VIRTUE: RELEVANCE IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICS

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Virtue: Relevance in Contemporary Politics

The concept of virtue holds a prominent place in the history of western political thought. According to many theorists, virtue is demonstrated through values and actions developed in the political state. Many studies concentrate on some particular manifestation of virtue, like justice or beneficence. However, there are fewer studies that consider the relevance of virtue itself to contemporary political theory and politics. Early and modern political theory presents a variety of approaches to conceptualizing virtue within the political state and social society. Each approach develops a concept of virtue building upon or diverging from that of previous theories. How has virtue developed over time to become relevant and consistent with contemporary theory and politics?

Contemporary theories and structures of western society have developed based on the building blocks left by those of the past. The concept of virtue as it relates to contemporary politics and society is no different. Current examples of politics show signs of common virtues among individuals and government using virtue in action. Some examples may stem from government structure and its laws, community and local politics, election campaigns, media, the War on Terrorism, etc. The possibility of consistently using virtue in contemporary politics makes this issue relevant and important to the study of politics and the progression of politics in the future.

By studying the evolution of virtue, we can determine how virtue came to be, identify a possible range of virtues, and establish how it is used in different contexts. Identifying virtues and their contexts as they evolved over time creates the base for establishing virtues and contexts in current political structures. It provides examples for analysis and comparison to determine relevancy. For example, in Plato’s Republic, the
courage used by the guardian class who protected the Republic could be compared to the current idea of military and how the government expects them to act virtuously in protecting the whole of western society (Losco vol. I 75, Plato bk. IV 125).

Within the body of this research, I will discuss both early and modern concepts of virtue. Many theorists have contemplated and established their ideas about virtues. In early political theory, Plato posited, four key virtues that were characteristic of the classes developed within the Republic: Wisdom, Courage, Moderation, and Justice (Losco vol. I 74-77). Medieval thinkers like Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas considered religious virtues including faith, hope, and charity (Losco vol. I 211, 243-246). These approaches stressed the contributions of individual actions to the common good as well as to the welfare of the individuals displaying them. Virtuous action continued into early and modern political thought. Niccolo Machiavelli considered bold action or virtù in order to preserve the community (Losco vol. I 338, Strauss 301).

Theorists like Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau see virtue as consenting to and obeying the rules of the social contract created to bind us all together. Mary Wollstonecraft discussed virtue as it applied to both women and men establishing both negative and positive virtues. Also, Wollstonecraft favored virtue in passion and those that stimulated the mind (Losco vol. II 248, Wollstonecraft 14). William Galston identifies liberal virtues such as law-abidingness, independence, tolerance, ethics, adaptability, patience, etc. These virtues are developed within liberal society, economics, and politics forming a connection between institutions and the individual. He considers liberal virtues as a means to an end and intrinsically valuable in contributing to liberal good (Galston, “Liberal” 1287). Alasdair MacIntyre carries through
with virtue in action, exercising virtue in human activity. He also considers characteristics and requirements of virtues that appear in different contexts as virtue develops in social relationships and political structures (MacIntyre. “After Virtue” 140).

In this study, I argue that these ideas of virtue and several other concepts developed from early to modern political thought have relevance to contemporary politics today. I will first consider an analysis of early and modern concepts of virtue. Second, these concepts will be compared to determine whether they are or are not relevant to current issues and contexts of politics such as government and societal structures, policy, the role of media, etc. Third, I end with a discussion of the particular virtues that are consistent with current politics and speculate about the future of the concept of virtue for the study and practice of politics.

Development of Early Political Virtue

In the earliest conceptions of virtue, Thucydides wrote his History of the Peloponnesian War and Melian Dialogue establishing four key virtues and asserting the potential of virtue among men. Towards the end of the Peloponnesian War, Athenians docked on the island of Melos. The Melians, like others the Athenians tried to conquer, were given a choice to surrender to the Athenians or be destroyed by them (Losco vol. I 14, 38). Athenians argue that the Melians should act in their own self-interest to surrender, not succumbing to the might of Athenian forces. The Athenians rejected the traditional ideas of virtue that the will of the stronger always succeeds the will of the weaker because it goes against a man’s nature and desire to have security, honor, and the benefits of life (Strauss 17). Athenians further argue that there is no justice in virtue (Strauss 18). The common good cannot always be found among individuals, and it is in
their best interest to overtake them (Strauss 18). Melians resist arguing that, as neutrals in the war, there was no need to fight them; they were not enemies of Athens (Losco vol. I 38-40). Melians argue that justice is a virtue based on one’s own best interest and the common good. They suggest it is in their best interest to refute the Athenians, holding strong to their freedom and not being subject to slavery (Losco vol. I 40). In the end, Athenians were eventually able to conquer the Melians (Losco vol. I 42-43).

Thucydides indicates four virtues demonstrated by man: wisdom, moderation, courage, and prudence (Losco vol. I 20, 37, and 42). Wisdom and moderation are established as virtues of credibility in the battle between Corinth and Corcyra. Corcyra uses wisdom and moderation as part of government policy to avoid alliances with Corinth (Losco vol. I 20-21). During Pericles Funeral Oration, Thucydides describes courage as a virtue of freedom. The courageous will not relax in times of war and will not feel humiliation or hatred towards death. They embrace their noble sacrifice (Losco vol. I 37). Thus, Thucydides does not then see justice as virtue, but the prudence to defy superiors, stand up to your equals, and treat those inferior with moderation (Losco vol. I 42). Prudence is the closest that Thucydides comes to justice as virtue.

Socrates developed his concept of virtue through the dialectic method or by making an assertion prompting questions and answers out of his students and other individuals he came across. He used this method to engage others in scholarly conversation including Meno, a sophist traveling from Athens (Weiss 6). Both individuals debate their own concepts and definitions of virtue. Socrates discusses his “priority of definition” principle that without knowing what virtue is he could not make an initial definition (Weiss 22). Meno is prompted by Socrates to create a definition of
virtue. Virtue is to desire fine things and to have the power to acquire them (Weiss 23, 32). This would make two criteria of virtue in man: “a penchant for the fine and power” (Weiss 32). He pushes Meno to express desire, considering if desires of individuals can be established as good or bad based on individual want and judgments (Weiss 34-35).

