



Leadership and the Liberal Arts

With Dr. Christopher Perrin

Lecture 1: The Tradition of Virtue

Outline:

The Tradition of Virtue and Vice: Moral, Civic, and Intellectual

- Virtue
 - Greek: *Arete*
 - Excellence
 - Human capacity fully developed
 - Latin: *Vir* (meaning man) – *Virtus*
 - *Virile, Virility, Virtue, Virtuous, Virtuosity*
- Kinds of Virtues
 - **Moral Virtues:** *moralis* (manner, character, proper behavior); avoiding extremes of excess and deficiency
 - **Civic Virtues:** *civilis* (civil courteous); cultivation of habits important for the success of a community
 - **Intellectual Virtues:** *intellectus* (understanding); deep personal qualities or character strengths required for good thinking and learning
 - **Cardinal Virtues:** *cardo, cardonalis* (hinge): four classic, natural, moral virtues that humans can cultivate by imitation and practice. **Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance, Justice**
 - **Theological Virtues:** three supernatural virtues that humans can cultivate with divine aid. **Faith, Hope, Love**
- Virtue as Habit
- What is Virtue?
 - **Definition of Virtues:** Virtues are **dispositional properties** along with the concerns and capacities for judgment and action that constitute them. Virtues are **deeply embedded parts of our character** that readily dispose us to feel, think, and act in morally appropriate ways as our changing circumstances require.
 - **Plato:** We think with our whole soul; it is not the mind that thinks but the man. S: “How will you manage to think rightly with a sick soul, a heart ravaged by vice, pulled this way and that by passion, dragged astray by violent or guilty love? ...passions and vices relax attention and scatter it, lead it astray, and they injure the judgment in roundabout ways...knowledge depends on the direction given to our passions and on our moral habits.”
 - **Compare C.S. Lewis:** You don’t have a soul – you are a soul. You have a body.



- “It is by doing just acts that a just man is produced and by doing temperate acts the temperate man.” (Aristotle)
- “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act, but a habit.” (Will Durant)
- Born to...know
 - Aristotle: all human beings “by nature desire to know (Metaphysics, Book I). All people are born curious.
 - Book II of Nicomachean Ethics: Every virtue has two corresponding vices or defects: a vice of deficiency and a vice of excess (for example: Courage in excess is rashness, and a deficiency of courage is cowardice).
- Habit
 - Where one dwells
 - **Habito**: I dwell, reside, abide, live
 - Habitation
 - Inhabit
 - Virtues become our character.
- Disposition
 - State of mind regarding something
 - Inclination
 - Prevailing tendency
 - **Dispono**: to set out, arrange
 - How is your soul arranged? Do you have a disposition to be courageous?
- Discipline
 - Training to act in accordance with rules
 - A regimen that develops or improves a skill.
 - **Disciplina**: system, training, discipline, habits, teaching, instruction
 - **Discipulus**: pupil, apprentice, student

Intellectual Virtues

- Anti-Intellectual Spirit of Our Age
 - Subjective
 - Pluralistic
 - Individualistic
 - Amused
 - Anti-intellectualism gives rise to the most extreme, the most morally deplorable form of sloth. It is to be found in persons for whom the ultimate objectives in life are the maximization of pleasure, money, fame, or power, and who, thus motivated, express their contempt for those who waste their lives in purely intellectual pursuits. It is almost as if they wished they did not have the burden of having intellects that might distract them from their fanatical devotion to nonintellectual aims. (Mortimer Adler, *Intellect: Mind Over Matter*)
- Cardinal John Newman (1801-1890)



- Priest, professor, poet, theologian, cardinal
The Idea of a University: “That perfections of the Intellect which is the result of education, and its beau ideal, to be imparted in their respective measures, is the **clear, calm, accurate vision and comprehension of all things**, as far as the fine mind can embrace them, each in its place, and with its own characteristics upon it. It is almost **prophetic** from its knowledge of history; it is almost **heart-searching** from its knowledge of human nature; it has almost **supernatural charity** from its freedom from littleness and prejudice; it has almost the **repose of faith**, because nothing can startle it; it has almost the **beauty and harmony of heavenly contemplation**, so intimate it is with the eternal order of things and the music of spheres.”
- Newman is talking about the virtuous life. This is a description of intellectual virtue.
- Ordered Harmony
 - *Ordiri*: Weave, row of threads in a loom
 - Rightly order the city, the church, the school
 - Rightly order the soul
 - Ordered Loves/Ordo Amoris (Augustine)
- Augustine
 - “But living a just and holy life requires one to be capable of an objective and impartial evaluation of things: to love things, that is to say, in the right order, so that you do not love what is not to be loved, or fail to love what is to be loved, or have a greater love for what should be loved less, or an equal love for things that should be loved less or more, or a lesser or greater love for things that should be loved equally.” (*On Christian Doctrine*, I.27-28)
- Intellectual Vices and Virtues:

Vices	Virtues
Sloth	Love
Sensuality	Humility
Pride	Constancy/Studiousness
Envy	Patience
Irritation	Perseverance/Courage
	Prayer

- What is a student?
 - **Studious**: *Studium* – zeal, eagerness
 - **Diligence**: *Diligere* – to esteem, prize, have fondness and affection for
 - **Attentive**: *Attendere* – to stretch, reach
 - **Ecstatic**: *Ekstasis* – lifted up and out of
 - **Disciplined**: *Discipulus* – learner, follower, disciple
 - **Virtues**: *Virtus* – fully-developed human capacities



- How do you assess yourself? How do you assess the student?

Intellectual Vices

- Disordered passions prevent and hinder the acquisition of knowledge.
 - Passions and vices relax (compromise) attention.
 - Passions and vices injure judgment.
 - Knowledge depends on the direction given to our passions and on our moral habits.
- From Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life*
 - **Sloth:** The grave of the best gifts (because they are not used).
 - **Sensuality:** Makes the body weak and lethargic, befogs the imagination, dulls the intelligence, scatters the memory
 - **Pride:** Sometimes dazzles and sometimes darkens, so drives us in the direction of our own opinion that the universal sense escapes us
 - **Envy:** Obstinate refuses to acknowledge some light other than our own
 - **Irritation:** Which repels criticism and comes to grief on the rock of error
 - **Vices gang up:** they bring one another...lead to one another, are interconnected
 - **Antidote: Purity of thought requires purity of soul.**
 - **Are you taking care of your soul?**
- Combatting vices
 - **Virtues unite too:** The True and the Good are interconnected, dwell together at the summit to which we climb. We climb and labor out of a love for the truth, which is always connected to what is good.