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CLASSICAL VIRTUES AND MODERN LEADERSHIP

Mindaugas Kubilius

“It is character through which leadership is exercised”
Peter Drucker

INTRODUCTION

The question of effective leadership has never been as challenging as it is today. The Western world on both sides of the Atlantic is still struggling to come to terms with the aftermath of the financial crisis. Main Street folks blame greedy Wall Street bosses for the mess and their suffering, while experts crucify the Federal Reserve for the deregulation of fiscal policies. Both approaches seem reasonable.

Despite the hysteria, the “crisis”, not every bank on Wall Street went bankrupt. In a free country and a free market economy, one acts freely according to one’s reason. Flaws in a system do not oblige the actors on stage to behave irrationally or commit irreversible mistakes. In the final analysis, responsibility lies not with the system but with the individuals, the ones in the position to decide and act. Failure, essentially, can be traced to failure of individuals to judge and act rightly.

Richard Fuld, the former CEO of *Lehman brothers*, in his last memo for his personnel wrote: “The past several months have been extraordinarily challenging, culminating in our bankruptcy filing ... This has been very painful on all of you, both personally and financially. For this, I feel horrible.” This meant that there was no hope for employees to continue with their jobs and that a seemingly confident and, until recently, blind giant has come to a sorrowful end.

So why didn't Richard Fuld convince The Bank of America to buy his bank rather than Merrill Lynch or the Fed to redeem Fuld's wrongs? Why did the splendid career of the unbeatable pilot of the Air Force One of Wall Street banking have to end in such a shame? Maybe Fuld became the Fed's viciously chosen scapegoat? Or, rather, perhaps he was too arrogant to come begging on Wall Street? Too arrogant to appear poor? We don't know and cannot judge for sure. But certainly, the judgement and its failure was his. Now *Lehman brothers* has passed into history and taken residence beside Enron Corp., WorldCom and other similar poor cases of the decade.

What are the reasons behind these failures? I believe that *the quality of leadership* here comes into question.

In this article I will try to raise the issue of the quality of leadership from the perspective of the Western leadership tradition. I will not provide a comparative study but will rather attempt to respond to growing exigencies and challenges for leaders in the changing realities of today's business world.

THE QUESTION OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

The literature on leadership has been soaring since the middle of the 20th century. There are many theoretical approaches to high quality leadership and all sorts of gurus' practical recipes. However, reality provides its own answers on the basis of which theories of leadership are being built, and then often corrected alongside the logic of change in the reality itself. In my opinion, the quest for high quality leadership should begin not so much with a theoretical paradigm but rather with the search for a practical criterion of effectiveness.

In principle, effectiveness or, rather, aptness of leadership can only be proven via factual endurance of achieved results. The longer a newly established order of things persists, the more effective it is and the greater leadership is proven. It is the sustained welfare of a community that is both the object of leadership and the proof of its effectiveness.

We are led to conclude that no diverse positive qualities constitute high quality leadership without it resulting in an enduring order of things willingly maintained and perpetuated by a community of humans.

So, what might be the necessary precondition of effectiveness in leadership and its sustainable results in reality? What makes judgement solid and action vigorous when leading others for the sake of their enduring good?

John Adair, the world's first Professor of Leadership Studies at the University of Surrey and the founder of the Action-Centred Leadership Model, encapsulates

his most valuable insights on leadership in his late book *How to grow leaders*. Adair ponders on the state of mind of a strategic leader (Adair, 50):

“As one reaches the top of an organization one has to deal with a greater level of complexity than at team or operational level. Complexity is both intellectually demanding and stressful, and it is not uncommon to discover that some individuals promoted to be chief executives just cannot handle it: they have risen to the level of their incompetence. In particular, they lack the kind of mind that an effective strategic leader needs”.

The complexity a strategic leader deals with consists of manifold factors in objective reality. These factors, in turn, affect the decision-making process. Therefore, the necessary precondition for a decision and its correct implementation is the correct understanding of these factors.

That is to say, the factors of objective reality have to be reflected in the mind of an admittedly subjective perceiver in the most objective, i.e. truthful, way possible. Inadequate understanding of the reality invites misjudgement and misguided action.

An innately passionate impetus to create a wonderful and comfortable world of one’s own might not only distort the objective view of reality but also tends to result in the destruction of the reality itself.

For instance, greed easily gives rise to false expectation and mistaken judgement. In one’s mind, a greedy premise proceeds like this: I am to get this thing at all hazards, for this thing must belong to me in order to constitute my valuable self. The passion of greed, on the one hand, convinces the intellect of the value of the thing to possess and to become a part of the value of my self, and, on the other hand, ignites the will to seek a coveted thing, be it a million dollars or a pretty woman.

The misjudgement occurs not only because a reflected cognition of what really constitutes the value of my human self has not been performed in principle. Also, it is wrong on the basis of the factual order of things. There might be others to whom the coveted thing already belongs or would belong by virtue of an established fact or powerful supremacy. Logically, the greedy premise – I am to have this at all costs – is a mistake, because it contradicts the factual order of things. Despite the order, the passion of greed and subsequent misjudgement forces the will to act by virtue of the mistaken belief of what constitutes the value of my self.

And if the objectively wrong premise triggers the intellect to scheme and the will to act in order to acquire the coveted object, this action will necessarily

result in failure because a wished order of things contradicts the existing factual one. Consequently, a deficit of objectivity occurring in misjudging reality results in the deficit of the good of reality itself, both in the life of the acting individual and, to a larger extent, in the community affected by the individual's action. As communitarian value is measured by finances, so the lack of the good of the reality in the affected community becomes evident in the deficit of its public budget. This is what happened in the recent financial crisis.

John Adair continues pondering on the strategic mind: "From ancient Athens I have borrowed the Greek word *phronesis* to describe the mind needed" (ibid.). Adair translates the Greek word *phronesis* as *practical wisdom* – thus avoiding the mere moral connotation of the degraded English word 'prudence' (*prudentia* in Latin).