Socrates determines that desire is a source of wretchedness and that a better definition to argue would be knowledge is virtue (Weiss 36, 134). The basic structure of his argument suggests that virtue is good and beneficial, that knowledge includes wisdom which allows the soul to be considered good, and that virtue becomes either the whole or at least part of wisdom (Weiss 134). Thus, virtue is considered wisdom, and it does not come by nature. (Weiss 137). As virtue in knowledge and wisdom develop overtime, they become teachable and are those virtues Socrates considers to be taught by the philosopher (Weiss 140). Socrates expands on his theory of virtue in discussions in Plato’s Republic.

In Plato’s Republic, a good city is created based on a conversational debate between several individuals including Socrates, a prominent sophist, two of Socrates’ students, and a wealthy man and his son hosting the dinner being provided. Plato describes the good city as having a three level class system: Rulers, Guardians, and Artisans (Losco vol. I 59). Following in Thucydides’ footsteps, Socrates describes four cardinal virtues demonstrated by each class: Wisdom, Courage, Moderation, and Justice (Losco vol. I 74-77). First, wisdom and knowledge of the ruling class is used to counsel and guide the city by providing rules, opinions, and advice (Losco vol. I 74-75, Plato bk. IV 124). Guardians preserve wisdom set down by the rulers, serve as a police of sorts for the state, and protect citizens from others and each other (Losco vol. I 75,
Plato bk. IV 125). Moderation or temperance is experienced when classes work and stay together. For example, individuals in the artisan class shouldn’t think they could be a member of the ruling class. There is no class mobility; instead they must accept their position conforming to the Noble Lie (Losco vol. I 76, Plato bk. IV 128-129).

Lastly, there is justice or what Socrates considers to be what is leftover. This is different from Thucydides’ idea of prudence that lacks justice within society. Justice can be found when citizens mind their own business with everyone doing his/her own job and not mingling with other classes. Socrates suggests that justice is not often thought of and lies at each individual’s feet. Justice is something to shoot for that only the philosopher obtains within his soul (Losco vol. I 77, Plato bk. IV 128). The soul is smaller making justice harder to see by other individuals who find justice easier in the city. The philosopher thus distances himself further from the city allowing him to use reason to stop, think, and evaluate justice (Losco vol. I 70-71). Socrates describes both justice and moderation similarly within the city. However, Socrates differentiates them by suggesting that justice is the method, and moderation is the harmony produced by the method. Justice reconciles actions between individual good and the common good producing moderation between the classes (Losco, vol I. 76-77, Plato bk. IV 128-129).

Overall, Socrates and Plato describe the concept of virtue as beneficial to the whole of society at the expense of the individual. The philosopher creates an exception to this view. Philosophers distance themselves from the needs of the city allowing them to use virtue within the soul to benefit their own self-interest (Losco vol. I 70-71). Eventually, the philosopher is forced to give up this individual interest and power to become the philosopher king (Losco vol. I 77, Plato bk. VI 129-130). This suggests that
justice in the soul also demands a certain amount of civic justice, which some philosophers require for a societal government to be self-sustaining (Galston, “Civic” 2).

Philosophers like Aristotle took a different approach to developing virtue within nature and society. Virtues identified by Aristotle fall between two areas of thought, intellectual and moral virtues (Aristotle bk. II 33). Intellectual virtue is obtained through teaching that takes time and experience, which is usually reserved for the philosopher. Moral virtue is formed in individual habits developing over time (Aristotle bk. II 34). Nature provides individuals the capability to receive virtues, which is then perfected by habit (Aristotle bk. II 35). Any individual can experience moral virtue. Both pain and pleasure test the moral state of an individual found within nature and society (Aristotle bk. II 38). Pleasure forces individuals to do what is necessary, and pain forces individuals to refrain from doing things that are considered noble (Aristotle bk. II 39-40). It is a battle between excess and deficiency within the moral state. Virtue is the mean between this excess and deficiency (Aristotle bk. II 37-38). Aristotle determines that “Virtue then is a state of deliberate moral purpose consisting in a mean that is relative to ourselves, the mean being determined by reason, or as a prudent man would determine it” (Aristotle bk. II 47). This establishes a golden mean that is a virtuous comfort zone between deficiency and excess by practicing or being trained by laws creating a mean state (Aristotle bk. II 37-39, Losco vol. I 108-110).

Aristotle identifies ten key virtues within the mean state: courage, temperance, liberality, magnificence, high-mindedness, anger, truthfulness, friendliness, modesty, and righteous indignation (Aristotle bk. II 49-52, Murray 837). Each virtue has different deficiencies and excesses than the other. For example, magnificence corresponds to an
excess of taste or vulgarity with a deficiency of meanness; while liberality has an excess of prodigality and deficiency of illiberality (Aristotle bk. II 49-50). Within the mean state, there is a distinction made between involuntary and voluntary actions based on ignorance (Aristotle bk. III 58). Actions taken based on passions and desires are considered voluntary actions. Aristotle determines that virtue, vice, and the moral state are all voluntary actions within the mean state (Aristotle bk. II 53). Apart from Socrates and Platonic virtue, Aristotle is able to prescribe virtue that is beneficial to both the individual and society. Individuals benefit from developing moral virtues over time that result in a mean state balancing deficiency and excess (Aristotle bk. II 34, 49-52). Then, society benefits based on interactions between intellectual and moral virtue creating moral purpose of virtue (Aristotle bk. II 47). Thus individual virtue is not sacrificed to the benefit of society, instead contributing to its good and sustainability.

During the Great Roman Empire, a statesman named Marcus Tullius Cicero established a more direct approach to virtue emphasizing the importance of virtue in government. Cicero argues the reliance of using virtue to maintain its existence. This suggests virtue has a more useful place in the government (Strauss 159). The statesman who acquires the principles of virtue and who can persuade others to do the same in government is considered superior to those who abstain from political participation (Strauss 159). He considers duty to the state as the ultimate virtue, and stability of the statesman is of the highest value to the state (Losco vol. I 157-159). There are two kinds of virtues found within the state, applied and abstract (Losco vol. I 149-150). Cicero favors applied virtue. Demonstrating applied virtue, virtue in action shines and is the highest form of virtue in government based on service given by the
statesman (Losco vol. I 149). This establishes a similarity between Platonic virtue and Cicero’s virtue. By exercising civic virtue, the individual continues to serve the state even if reasons vary. This insinuates a support for society at some expense to the individual.

