoing summary is but a sketch. No doubt the features of the virtue we've identified could be refined. Perhaps further features could be distinguished. Even so, we think these five elements provide the outlines of the emotional and behavioral signature of the intellectually respectful person.

To this point, we have merely gestured at what failures of respect might look like. Given the many ways one could go wrong here—from condescension, to aloofness, to sycophancy, and beyond—we doubt that the intellectual virtue of respect lies in a simple Aristotelian mean. Although we cannot provide an analytical taxonomy of this virtue's sundry relative vices, in the next section we offer some practical suggestions for overcoming just a few of the most common obstacles to respect.

### **Cultivating Intellectual Respect**

How might we non-ideal thinkers come to approximate the ideal of respect more closely, and encourage others to do likewise? Our advice falls into three categories: behavioral, contemplative, and social. As we'll see, these categories are ultimately separable only in thought; they inevitably intermingle in real life.

To begin, recall Matt, the Nietzschean elementary school teacher who feigns respect for the sake of its benefits. Few educators (parents, employers) share Matt's principled resistance to respecting their less-than-excellent students (children, employees). But many of us sometimes share his emotional blindness, and end up failing to treat those "below us" in a way that befits the dignity we (should) know they have. In a culture that prizes overt "excellence" (note the scare quotes), often encouraging respect for putative dignitaries over respect for dignity, it is all too easy to allow the evaluative category of comparative esteem to overwhelm its egalitarian counterpart.<sup>30</sup> And even when we retain some capacity for basic respect for intellectual dignity, that capacity can be desensitized over time. After all, even if it doesn't always breed contempt,

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<sup>30</sup> Of course, in an overreaction against the overemphasis on comparative excellences, some elements of our culture downplay *all* interpersonal comparisons, attempting to promote self-respect (self-esteem) by celebrating mediocrity, or mere participation, as much as real greatness. Just as cultures that measure personal worth in terms of comparative achievements or physical appearance can erode proper respect for human dignity, so too cultures in which everyone gets a trophy can erode a proper appreciation for *extraordinary* human excellence, whether physical, moral, intellectual, or spiritual. We should avoid both extremes.

familiarity has a way of blinding us to the infinite worth embodied in the precious ones who call us Mrs. So-and-So, or Daddy, or Boss. When this (hopefully occasional) shortcoming grows into a vice, it goes by the name “aloofness.” It isn’t that the aloof think badly of others; they’re just emotionally numb to others’ inherent value and (mis)treat them accordingly.

As an initial remedial step, the aloof might (partially) follow Matt’s lead and simply pretend to be respectful, regardless of their feelings. In a well-known passage, C. S. Lewis nicely captures the sense in which our emulation of Matt must be only partial.

[T]here are two kinds of pretending. There is a bad kind, where the pretence is there instead of the real thing; as when a man pretends he is going to help you instead of really helping you. But there is also a good kind, where the pretence leads up to the real thing. When you are not feeling particularly friendly but know you ought to be, the best thing you can do, very often, is to put on a friendly manner and behave as if you were a nicer person than you actually are. And in a few minutes, as we have all noticed, you will be really feeling friendlier than you were. Very often the only way to get a quality in reality is to start behaving as if you had it already.<sup>31</sup>

Matt’s pretending is bad, for he has no interest in becoming genuinely respectful. Good pretending, by contrast, is undertaken in an effort to “put on” (in the rich Pauline sense) the real thing. Of course, we cannot stop at mere behavior change. But outward changes have a way of shaping the heart, and the perceptual view of emotions provides a plausible explanation of how this works. When we act as if our seven-year-old student struggling with her math has inherent dignity—say, by listening attentively and patiently to her explanation of how she got the answer she did, in the hopes of really understanding what isn’t clicking for her, rather than simply trying to get her to say the right answer so we can get on with the rest of the lesson—the educational exchange takes on a respectful appearance to both teacher and student. In a way that parallels Douglass’s Oval Office experience, by behaving as if the student were “big,” both she and we find it more natural to see her bigness emotionally. In other words, treating others with dignity increases our sense of their dignity by making it salient to us.