"So *practical wisdom*, as opposed to *sophia* – the wisdom sought by the old philosophers – is the wisdom of leaders relating to practice: what way to go, what to do next, when to do it, how to do it and with whom to do it. These are questions and issues that cannot be solved like mathematical problems or puzzles: they call for the exercise of judgement. What equips a person with good judgement?" says John Adair (ibid.).

According to Adair, *phronesis* or *prudentia*, the intellectual virtue known already by our Greek and Latin spiritual forefathers, is an indispensable guarantee of sound judgment – it is a *must* for a strategic leader who deals with complex realities.

Adair encourages us to learn from the Ancients the basics of strategic leadership (Adair, 51): "We are only on the threshold of the study of *phronesis*, practical wisdom, in the context of leadership, and so I cannot tell you much more about it". In line with this imperative for leadership studies, I will attempt to explore the classical virtues in the light of the modern need for effective and high quality strategic leadership.

THE CONCEPT OF VIRTUE

The English word *virtue* originates from the Latin *virtus* (worth, military talent, courage, valour)¹. Etymological association with *vir* (man) emphasises the character of manliness and power of *virtus*. As we can see from English as well as from other European languages influenced by Latin, the meaning of *virtus*, in the continuance of the history of Western civilization, has endured

1) *Latin Dictionary Lexicon*. Ed. P.G.W. Glare. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982. Also other references of Latin words are taken from this dictionary.

substantial enrichment to serve as an indication for perfection of human nature. The original meaning of *virtus* comes from the Greek culture with the beginning of the discovery of the cultural ideal of man.

Amongst the ancient Greeks the most skilful and victorious warrior in battle was called *aristos* (ἄριστος, noblest, best, finest)². This indicated a possession of *arretê* (ἀρετή, excellence, merit, reward, fame) by an individual. For Greeks *arretê* was “a description of worth of possessor, of a power peculiar to him, which makes him a complete man” (Jaeger, 1945 : 418, note 10). Indeed, *arretê* became the foundation of the ideal of man to be formed in the course of *paideia* (παιδεία, education) (Marrou, 139 – 140).

The very core of the Greek educational ideal is expressed in the Homeric imperative: “αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπέροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων” (Iliad 6,208) – “ever to be bravest and pre-eminent above all”³. In his pioneering and still fundamental work on the roots of the European educational ideal, Jaeger remarks: “It was that chivalrous rivalry which struck out the motto of knighthood throughout the centuries. (...) Into that one sentence the poet has condensed the whole educational outlook of the nobility” (Jaeger, 1945 : 7).

What today we call “leadership” was for Greeks ‘αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν’. The classical Greek lexicon of Liddell & Scott provides this translation for *aristeuein* (ἀριστεύειν): “to be best or bravest, gain the prize for valour, to gain the highest distinction”. In other words, to excel and gain an everlasting memory and fame in order to be counted a living being alongside ethereal gods. This is what the Greek hero strived for.

The sense of being *aristos* in Greek society is well rendered by Pindar (ca. 522 – 443 BC), the greatest of lyric poets of Ancient Greece. The majority of his works celebrated victories at the great Pan-Hellenic festivals at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea and the Isthmus. In his heroic poems, Pindar praises the victorious and, at the same time, ethereal ideal of Greek aristocracy (Nemean Odes, 1,7-9):

“The chariot of Chromius and Nemea urge me to harness a song of praise for deeds of victory. The foundations of the song have been laid with the gods,

2) *Greek-English Lexicon*. Ed. H.G.Liddell & R.Scott. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968. Also other references of Greek words are taken from this dictionary.

3) *Translated by the author of the essay*. Or: “to be always among the bravest, and hold my head above others” (*The Iliad of Homer*. Trans. by Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: The University of Chicago).

and with this man's god-given excellence (*σὺν ἀνδρὸς δαιμονίαις ἀρεταῖς*)⁴.

In this passage, *aretê* is a god-given excellence, which for the Greeks traditionally meant to become *kalos kai agathos* (*καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός*). The ideal of *καλοκαγαθία* (*kalokagatia*) indicated the very essence as well as expression of cultivated humanity. To be *agathos*, the noble man had not only to be shaped in beautiful stature, *kalos*, but he also had to incarnate *aretê*. *Kalokagatia*, proven in victorious achievements, constituted the interior value of a citizen who, as such, was honoured by the *polis* community (Jaeger, 1945 : 416, note 4).

Festugière resumes with his succinct explication of the virtuous foundation of this Greek ideal (Festugière, 17-20):

“If one intends to perceive what was the ideal for a native or Hellenized Greek, i.e. the one who received Greek education, in the first age of our era, it would be normal to think in depth of the traditional ideas, made popular since Pindar, which were offered to a young man being well-educated. If he was of noble origin (*εὐγενής*), of parents rich and influent: since infancy he was taught of essentially Greek morality coined for a free citizenship and forbidden to both slave and barbarian. This is the ethics of *aretê*, of honour. This ethics funds itself on four virtues which, if one possesses them, would lead him straight to *καλοκαγαθία*, ideal of humanism. The whole life is penetrated by reason (*φρόνησις*) [*fronêsis*, or practical wisdom]. The reason, inasmuch it concerns an individual person, invites to act as man (*ἀνδρεία*) [*andreia*]. That is to master yourself and one's passions (*σωφροσύνη*) [*sofrosunê*], to endure adversities (*ὑπομονή, καρτερία*) and to become, in general and in right measure, moderate (*μέτριος*) [*metrios*].