During the Medieval Era, those of Christianity looked to those virtues that brought individuals closer to the city of God. St. Augustine establishes three key virtues in his City of God. First is Faith, the love of God. Then, there is Hope and Charity, doing unto others, as you would have them do unto you (Losco vol. I 211). He suggests that true virtues are impossible without religion constituting these virtues in the city of man (Losco vol. I 210-211). St. Augustine describes two types of virtue within the city of man: Christian and Pagan virtue (Strauss 180). In establishing what brings individual citizens of the city towards common good, justice is the cornerstone of virtue in society (Strauss 180-181). He suggests that being right by justice instead of being right by law is essential to society in that where there is no justice there can be no right (Strauss 181). However since God has no ability to govern characteristics of the city, there can be no true justice within the city. This insinuates that true justice can only be found in a city dedicated to God and Christian virtues (Losco vol. I 210).

Niccolo Machiavelli creates a change in how individuals consider virtue developing what he calls virtú (Losco vol. I 338, Strauss 301). Virtú is Machiavelli’s judicious alteration of virtue, using it in a traditional and modern sense of the word (Strauss 301). Virtú means to be both bold and cunning, taking bold action when necessary, and by preserving the community (Losco vol. I 337-338). Machiavelli emphasizes the importance of virtú to the fortune of individuals and society. He
considers fortune to control at least half of individual actions leaving the individual to control the other half. Fortune strikes when powers have not been organized against it; therefore, striking purposely where it will find no resistance (Losco vol. I 338). Machiavelli suggests individuals tend to rely on luck against fortune, but luck eventually runs out. Virtú helps to control fortune by expanding opportunities for individuals to be prepared and flexible, potentially producing better outcomes for the individual and society (Losco vol. I 338-339). Matching circumstances with methods can help ensure success, but if methods do not match or times and circumstances change abruptly, fortune can still strike (Losco vol. I 339).

Throughout the early development of virtue, there are clear lines of transition between emphases on virtue benefitting society and the individual. Thucydides demonstrates how to engage with the state from the community level using virtue. Virtue then becomes beneficial to society as a whole at the cost of individual’s virtue and needs. According to Socrates and Plato, individuals demonstrate civic virtue to further the sustainability of society (Losco vol. I 70-71). Aristotle combines intellectual and moral virtues to create individual virtues that help to sustain society (Aristotle bk. II 33, 47). During Medieval times, virtues concentrated on an individual’s ability to become closer to the city of God by producing good actions and faith (Losco vol. I 211, Strauss 180-181). Niccolo Machiavelli brings the transition between the early and modern political theory on virtue making a change from faith to reason. Machiavelli suggests that taking virtuous and bold action is necessary to preserve society reacting to circumstances that potentially change unexpectedly (Losco vol. I 338-339). In modern political virtue, virtuous action takes place in a variety of circumstances impacting both
the individual and society, causing a simultaneous sustainability or failure of society as a whole. Many modern and contemporary political philosophers contemplate these virtues presenting a positive outlook on virtue in a changing society.

**Development of Modern Political Virtue:**

In modern political virtue, there is a movement in western political society towards virtue and its role in democratic society. John Locke introduces his conception of virtue based on liberal democratic theory leading to the development of political liberalism (Devine 253-254). While virtue is not a main focus of John Locke’s political theory, virtue is a large component of political liberalism. Political liberalism creates liberal virtues within society (Devine 253, Rawls “Liberalism” 191). Further development of political liberalism can be found throughout this study.

Moving towards reason, Jean-Jacques Rousseau determined that virtue in society is living by principle. Virtue is considered necessary in civil society. However, Rousseau debates whether virtue is good in itself. He considers whether virtue can be both desirable and effective in preserving society (Strauss 578). Rousseau develops virtue by social contract, but under what he calls the general will. Each person exchanges individual freedom and virtue for moral freedom that is established by the general will (Losco vol. II 141). The general will considers both the common interest and private interests creating a sum of wills in society (Losco vol. II 159). Having virtue under the control of the general will suggests more individuals will live by principles set by government and effectively preserve society longer.
Edmund Burke considered prudence to be the first and most important of all virtues. Using prudence he distinguishes between presumptive virtue and actual virtue. Presumptive virtue (wisdom) occurs less frequently and is found among gentlemen born into wealthier families that learn self-respect (Strauss 693). Actual virtue happens more frequently but is more uncertain occurring only when prudence has failed (Strauss 694). Burke suggests that actual virtue is for emergencies only, and if not, ordinary individuals with no cleverness and knowledge are encouraged to cast out others causing chaos in society. In this theory, it’s important for actual virtue to follow behind presumptive virtue. This allows virtues like moral prudence to be separated from lesser virtues like cleverness (Strauss 694). Burke establishes a hierarchy of virtue within society, similar to development of virtue made by Socrates and Plato in the Republic.

Great women of political thought have also established concepts of virtue vital to its development. In government, Mary Wollstonecraft emphasizes equality among humans and avoiding abuse of power to create more virtue and happiness within society (Wollstonecraft 7). Women should have the ability to acquire human virtues and be considered rational creatures in the same manner as men (Wollstonecraft 37). Educationally, the understanding of virtue is taught to enable the individual to become independent (Wollstonecraft 14). In becoming more independent, Wollstonecraft suggests that women will rely less on negative virtues like docility and more on positive virtues like reason (Losco vol. II 248).

The will to power developed by Friedrich Nietzsche is the source of he used to revise traditional concepts of virtue. He prescribed virtues that are dedicated passions (Strauss 844). Traditional virtue he compares with wisdom and sleep that produces self-
conscious creation. However, Nietzsche sees virtue as creativity and self-realization created by virtues like sincerity and integrity (Strauss 844). Nietzsche describes several other core virtues among society such as hate, morality, historical sense, pity, honesty, and cruelty (Nietzsche 148, 152-156, and 159). Each virtue impacts individuals and society differently and can come as a response to action. For example, hate comes from loving then losing, and pity stems from the experience and balance of pleasure and pain (Nietzsche 148, 154-155).

Another point Nietzsche makes about virtue reverses the theory provided by Wollstonecraft in how virtue is established for women. Nietzsche suggests that women have failed in virtue and that the independence of women is a terrible development (Nietzsche 163). He states that women shouldn’t seek enlightenment and virtues. Instead, they should understand what men would want for women (Nietzsche 164). For example, he says women should not take initiative as a cook in the kitchen knowing not what food means physiologically. If women have gained virtue in the kitchen, they would have been thinking creatures from the start of time. Nietzsche views women as bad cooks with no sense of reason in the kitchen, and as one of the biggest downfalls to expanding the evolution and virtue of man (Nietzsche 165).

