

SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

Department: Philosophy & Religion

Course Number: UI369

Title: Vice and Virtue

New: Fall 2000

I. **Required texts:**

- A. Casey, John. *Pagan Virtue: An Essay in Ethics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- B. Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982.
- C. Sommers, Christina, and Fred Sommers, eds. *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life*, 4th ed. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1997.

II. **Supplementary texts:**

- A. de Sousa, Ronald. *The Rationality of Emotion*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990.
- B. Flanagan, Owen. *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.
- C. Kruschwitz, Robert B., and Robert C. Roberts, eds. *The Virtues: Contemporary Essays on Moral Character*. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1987.
- D. MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1984.
- E. Thomas, Laurence. *Living Morally: A Psychology of Moral Character*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989.

III. **Course outline:**

- A. Two concepts of goodness (Univ. Studies Objectives: 1, 4, 5; Time: 9 hours)
 - 1. Virtuous character
 - a. classical views (Aristotle, Hegel, Nietzsche)
 - b. classical virtues: courage, temperance, wisdom, justice
 - c. contingencies: fate, gifts of fortune, material prosperity, moral luck
 - d. paradoxes (Oskar Schindler, Tolstoy's peasants)
 - 2. Principled commitment and obedience
 - a. universalist views (Plato, Stoicism, Augustine, Kant)
 - b. Christian virtues: meekness, humility, altruism, self-denial
 - c. the finessing of contingency

- d. commitment without principles (Gandhi, King, Tutu)
- 3. Accommodation of classical and universalist ideals
 - a. expanded conception of personhood (Casey, Thomas)
 - b. relevance of emotions, feelings, knowledge, habits, dispositions (de Sousa)
 - c. the importance of unity and tradition (MacIntyre)
- B. Elements of moral personhood (Objectives: 1, 2; Time: 6 hours)
 - 1. respect for persons
 - a. domain of will (Kant)
 - b. domain of character (Aristotle, Hegel, Nietzsche)
 - 2. appropriateness of emotions, attitudes, feelings
 - a. anger, fear, respect (Aristotle, Aquinas, Spinoza)
 - b. sympathy, imagination: Hume
 - c. hatred (George Eliot, Spinoza)
 - d. envy, jealousy
 - e. admiration, contempt
 - 3. cultivation of interpersonal and social relations
 - a. self-consciousness, the glance (Sartre)
 - b. subject and object (Merleau-Ponty)
 - 4. acceptance of physical embodiment
 - a. shame, modesty
 - b. sexual expressiveness (Proust)
 - c. spiritual qualities (Winckelmann)
 - 5. the right to demands on others
 - a. self-assertion, resentment, insult
 - b. pride, self-esteem, vanity
- C. First midterm exam
- D. Virtue and vice in history, literature and art (Objectives: 1, 2, 6, 7; Time: 15 hours)
 - 1. Courage and cowardice
 - a. types: moral, psychological, physical, political
 - b. facing fear (Aristotle, Homer, Stockdale)
 - c. self-confidence, shame, weakness of will
 - d. knowledge, choice, indecision (Sartre)
 - e. pride, magnanimity (Hume, Virgil)
 - f. false courage (Aristotle)
 - g. nobility vs. vanity
 - 1) artistic depictions of noble character (Michelangelo, Shakespeare)
 - h. heroism vs. egoism
 - 1) artistic depictions of heroism (Shakespeare, Nietzsche)
 - i. honor, duty, obligation, loyalty (Melville)
 - j. virtues, valiantness, boldness (Machiavelli)

