

Home and Adventure: An LDS Contribution to the Virtues and Vices Tradition

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Recent years have seen renewed scholarly interest in the tradition of the virtues and vices.¹ This tradition has roots in both Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman ethics, and reached the height of its Western cultural importance during the medieval period. Since that time, many artists and thinkers have continued and further developed the virtues and vices tradition. Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590-96) and Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* (1791) both expand this tradition, with Spenser's lively stories about the power of virtue and the danger of vice and with Franklin's description of his aborted attempt at a handbook on "The Art of Virtue." In addition, Oscar Rejlander's landmark photograph *Two Ways of Life* (1857) is an allegory of the contrasting paths of virtue and vice. Other artists have focused particularly on the seven deadly sins, notably Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht in their *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1933) and the series by American artist Paul Cadmus titled *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1945-49).

Though Mormons are, of course, interested in virtue and vice, the lack of direct engagement with this tradition raises this question: Could there be a meaningful LDS contribution to the virtues and vices tradition? This article explores the possibility of just such an LDS contribution, beginning with a brief introduction to the tradition and an examination of four lists of virtues common to LDS culture. Such a survey reveals the important pedagogical aspect of the virtues and vices tradition.

To this examination is added an LDS configuration of virtue

and vice founded on Mormonism's theological views about a premortal existence. I argue that, based on that belief, virtue or vice are proper or improper expressions of human drives for "home" and for "adventure." While humans come to earth with no clear recollection of the premortal world, it could be said that LDS theology makes possible the notion that people have an innate desire to again experience the love felt in an original heavenly "home." But it was in that heavenly home where those who are now mortal made the choice to journey on and face the "adventure" and challenge of mortality. These premortal experiences can be seen as the source of twin, complementary desires for the security and acceptance of "home" and the drive to "adventurously" grow to achieve a divine potential.

This LDS configuration of virtue and vice as proper or improper expressions of drives for "home" and "adventure" becomes clearer when it is compared with other traditional configurations. One such configuration is the medieval tradition of Trees of Virtue and of Vice. Such images, like the LDS lists of virtues, served an important pedagogical function, as they illustrated the opposing "fruits" or outcomes of lives dominated either by humility or by pride. In addition to such visual configurations, Dante's second book of the *Divine Comedy*, the *Purgatory*, provides a compelling configuration in the form of a metaphorical "whip" and "bridle." Dante's metaphor compares the training of animals by using the stimulating "whip" and the restraining "bridle" to how people might be compelled toward virtue and controlled from vice. Similarly, drives for "home" and "adventure" must be properly encouraged as well as controlled. When such drives are successfully or unsuccessfully employed, they bring about the "fruits" evident in the Trees of Virtue and Vice. The complementary interplay of these drives, therefore, either results in one's most fundamental wilting and death or ultimate growth and flourishing.

LDS Lists of Virtue

As mentioned at the outset, the virtues and vices tradition has both Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman roots.² Plato's *Republic*, for example, lists and describes four key virtues: wisdom, temperance, fortitude, and justice. Paul's faith, hope, and charity add the

completing trio to produce the conventional list of seven virtues. The seven standard vices of pride, anger, envy, sloth, gluttony, greed, and lust developed independently of the virtues, adapted over time from lists of nefarious “evil thoughts” described by Evagrius and John Cassian.³ One of the first texts to bring these two lists together was Gregory the Great’s *Magna Moralia* or *Commentary on Job* (CE 578–95).

Over time, the virtues and vices tradition served a number of different purposes. The tradition of seven deadly sins is at the heart of early medieval penitential manuals like the *Penitential of Cummean* (ca. 650).⁴ St Thomas Aquinas employs the virtues and vices tradition in the *Summa Theologica*’s systematic doctrinal compendium. The tradition is part of powerful dramas about the human soul, like Hildegard of Bingen’s *Ordo Virtutum* (ca. 1151) and Christopher Marlow’s *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (1594). Works dealing with the preparation of one’s soul for death like Thomas More’s *The Four Last Things* (1522) and Hieronymus Bosch’s *The Seven Deadly Sins and the Four Last Things* (1500–1510) also strongly engage this tradition. Finally, there is also a substantial tradition of satirical works that use the virtues and vices as their basis, including Gervais de Bus and Chaillou de Pestain’s *Le Roman de Fauvel* (1310–16), Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht’s *The Seven Deadly Sins* (1933), and even a recent story in *The Onion* with the headline, “All Seven Deadly Sins Committed at Church Bake Sale” (2001).

As one key purpose for enumerating and describing virtue and vice is to encourage positive attributes and discourage negative ones, these schemata often appear in pedagogical contexts. Such an aspect goes back to Plato’s description of ideal Guardians in his *Republic* and Cicero’s commendation of virtue to his son in his work *Of Duties* (44 BCE). Decorations on churches and cathedrals as well as monastic and princely manuals vividly portrayed lessons of virtue and vice. Paintings and prints by artists like Giotto, Peter Brueghel the Elder, and Paolo Veronese served similar functions. Even in an increasingly nonreligious world, murals by artists like Diego Rivera and films like Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) persuade people away from vice by showing its dire consequences.

While Mormons produce innumerable sermons about partic-

TABLE
FOUR “LDS” LISTS OF VIRTUES

<i>D&C 4:5–6</i>	<i>Thirteenth Article of Faith</i>	<i>Scout Law</i>	<i>Young Women Values</i>
Faith (repeated twice)	Honest	Trustworthy	Faith
Hope	True	Loyal	Divine nature
Charity (repeated twice)	Chaste	Helpful	Individual worth
Love	Benevolent	Friendly	Knowledge
An eye single to the glory of God	Virtuous	Courteous	Choice and accountability
Virtue	Doing good to all men	Kind	Good works
Knowledge	Faith	Obedient	Integrity
Temperance	Hope	Cheerful	Virtue
Patience	Perseverance	Thrifty	
Brotherly kindness	Seek after the virtuous, the lovely, that which is of good report or praiseworthy	Brave	
Godliness		Clean	
Humility		Reverent	
Diligence			

ular virtues and vices, they do not specifically engage the virtues and vices tradition. In fact, most Mormons would probably be hard pressed to list either the canonical virtues or vices. That is not to say that Mormons do not have their own tradition of virtues and vices; rather, it means that Mormon iterations are largely detached from the older, more established tradition. However, there are in fact four lists of virtues that are common and prevalent in Mormon culture, all strongly tied to pedagogy. Mormons do not typically use systematic ideas of virtue and vice for confessional purposes, to prepare for death, or for satire, but the inculcation of specific virtues is a dominant goal. (See the four lists of virtues in Table 1.)