Development of Contemporary Political Virtue:

Part of virtue is making judgments. Robert Dahl compares moral judgments with human beings and how that impacts their lives and virtues as they develop. Judgments can provide intrinsically equal consideration to each individual and their interests that produce virtues. He calls this the “principle of intrinsic equality” (Dahl 65). Dahl uses Plato’s Republic to show how guardians within the city use their virtue (courage) to
serve the good of all. Then, guardians make judgments based on their knowledge of societal good and how to accomplish it (Dahl 70). Dahl suggests that decisions made by the individual and those made by government in the city are not the same or equal (Dahl 71). For example, virtuous judgments and decisions require ethics for determining policy design within society, which would be very different between the individual and government based on virtues like justice and fairness that can affect and are affected by resources and incentives (Dahl 71-72). However, it is important to note that knowledge and power are not the same; power can have side effects for those who use it potentially causing corruption (Dahl 72). Government decisions also require the virtue of incorruptibility. By having a resistance to power and having a dedication to public good, decisions should provide benefits for more than the government (Dahl 73).

John Rawls establishes virtues as moral and are considered sentiments of those dispositions and tendencies that are regulated by the need to act based on moral principles (Rawls, “Justice” 167). The principles of justice and right can be used to define moral virtues and he considers the idea of justice as fairness (Rawls, “Justice” 167). In a just society based on moral virtues, citizens will have an appropriate sense to act on justice to ensure its enactment. In other cases, citizens can act on principles of justice by following the lead of others as opposed to acting based on having a just society (Rawls, “Justice” 382-383). Rawls makes a distinction between virtues and natural assets. Virtues are sentiments that lead individuals and government to act based on principles of right and justice. Natural assets are natural powers that develop through education and are used based on societal regulations and standards (Rawls, “Justice” 383). Moral virtues strengthen and maintain sentiments within the society,
while natural assets like imagination and endurance only provide intention or enhancement to get things accomplished within society (Rawls, “Justice” 383).

Rawls discusses several individual virtues including shame, self-command, morality of authority, morality of association, judiciousness, and integrity (Rawls, “Justice” 390-391, 408-409, 413, 453-455). Shame comes from prizing personal excellences expected by both the individual and society to be a requirement and encouragement of life. Good combined with moral worth results in virtues such as shame based on its excellences (Rawls, “Justice” 390). Each virtue has its own triggering excellences such as self-command having the excellences of strength, self-control, and courage (Rawls, “Justice” 391). Morality of association and morality of authority prompt different virtues to appear based on circumstances. For example, morality of association can prompt cooperative virtues like integrity, justice, fairness, and trust. They can also prompt vices, or negative virtues, such as dishonesty and unfairness (Rawls, “Justice” 413). This is similar to excesses and deficiencies previously discussed by philosophers like Aristotle. In other instances, society can come under tremendous doubt and a loss of faith in long standing values prompting integrity virtues like truth, commitment, determination, and authenticity (which are included as individual excellences) (Rawls, “Justice” 455). By combining these virtues with justice found in society, it can result or bring back autonomy and objectivity among citizens (Rawls, “Justice” 456).

Virtue can also be found in political liberalism. John Locke was thought to be one of the first to develop liberal virtues in his political liberalism (Devine 253). Political liberalism creates liberal virtues. Rawls looks to find a common conception between
political virtue and conceptions of good. For example, neutrality can lead to free rational discussion among reasonable persons capable of producing thought and judgment concerned with finding the truth or reasonable agreement. This process develops good neutral procedures, which are essential to political liberalism (Rawls, “Liberalism” 191).

Unlike neutrality, justice as fairness cannot be procedurally neutral, but tries to gain overlapping consensus within society. Neutrality can affect justice by changing its conception. Although depending on the definition of equal opportunity, justice as fairness can aim to be neutral. Justice as fairness tries to provide a medium of focus for the overlapping consensus (Rawls, “Liberalism” 192-193). Thus justice as fairness is linked to political virtues like those of cooperation like tolerance and civility (Rawls, “Liberalism” 194). Virtues characterize the good individual within the democratic state. They are shared by citizens and connected with forms of judgment and conduct creating a base for fair cooperation (Rawls, “Liberalism” 195). For this reason, Rawls distinguishes between political virtues and other individual virtues like those found in family life or religious doctrines (Rawls, “Liberalism” 195). This separates what virtues would be enhanced politically from the non-political (Rawls, “Liberalism” 195).

Alasdair MacIntyre uses the building blocks left by those like Aristotle and Rawls to advance his concept of virtue. His justification for virtue is formed based on fundamental moral virtues. Rawls establishes fundamental moral virtues as virtues that can effect desires acting on principles of right. According to MacIntyre virtue is justified by rules and principles developed within society (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 112). MacIntyre compares humans and animals (like dolphins) as dependent and rational
practical reasoners having different aspects of social relationships in life with a large portion devoted to virtue (MacIntyre, “Animals” 82).

Different types of virtues are found in heroic societies developing virtue in action. MacIntyre considers virtue within different heroic societies such as Athens and those portrayed in the Iliad. Heroic virtues like courage and fidelity can only be found in particular kinds of humans and social structures that develop certain characteristics. For example in many societies, morality is tied socially at the local level and by inheriting virtues (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 115-116). This suggests a connection or bond between virtues and social structure creating a single set of social bonds that does not yet include morality (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 116). MacIntyre adds that heroic virtues require a specific kind of individual and social structure (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 119).

Social bonds and structure can create passions that invade the virtues of humans within heroic societies such as those that appear based on relations of friendship and religion (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 117). This implies morality in heroic societies is linked to social structure and the experience of heroic virtues that happens through tradition only with individuals inheriting understanding from the past (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 119).

Recently, virtues have become separated from a traditional context of practice and theory. Many virtues are understood as natural passions experienced by each individual, or dispositions that control the negative effects of passions (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 212). MacIntyre describes natural and artificial virtues within society. Natural virtues are qualities an individual with normal passions and desires finds useful. Artificial virtues are created by the social structure preventing passions and desires of self-interest that produce negative effects (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 213). This produces a
natural use of generosity and an artificial need to follow principles and rules of justice, even if results do no benefit our own self-interests (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 213).