Regarding citizenship, i.e. being a member of a social body, reason guides him to give to his neighbour his due so that the latter, in its turn, gives back his own due (*δικαιοσύνη*) [*dikaïosynê*]. Thus the right measure governs a city in the way it governs the individual – everything obeys a single established order. This harmony makes beauty come to the fore. And this beauty is nothing else than that what is good for man. Man profits from all this. *Εὐ πράττειν*, to behave well, also means to succeed, to be happy. One word, *eudaimonia* [*εὐδαιμονία*], expresses this state. In this state one possesses perfect health: of body, of soul, of city. This is moral equilibrium”⁵.

It is important to stress that virtue ethics is not the invention of Plato or

4) English text by Basil L. Gildersleeve. Perseus digital library: Tufts University.

5) Translated by the author of the essay.

Aristotle as many might suppose. The discovery of virtues had been effectuated by the *polis*' citizens in their effort to become efficient warriors, honoured heroes and political leaders. Already in Homer's epics we can distinguish contours of this educational ideal. For example, the wise Fenix exhorts Achilles (Iliada 9,443): "μόθων τε ῥητῆρ' ἔμεναι πρῆκτ' ἠρά τε ἔργων" – "to be both a speaker of words and a doer of deeds" ⁶.

Greeks themselves believed this verse was the very expression of all the potentialities of human nature (Jaeger, 1945 : 26). Now these potentialities had to be developed in order for them to become *arretai*, i.e. actual powers of character, and for a man to become truly worthy, i.e. *aristos*, a nobleman and, eventually, assume *kratos* (κράτος, might, authority, lordship) over other citizens.

Already in the early centuries the four cardinal virtues – courage, temperance, prudence and justice – expressed the wholeness of the Greek cultural ideal of humanity. It was a goal of the educational process of the Greeks to model this virtuous ideal of man.

Only those who had enough practical wisdom to decide rightly and act justly for the welfare of all citizens by virtue of their prudence, temperance and courage, could aspire to leadership in battle and statehood.

PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION: PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Ethical doctrines of Greek philosophy are well founded in the ethos of Greek society.

To be a philosopher meant primarily a life in a secluded community gathered around a founder, his doctrine and way of life in order to practice theoretical wisdom (Hadot, 118). For example, a member of the Platonic Academia would practice intellectual intuition of the ideas (ἡ θεωρία τῶν ἰδεῶν), i.e. the essences of things, in order to free his or her soul from the restraints of bodily existence (Justin, Dialogue 2,6).

Greek philosophers, instead of becoming virtuous heroes to be honoured and remembered by the polis community, searched for the truth as the *archê* (ἀρχή, origin, cause, rule) of *cosmos* (κόσμος, order, universe).

Numerous philosophical schools of Antiquity elaborated their own insights of foundational principles of *cosmos*. On these principles they built their doctrines not only to account for the existing reality, but also to provide humans with rational means in order to achieve the *archê* as both the goal of

6) Translated by the author of the essay.

human existence and the state of being, that is happiness. Certainly, this way of life required virtue. Traditional virtue ethics of *paideia* was employed by the communities to serve their higher theoretical purpose. Eventually, virtue ethics was founded upon theoretical principles, primarily, in the teachings of Socrates and his great followers, Plato and Aristotle.

In Plato's dialogues, Socrates appears to be not only a virtuous philosopher, but also an educator of virtue. In "Laches", two Athenian noblemen, Lysimachus and Melesias, invited Socrates to teach their sons. The noblemen are anxious to see their sons' "souls to become as good as possible (*ὅτι ἀρίστως γενέσθαι τὰς ψυχάς*)"⁷. In other words, Socrates is asked to help these young souls excel in virtue. The noblemen not only had confidence in Socrates as a philosopher, they also had some understanding of what philosophically taught virtue meant and in which way it differed from the virtue taught in an Athenian gymnasium.

According to Socrates, virtue is knowledge. The right and logically consistent knowledge of the good of the reality makes one's life harmonious with that good and unified in virtue (Santas, 199–200). Hence, virtue is primarily the practice of reason, the willing adhesion to the reasonable part of the human soul. This Socratic practice provided his disciples a firm theoretical basis for further explorations in virtue ethics.

Plato's philosophical concept of virtue is built upon three fundamental questions: What is the origin of the human soul? What is the goal of each individual? How can a human being reach the goal? Plato considers anthropological concepts in the light of his metaphysics.

Plato's philosophy is basically soteriological. Its focus is the rational part of the human soul, akin to the ideas and, thus, immortal, which has to be freed from imprisonment in the mortal body. Now it is because of this imprisonment, that the structure of the human soul became tripartite (Robin, 126–140). In the book IV of the *Republic*, we find that this enslaved soul consists of three parts⁸: the immortal rational part (*τὸ λογιστικόν*), the courageous or spirited part (*τὸ θυμοειδές*), and the appetitive part (*τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν*) (Coplestone, 208).

Consequently, the soteriological goal of Plato's teaching dictates an ethical imperative. In the famous chariot analogy in *Phaedrus* (246 a 6), Plato depicts

7) *English text: Plato in Twelve Volumes, Vol. 8 translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1955. Perseus digital library: Tufts University.*

8) *Also in the late dialogue Timaeus 86 d7–e3.*

the drama of the tripartite soul. A charioteer, the rational part of human being, tries to rule two horses, namely, the spirited element and the appetitive part. The first one willingly obeys the reason, while the other is unruly because it tends not to the charioteer's commands, but to the sensible goods of the world below.

This analogy illustrates that the ethics of Plato essentially consists in the constitution of an undisputed supremacy of the rational part, which, as Plato affirms in *Timaeus* (41 c642 e4, 69 b8–c8), is made by the Demiurge and is akin to the divine World-Soul. Because of its divine origin, the rational part of human soul should not be impeded by lower realities in its effort of the reconstitution of its original divine beauty by way of assimilation with the divine Soul.