While there may be other lists, these four are the most commonly encountered and repeated lists of virtues in current LDS

culture. The chart presents these lists in the chronological order in which they entered Mormon culture. Of the four, the Scout Law is the most anomalous, for the obvious reason that it was not developed by LDS authors for a specific LDS purpose. This list also seems the least God-centered, as “reverent” is the only quality that has a religious resonance.

The Young Women Values is also idiosyncratic, though not as divergent from standard lists of virtues as the Scout Law. The Young Women Values are not stated exactly as a “list of virtues” but instead as a list of key, cherished principles. It is also important to note that, in the Young Women’s list, “virtue” has little to do with its original meaning, taken from the Latin to mean qualities of “manliness,” or human power, excellence, and achievement. Rather, it is perhaps better stated as sexual purity, the meaning it typically held in the eighteenth century as, for example, in the novels of English author Samuel Richardson.

The other two lists, both scribed by Joseph Smith, seem to differ only by how they elaborate on the qualities one should develop. Both place a premium on the traditional Pauline theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity or love. The list from the Doctrine and Covenants is a revelation for those who would “embark in the service of God” (D&C 4:2). As such, this list emphasizes those qualities that would align an individual with God and ensure completely consecrated service—service carried out with one’s entire “heart, might, mind, and strength” (D&C 4:2). Joseph’s enumeration for the Articles of Faith lists qualities that all members should seek and that the Church as a whole upholds and encourages. Seeking that which is “virtuous, lovely, of good report, or praiseworthy” gives the sense of how Mormons would bring all that is good to Zion, but having an “eye single to the glory of God” is a more pointed directive to those attempting to do God’s work as missionaries.

It may be appealing to create even greater harmony in the lists. Could one not make a single, comprehensive list that would take into account all of the virtues? Could not such a list apply to those who would serve—to Zion as a whole, and then more specifically for training young men and young women? I take the position that part of these lists’ value is their very variety, the way that they call to the mind different but complementary qualities.

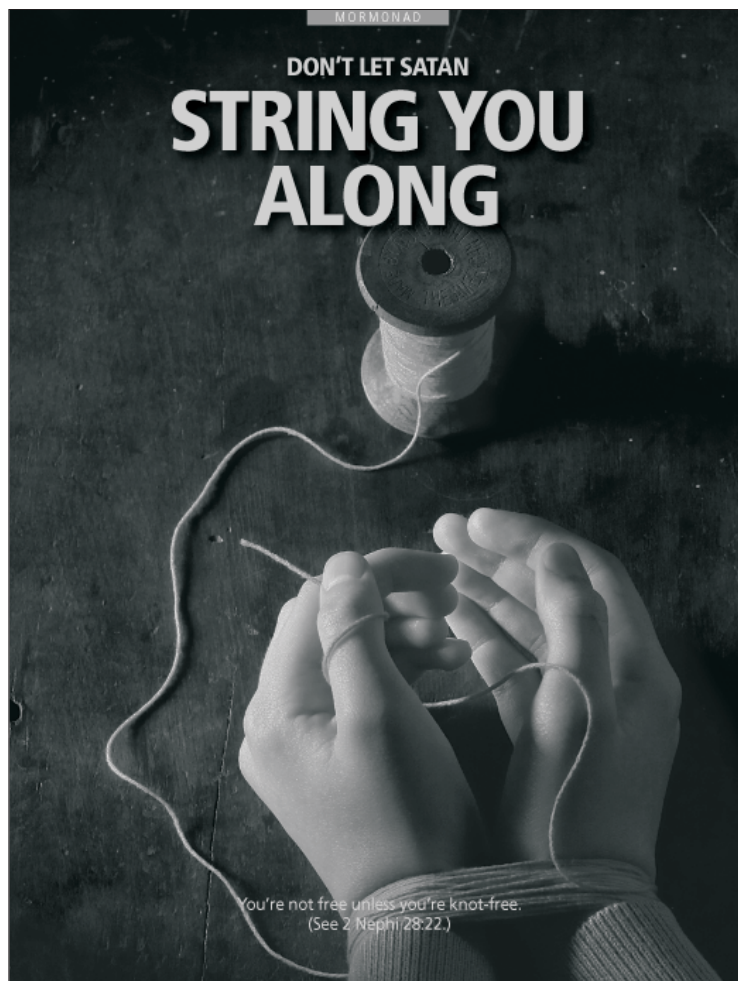
“Brotherly kindness” suits one list while being “helpful,” “friendly,” and “courteous” on another list gives beneficial variety in describing similar qualities. Another example of this helpful variety is how “honest” appears on one list, seems to appear as “trustworthy” and “loyal” on another, while a third list could account for a similar quality with “integrity.”

Finally, what is perhaps most obvious about these lists is their pedagogical place and power. This chart shows the virtues that are encouraged by those in the pre-teen Primary program (the memorized and recited thirteenth Article of Faith), the Scouting program (the Scout Law), the Young Women program (the Young Women Values), and missionary training (D&C 4:5–6). Examined in this respect, the Scout Law, Young Women Values, and Doctrine and Covenants 4:5–6 are carefully attuned instructions in virtue for their particular audiences. It is clear, then, that Mormons have a strong tradition of the pedagogical use of lists of virtues. Those lists share a similar Pauline source with the traditional virtues but seem to be derived independently and have only their shared pedagogical purpose in common with historical iterations of virtues and vices.

Finally, while there is no tradition of a list of vices or seven deadly sins in Mormon culture, the bold and graphic ways that MormonAds encourage virtue and discourage vice connects them, tangentially, to similarly functioning traditional images. One example is a 2008 MormonAd that uses the image of a vise to teach how “small vices” can put one in a “big squeeze” (Figure 1). MormonAds typically use visual and verbal plays on words with the simple, graphic imagery that contemporary youth are familiar with in advertising. Taken as a whole, MormonAds seem much less systematically developed and deployed for a particular audience than the four lists explored above.

Home and Adventure

Lists of virtues and MormonAds are examples of pedagogical uses of virtue and vice in Mormon culture. Though they are useful and though they show similar functions as works in the established tradition, they do not, of themselves, make a significant contribution to the tradition. They do not help us reexamine the tradition. A configuration based on LDS beliefs that does poten-



New Era, February 1992, 37. Photography by Jed Clark.

tially help us reexamine the tradition is one founded on the idea of an innate desire for “home” and “adventure.” My discussion of a powerful drive for home has its genesis in insights that Barta Heiner, an acting and theater professor at Brigham Young University, offered during her 2008 BYU forum presentation, “Counterfeits: A Mess of Pottage.” In this presentation, Heiner talks about how she teaches her acting students that, in order to play a charac-

ter, one must connect with that character's objectives and super-objectives. She explains that objectives are what a character wants from a scene or act; super-objectives are what characters want from life. Heiner refutes the commonly taught idea that all super-objectives are essentially sexual.

