



Dr. Paul & Annie Kienel
LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE

Wisdom's Necessary Companions: The Cardinal and Theological Virtues



John Shoup, Lisa Friesen, and Troy Hinrichs

THE FULL UNITY OF VIRTUES (ARETE = EXCELLENCE)

	Sophia	Phronesis	Justice	Fortitude
Sophia <i>without which, the other virtues are arbitrary.</i>	Beliefs, choices, habits, and dispositions that are aligned with what is ultimately true, right, and beautiful.	Doing the right things, the right way, at the right time.	Benevolent passions for people to receive what they deserve and need.	The relentless pursuit of truth and understanding of how the world works.
Phronesis <i>without which, the other virtues are theoretical.</i>	“Speak softly and carry a big stick...” Teddy Roosevelt. MN State Fair Speech Sep. 2, 1901	Enlightened perspectives to make and act on decisions in accordance with what is ultimately good and in accordance with reality (e.g., acting on sophia).	Discerning what values and social outcomes should privilege others in particular situations.	Discerning how to finish well.
Justice <i>without which, the other virtues are self-serving.</i>	“God often clearly shows Himself at work in the distribution of good and bad fortune.” Augustine, City of God	“Woe to you,... For you tithe...and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.” Matthew 23:23	Duty to render to others what is necessary to thrive and/or is due.	Proper resolve and tenacity to bring about cherished outcomes for others.
Fortitude <i>without which, the other virtues are fleeting.</i>	Dying on the right hills.	“You gotta know when to hold ‘em/ Know when to fold ‘em/ Know when to walk away and know when to run.” Kenny Rogers “The Gambler” written by Don Schlitz (1978)	To fight for the right without question or pause/ To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause . . . / And the world will be better for this . . . Andy Williams “The Impossible Dream”	Courage, perservice, and patience in the pursuit of what is good and right.
Temperance <i>without which, the other virtues compete.</i>	“Excessive devotion to books is wearisome to the body.” Ecclesiastes 12:12	“If you can’t say anything nice; don’t say anything at all.” Thumper’s mother <i>Bambi</i> (Disney, 1942)	“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Martin Luther King Jr.	“God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”
Faith <i>without which, the other virtues are aimless.</i>	“That there’s some good in this world, Mr. Frodo, and it’s worth fighting for.” Samwise Gamgee “The Lord of the Rings”	“I would rather spend one lifetime with you, than face all the ages of this world alone.” Arwen “The Lord of the Rings”	“I am convinced that adverse fortune is more beneficial to men than prosperous fortune.” Boethius <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i>	“Those who sow sparingly will also reap sparingly, and those who sow generously will also reap generously.” 2 Corinthians 9:6
Hope <i>without which, the other virtues are tiresome.</i>	“After all, tomorrow is another day!” Scarlett O’Hara <i>Gone With the Wind</i>	“Hope means hoping when everything seems hopeless.” G.K. Chesterton	“There is nothing like a dream to create the future.” Victor Hugo <i>Les Misérables</i>	“Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.” Vaclav Havel
Love <i>without which, the other virtues are vain.</i>	“To love another person is to see the face of God.” Victor Hugo <i>Les Misérables</i>	“It is a far, far better thing that I do, than I have ever done; it is a far, far better rest that I go to than I have ever known.” Sydney Carton <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>	“Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.” Dr. Cornel West	“Ask not what your country [others] can do for you, but what you can do for your country [others].” J.F.K.

	Temperance	Faith	Hope	Love
Reason and sentiment are balanced by sentiment and reasoning.	Assurance of what is true, right, good, and beautiful and that virtues are their own reward.	Rightly placed confidence in self, others, and events in relation to probabilistic and favorable outcomes.	Rightly prioritized benevolent pursuits and engagement.	
Not overreacting and not underreacting.	Trusting the right people and processes.	Rightly placed confidence in cherished outcomes.	Rightly placed affections and support of others (e.g. individuals choosing who to give affections to versus arbitrarily ‘falling in love’).	
Proportional responses to and the sharing of resources with others.	Confidence that truth, goodness, and beauty are the highest pursuits.	Confidence that truth and goodness eventually win out.	Joyfully doing our duty for the well-being of others.	
Pursuing long-term cherished goals while not forsaking other priorities.	Persevering to the end with confidence in credible future promises.	Perseverance in the right things eventually pays off.	Persevering because the desired outcomes are worth the sacrifices.	
Moderation in thoughts, feelings, and actions, to avoid the extremes when possible.	Proportionately attending to all faith obligations without emphasizing favorites at the expense of others.	Realistic appraisals of time and effort and positive probabilistic and absolute outcomes.	Proper affection and attention toward God, family, and neighbors.	
“If we don’t stand for something, we’ll fall for anything.”	Confident assurance that beliefs are accurate.	Confidence that right and good things will come to pass.	Rightly placed confidence in endearing and liberating beliefs.	
“Don’t put all your eggs in one basket.”	“Life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re going to get.” Forest Gump (1994)	Confident expectation in a benevolent outcome.	Ultimate justification for preferred futures for self and others.	
“It is proper to the magnanimous person to ask for nothing, or hardly anything but to help eagerly.” Aristotle	“. . . You do well to believe [that God is one], the demons also believe, and shudder.” James 2:19	“Take it (the mirror) with you so you’ll always have a way to look back ... and remember me.” Beast to the Belle <i>Beauty and the Beast</i>	Selective benevolence toward self and others.	