Here comes the need for virtues. Plato, in Book IV of the *Republic*, discusses four cardinal virtues. According to Plato, in order for the tripartite soul to become god-like, each part has to be perfected. The reasonable part is perfected by wisdom (*σοφία*) which enables reason to perceive divine ideas and, most importantly, the idea of the Good. The spirited part is perfected by courage (*ἁνδρεία*) which enables the soul to live by the supernatural knowledge, whereas the appetitive part is perfected by temperance (*σωφροσύνη*) which subdues it to obedience to the rational part. Justice (*δικαιοσύνη*) enables human commonwealth.

Virtues empower the three natural parts to make the soul's divine appetite, Eros, tend towards the Good. The relation between virtues and this divine appetite is essential in Plato's moral as well as his political philosophy. This relation is the axis of Plato's social models. Even though Plato's ideal Republic of three virtuous classes, where the wise class enacts beautiful ideas by means of subdued lower ones, does not survive in his late thought; still, Plato's Eros with its essential soteriological significance and ethical imperative persists as the foundation of human concord envisaged in his *Laws*. "Plato remains unshakeably convinced that the institution, by means of philosophy, of the virtue in the souls of citizens would make a fraternal friendship prevail amongst them" (Robin, 192)⁹.

In short, a leader, according to Plato, is the one who perfects his soul by practicing virtues. His goal is his personal assimilation with the metaphysical Good. He also shares with fellow citizens an achieved perfection *via* establishing, as far as possible, a just order destined to make the citizens enact the perfection in their commonwealth.

9) *Translated by the author of the essay.*

Aristotle, Plato's disciple, continued researching anthropology in the light of universal principles. According to Aristotle, the interrelationship between primordial principles, matter (*ἕλη*) and form (*εἶδος*), underlies the whole of reality. Potency (*δυναμεις*) instilled in matter comes into being by virtue of actualizing form, whereas actuality (*ἐντελέχεια*), form without potency and change, is the metaphysical principle of the becoming of things. It moves forms in potency to actual existence.

On these metaphysical principles Aristotle founds his anthropology. Now the basic principle of all living beings is soul: “substance as form of a physical body having life in potency [*οὐσίαν εἶναι ὡς εἶδος σώματος φυσικοῦ δυνάμει ζωὴν ἔχοντο*]” (*De Anima* ii 1, 412a20-1); “the first actuality of a physical organic body [*ἐντελέχεια ἢ πρώτη σώματος φυσικοῦ ὀργανικοῦ*]” (*De Anima* ii 1, 412b5-6)¹⁰.

As the generic form of living bodies is the soul, the accidental forms of living bodies are different forms of life. These accidental forms are not exclusive, but subsist in one essential form as complementary capacities in one hierarchical structure (Shields).

The lowest accidental form of life is the nutritive or vegetative soul. A body endowed with this accidental form, for instance, plants, exercises activities of nutrition, growth and reproduction. The next stage of complexity in the hierarchy of accidental forms of a living being, for example, animals, is the sensitive soul which, according to the Philosopher, is *in actu* in three ways: sense-perception, appetites and local motion. The highest form of the soul is that possessed by humans. “This soul has a peculiar advantage in the possession of *nous*, to *dianoitikon*¹¹. The latter is active in two ways, as the power of the scientific thought (*λόγος, νοῦς θεωρητικός = τὸ ἐπιστημονικόν*) and as the power of deliberation (*διάνοια πρακτική = λογιστικόν*). The former has truth as its object, truth for its own sake, while the latter aims at truth, not for its own sake but for practical and prudential purposes. All the powers of the soul, with the exception of *νοῦς*, are inseparable from the body and perishable: *νοῦς*, however, pre-exists before the body and is immortal” (Coplestone, 328-329).

According to the Philosopher, the perfection of a human being can be achieved only by exercising the rational part of human soul. The rational part empowers the whole soul and body to act towards the rational end. Aristotle views virtue as rationally ordained and acquired habit enabling perfection of

10) Greek text: *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae digital library: University of California. Translated by the author of the essay.*

11) *Νοῦς – mind, intellect; τὸ διανοητικόν – capable of knowledge.*

a human being. The perfected powers of the intellect and the lower sensitive part, namely, the intellectual and moral virtues, make the human become truly human and truly god-like (*eu-daimon*, *ευδαιμόνων*), which, at the same time, means the summit of happiness (*eudaimonia*, *ευδαιμονία*). “In any case, happiness, as the ethical end, could not consist simply in virtue as such: it consists in activity according to virtue or in virtuous activity, understanding by virtue both the intellectual and the moral virtues” (Coplestone, *ibid.*).

Let us look briefly at Aristotelian virtues. Now the rational part of human being is twofold, corresponding to the nature of its objects. *To epistêmonikon*, the knowledgeable part, concerns immutable objects, principles of being; while *to logistikon* deals with contingent objects. The perfection *to epistêmonikon* is the virtue of *sofia*, wisdom. “Wisdom”, says Aristotle, “will therefore be a union of intuitive reason (*σοφία νοῦς*) and scientific knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*); it may be defined as the complete science of the loftiest matters” (*Etica Nicomachea*. 1141 a9–2). The perfection of *to logistikon* lies in the well performed ability to act in the world of contingent things and is called *fronesis*, practical wisdom; whereas to make or produce contingent things themselves an art (*technê*, *τέχνη*) (Coplestone, 343). In this sense, *phronesis* chooses well and *technê* makes well in order to enact in practice what theoretical wisdom deems worthy.

Now the imprint (*χαρακτήρ*, *charaktêr*) of reason upon the lower sensitive part of human soul empowers the lower capacities to be subdued and, then, to act in accordance with a rational end. Here Aristotle follows traditional lines in Greek thought by naming the powers of character as *andreia* for the irascible part, and *sophrosynê* for the concupiscible part. Also, the Philosopher speaks of other specific virtues related to desirable specific objects, such as glory, wealth, society.