There are many contexts in society that form virtue. MacIntyre compares both reason and desire as contexts, asking how to provide good reason for taking action on one desire over another and how it will impact the individual and/or others (MacIntyre, “Animals” 86). Reason and desire transition throughout an individual’s lifetime by developing qualities of intellectual and moral virtues leading them towards good (MacIntyre, “Animals” 87). There must be a significant range of intellectual and moral virtues in creating individuals that are independent practical thinkers (MacIntyre, “Animals” 96). Teachers provide continuing and unconditional care for children that helps child development and the ability of children to inherit virtues over time. The individual moves from a childhood state initiating the reason for acting immediately on desire to evaluating and revising virtuous action to eventually replace them with new and better ones (MacIntyre, “Animals” 91). The context of self-knowledge develops through social relationships balancing and potentially correcting self-judgments. Most importantly, self-knowledge requires virtues of honesty and truthfulness to have self-examination and accountability of others (MacIntyre, “Animals” 95). Individuals owe the attainment of such virtues to those they depend on, like teachers (MacIntyre, “Animals” 96). Thus without virtue, individuals cannot protect themselves against stupidity, neglect, malice, acquisitiveness, and defective sympathies (MacIntyre, “Animals” 98).

Virtue is characterized by having the individual ability to recognize the stakes in each situation, identify immediate threats, and come up with a just action (MacIntyre, “Animals” 92). Virtue can be either agreeable and useful or disagreeable and harmful to
the individual such as temperateness that can be agreeable in moderation but disagreeable in excess (MacIntyre, “Animals” 88). MacIntyre highlights three different types of virtue such as Aristotelian (justice, courage, truthfulness, temperateness, etc.), theological developed by those like Thomas Aquinas (prudence, pity and charity), and those in social relations (generosity and pity) (MacIntyre, “Animals” 120, 124-126).

Treatment of these virtues over time has continually changed. For example, Aristotelian thought considered moral and virtuous to be synonyms (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 216-217). MacIntyre states that “Virtue is, indeed has to be, its own end, its own reward and its own motive” as it moves across time (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 217). Further on, MacIntyre discusses virtue in action. The practice of human activity occurring in nature can result in exercising virtue (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 140). This idea provides Macintyre’s first tentative definition of virtue. Virtues are those human qualities that when used enable individuals to achieve goods internal to practices without which individuals could not achieve these goods (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 140-141).

Another contemporary political theorist, William A. Galston, considers virtue in civil society and how it impacts individuals, government, and society as a whole. Civic virtues are those virtues that are required for a government to be self-sustaining such as dispositions and habits (Galston, “Civic” 2). Similarly, Cicero created his ideas of civic virtue based on an individual’s duty to the state (Losco vol. I 157-159). In distinguishing between right and rightness found within society, Galston inquires whether civil society is sufficient enough to produce virtue in a liberal democracy and the substance of those virtues. He suggests that civil society needs help to stay sufficient by promoting civic education. A substantive account of civic virtue can only be functional when it takes on
the traits, characteristics, and habits of those needed to sustain sufficiency of civic independence and self-government (Galston, “Civic” 2). These traits, characteristics, and habits include those that develop societal families, relationships, responsibilities, etc, that create a sustainable society. For example, the relationship created between a parent and child gives rights to the state they can use to create and enforce child support laws to promote the best interests of the child (the future), eventually sustaining society longer (Galston, “Civic” 3). Current changes in these relationships found in American society and public culture has altered civic virtue and the distinction between right and rightness based on what is needed to sustain society (Galston, “Civic” 3).

Within a sustainable society, Galston suggests there is a difference between civic virtue and human virtue. Civic virtue has an instrumental value based on its ability to sustain the political society. In contrast, all individuals desire human virtue since individuals can maintain the content of actions over time despite changes in things like culture and circumstances (Galston, “Pluralism” 625). Different societies tend to differ in their institutions and principles causing civic virtues to vary between them. This causes tensions between human and civic virtue making the level of priority uneven (Galston, “Pluralism” 625). There are two solutions to resolving the tension: by changing intrinsic virtue that constantly changes to instrumental virtue or by taking away the moral force from instrumental virtue (Galston, “Pluralism” 625-626). Several previous theorists, such as Thomas Hobbes and George Kateb, have debated how to deny these forces controlling both human and civic virtue, but found problems in making it successful. Galston suggests if neither force can be denied both are left open to criticize the other
(Galston, “Pluralism” 628). Despite having criticisms and finding tensions in the idea of human virtue, Galston argues the importance of civic virtue in society.

Characteristics of life construct individual lives and how we develop civic virtue within a society (Galston, “Pluralism” 628). By following laws of society, individuals can experience positive results providing more incentive to act civically. For example, obeying traffic signals helps to avoid car crashes. However, those who do not follow laws can experience negative results decreasing the incentive to act civically. For example, not paying your taxes without consequences can lead to serial tax avoidance (Galston, “Pluralism” 629). Each community has incentive to encourage civic virtue in order to create trust and positive results. He argues that citizenship is developed based on specific societal values and their political regimes set the standards of civic virtue (Galston, “Pluralism” 632). Galston indicates civic virtue is necessary in society and societies must find ways to foster it without going beyond what is required for a healthy civic lifestyle (Galston, “Pluralism” 630). Many societies today are described as pluralistic having multiple and diverse cultures, interest groups, people, and human communities like families. This creates differences in virtues (Galston, “Pluralism” 634). As differences develop over time, an individual’s experience of virtues can shift creating a meta-virtue or virtues that have the ability to change from one way of conduct to another as individuals move through life. This suggests the necessity for political pluralism to accommodate the changing meta-virtue and to keep up political morality that can foster civic virtue in society (Galston, “Pluralism” 635).