Unity in the essentials, liberty in the nonessentials, charity in all things.

Wisdom is a necessary intellectual and moral virtue to live and lead well. It has two distinct facets. Sophia is the contemplative and theoretical aspect of wisdom. Phronesis, also known as prudence, is the calculative and practical side of wisdom. Though wisdom is considered the *primus inter pares* among the virtues, it falls short if not accompanied by essential companion virtues like justice, fortitude, temperance, charity, hope, and faith. Wisdom without justice risks being self-serving and justice without wisdom can become arbitrary. Wisdom without courage is rendered useless just as courage without wisdom risks being reckless. Far too often injustices happen because leaders who know better fail to act for lack of courage. Wisdom without temperance is unmitigated zeal; temperance without wisdom is tedious. Problems are exacerbated when leaders who know what is good for the situation act hastily. Wisdom without charity, hope, and faith can be heartless, uninspiring, and untrustworthy. Wisdom is much better understood and practiced when tempered with the three theological and four cardinal virtues and vice versa.

The four cardinal (wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance) and three theological (faith, hope, and love) virtues are the closest approximation to a definitive list for living the good life. They provide an easy introduction to the nature of virtues and serve as a useful framework for cultivating wise habits necessary for good leadership.

The Virtues

Virtue is a classical word with differing contemporary connotations. In essence, to have virtue is to possess some type of moral character. The Greek word for virtue is *arete*. When used by Plato and Aristotle it referred to a form of excellence, hence an excellent life consisted of virtuous thoughts, dispositions, and habits.

The philosopher and theologian Ambrose of Milan (340-397) called wisdom, justice, fortitude, and temperance the cardinal virtues (Bejczy, 2011). Cardinal is the Latin word for hinge. The

argument was that if people “hinged” their lives on the four virtues they would experience an excellent life regardless of their circumstances. Jerome (347/48-419/20) and Augustine of Hippo (354-430), like Ambrose, associated the cardinal virtues with Biblical truths and as a means to think of and practice godly living (Bejczy, 2011).

Peter Lombard (c. 1100-1160), the scholastic theologian and Bishop of Paris tied the cardinal virtues to grace and posits that “charity is the mother and the form of every virtue” (Bejczy, 2011, p. 120). Lombard described the theological and cardinal virtues as the principal virtues (p. 121), a position later popularized by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274).

Distinguished scholar Joseph Pieper (1965) provided detailed descriptions of the cardinal virtues captured in the Western tradition, primarily relying on Aquinas’ *Summa Theologica*. According to Pieper:

- Prudence is enlightened perspectives to make and act on decisions in accordance with what is ultimately good and aligns with reality.
- Justice is a habit whereby people render fairly what is rightly due to others.
- Fortitude is a combination of courage, perseverance, and patience to bring right and good things to fruition.
- Temperance is the directed reason and serene inner order for balanced reasoning and action.

The theological virtues of faith, hope, and love were first grouped by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 13, I Thessalonians 1:3 and 5:7-8 and Galatians 5:4-6. Augustine titled them the three theological virtues in his compact treatise (circa. 421), *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*. Augustine wrote the compact 122 paragraph-like chapter handbook to assist Laurentius in his earnest pursuit to be wise. Augustine briefly describes the objects of faith, hope, and love and posits that they are the chief virtues for a pious life. According to Augustine:

- Hope is a confident expectation in a benevolent outcome.
- Faith is a trust in a reality not yet seen or realized.
- Love is a benevolent action of good for others.

The Full Unity of the Virtues

While each of the seven virtues are distinct, each needs to be informed and practiced at some level in unison with the other virtues for each to be fully realized. To be truly wise, one needs to be just and have fortitude, temperance, faith, hope, and love and vice versa. Technically a leader could be a shrewd tyrant, but far better to be a prudent, benevolent, and just servant to the people.

