

Adam's Clothes

By Craig Paardekooper

Is Character Normally Distributed?

I used to think character was possibly a normal distribution.

But since COVID there has been a polarization of people into more discrete camps of good and evil . I suppose that willingness to injure and kill with a known toxin is quite extreme behavior on the part of some doctors and nurses, as is willingness of some politicians to imprison or quarantine unvaccinated indefinitely in metal boxes or ban unvaccinated from education, work, family, medical help etc.

We typically regard the Nazis as an extreme, not part of the same distribution as normal people. We like to think of them as...different.

What is Character? What is Good?

Anyway, it is interesting to ask what comprises character. Lawfulness is a good definition - willingness to abide by laws that protect other creatures, even when the incentive is to do otherwise.

Jesus summed up the law and the prophets with his famous commandment - do unto others - which means having regard for the rights and welfare of others.

The welfare of others is no more manifest than in the concept of harm and suffering . Suffering is the psychological experience of loss of welfare.

In defining character we can distill first what makes for a good life - by looking at the principles of law that enshrine what is good - not causing unnecessary suffering - do no harm - do unto others

Once we have a clear definition of good then it can be used to assess character.

Rights and Responsibilities

Rights are not absolute but linked to responsibilities . This principle is embodied in law which says that violation of the rights of others can lead to loss of freedom (prison) loss of property (fines) or even loss of life (death penalty) . So our rights are not absolute but conditional upon our responsibilities being fulfilled.

So we can lose our rights by violating the rights of other creatures. By upholding the rights of others we protect our own rights .

What is good may extend beyond what is lawful, and violation of what is good may also derogate our rights.

The Dignity of Man

Our dignity as human beings resides in our rights – but when we violate law we compromise our rights and our dignity. When Adam disobeyed God, he felt naked, and sought to cover himself. Adam's true clothes were his righteousness, his goodness.

If we earnestly uphold the good and lawful, then our own rights will be secured and we will be raised to our true dignity as human beings.

Law and Love

When goodness and righteousness are upheld, they generate as a tangible spirit of peace and love.