To teach her approach to acting, Heiner reports that she sometimes talks with her students about the premortal existence. In that premortal world, she remarks, "we enjoyed the all-encompassing love of a Father in Heaven."⁵ She further elaborates that, although we have no clear memory of that place, "the longing is still there"⁶ and that what we hunger to feel again is that divine love. Heiner proposes that some people glimpse and understand that yearning, while others know that they have a need but cannot properly identify it. Those who do not know what their real need is often find only counterfeits. Heiner comments that "some choose power, fame, drugs, lust, or other forms of gratification."⁷ The longing that Heiner describes is what could be called the desire for home. This desire, stemming from our premortal existence, is a powerful super-objective or overarching and compelling drive.

To Heiner's insight about our longing for home, we could postulate a complementary drive, the drive for adventure. We can extrapolate from the little that is presented in Mormon belief about the premortal existence that people here in mortality chose to leave home, to go away, and to take a great risk when they chose to keep their "first estate." Mormon theology does not explain how much we knew about the risk we were taking, or the adventure upon which we were embarking. Still, it seems logical to conclude that, from these earliest experiences, our souls are driven both toward home and toward adventure. Brigham Young seems to have had this idea of adventure in mind when he spoke about the importance of improvement. On this subject, he said:

The first great principle that ought to occupy the attention of mankind, that should be understood by the child and the adult, and which is the main spring of all action, whether people understand it or not, is the principle of improvement. The principle of increase, of exaltation, of adding to that we already possess, is the grand moving principle and cause of the actions of the children of men. No matter what their pursuits are, in what nation they were born, with what

people they have been associated, what religion they profess, or what politics they hold, this is the main spring of the actions of the people, embracing all the powers necessary in performing the duties of life.⁸

Brigham Young uses the word “improvement,” and it is common among Mormons to hear mortality described as a test, a trial, or a school. Elder Bruce C. Hafen comments: “This earth is not our home. We are away at school, trying to master the lessons of ‘the great plan of happiness’ so we can return home and *know what it means to be there*.”⁹ “Improvement,” “test,” “trial,” “progression,” or “school” are all similar terms for an impulse that can also be described as the drive for adventure. I prefer this term to other options because “adventure” is uncommon and therefore may be fresher to the mind, but also because it seems to honor the risk-taking, the courage, and even the righteous ambition inherent in this primary motivator, super-objective, or “grand moving principle and cause” of human action.

We can see the interplay of both of these grand motivating drives—for home and for adventure—at work in many archetypal stories, stories that echo the individual’s journey from home into adventure. Abraham left home and sought the adventure of the priesthood “blessings of the fathers” (Abr. 1:2). The sons of King Mosiah had to plead to get their father’s permission to leave home and face the adventurous challenge of a mission to the Lamanites (Mosiah 28:1–8). Often the search for adventure seems imposed upon people, yet those exiles find that, with the pain and the risk, come otherwise unattainable understanding and growth. Some Bible scholars read the account of the tower or city of Babel (Gen. 11:1–9) as just such an exile. They note that the people wanted to build a community to maintain their security and isolation, but such an “action constitutes a challenge to the divine command to fill the earth.” God’s confusion of the languages and subsequent scattering “thereby promotes diversity at the expense of any form of unity that seeks to preserve itself in isolation from the rest of creation.”¹⁰ These scholars see in Babel a parallel to Christ’s command to preach His gospel throughout the world (Matt. 28:18–20) and in the miraculous endowment to do just such a work at Pentecost.¹¹ A commanded or compelled expulsion also seems to be the case with Adam and Eve, Abraham, Joseph who was sold into

Egypt, Lehi and his family, and the early Latter-day Saints, to name a few. Perhaps the gravitational pull of home is so strong that God has to give us a push to seek the growth-inspiring adventure.

Finally, Christ is our example as well. A comparison of Christ's pre-atonement words in Matthew 5:48 and his post-resurrection reiteration in 3 Nephi 12:48 gives the impression that His completeness or perfection resulted from His willingness to face the infinite challenge of leaving His throne and descending below all things in order to give humankind the opportunity to finally return home. This interplay of the simultaneous drives for home and adventure is a comparison, a figuration, or a configuration that can yield new insights into the virtues and vices. Heiner elaborates the ways that lust, greed, gluttony, envy, vanity, and the desire for power can all be counterfeits for the real satisfaction that one longs for but which can come only from feeling at home with God. One could add that these vices are not mere distortions of the desire for home but may also be expressions of a counterfeit drive for adventure.

It is easy to see how greed is the perverted quest for greatness and accomplishment, for the adventure of improvement. We witness moguls who amass fortunes and empires dwarfed only by their egos and yet who still insatiably desire more. But even the impulse to greed can show a twisted desire for home. C. S. Lewis insightfully connects greed, or at least a lack of giving to the poor, with the desire for control and security: "For many of us the great obstacle to charity lies not in our luxurious living or desire for more money, but in our fear—fear of insecurity."¹² Greed can reveal a desire for security, control, and even peace, or home, but when this desire takes the place of relying on God, it is a counterfeit for the home only God can provide.

Greed is one example of how we can examine the vices as perverted substitutes for home and adventure. Lust is another: the lecherous may constantly and erroneously seek the new adventure of another encounter, another conquest, while simultaneously and futilely seeking the oneness and deep connection of home. The envy of those who lack patience and gratitude causes them to covet both the improvements and the security of others. Anger can be an extreme expression of frustration with one's failure in

either securing home's safety and acceptance or the rewards of adventure. Sloth seems to entail a complete and cowardly lack of adventure in which an inordinate desire for home, peace, and ease replaces healthy ambition, work, effort, "hungering and thirsting after righteousness," and faithful risk-taking.