- 1) artistic depictions of virtues (Shakespeare's Othello, Coriolanus)
2. Temperance and self-indulgence
 - a. natural endowments: appetites, tastes, pleasures, feelings, emotions
 - b. fitness, vitality, energy, readiness to act, being-in-the-world (Sartre)
 - 1) sloth, inactivity, indisposition, depression, apathy, idleness
 - c. grace, decorum: as the expression of character
 - 1) willfulness, uncontrolled passion, ugliness of expression and gesture
 - d. self-control, respect, patience (Roberts)
 - 1) intemperance, rage, lust, passion, willfulness, fantasy
 - e. emotional consciousness (Sartre), sincerity (Proust)
 - 1) imagination, magic, absorption, nostalgia, reverie
 - f. self-love, proper pride (Taylor)
 - 1) amour propre, vanity, envy, deceit, carnality (Dostoevski)
 - 2) worldliness, overweening ambition (Macbeth), jealousy
 - g. clemency
 - 1) cruelty, sadism (Hallie)
 - h. sensual awareness, gusto, sensuous openness
 - 1) perversions
 - i. will to power, ambition, self-esteem
 - 1) lust for power, megalomania
3. Practical wisdom and cautious rule following
 - a. counsels of prudence vs. commands of morality (Kant)
 - b. requires intelligence, moral imagination, perception (Aristotle)
 - 1) contrasts with skill, which lacks overall understanding
 - 2) contrasts with art, which lacks knowledge of itself
 - c. absence of practical knowledge is a vice
 - 1) excusable vs. inexcusable ignorance (is Othello culpably ignorant?)
 - d. practical knowledge informs other virtues (Godlovitch)
 - 1) vice is inadvertence, negligence, recklessness, absent-mindedness
 - e. objectivity, honesty, discipline of imagination by truth (Jane Austen)
 - 1) vice is passive sensation, concealment, immersion in subjectivity
 - f. teachability, openness to the wisdom of others, engagement of tradition
 - 1) vice is close-mindedness, traditionalism
4. Justice and selfishness
 - a. conceived of as dispositions rather than states of affairs
 - b. requires interests in and concerns for others (Le Guin)
 - c. gratitude, approval, benevolence, selfless love
 - 1) vice is excess attachment to one's own interests

- d. distinct from love which makes a claim on others (erotic love, friendship)
- e. distinct from charity which is a relation of inequality
- f. similar to friendship: as interest, love and delight in another's well being (Bennett)
- g. good will: concern for the attitudes, feelings, responses of others
- h. civic friendship: unity, completeness, lacking in ulterior ends (Oakeshott)
- i. respect, piety, homage, loyalty to shared goods (Macbeth)

E. Second midterm exam

F. Assessment of virtue theory (Objectives: 2, 7; Time: 6 hours)

- 1. shows importance of habits, feelings, dispositions to morality (MacIntyre)
 - a. virtues are dispositions which everyone has reason to cultivate
- 2. compatibility with heterogeneity of goods (Taylor)
 - a. sensitive to the intrinsic worth of the agent's interests and well being
- 3. promotes both self knowledge and civic loyalty
 - a. behavior motivated by seriousness of ideals, conscientiousness
- 4. reveals continuing conflict in our moral inheritance (Casey)
 - a. ethic of honor vs. ethic of love

G. The relation of psychology to ethics (Objectives: 2, 4, 7; Time: 9 hours)

- 1. Psychological realism
 - a. view that moral theory should be informed and constrained by empirical science
 - b. holds that all moral behavior is mediated through the psychology of the agent
 - c. holds that only psychology can explain how biological and social forces interact
 - d. claims psychology can expose a priori philosophical assumptions about morality
- 2. Philosophical psychology
 - a. view that psychology can be informed and constrained by logical analysis
 - b. show how research in moral psychology is based on philosophical assumptions
- 3. Moral development theory (Piaget, Kohlberg)
 - a. asserts a universal disposition to develop morality
 - b. proposes a universal pattern of moral development
 - c. proposes a typology of ideal moral personalities
- 4. Criticism of moral development theory
 - a. based on a narrow conception of morality and moral competence
 - b. experimental method inadequate to reveal moral competence (Flanagan)

- c. idealized typology fails to account for the variety of moral traits (Gilligan)
- d. hypothesis of psychological equilibrium cannot explain moral adequacy

H. Final exam