

## **Virtue and Selfishness**

by  
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In Harrisburg, there are currently two house proposals to abolish or change Pennsylvania's no-fault divorce law. Supporters believe abolishing no-fault divorce would affirm traditional "family values" and bolster society's moral compass.

Consider a situation where a parent of a young child abandons the family for any reason. In the end, the parent can find a new honey, keep more money and still see sonny, where is the incentive to stay. Although a child has a great ability to distinguish good from evil, the psychological harm inflicted is devastating. Dysfunctional has become a word that we have almost grown to accept as normal. But isn't the root problem something more than just keeping people together?

I believe that self-centeredness in our society has been on the rise. We have become a nation that unwittingly encourages selfishness. Self is subliminally glorified on television. It is routinely flaunted by sports figures and rock stars. It may even be unknowingly advanced by some churches.

Perhaps selfishness is furthered most by a society that has grown apathetic and fosters a legal system that seldom makes people pay for the destructive consequences of their selfish actions particularly with children. It is selfishness which is at the core of our country's divorce problems and other moral problems.

If society rewards selfish actions, is it a surprise that morality often becomes whatever anyone thinks it is? It changes with the situation and the moment. It turns to whatever works and feels comfortable. The moral vacuum created through the absence of absolutes allows shame, humiliation and guilt to be freely exercised through the misguided promotion of self. Excuses abound and many are able to clearly rationalize and justify almost any kind of wrongful action. People no longer sin today. They just make mistakes.

Almost everyone would agree that virtue is good and that we need more of it. Almost all would agree that such things as love, honesty and loyalty are desirable. However, many hold an understandable belief that suggests the promotion of virtue would favor one form of religion over another with intolerance to follow. Intolerance of anyone is indeed deplorable. But intolerance of anyone's wrongful selfish actions is not. In our zeal to accommodate everyone are we also beginning to accommodate everything?

The opposite of love is not hatred but apathy, the absence of all feeling. Suppose some form of twisted intelligence was behind evil. Is it conceivable that evil's real agenda would be to lull us into a state of numb tolerance of all that is not good? Wouldn't it logically follow that evil wants to rid society of any involvement of that which makes us

feel completely for others - love. Since most faiths advocate love and selflessness, wouldn't it be evil's sinister plan to make faith appear irrelevant and unnecessary in what we legislate and how we legislate?

If we really want to affirm family values, the war should be waged against evil by endorsing the virtues that are the progeny of faith. Laws that strongly discourage the break-up of the family are worthy of consideration. However, there are a variety of other steps that can be taken to positively promote virtue. Worthwhile tax credits for families would be a great start. Compulsory marriage education classes for those engaged would not be a bad idea either. Giving religious schools a level playing field with virtue-neutral public schools by enacting school choice laws would be another step in the right direction.

And we don't need to restrict pro-virtue legislation to family issues. Eliminating all campaign advertising while guaranteeing all candidates on a ballot the right to debates would dramatically improve the cynical political psyche of this country. Perhaps mandatory military or public service of at least one year for everyone in this country would make us all in some way responsible for the freedom we so often take for granted.

Selfishness will be with us forever but the return of virtue would severely limit its destructive intent. Drinking and driving is being successfully stigmatized as irresponsible and unacceptable. We can do the same in other areas too. Let's reinstate what is good.



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