If sloth is the most obvious perversion of the desire for home, pride is the clearest perversion of the desire for adventure and improvement. Here again Lewis is insightful in his description of vice when he defines pride as counterfeit accomplishment and adventure based on comparison: "Pride is *essentially* competitive—is competitive by its very nature—while the other vices are competitive only, so to speak, by accident. Pride gets no pleasure out of having something, only out of having more of it than the next man." Lewis further clarifies that pride "is enmity. And not only enmity between man and man, but enmity to God."¹³ The particular danger with pride is its powerful counterfeit of home and adventure. Pride makes God and others the enemy, selling the proud short with something false while keeping them from the real adventure of lovingly interacting with others, of learning, and of growing to be like God and enjoying His security, comfort, peace, and rest. Pride's perversions cause its victims to be trapped in the solipsism of self-deification, selfishness, and despair.

Where the vices are perversions of drives for home and adventure, the traditional virtues display those drives being properly used and encouraged. Temperance is the self-control necessary to keep these drives correctly focused. Fortitude, or as Lewis calls it, "guts," is the power and courage to hope for home while struggling as an adventurer and exile.¹⁴ Faith, among other things, is a healthy and exalting blend of trust and risk-taking. Charity is receiving and reflecting Christ's love in ways that support, encourage, and empower others while also providing comfort and security. In contrast with lust, properly used and controlled sexual passion powerfully binds a couple and provides a compelling and breathtakingly satisfying experience of adventure and exploration as well as profound oneness.

Trees of Virtue and of Vice

As just described, the configuration of innate drives for home and adventure offers unique insights into the traditional virtues

and vices. While other religious and philosophical traditions engage notions of a premortal existence, none of those traditions uses those concepts to describe fundamental human drives in this way, nor do they use those concepts to explore the nature of virtue and vice. The value of this configuration comes into greater focus when it is compared with other configurations, like medieval Trees of Virtue and of Vice. Before talking about these trees, it is important to note that many different configurations have emerged over time to suit the needs of many different artists, preachers, philosophers, and audiences.¹⁵ One common and early configuration is the battle motif where virtue and vice fight for possession of the soul.¹⁶ Another configuration is the image of the ladder, where souls attempt to climb successive steps toward a final, celestial goal while the devil and earthy “gravity” attempt to thwart that progress.¹⁷ Sometimes the virtues are understood and visualized as a tower or castle, whereas in other works a House of Pride contrasts with a House of Holiness.¹⁸ These and other configurations are powerful comparisons, useful in understanding the nature of virtue and vice, and these metaphors often lend themselves to visual representation. Such comparisons make the otherwise abstract concrete. They also anchor the abstract in concrete things that can be encountered in daily life, thereby not only making the principles more vivid but also triggering remembrance of those principles through chance daily encounters with their metaphorical analogues.

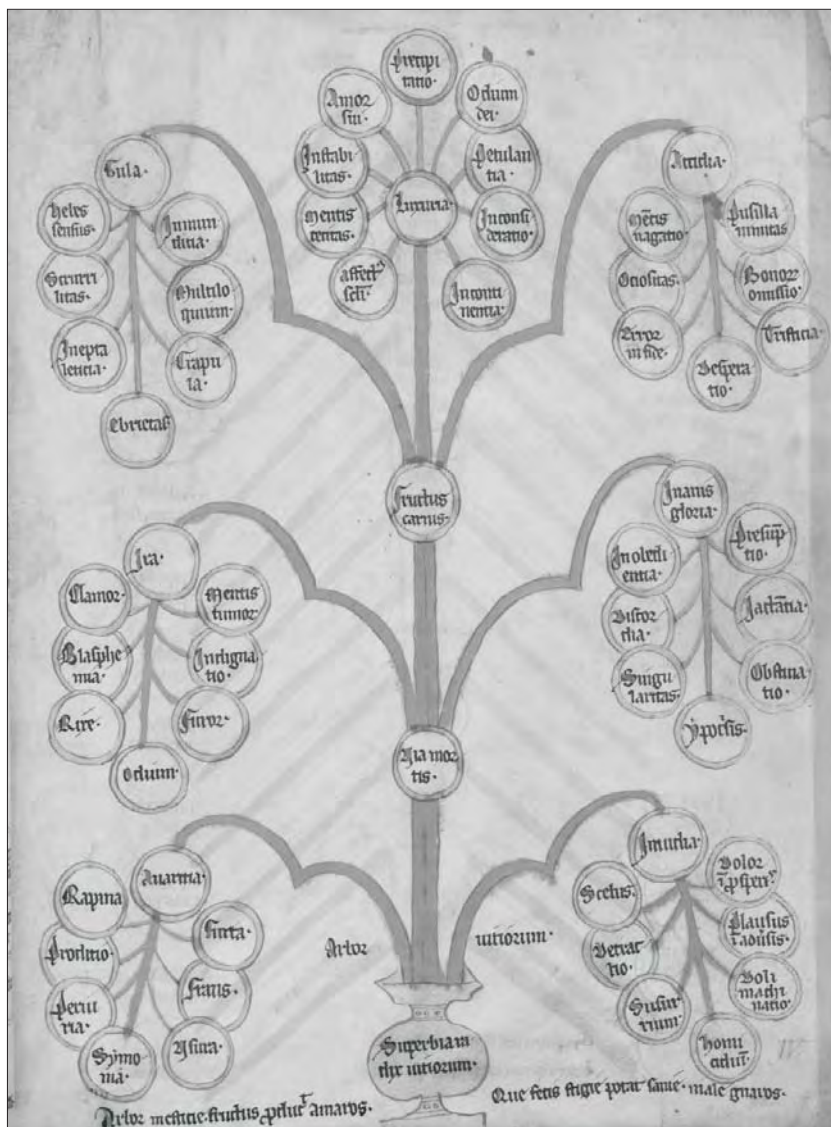
Such reciprocity between daily object and abstract principle would have surely been the experience of students in medieval monastic schools when they saw trees. Schools like those attached to the Cistercian abbey of Kemp in Germany used diagrams to teach theological principles. Those diagrams included the Tree of Virtue and the Tree of Vice, diagrams that are part of a *Speculum Theologiae* collected at Yale as Beinecke MS 416. Such diagrams are powerful teaching tools and effective configurations of virtue and vice. At the base of the Tree of Vice from Beinecke MS 416 (Figures 1 and 2), the inscription reads, “The tree of sadness produces bitter fruits, which makes those knowledgeable of evil drink from the brine of the Stygian dregs.” With its sagging branches and drooping fruit, this tree illustrates, in one complete image, the sad and sickly outcomes of a life dominated by pride,

since, as the inscription on the tree's pot reads, "pride is the root of the vices."