In comparison with Plato, Aristotle’s doctrine of virtues is certainly more detailed, in accordance with his elaborate anthropology. Acting in compliance with the rational human nature, the constitutive good of humanity, is the essence of Aristotle’s concept of human perfection. Still, both Plato and Aristotle remain in the traditional Greek framework of the traditional four cardinal virtues. Generally speaking, Greek philosophers considered human perfection, or leadership in modern terms, as life in accordance with the reasonable human nature as well as the reasonable founding principle of the reality.

CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP

Saint Paul, the conveyer of the Good News to the Greeks and Romans, says

that the kingdom of Heaven is accessible only for victorious athletes in the race for the perfection in faith and morals:

“Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable garland, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified” (1 Cor 9,24–27)¹².

We might easily see Paul’s comparison of a Greek athlete as a communicative tool to convey the Christian message to his Greek speaking audience in Corinth. However, our question is not so much about the rhetorical means used by Paul, but, more generally, about the way of the reception of the Jewish-Christian message by the Greek culture and its assimilation by the Greek mentality.

There is no doubt that categories of Greek culture shaped the hermeneutics of the reception of the Good News in this culture (Danielou, 461). Now the question arises: in which particular way did Greek Christianity understand the Christian ideal of the human being? In other words, how were the Greeks to follow Christ? And how was the heroic leadership of the Greeks transformed into a Christian one?

As the history of our culture proves, Christian formation provided a new educational ideal which adapted the Greek *paideia* with its already developed concept of the four cardinal virtues (Jaeger, 1961).

The Greek doctrine of virtues is reflected in the Book of Wisdom, written for the Hellenized Jewish community: “Or if it be uprightness you love, why, virtues (*ἀρεταί*) are the fruit of her labours, since it is she who teaches temperance (*σωφροσύνην*) and prudence (*φρόνησιν*), justice (*δικαιοσύνην*) and fortitude (*ἀνδρείαν*); nothing in life is more useful for human beings” (Wis 8,7)¹³.

Paul’s authoritative anthropological thought gave a doctrinal basis for further incorporation of the doctrine of four cardinal virtues into Christian theology. Certainly, one should not confuse philosophical duality between soul and body with Paul’s distinction between

sarks (*σάρξ*) and *pneuma* (*πνεῦμα*). Paul’s distinction relates not so much to different parts of human nature, but rather to two opposed states of this nature: sinfulness and gracefulness (cf. Gal 5,16–24). A variety of anthropological concepts found in Paul’s writings, such as *sarks pneuma*, *nous*, *kardia* (*καρδία*),

12) Quoted from the New Revised Standard Bible version (Anglicized Edition).

13) Quoted from the New Jerusalem Bible version.

soma (σῶμα), express a complex interrelationship between the two theological realities which are not easily interpreted in philosophical terms.

Although the Apostle's extant writings are not sufficient in order to reconstruct a consistent anthropology of Paul's theology, it is clear that for him, *nous* meant just the same as for the Greeks – the rational part of human nature (Fitzmyer, 1406–1407). The strongest proof of Paul's acceptance of this philosophical concept is his anthropological justification of natural theology: "Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made (ποιήμασιν νοούμενα καθοράται)" (Rom 1,20)¹⁴.

This justification of natural theology on the basis of the innate capacity of human intellect gave an impetus for the interpretation of human nature in terms of philosophical anthropology, which, eventually, led to the treatment of classical virtues as indispensable means of the divinization of human nature.

The early monastic tradition of the Desert Fathers continued elaborating on the concept of virtuous Christian perfection in line with Greek–Pauline anthropology. For example, a 4th century monk and theologian writes: "when the intellect rescues the soul's senses from the desires of the flesh and imbues them with dispassion, the passions shamelessly attack the soul, trying to hold its senses fast in sin" (St Isaiah the Solitary, 25). This passage provides us with a typical short resume of the virtuous monastic morale practiced in the lonely tranquillity of monasteries.

In Antiquity, ordinary Christians took it for granted that classical virtues were an indispensable part of their civic education. The Fathers of the Church, although on many occasions they mentioned the cardinal virtues as indispensable for Christian formation, did not explain them much from the theological point of view. It is with the rediscovery of Aristotle's writings in the late Middle Ages and Thomas Aquinas' scholarship that a theoretical basis was forged for the classical virtues.

As a result, the four cardinal and other concomitant virtues have never failed to be taught in Catholic schools and practiced by the faithful (Catechism of Catholic Church, 1995 : 495–504). Virtuous *paideia* of Antiquity in its Christianized form still persists in the best schools and Christian families. Now let us turn to Thomas Aquinas himself.

The most conspicuous contribution by Thomas to Aristotelian anthropology was the study of the human will. It is the faith in a loving God and the Christian

¹⁴ Quoted from the New Revised Standard Bible version (Anglicized Edition).

duty for an adequate response to God's love that incited Christians to study the human will. According to the Apostolic tradition, the will of God is sanctity itself and, at the same, the very expression of God's nature (cf. 1 Tes 4,3) which condescended to redeem and divinize human nature. By means of supernatural virtues of faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13,13), God allows human nature, namely, his intellect and will, to participate in the very nature of God (cf. 2 Pt 1,4).

It is this data of Christian faith that makes Thomas Aquinas' study on the will the key element in the Christian doctrine of virtues.

Aquinas follows Augustine's precept that all virtue is love by affirming that each virtue "in some way depends on love in so far it depends on the will (*voluntate*), whose first movement consists in love (*cuius prima affectio est amor*)" (Summa : Ia – IIae q. 56 a.3)¹⁵. Thomas had to make a clear distinction between appetites of the lower part of the human soul and the will. Hence, "the will is a rational appetite (*voluntas est appetitus quidam rationalis*)" which is distinct from those of concupiscible and irascible.