Out of the many different kinds of virtues that are present within society, Galston spends most of his time focusing on justice. He argues that justice is concerned with a
state of affairs, or the “ordering or relation that obtains among human beings or between human beings and other kinds of entities” (Galston, “Human Good” 100). He suggests justice may be considered both social and unsocial, comparative and non-comparative, and sharing or not sharing of objects that are all present in the relations between individuals (Galston, “Human Good” 101). Justice develops between relations that are separated existentially and analytically. Existential separation comes between sustainable individuals, while analytical separation takes place between elements surrounding individuals (Galston, “Human Good” 103). Thus altering the view of a state of affairs, it now “possesses relation that exists between an individual and some object of desire or aversion; the judgment of justice or injustice is applied to this relation” (Galston, “Human Good” 104-105). He determines that justice is the most controversial and theoretical virtue in existence (Galston, “Human Good” 105). All judgments made within the state of affairs regarding justice or injustice are related to the individual. There are recipients of justice and agents who create justice (Galston, “Human Good” 106-107). Justice of relations considers how justice impacts individuals as they experience changes like actions and opportunities. Justice is always relative to the individual. For example, in legal entities, individuals are impacted by political acts. Justice or injustice is related to the individuals within the states of affairs that experience different and changing circumstances (Galston, “Human Good” 107).

Then, Galston considers Rawls’ application of justice to societal economics arguing that there are several objections that could be made to the application of justice to primary, political, and social goods (Galston, “Human Good” 113). For example, Rawls considers justice for gaining means rather than meeting ends. For Rawls,
individuals that disagree about ends do not agree on general principle forcing them to risk their freedom and justice. This causes justice and freedom as goods to turn into ends causing pursuit within society to be restricted (Galston, “Human Good” 114).

Principles of justice are considered “reasons or criteria” that justice uses to give different things to different people, both formal and material (Galston, “Human Good” 143). Formal principles of justice treat like cases alike and treat different cases differently; it also does not lead into substantive principles (Galston, “Human Good” 143). However, Galston provides three principles of substantive justice in relation to case claims: ordinal, supply, and non-violation (Galston, “Human Good” 146). In ordinal cases, one has a larger claim than the other influencing the results of both claims of justice. In supply cases, justice is modified when claims exceed available distribution of justice. Then, non-violation claims create a just situation when each individual equally holds and enjoys their valid claims of justice (Galston, “Human Good” 146). Each principle of justice allows individuals to gain and/or lose rights within society such as equality, need, and desert (Galston, “Human Good” 160-170). For example, all three of these rights interconnect justice with the individual. Needs are basic human goods that individuals assume they deserve, without earning them (Galston, “Human Good” 169). Equality creates indifference among individual’s morals that develop needs-claims (Galston, “Human Good” 170). Desert then links need and equality by creating a relation between the need and virtue, in this case justice, which can vary depending on the characteristics of the individual need (Galston, “Human Good” 170).

Lastly, Galston considers virtues in contemporary liberalism. There are two types of liberal virtue: instrumental and intrinsic (Galston, “Liberal” 1281, 1286). Instrumental
Virtues are those vital to the sustainability of a liberal society and the institutions it forms. They create relations between social institutions and the character of individuals. Thus most citizens must possess instrumental virtue for a successful liberal society (Galston, “Liberal” 1281). Some instrumental virtues are considered general, or virtues necessary for any political economy such as law-abidingness and loyalty (Galston, “Liberal” 1281-1282). However, there are virtues specific to liberal communities like fidelity that help to maintain stable families and tolerance further helping to keep up with social diversity (Galston, “Liberal” 1282). Within liberal society, there are also virtues of economy, those virtues demanded by economic roles and politics, and virtues with relation to both citizens and leaders (Galston, “Liberal” 1282-1283). These include virtues of citizenship, leadership, and general political virtues like patience and optimism (Galston, “Liberal” 1283-1285). Intrinsic virtues are those Galston uses to examine virtues as means to an end in society. He looks at many ideas of excellence from Locke to Mill in determining unity of individual intrinsic virtue within society (Galston, “Liberal” 1287). However, he notes tensions between liberal polities can cause tension between means and ends within a liberal society. He considers liberal virtues as a means to an end and intrinsically valuable in contributing to liberal good (Galston, “Liberal” 1287-1288).

Virtue Analysis and Comparison:

From the start to the present of political thought, political theorists have developed the existence and importance of virtue in society. Each provides examples of virtues, contexts, and experiences to develop a societal dependence on virtue. The most common virtues among these theorists are justice, courage, temperance, prudence, moderation, charity, generosity, truthfulness, and wisdom. Each is connected
with specific contexts such as those of the individual, government, and social relations. As political thought expanded on virtue, theories and theorists were constantly being critiqued pointing out similarities, differences, negative or positive impacts, and what is agreeable or disagreeable in context. This provides a foundation for determining how virtue is relevant to politics today.

There are commonalities among different conceptions of virtue. Virtue as established by Socrates, Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Galston suggests that virtue develops over time, not instantly given or creating an initial positive effect within society. Socrates suggests virtue is gained through knowledge that over time develops into the virtue of wisdom (Weiss 134). Then, virtue can become teachable and is taught by the philosopher (Weiss 140). Aristotle expands on this notion labeling these virtues as moral virtues, which are experienced and taught by anyone, not just the philosopher. Aristotle suggests that moral virtues are taught by habit as individuals experience both pain and pleasure (Aristotle bk. II 35, 38). As early changed to modern, Machiavelli theorized virtú, or virtue as bold and cunning action in which to preserve the community (Losco vol. I 337-338). However, he insists that fortune can have a changing impact on virtue and society causing them to change over time. This can lead to a negative impact on society if not properly prepared (Losco vol. I 338-339). Contemporary virtue has continued the notion of virtue in action. Galston establishes that human virtue is maintained over time through the content of actions (Galston, “Pluralism” 625). As individuals experience change, virtues continue to change creating meta-virtues adapting to current content and conduct of individual actions (Galston, “Pluralism” 625).
Another commonality is the promotion of virtue as a necessity of society producing both positive and negative effects. Cicero’s virtue becomes a necessity for the government that relies on the duty virtue of the statesmen maintaining its existence within society (Strauss 159). Rousseau establishes that virtue is necessary for society to exist. The individual will can create negative effects for society. Rousseau theorizes that a social contract can be made creating moral virtue under the general will that creates positive virtues (Strauss 578, Losco vol. II 141). Individual virtues are necessary to hold society together. Wollstonecraft emphasizes individual virtue must be allowed to expand imagination in order to foster positive effects on society. Virtues that come with restriction in social relations produce negative virtues in society (Losco vol. II 248).