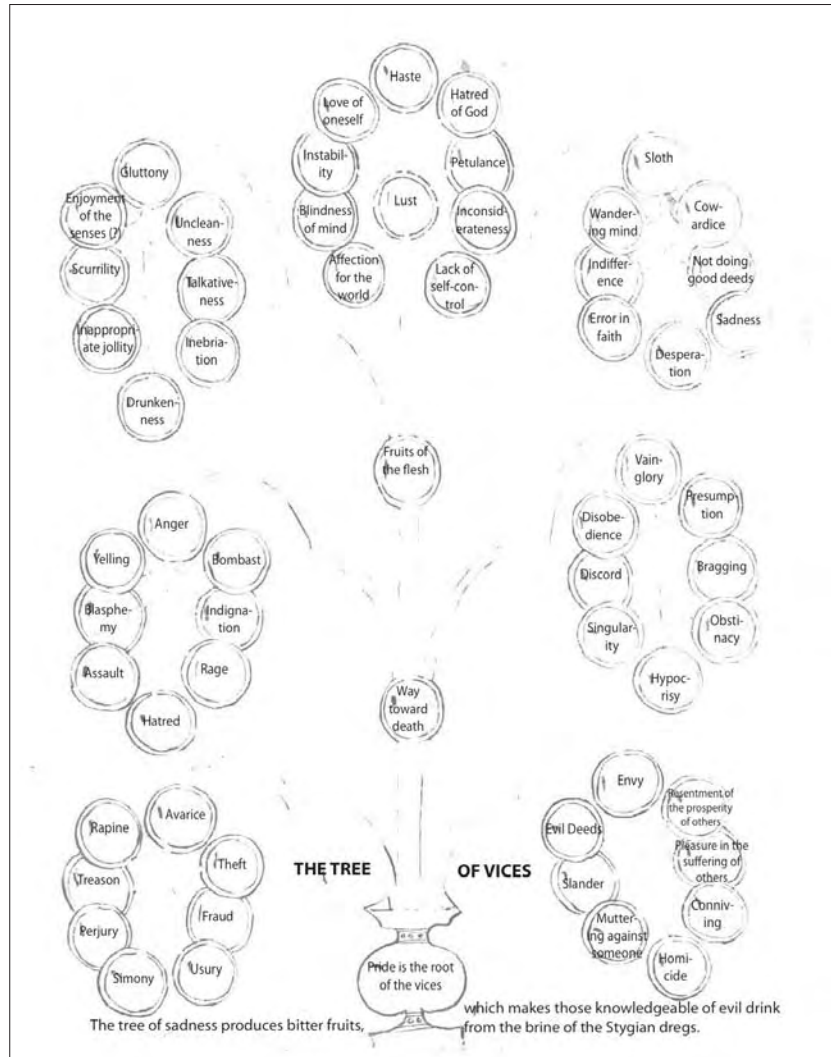
Each branch coming from the tree's trunk reaches a principal vice first, with subsidiary vices clustered around it. On the two lowest branches are avarice and envy accompanied by vices like "theft" and "fraud" or "slander" and "pleasure in the suffering of others." A knot or medallion in the lower third of the tree's trunk warns that this tree marks the "way toward death" with the branches of anger and vainglory emerging from the trunk. The top three vices, gluttony, lust, and sloth, are marked by another medallion describing them as the "fruits of the flesh." With gluttony comes vices like "drunkenness" and "inappropriate jollity." "Blindness of mind" and "lack of self-control" sprout around lust, while "cowardice" and "indifference" grow with sloth.

The opposing, positive parallel for this tree is the Tree of Virtue (Figures 3 and 4). The format for this diagram is identical to that of the Tree of Vices except that here the branches lift upward in physical and spiritual vitality. Instead of a drooping tree of sadness, the inscription here explains: "The tree of joy does not bear bitter fruit, but, extending itself abundantly, it bears the knowledgeable to celestial things." The first two virtues to emerge from the tree, whose root is humility, are prudence and fortitude. Just up the trunk, justice and temperance branch out above a knot/medallion. The tree's designer thus puts the four "classical" and humanistic virtues as emerging first and most fundamentally from the tree. They are the "way toward life" in many respects, including how they secure both "worldly" success and can lay a foundation for the "fruits of the spirit." Those "fruits" appear at the tree's uppermost region as the three theological virtues of faith, charity, and hope.

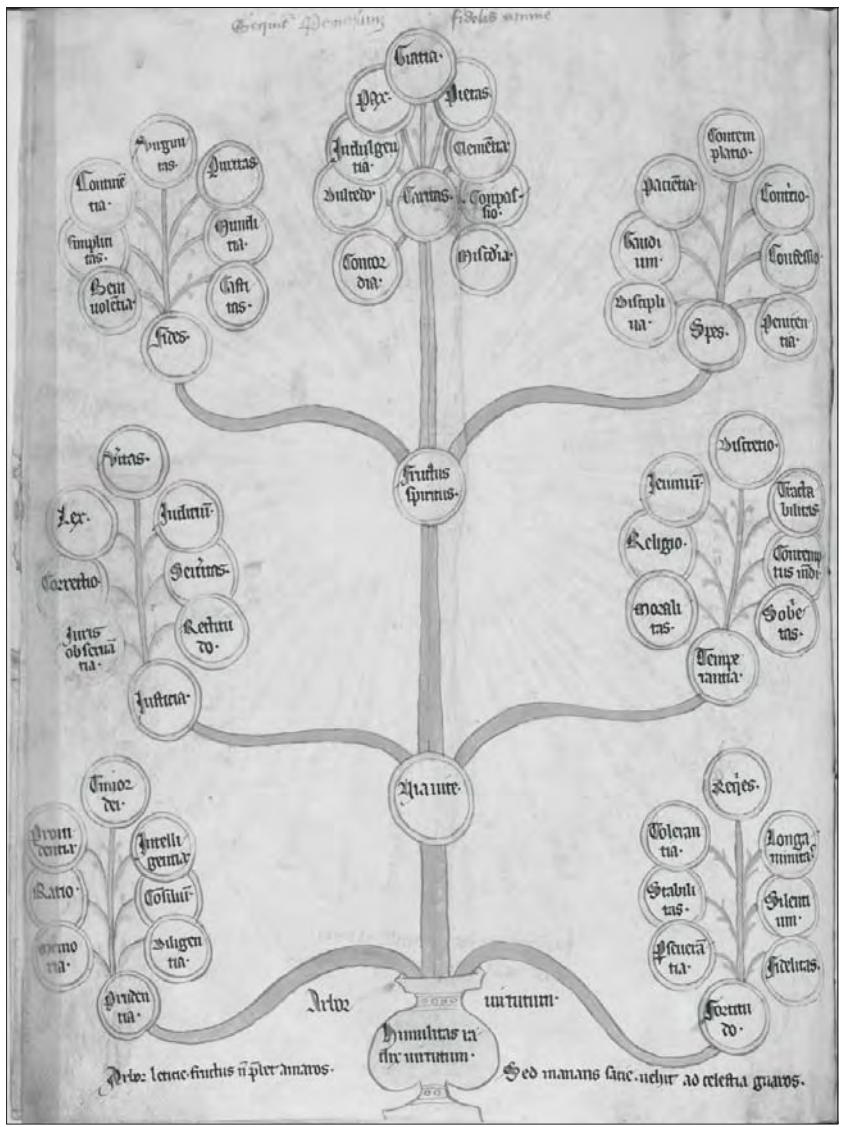
When we place the two diagrams next to one another and examine them carefully, it becomes clear that the vices and virtues on the two trees do not exactly oppose one another. It is hard to see avarice, for example, as the opposite of prudence or faith as the opposite of gluttony. This mismatch is partly because the virtues and vices historically developed separately from one another, converging in late antiquity or the early medieval period. But where it may seem to make more sense to have vices matched with