According to *Doctor angelicus*, the will is what constitutes the heart of a human being. The will strives for the good of reason, namely, the truth insofar as it is known by the intellect. The intellect acts well insofar as it is moved by the will directed to the Supreme Good, which is God.

A good summary of the Thomistic doctrine is provided by Joseph M. de Torres:

"God moves the will as 'first efficient cause' giving it the active inclination towards the good, and then the will moves itself or carries on the motion as 'second cause' to actually will this or that (the actual choice). (...) Of all man's potencies, therefore, the most powerful is the will. It is the 'queen' of all the powers of man and dominates all others: it is the closest power to the self. This is why for the moral struggle for sanctity, which is the perfection of man's being, it is necessary for man to be detached from his will and to contemplate God, to look towards God with his intelligence moved by the love of God, so that he will do God's Will and not his own, and guide his emotions in that direction" (Joseph M. de Torres, 185–186).

Thomas does not dispute Aristotle's anthropology. He complements it by

15) English text: *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas Second and Revised Edition, 1920, Literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province: Online Edition by Kevin Knight. Latin text: Corpus Thomisticum. Textum Leoninum Romae 1891 editum ac automato translatum a Roberto Busa SJ in taenias magneticas demuo recognovit Enrique Alarcón atque instruxit: <http://www.corpusthomisticum.org>.*

elaborating on the concept of the rational appetite as the indispensable part of the intellectual part of the soul: “the intellect is moved by the will (*contingit autem intellectum a voluntate moveri*), just as are the other powers: for a man considers something actually, because he wills to do so. And therefore the intellect, in so far as it is subordinate to the will (*secundum quod habet ordinem ad voluntatem*), can be the subject of virtue absolutely so called” (Summa : Ia-IIae q.56 a.3).

To participate in God’s nature is to love God, which, at the same time, establishes human nature in the most rational state of being. Human intellect achieves its perfection in the cognition of the encounter between the human loving self with God’s all embracing and sacrificial love.

Consequently, the act of knowing in its essence is dependent on the act of willing. Equally, moral virtues become prerequisites for the act of knowing in Thomas’ doctrine: “‘To know’ is a condition required for moral virtue (*ad virtutem moralem*), inasmuch as moral virtue works according to right reason. But moral virtue is essentially in the appetite (*secundum rationem rectam*)” (Summa : Ia-IIae q.56 a.2).

The right disposition of the rational appetite, *recta ordinis voluntatem*, is the foundation of Christian perfection, or Christian leadership, as we would put it nowadays. Still, only supernatural grace, superseding the natural order, accomplishes Christian perfection. Theological virtues – faith, hope and love – dispose the human will and intellect to search for and tend towards the revealed Supreme Good. The infused theological virtues also become efficient causes for the natural cardinal virtues. “Grace builds upon nature,” according to the *dictum* of medieval scholars.

In the same way, one may say, Thomas builds upon Aristotle by infusing the Apostolic doctrine into Aristotelian anthropology. Thus shaped, Christian anthropology became so far the most exhaustive thought on human nature and provided us with a firm ground for practising leadership as man’s all-embracing perfection.

VIRTUOUS LEADERSHIP: HAVARD’S CONTRIBUTION

For almost three thousands years, European aristocracy has been formed on the principles of the Greek *paideia*. In the late 19th and 20th centuries industrial and ideological developments began significantly changing the social picture in Europe. The wave of ideologically motivated adversities in the last two centuries attempted to destroy, or rather pervert, the Greek-Christian aristocratic

ideal of man. These attempts have been made not only in failed realisations of the “superhuman” ideals of Nazis and Soviets, but also in the ideal of the “super happy” consumer of our day. However, neither ideology that exalts one race or social class nor exquisite PR or marketing techniques, not even the modern empirical sciences have been able to produce an all-embracing concept of human nature in its spiritual and material wholeness.

The failure of aggressive Modernity with the unleashed and greedy Renaissance man at its centre has become more than evident in the recent financial crisis. In the last two centuries, there were too many unsuccessful attempts to build empires upon ideological fantasies – at the expense of reality itself. The recently failed global net of phantasmagorical finances is, one hopes, the last product of the Modernity project. The true and painful thing is that unreal fantasies do not uphold true values, but rather destroy them.

Despite the damage and the ideological misconceptions in the European mentality, the education of our post-industrial society with its predominant emphasis on the empirical sciences as well as highly elaborate expertise in various specialized techniques still has not eradicated the need for universal human formation. The best universities with their truly *universitas* character preserved much of it. Still, the democratic form of lordship requires leaders who are exceptionally strong both in word and deed. Oxford, Harvard, and other famous high schools do remain the forges of many effective leaders nowadays. Examples abound. The reason for this is simple: people need to be led by those who have both good judgment and strong will. The interrelation of good judgement and resolute will is what makes a man a leader of others in any epoch. Nothing has changed since the times of Homer.

In the last century, the spin for leadership development did come from the business world. Business people are concerned with concrete tasks and accomplished deeds. They ask: what is the main factor behind the success of a business leader in the competitive world? Or rather, what enables a business leader to make money? What constitutes sustainable growth of value in business?

Undoubtedly, there are many aspects of business leadership that have been already abundantly discussed in leadership literature. The focus on leaders’ traits came from the military milieu where cadets were trained to become effective commanders. Over the course of several decades, the question of “What is a leader?” was substituted by “relational” and “situational” approaches: how to lead effectively and how to organise effectively one’s own and subordinates’

work. The relational approach comes from the permanent need for motivation of personnel, for without a good worker there is no good business. Equally, the study of context has contributed much to the organisational behaviour of a leader in practice.

Eventually, a deeper common ground for both approaches was discovered in the question of “how leaders transform aptitudes and attitudes of workers” (González & Guillén, 152). In this “transformational” approach, the leader’s relationship with his personnel and his management results are considered together.