While the cultivation of respectful manners can be an important first step in the cultivation of more robustly virtuous dispositions, communities that emphasize the importance of

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<sup>31</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 163.

behavioral propriety and politeness run the risk of treating good manners as a substitute for more robustly virtuous character traits, which essentially include internal aspects of thought, emotion, and motivation. Thus, we would do well to supplement behavioral practices with contemplative ones.

Recall that appreciative understanding of the intellectual dignity and excellences of others, together with wisdom about how best to honor such worthiness, is central to the intellectual virtue of respect. It follows that deepening such understanding (wisdom) by contemplating the psychological structure of the virtue itself, together with the goods it is for and the vices opposed to it, can be an especially fruitful way to cultivate respect. This can be done by conducting a careful philosophical analysis (as we have tried to model and motivate in this paper), or by fixing one's imaginative gaze upon virtuous exemplars and their vicious counterparts, whether real or fictional (say, by openheartedly reading an intellectual biography of someone like Abraham Lincoln). The underlying thought here is that, in some measure, we become what we behold. That is, by setting our minds (hearts) upon what is truly excellent, the object of our contemplation will tend to shape us in its image. (Two correlated warnings follow: we likely will *not* become what we do *not* behold; and less-than-excellent objects have heart-shaping power, too.)

The Christian will want to seek progress here by ruminating on relevant biblical material (for example, see the passages discussed above). By “meditating day and night” (Ps. 1) on both the intellectual features of God's image in all people and on God's use of the weak and foolish things of the world to shame the strong and the wise, we allow God's word to form in us a heartfelt appreciation for forms of intellectual dignity to which worldly eyes are often blind. And by repeatedly pondering Proverbs' guidance for intellectually respectful action and the Gospels' depictions of Christ's interactions with others, we invite Solomon's and Jesus's habits of mind to become our own.

The foregoing might be thought of as off-the-spot contemplative practices, since we engage in them independent of opportunities to practice intellectual respect directly (though one could, of course, demonstrate intellectual respect, or not, in the way one reads the Bible, or a biography, or this essay). For those of us habituated to less-than-respectful patterns of action and perception, though, it will often be necessary to take the conceptual lenses we've endeavored to form via contemplative study and prayer (but which have not yet been fully integrated into our

heart's default perceptual apparatus) and *actively peer through them*, seeking to correct our thoughts, emotions, and actions *in situ* by contemplating ourselves and our interlocutors on the spot, as it were. Some contexts of discourse call for special vigilance in this regard.

For better or worse, social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have become primary avenues for public discourse on topics ranging from the trivial and inane to the timely and important. Unfortunately, these modern modes of communication are breeding grounds for disrespect. As we've seen, disseminating our ideas and listening to criticisms and opposing viewpoints in ways that befit our interlocutors' dignity are key aspects of intellectual respect. These are lost arts—and certain aspects of social media discourage us from reclaiming them. Such outlets are essentially platforms for self-publication, with no filter or editorial standards: we can write whatever we want, in whatever tone we want. And, because our audience is hidden behind a digital web, we can avoid the kind of interpersonal and social sanctions on disrespectful engagement that arise more naturally in face-to-face interactions. When we are in the physical presence of others, their apparent dignity naturally confronts us in a way that it does not when we view them through the lens of their profile pictures on our smart phone. For those with any sensitivity at all to others' intellectual dignity, this feature of face-to-face interactions serves as a built-in sanction against blatantly disrespectful behavior. The digital medium weakens this sanction. Additionally, in flesh-and-blood interactions, our interlocutors have the ability to correct us or offer opposing arguments. But in the virtual world of disembodied digital discourse, we can simply choose not to read their responses (a kind of willful anti-listening), or even forcefully silence them by “blocking” their posts from view.