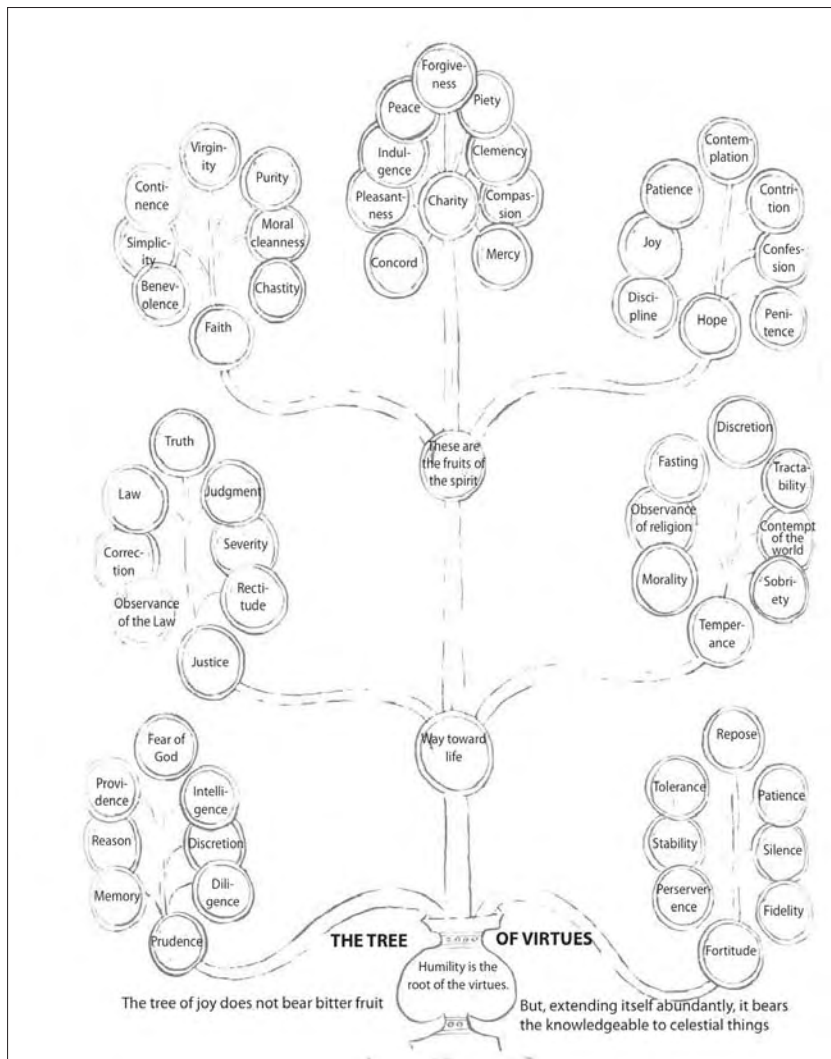
Anonymous late thirteenth-century or early fourteenth-century *Tree of Vices*. Caption translation by Brian Noell. *Speculum Theologiae*, Beinecke MS 416, Yale University.



Anonymous late thirteenth-century or early fourteenth-century: Tree of Vices. Caption translation by Brian Noell. Speculum Theologiae, Beinecke MS 416, Yale University.



Anonymous late thirteenth-century or early fourteenth-century Tree of Virtues. Caption translation by Brian Noell. Speculum Theologiae, Beinecke MS 416, Yale University.



Anonymous late thirteenth-century or early fourteenth-century Tree of Virtues. Caption translation by Brian Noell. Speculum Theologiae, Beinecke MS 416, Yale University.

clearly opposing virtues, to have foolishness oppose prudence, injustice oppose justice, or despair oppose hope, for example, what we find may be more complex and interesting. Some of the parallels, when we examine the entire cluster, do seem to match. Hope's opposition to sloth may seem somewhat mismatched, but with sloth comes "cowardice," "sadness," and "despair," thereby making this cluster an interesting play of contrasts. Even where there seems to be greater slippage, such a slippage could actually trigger new connections and insights. The two diagrams invite contemplation about how temperance's cluster of "discretion," "fasting," and "contempt of the world" contrasts with vainglory and its "discord," "bragging," and "obstinacy." The contrast between faith and gluttony, which may strike us as a counterintuitive comparison, becomes more interesting when "inappropriate jollity," "uncleanliness," and "enjoyment of the senses" are compared with "benevolence," "simplicity," "continence," and "purity."

The intellectual rhymes and half rhymes, like a motet, create beautifully complex and contemplative echoes in the attentive soul. Students who viewed these diagrams would not only see the play of contrasting principles of virtue and vice, but could easily connect them with other trees, specifically trees mentioned in their other biblical training. Such trees include Jesus's teaching that good and evil trees bear good or evil fruit (Matt. 7:17–19) or His teachings at the Last Supper about vines and branches (John 15:1–10). Isaiah celebrates a "rod" growing out of the stem of Jesse and upon that "rod" would be the spirit of the Lord (Isa. 11:1–10). The connection of fruit and the interconnected nature of virtues demonstrated in the diagram also match Peter's discussion about how partaking of the "divine nature" and "giving all diligence" allows one to add successive virtues like faith, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, and others so that one can avoid being "barren [or] unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:4–8). Perhaps most importantly there is the "evil" tree that accompanied Adam and Eve's proud "fall," a tree that is contrasted with the sacrificial "tree" upon which Christ died to redeem them and their descendants.