In my opinion, the next step in leadership development is the question of the efficiency of a transformer *himself*. This question concerns the right exercise of human nature, namely, the distinctly human powers – the intellect and the will.

Here Greek *paideia* and classical virtues come back into business. Indeed, the oldest European school of education answers the human need of ages past: how to make a decision rightly and carry it out in the most effective way.

Transformation of a leader’s personality by way of empowering his natural powers, belonging to his *persona*, to act in the most excellent way according to human nature common to both the decision maker, his subordinates and members of a society, creates nothing else but common enduring good, which results in a sustainable growth of the leader’s business.

Virtuous leadership is the next organic step in leadership studies: from transforming relation to the transformer, the actor himself. It is important to emphasize that in this kind of leadership the transformer influences his subordinates or clients not primarily by way of his traits, skills, or acquired techniques, but rather by developed natural powers – virtues.

Pioneering theoretical works on virtues in leadership have been appearing in the recent decade¹⁶. Practitioners, also, have already offered a contribution. Their point sums up the recently felt need for the doctrinal tradition of virtues to return to social and business life:

“Here we come to one of the most important insights of the Christian tradition on work and its relationship to virtue: *We grow as human beings at work to the extent that we create conditions for other people to develop*. In other words, we cannot develop ourselves at work without developing others

16) A conspicuous example is A.J.G. Sison’s book “The Moral Capital of Leaders. Why Virtue Matters” where he studies Aristotelian anthropology and shows its principles at work in organisational behaviour.

at work, and we cannot develop others unless we ourselves are trying to be virtuous. When our goal in work disengages from the moral and spiritual order in which it is done (the vocational order), a certain corruption occurs within us” (J.Cornwall & M. Naughton : 2008, 65–66).

Alexandre Havard’s book “Virtuous leadership: An Agenda for Personal Excellence”¹⁷ combines both theoretical and practical aspects of the doctrine of virtues in the light of actual needs of business, and provides a strong impetus for modern development of it in leadership studies.

The novelty and value of the book is that Havard not only adapts the doctrine of classical virtues according to modern exigencies and, thus, creates new theoretical premises, but he also proposes for leaders a practical agenda for achieving personal excellence on clear anthropological grounds. Let us briefly survey main points of the book.

The essential point of the book is the classical tenet evoked by Havard in the context of leadership studies: leadership is character (Havard: 2007, xiii, 114). For Havard, character means just the same as it did for the Greeks, namely, the actualization of natural human potencies by means of rational habits – virtues.

The point of departure in the book is the evaluation of leadership failures in the light of his basic point. He writes (ibid., xiv): “The business scandals of our time invariably give rise to calls for increased government oversight, reform of corporate governance, and revision of codes of ethical conduct. These things may have their place, but they miss an essential point. The perpetrators of wrongdoing invariably know that what they are doing is wrong. And yet they do it anyway. This is a failure of character”.

Though the book was written two years ago, Havard’s evaluation has proved to be prophetic in the recent aftermath of the credit crunch of 2008. Indeed, governments of many nations have had to intervene and pay a huge price for the lack of temperance and prudence in the free market. Now international efforts have to be consolidated, and possibly new institutions created to better monitor and control banking activities on the global scale.

But will policing measures, even the best, guarantee an irreversible change of human attitudes? Certainly, they will not. Unless there is a change human character, one cannot perfect the world.

Havard lists four cardinal virtuous and two virtuous attitudes which, in his opinion, empower the human being to achieve excellence (ibid., xvi):

17) Already translated in 8 languages.

Prudence: to make right decisions.

Courage: to stay the course and resist pressures of all kinds.

Self-control: to subordinate passions to the spirit and fulfilment of the mission at hand.

Justice: to give every individual his due.

Magnanimity: to strive for great things, to challenge myself and others.

Humility: to overcome selfishness and serve others habitually.

As we can see, these are basic descriptions of classical virtues.

Havard does not fail to build his leadership concept upon clear anthropological grounds¹⁸. “If magnanimity and humility – the pillars of leadership – are virtues principally of the heart, the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, courage, and self-control – leadership’s bedrock virtues – are principally of the mind and the will. Prudence, the virtue specific to decision-makers, is the most important, since to lead effectively I need the capacity to make right decisions” (ibid., xix).

The anthropological concepts, such as intellect, will and heart, evidently come from traditional Christian moral doctrine¹⁹.

Havard devotes a chapter in his book to presenting the sources of his virtuous leadership. These are threefold: (i) Greek – Plato and Aristotle, (ii) modern Catholic thinkers – Josef Pieper and Josemaría Escrivá, and (iii) business oriented thinkers – Peter Drucker and Stephen Covey (ibid., 110). To put it in the order of thought, Harvard takes up Pieper’s and Escrivá’s interpretation of Aristotelian-Thomistic doctrine of virtues and adapts it to the needs of modern business leaders. He does it along similar lines Drucker founded his management theory on Aretology, i.e. the science of virtues, or Covey – his principle-centred leadership.

Havard’s novelty in leadership studies is his clearly traditional, though,

18) *Whereas J.Cornwall & M. Naughton do lack them, which makes their book contain rather good practical counsels, and not a well based theory to be implemented in practice.*

19) *Seemingly, Havard elaborated its particular set of virtues in accordance with the anthropology which is rather in accord with the Pauline one: “Unlike the mind and the will, the heart is not an attribute of the human spirit. It is an expression signifying the whole person, the person himself: the heart does not just feel, it also knows and desires. Thus the intellect and the will come together in the heart” (ibid., 123). To compare: “The sarks, or psyche, is the total man, and the kardia is the centre of intelligence where the will has complete independence of choice to become either hardened to truth or receptive to divine enlightenment from without” (Romanides).*

in comparison with the Greek and the Scholastic models, slightly modified anthropology, and a set of cardinal as well as concomitant virtues in harmony with Havard's anthropological determination.