Conceptions of virtue also have their differences among theorists and how they are presented in society. The most significant and common difference is how to define virtue within society. Aristotle determines that “Virtue is a state of deliberate moral purpose consisting of a mean that is relative to ourselves, the mean being determined by reason, or as a prudent man would determine it” (Aristotle bk. II 47). This creates a golden mean of virtue between deficiencies and excesses that create society (Aristotle bk. II 37-39, Losco vol. I 108-110). Machiavelli’s virtú is bold and cunning action taken by individuals to preserve society, which helped to transition from early to modern political thought (Strauss 301, Losco vol. I 337-338). Nietzsche established virtues dedicated to the passions. He sees virtue as the creativity and self-realization established by virtues found among individuals such as sincerity and integrity (Strauss 844). Lastly, Rawls suggests that virtues are moral sentiments of tendencies regulated by action that is based on moral principles (Rawls, “Justice” 167). These virtues allow
individuals to act based on principles of right created within society (Rawls, “Justice” 383). Having virtues in every part of society, it becomes harder to narrow down a singular definition of virtue impacting both the individual level and societal group level.

Currently, western society sits on a plethora of opinions, theories, and publications of virtue concepts. From early to modern and contemporary political thought, the differences in society have changed the context where we find virtue. Families have become bigger; cities have developed based on market and technological expansions; and government has changed in all aspects of the word adapting to changing populations and opinions. Most recently or since the year 2000, virtue is seen in different contexts of society such as daily life, in our occupations, in government (state and federal), political parties, culturally, in faith, etc. Three types of virtue have become very prominent in theoretical and active politics: civic virtue, liberal virtue, and virtue ethics.

Civic virtue is found within a civil society. Civic virtue has a single purpose to maintain peace and prosperity (Galston, “Pluralism” 625). Civil societies require civic virtue for the government to remain self-sustaining (Galston, “Civic” 2). Civic virtues function in society when it takes on the characteristics of what is needed to maintain civic independence and self-government (Galston, “Civic” 2). However, current changes in societies’ cultures and social relationships continue to alter civic virtue. Therefore, civic virtue’s value is based on how well it can keep political society sustained and self-sufficient (Galston, “Pluralism” 625). Civic virtue becomes a necessity for society that it must continue to perpetuate. This can require civic education that produces different
types of good citizens like those who are responsible, participatory, or justice-oriented citizen (Galston, “Pluralism” 631).

One current example of instilling civic virtue through education was published in the year 2000 on *Turning Points Reform*, a study of 16 middle schools trying to foster engagement with ideas like caring for people, diversity, and having knowledge of democratic processes (Oakes 568). Like many other attempts, civic virtue struggles to maintain itself in current society. Previous changes in relations and politics can also alter how civic virtue is absorbed. Schools felt pressure for maintaining high exam scores and safety protocols for students. This created concern and suspicion with parents and board members when the schools tried to take on non-traditional practices to promote civic virtue and engagement (Oakes 571). This along with other forms of resistance in the local area like culture caused the downfall in fostering civic virtue in civic education (Oakes 573). However, more of the local politicians were pushing for civic virtue, “that is, in the direction of policies and practices that characterize the public good as embodied in a citizenry that can come together across differences and solve common problems in a democratic sphere” (Oakes 569). This correlates with theoretical conceptions of civic virtue that take on the characteristics of civic independence and self-government. By using civic virtue to promote the public good, civic virtue can solve problematic differences and issues that would risk the sustainability of society.

As different aspects of politics change so do the philosophy and direction of thought. One such thought and political philosophy is liberalism. As mentioned previously, John Locke first developed liberal virtues that are created within political liberalism. He suggests virtue resides with individuals in society making it important to
protect individuals in order to preserve virtue (Devine 253). Unlike previous examples of civic and other defining virtues, Locke’s idea of liberal virtue could be self-sustaining and emerge spontaneously among individuals in society without government direction and guidance as long as civil peace is maintained (Devine 253). Liberty and virtue are considered to be in harmony by controlling coercion and having trust among individuals in society forming liberal virtues (Devine 253-254).

William Galston took this conception of liberal virtue into contemporary ideas of liberalism and politics today. Both instrumental and intrinsic liberal virtues are found within contemporary society (Galston, “Liberal” 1281). Instrumental virtues are used to sustain liberal societies, creating relationships between the individuals and its institutions (Galston, “Liberal” 1281-1282). Intrinsic virtues are those that lead to the possible means to ends and produce potential unity between individual virtues (Galston, “Liberal” 1287). Overall, he considers liberal virtues as a means to an end and intrinsically valuable in contributing to liberal good (Galston, “Liberal” 1287-1288).

Current theories of liberal virtues parallel in similarity to civic virtue. Both virtues have the ability to maintain peace and harmony, while keeping liberal virtue and society self-sustaining.

Another example of virtue in society was an attempt by George W. Bush in 2001 to promote a program called Communities of Character (Galston, NYT). Civically this targeted entertainment media, encouraging them to foster civic responsibility and virtue. Galston suggests presidential influence can receive a larger response to perpetuating civic virtue in society. Previous survey research shows Americans look to moral and civic virtue to be informative on public policy and education (Galston, NYT). Galston
advises that government should rely on presidential leadership and work to enhance civic virtue and participation harmonizing with moral and civic values (Galston, NYT).

Lastly, in various contexts the idea, study, and evaluation of virtue ethics has developed throughout western society. Contemporary virtue ethics has a potential start in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and several theorists like MacIntyre have since built on the idea. Virtue ethics can be thought of as a “judgment of agents” (Simpson 503). Ethics is considered in virtue theory and how it is exercised. So theories generally examine what virtue is and how individuals flourish to create an account of virtue in ethics (Simpson 506). By showing how an individual flourishes in a specific context (such as ethics and occupation), virtues can become justified within society (Simpson 507). Several studies have suggested that pleasures, not virtue, cause individual flourishing that promotes ethics. However, Aristotle and MacIntyre disagree with this notion (Simpson 509). Prudence is then the mean state of virtue ethics within society (Simpson 510). Political and philosophical life is bound by virtue, both moral and political (Simpson 517). In this respect, several areas of contemporary politics are informed by virtue ethics.

Virtue Ethics is becoming increasingly important at the political and government level of society. In recent years, current events have forced presidents and politicians to think more ethically. In many cases, prudence has been demanded from political leaders in their ethical choices (Dobel 57). A study conducted on decisions made during both Bush administrations emphasizes prudence and other virtues as necessary and independent in the political process (Dobel 57). During each Bush administration, both were called to make the tough decision to go to war. Virtue ethics suggests a “moral
responsibility of individuals and their obligation to give reality and content to moral norms” (Dobel 58). Especially when utilizing political prudence, virtue ethics has become more independent morally in making official decisions requiring self-knowledge, self-mastery, curiosity and open-mindedness, and the ability to understand the shape of meeting ends and the consequences they pose (Dobel 59).