Besides these trees, the students would also observe the literal trees that surround them. A student who saw the drooping branches and withering leaves of a dying tree might instantly recall the

Tree of Vice and compare that tree to a thriving tree nearby which stands as a natural embodiment of a Tree of Virtue. Such a chance daily encounter could trigger the rich reciprocity of all the above ideas and connections with the literal, physical world.

Dante's Whip and Bridle

Diagrams like the Trees of Virtue and Vice visually configure virtue and vice in compelling and insightful ways. Such literal, graphic representations evoke relationships and invite recollection through connections with everyday experiences. Dante uses powerful images in the *Purgatory* to also make strong connections and to convey his configuration of how to inspire virtue and curtail vice. This configuration also provides new insights into the nature of virtue and vice. It is on the various levels of the mountain of Purgatory that Dante's sinful spirits are purified of their pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony, and lust. What readers encounter at the beginning of each level can be described as a "whip." This metaphorical "whip" forcefully prompts or impels the sinner toward virtue with the presentation of various examples of the virtue that opposes the level's sin.

In Canto 13, where Dante describes the level of the envious, the "whip" is composed of love that opposes envy. The first example is taken from Mary's life, as is the pattern at each level. The envious hear Mary's voice say "Vinum non habent" or "They have no wine."¹⁹ Mary made this sad comment at the wedding feast at Cana; and in response, Jesus performed his first recorded miracle: turning water into wine. What is significant about this act for the envious is that Mary did not rejoice in the misfortune of others. Mary's words express her genuine and heartfelt concern, a concern that seems to have inspired the miracle. The second sound the envious hear is "I am Orestes" (13:32–33), an allusion to the selfless friendship of Orestes and Pylades. When Orestes was condemned to death, Pylades disguised himself as Orestes in order to die in his place. Both friends argue "I am Orestes" in an effort to save the other's life. The final voice is Christ's command spoken in the Sermon on the Mount to "Love your enemies" (13:35–36). These three voices express love for others, friends, and even enemies in sharp and compelling contrast with envy's self-absorption.

When Dante asks Virgil what these voices mean, Virgil replies: “This circle whips the / guilt of envy, and therefore the cords of the whip / are braided of love” (13:37–39). Love is the whip or lash which prompts the envious to act differently. Virgil next promises: “The bridle needs to be of the opposite sound: I / believe, from what I perceive, that you will hear it / before you reach the pass of pardon” (13:40–42). The envious hear just such a restraining “bridle” when they hear the voice of Cain lamenting that, now that his envy has compelled him to kill Abel, everyone will seek to kill him (14:133). The warning here is that envy not only breeds murder but fosters intense fears that others will respond in like manner. After the thundering voice of Cain, the envious hear the voice of Aglauros (14:139). Aglauros took a bribe from Mercury to allow the god to sleep with Aglauros’s sister; but when Aglauros’s envy of her sister led her to thwart Mercury’s plan, the god turned her to stone. These booming voices of warning show how envy can transform tender feelings of family love first to bitterness and then murderous jealousy or stony insensitivity.

Dante’s use of positive examples with the “whip” of virtue contrasted with negative examples with the “bridle” of vice makes these ideas graphic and concrete. In addition, as Dante draws upon a variety of stories from the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Roman traditions, as well as from other tales and even the lives of people he knew, he reinforces the broad application and relevance of those concepts. When Dante’s audience returned to biblical accounts of Cain, Mary, or the Sermon on the Mount or classical stories of Orestes or Aglauros, those readers could reconnect those stories with love and envy. In other levels, Dante shows the power of humility over pride, meekness over wrath, zeal over sloth, poverty over greed, abstinence and moderation over gluttony, and chastity over lust.

Complementary Configurations

What helps push Dante’s penitent up Purgatory’s mountain is the “whip” or prod of virtuous examples—examples taken from the Old Testament, New Testament, and classical world. Images of their vice “bridle” or restrain those souls, helping them turn away from those errors. When Dante’s images come together with

notions of innate desires for home and adventure, what emerges is the synthesis of those drives properly encouraged, harnessed, and directed. As Alma warns his son Shiblon, we are to “bridle all our passions” (Alma 38:12). Dante’s configuration is examples of those who properly and improperly encourage and bridle those passions; the home and adventure configuration explains the source and power of those same passions. Mary and Pylades can eschew the vice of envy because they do not seek a sense of security or home in the misfortunes of others. Instead, they find peace and power in lovingly and courageously extending themselves for others. The home and adventure of love is so great that Pylades finds it worth the risk of his own life. Cain and Aglauros seek their own satisfaction, security, and sense of accomplishment through vice’s counterfeit means and find, in the end, only isolation and destruction. Such an overlay of these complementary configurations of virtue and vice gives a more complex and nuanced view than either could give on its own.

Trees of Virtue and Vice illustrate the fundamental sources of those positive or negative attributes. They also show the complex interrelatedness of the fruits or outcomes of lives dominated by pride or humility. According to these images, humility is the source of all virtue; pride is the root cause of all vice. Here again the configuration yields new insights when compared with that of drives for home and adventure. The “pride” that is the source of all vice is the fundamental misdirection of drives for home and adventure away from God. Such pride is what Lewis would describe as “the complete anti-God state of mind” and being.²⁰ This anti-God state is the “way toward death” listed in the tree’s first medallion and the bitter “fruits of the flesh” described in the second. Such misdirection bears fruits that are counterfeits of the fruits of the Tree of Virtue, bringing forth “indifference” and “cowardice” instead of “patience” and “joy,” “instability” and “lack of self-control” instead of “peace” and “concord,” and “hatred” and “yelling” instead of “truth” and “justice.”

And just as pride is the complete anti-God state of misdirected and misused drives for home and adventure, so humility is the complete Godlike state of those drives’ perfect focus and harmony. An intimate, harmonious connection with the divine brings about humility’s “enthusiasm,” or the energy, vigor, power,

and compassion of an “en-theos,” or God within oneself. The “powers” or virtues that come from such a connection naturally result in prudence and fortitude, temperance and justice, in faith, hope, and charity, as well as the many other fruits that thrive on the Tree of Virtue.

This notion of harmonized and harnessed drives that result in humble enthusiasm yielding the fruit of the Tree of Virtue can shed new light on one of the most unique items on the LDS lists of virtues, namely “divine nature.” This item seems to propose that, by nature, or in the most fundamentally innate manner, all mortals are made to thrive just like the upturned branches on the Tree of Virtue. In fact, when we use all of the configurations—drives for home and adventure, whips and bridles, and trees of virtue and vice—we can see those LDS lists of virtue in a new way.