In light of these temptations to practice disrespectfulness, social media can provide us with opportunities for on-the-spot contemplation aimed at cultivating intellectual respect. For starters, we can engage in a practice of watchfulness, in which we attend to our own patterns of thought, emotion, and action. We might ask ourselves questions like, “Are there certain people, or groups of people, whose intellectual worth I am inclined not to respect?” If the answer is “yes,” we must learn to repent—literally, to think again—in the moment of temptation. For instance, when we catch ourselves illicitly contemning another, or find our fingers furiously formulating an unnecessarily nasty reply before we've really had a chance to think, we pause. We breathe. And we look again with fresh eyes, this time actively seeking whatever intellectual

goods might characterize the other.<sup>32</sup> Toward this end, we might form a habit of asking ourselves respect-driven questions like, “What can I learn from her?” “What intellectual virtues or skills does he have?” “Am I treating them as fellow divine image-bearers?” “How can I communicate my ideas in a way that better befits the intellectual worth of my audience?” and so on. It might also prove helpful to seek out opportunities to read books or articles (and, yes, even social media posts) by these people, or to talk with them (face to face, if possible!), being explicitly on the watch for insights to admire rather than mistakes to demolish. In this way, we actively resist the natural current of digital discourse (and of our own malformed hearts) by deliberately attending to the intellectual worthiness of others. Of course, such on-the-spot contemplation can be useful in other moral and intellectual settings as well. But for many people today (especially young people), social media platforms provide a particularly fecund context for contemplating and cultivating their character.

We’ve been treating the foregoing practices as activities for individuals. But they can also take on a social dimension as we seek to build communities of respect in direct defiance of the vice-conducive social trends noted above. For instance, institutions like the Bear Creek School in Redmond, WA, the Intellectual Virtues Academy in Long Beach, CA, and the Rosslyn Academy in Kenya have pioneered work in re-imagining curricula, classroom practices, syllabi, and institutional awards in ways that support and communicate intellectual respect (and other virtues).<sup>33</sup> Short of such large-scale institutional changes, small groups of teachers (or parents, or even Facebook friends) might take the time to think together about ways their discourse is insufficiently respectful, to brainstorm solutions, to encourage one another to act respectfully against the grain, and to hold one another accountable.

The church might have a special role to play here, living as a counterculture of respect in the midst of a society rife with disrespect (including disrespect for Jesus and his way). As together we endeavor to prize each person’s dignity, honor each person’s excellences, and

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<sup>32</sup> Note that looking again can be an expression of respect. After all, the Latin root of the English word “respect” literally means “to look again” (Bell, *Hard Feelings*, 169).

<sup>33</sup> For specific practical ideas for reshaping educational institutions, see Philip E. Dow, *Virtuous Minds: Intellectual Character Development for Students, Educators, and Parents* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), esp. part 3 and the appendices. The websites of the schools mentioned above also provide helpful resources: <http://www.tbcs.org>, <http://www.ivalongbeach.org>, and <http://rosslynacademy.org>.

humbly acknowledge, bear with, and address each person's shortcomings, we can serve as a city on a hill to a watching world—and to each other. That is, by living respectfully together, we can demonstrate for one another what it *means* to live respectfully, and thereby mutually enhance one another's understanding of and capacity for respect. This is one reason Aristotle argued that friendships based on mutual admiration of character are schools of virtue.<sup>34</sup> As Talbot Brewer explains, even if it were possible for people to achieve something approaching the deep understanding and practical wisdom necessary for living virtuously on their own—that is, without witnessing the virtues lived out by others—such “Lone Ranger” understandings of the good life would be sorely lacking:

They would be in the position of the accomplished ballet dancer who has never actually watched a ballet: they would lack full appreciation of the nature and point of the activity at which they excelled. (Though of course it strains credulity to imagine that there could be an accomplished dancer who had never seen others dance well, just as it strains credulity to imagine that anyone could become a consistently praiseworthy agent without having attended to, and developed an appreciation for, the way in which other praiseworthy persons navigate their changing circumstances.)<sup>35</sup>

In our day, it strains credulity to imagine a thoroughly respectful community. Nevertheless, even as we acknowledge the inevitability of faltering, with God's help, the church can—indeed, *must*—endeavor to be such.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IX.

<sup>35</sup> Talbot Brewer, *The Retrieval of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 242.

<sup>36</sup> The views expressed here are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the US Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the US government.