According to him, two pillars, namely, virtuous attitudes of magnanimity and humility, constitute the basis for *auctoritas* – the state of perfection in virtuous leadership: “leaders lead through *auctoritas*, the authority that stems from character” (ibid., xix). *Auctoritas* is contrary to *potestas* (a directive exercise of power). The two basic virtues are seated in the heart – the source of any appetite.

“The classical definition of magnanimity is *extensio animi ad magna*” (ibid., 3), the soul's striving towards great things. “Leaders are magnanimous in their dreams, visions, and sense of mission; in their capacity for hope, confidence and daring; in their enthusiasm for the effort required to bring their work to successful conclusion; in their propensity for using means proportionate to their goals; in their capacity to challenge themselves and those around them” (ibid.,4).

Anima magna is an ability of a leader to live according to his vision which surpasses an immediate order of things and is achievable in the course of a definite period of time. Contrary to the virtue of *magnanimitas*, there is a self-deceit, i.e. striving of the soul towards unreal things.

The other basic virtuous attitude is humility (ibid., 29). At first glance, humility is contrary to the ambition in leadership. *Humilitas* stems from *humus* – earth, soil. In this Latin sense, the humble person has an acute sense of reality as opposed to the proud person who clouds himself in unreal fantasies.

“The humble man sees as he really is. He acknowledges his weaknesses and shortcomings, but also his strengths and abilities” (ibid., 30). Humility is “the habit of living in the truth” (ibid., 28). To acquire the habit, one practices *metanoia*, “a true conversion of the heart” (ibid.), a truthful perception of self and reality. Also, the virtue of humility enables the leader to transcend his egoistic motives and incites to exercise empathy towards its subordinates. Humility roots magnanimity in the reality of *humus*, a fertile soul.

The synergy of the two basic virtuous attitudes enables “leaders to implement the three great principles of managing people in organizations: *inclusion*, *collegiality* and *continuity*” (ibid., 30-31). These principles are nothing else but three dimensions of *auctoritas* performance. Havard discusses extensively how virtuous leaders create corporate culture on these principles (ibid., 32-42).

The inner unity of a virtuous leader not only founds rationality of his decisions as well as effective consistency in action, but also creates the synergetic and participated unity of his personnel. Authoritative leaders formed in virtue “transfer decision-making to a subordinate and make him co-responsible for the results” (ibid., 32). The unity created by an effective *auctoritas* is the key to sustainable growth of the organisation. As history proves, the legacy of great leaders extends beyond their life time – *auctoritas* affects people and times.

The psychosomatic unity of the human person is the unshakable foundation of “virtuous leadership”. Havard insists “on the anthropological unity of virtue, that is on the unity of reason, will, and heart” (ibid., 127): “Reason, will, and the heart blend seamlessly in the human person” (ibid.).

“For reason, will and the heart enable us to do the three things vital to growing in virtue: 1) contemplating it so as to perceive its intrinsic beauty and desire it strongly (a matter of the heart); 2) acting virtuously habitually (a matter of the will); and 3) practising all the virtues simultaneously with special attention given to prudence (a matter of reason)” (ibid.). Finally, “prudence [or practical wisdom] embodies unity of all the virtues” (ibid., 119), states Havard, along the clear lines of *philosophia perennis*.

It is by building on these anthropological premises that Harvard elaborates an agenda for personal excellence and invites leaders to acquire the classical formation in virtues (ibid., 55-109).

AD EXCELLENDUM

In this essay I have attempted to discuss the doctrine of classical virtues in the light of an increasing need for them. Havard’s response to that need, i.e. the method for modern leaders to excel in their personal and business life, is a successful landmark in the development of leadership studies.

There are several aspects of the need itself. The practical one follows from the urgency of business people to make decisions which would result in the sustainable growth of value in their organisations. The theoretical one concerns the development of leadership studies. The paradigm of transformational leadership is now shifting towards studies of personhood: in order to transmit value by way of transforming the relation between a business leader and his subordinates as well as clients, the leader has to foster a valuable self and become the source for sustainable growth in his organisation.

There is also an important historical paradigm of the modern need for classical

virtues. The actualisation of autonomous and potent human self became the predominant principle of post-Renaissance developments reflected in various theories and political history itself. To empower one's self is certainly the most urgent need of mortal and ever-weak human existence. Greek-Christian classical virtues were developed precisely for this goal – to empower a man to accomplish a great deed and gain honour or sainthood.

With the rejection of traditional values and morality, classical virtues were substituted, in general, with quite the opposite – the greedy appetite for illusionary omnipotence of self. However, these political and anthropological developments, expressly manifested in history during the last two centuries of aggressive Modernity, proved rather destructive. It seems that the foundation of the whole project is skewed.

On the other hand, the doctrine of classical virtues rooted in philosophical anthropology endures for ages and still proves to be useful and right. *Virtus* is might of rightly developed human nature, namely, *χαρακτήρ*. Indeed, the call of the wisdom of the Ancients is getting louder in our time.

To sum up, while writing this essay, Chicago University launched the Arete initiative with its multidisciplinary project of a New Science of virtues. The statement of the project is very much in accord with my personal effort:

“Today, contradictions within Enlightenment political philosophy are more evident than ever. Policymakers typically struggle to maintain standards of ‘equality’, promote ‘tolerance’, and provide structures that enable an increasingly multi-cultural society to live together peacefully while simultaneously recognizing and valuing moral and ethnic diversity. Yet in our search to find ways to value our differences, we have also lost our ability to talk about common goals and strive together toward the ‘good.’ We have, in short, lost our ability to talk about ‘virtues’”²⁰.

The need for human virtues is becoming global.

20) <http://larete.uchicago.edu/projects/scienceofvirtues.shtml>

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