While the Scout Law seems the least connected to humility as divinely inspired desires and drives, it includes some virtues uniquely appropriate to its audience. Such young men may have a hard time grasping the idea of having “an eye single to the glory of God,” but qualities like “helpful” and “friendly” are readily understood. The Scout Law, not unlike the Aaronic Priesthood, has a preparatory function similar to the way that the theological virtues build on the humanistic ones in the Tree of Virtue. When those young men become missionaries, they will be well prepared to build on the Scout Law’s foundation and to add to it the more God-centered qualities listed in Doctrine and Covenants 4. Sister missionaries will similarly be well prepared to add those attributes in Doctrine and Covenants 4 so as to exercise the faith to do this good work with a knowledge of their divine nature and their individual worth. Even the MormonAds are like Dante’s examples in the way that they prod toward virtue and draw one back from vice. MormonAds also make virtue and vice graphic and real, connecting those principles with real-world experiences just as the metaphorical Trees of Virtue and Vice connect with common, everyday analogues.

One final insight that emerges from this comparison is virtue and vice’s pedagogical importance. The LDS lists of virtues, MormonAds, and the Trees of Virtue and of Vice were all made specifically for the training of young people. Those young people are not only impressionable, but they also find themselves poised

between home and adventure. They find themselves negotiating the desire to metaphorically (and sometimes literally) stay at home, with its security and comfort, and the desire for the adventure of independence and growth. Such a developmental struggle parallels the struggle to negotiate innate spiritual drives for home and adventure. While adolescence seems like a crucial time in this negotiation, and such young people find themselves uniquely at a crossroads between home and adventure, harnessing such powerful drives so that they bear the proper fruits and lead one to God is central to everyone's mortal experience.

A key element of the entire virtues and vices tradition is an exploration of the very nature of virtue and vice. Grasping such complex and important concepts can be difficult. The pedagogical emphasis of that tradition demonstrates that an early understanding is crucial. Thinkers and artists have developed rich and complex configurations to make the nature, dangers, and advantages of those principles clear and concrete. The notion of innate drives for home and adventure provides a powerful metaphor to explain vice's perversion and virtue's proper harnessing, use, and enjoyment of those drives. Such a rich metaphor, founded on premortal beliefs, is a unique LDS contribution to the virtues and vices tradition and to that tradition's commonwealth of configurations.

Notes

1. See Richard Newhauser, *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Age* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005) and his *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) as well as Rebecca Konyndyk DeYoung, *Glittering Vices: A New Look at the Seven Deadly Sins and Their Remedies* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2009).

2. It is important to note that this is not a canonical, biblical tradition; neither the traditional list of virtues nor that of vices is found in the Bible. Though there are lists like Isaiah's "gifts of the spirit" (Isa. 11:1-10), the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12), and Paul's "works of the flesh" and "fruits of the spirit" (Gal. 5:19-32), what eventually emerged as the seven virtues and vices resulted from lists, descriptions, teachings, and writings of many different thinkers in antiquity through the early medieval period.

3. Recent treatments of Evagrius's and Cassian's developments and contributions to the development of the vices are the first two essays in

Newhauser's *In the Garden of Evil*, Columbra Stewart's "Evagrius Ponticus and the 'Eight Generic *Logismoi*,'" and Carole Straw's "Gregory, Cassian, and the Cardinal Vices." The seven virtues seem to be codified first in Saint Ambrose's *Paradise*, where he connects the classical or Greco-Roman virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice with the Judeo-Christian tradition by comparing them to the four rivers of paradise. This brings them into the Christian tradition.

4. John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York: Octagon Books, 1965). This use of the seven deadly sins as part of the spiritual diagnostics of confession was officially reinforced when Pope Innocent III's Fourth Council of the Lateral (1213) made confession mandatory.

5. Barta Heiner, "Counterfeits: A Mess of Pottage," BYU Forum address, May 13, 2008, 6:27 (mp3 cue) http://speeches.byu.edu/download.php/Heiner_Barta_052008mp3.mp3 (accessed on May 28, 2009).

6. *Ibid.*, 6:37.

7. *Ibid.*, 7:23.

8. Brigham Young, *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 87.

9. Bruce C. Hafen, "The Atonement: All for All," *Ensign*, May 2004, 98; emphasis his.

10. Walter Brueggemann et al., *The New Interpreter's Bible: Genesis to Leviticus* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1994), 412–13.

11. *Ibid.*, 414.

12. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper, 2001), 86.

13. *Ibid.*, 122, 124.

14. *Ibid.*, 79.

15. Two excellent resources for different images and configurations of the virtues and the vices are Adolf Katzenellenbogen, *Allegories of the Virtues and Vices in Mediaeval Art from Early Christian Times to the Thirteenth Century*, translated by Alan J. P. Crick (Rpt., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), and Colum Hourihane, *Virtue and Vice: The Personifications in the Index of Christian Art* (Princeton, N.J.: Index of Christian and Princeton University Press, 2000).

16. The earliest example of this is Prudentius's poem *Psychomachia*. This poem inspired many medieval illustrations and other sculptural decorations. This tradition is also behind works like Andrea Mantegna's *Minerva Chases the Vices from the Garden of Virtue* and Paolo Veronese's *The Choice between Virtue and Vice*. See Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, translated by H. J. Thomson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949); Helen Woodruff, *The Illustrated Manuscripts of Prudentius* (Cam-

bridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930); Roger J. Adams, "The Virtues and Vices at Aulnay Re-examined," in *The Twelfth Century*, edited by Bernard S. Levy and Sandro Sticca (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1975), 53–73; Herrad of Landsberg, *Hortus Deliciarum* (London: Warburg Institute, 1979); Joanne S. Norman's *Metamorphoses of an Allegory: The Iconography of the Psychomachia in Medieval Art* (New York: Lang, 1988); and Jennifer O'Reilly's *Studies in the Iconography of the Virtues and Vices in the Middle Ages* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988).

17. The earliest treatment is John Climacus, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), a work that inspired many medieval illustrations. See also the books by Katzenellenbogen and Hourihane cited above.

18. For early treatment of the tower imagery, see the medieval morality play, D. Bevington's "The Castle of Perseverance" in *Medieval Drama* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 791–900; and the houses of Pride and Holiness which are featured in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1979).

19. Dante's *Purgatorio*, translated by Robert M. Durling (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13:28–29.

20. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 122.