In regard to self-knowledge and mastery, the Bush presidents were seen as personal leaders that knew how to visualize impact (Dobel 60-61). Before making decisions, George H. W. Bush would take time aside to seriously contemplate them, exercising prudence, becoming increasingly more concerned about morality in his ethical decisions during the first war on Iraq. By doing this he found justification for acting with care in his decisions and public comments in matters involving Saddam Hussein’s capture of Kuwait (Dobel 61). By exercising virtue in decision-making, George H.W. Bush produced positive outcomes for the war and the public.

George W. Bush was more determined to create compiled information meetings of raw evidence. By working with other officials who had expertise and using hard facts, George W. Bush tried to make less impulsive decisions (Dobel 62). In the case of ends and means, George W. Bush tried to keep a clear set of actions and goals after 9/11 to determine the means of his decisions (Dobel 70). He had to make sure his justification for war was worth the consequences. Finding prudence in his decision made war an uphill battle that seemed endless against terrorism (Dobel 70). His stated purposes for war changed over time such as eliminating weapons of mass destruction, spreading liberty, and spreading democratic institutions (Dobel 71). However, this did not stop the disastrous consequences for the economy, military, and political life that were
experienced by both Americans and Iraqis. Means and ends were mismatched, resulting in the removal of military and supplies from the area (Dobel 72).

Prudence was important in making moral choices to go to war in both cases (Dobel 72). George H.W. Bush had the ability to be impulsive but was able to work on enforcing self-discipline creating a positive use of prudence in government. George W. Bush continued on a vain quest of decision-making and prolonged the War on Terrorism eventually limiting discussion of the matter, and not properly evaluating his decisions as he originally intended (Dobel 73). Prudence is dependent on using clarity of actions. Broad goals with little clarity make it harder to make decisions that link the means to the ends as seen in previous examples of ethical decisions about war (Dobel 73). In these two cases, prudence both succeeded and failed in connecting the means to their ends. Having multiple goals strained progress, progressively changing the means for war causing conflict and unmet ends. Having clarity in professional judgment kept the public and military motivated to continue progress in the war (Dobel 73-74). However whether in successes or failures, virtue ethics is evident and important in current politics.

Conclusion:

After comparing these various examples, it is clear that virtues are important within current political life. Originally, I asked how has virtue developed over time to become relevant and consistent with contemporary theory and politics? Virtues and conceptions of virtue demonstrated by these examples and theories are consistent and relevant with contemporary politics. Many of them are the same as those common in the development of virtue, which include prudence, justice, courage, temperance, and moderation. Prudence is about being cautious in making decisions that impact not only
the individual, but also those around them. As seen above, war impacts not only the individual (e.g. president) making the decisions, but those who fight (e.g. military), those who are civilians and live in the fighting, suppliers, families left behind, etc. Exercising prudence is consistent with keeping costs and negativity low to produce the best results. Temperance and moderation also play a role in creating positivity to produce the best result in political life. George W. Bush lacked temperance and moderation prolonging the War on Terrorism and the American presence in the Middle East in many circumstances costing valuable resources and lives (Dobel 73-74).

Justice and courage can be found in examples used throughout this paper to highlight consistency with current politics. Liberal virtues are those that are instrumental in sustaining society and intrinsic in unifying individual virtues to create means to ends (Galston, “Liberal” 1281-1282, 1287). In these current examples, the military fights with courage to protect us from those we go to war with, as set down by the government, and from ourselves (Losco vol. I 75, Plato bk. IV 124-125). In accordance and agreement with Socrates, justice can be found within society but is something that we shoot for in attainment of being individual philosophers (Losco vol. I 77, Plato bk. IV 128-130). Our preservation of laws and policy are set down by the constitution. Individuals rely on the three-branch system for implementation and enforcement hopefully creating justice in all cases, such as stopping or catching those who commit violence. Justice plays a role in sustaining the structure of government and its implementation. Also, keeping virtues within society and consistent with actions and events is very important to the sustainability, growth, and knowledge of society. Sustainability and growth of society relies on the use of virtue to make positive
decisions and judgments that benefit the whole (Galston, “Civic” 3). Knowledge grows as we take more actions creating more experiences that require virtue in judgment (Weiss 36,134,140). It creates a continuing sustainable process of virtue.

The future of virtue is based on trends developed through time from its conception, which are still present in current politics. Aristotle is suggested to have initially started the trend of virtue ethics in decision-making (Simpson 503). Studies have been building on how virtues are effectively and ineffectively used in a variety of occupations of life including politics (Dobel 57). Cicero promoted civic virtue through duty to the state, creating the statesman of applied virtue where virtue in action truly shines (Losco vol. I 149-150). Machiavelli continued the concept of virtue in action by establishing virtú (Losco, vol. I 337-338). MacIntyre suggested virtue in action currently using virtues as human qualities to acquire necessary good (MacIntyre, “After Virtue” 140-141). These trends of virtue have successfully carried through and developed over time suggesting a continuity in our understanding of and need for virtue in society.

Virtue is necessary to maintain stability society that suggests the need for further research on virtue in the future. There is room for more research in particular areas of virtue. How does individual virtue further impact how political virtue of society and government progress? How have the changes in the development of the economy impacted the growth of virtue in society? Have new virtues been developed that were not possible or documented in the early and modern eras? Would there be significant differences in the development of virtue with newly developed virtues for the future? What might the future hold for virtue and the role it plays in society and politics?
What the future of virtue may have in store is unknown. How will government officials use virtue to influence and maintain a stable society? How will virtue be instilled in government and public policies? Will government ideas of virtue change how people regard and take actions of civic virtue? In any case, my vision of virtue in the future is optimistic. Virtue has been established in almost every aspect of individual and government life, and that is not likely to change. Every action we as individuals take is based on a particular virtue we have acquired. For example, many individuals can enlist in a division of the military based on their duty to the state and their ability to be courageous. Government officials take actions on policy based on their virtue of power or temperance in protecting the citizens in society. Virtue will continue to play an important role for individuals and society. It is the reason behind individual actions that produce positive or negative outcomes continuing or hindering the progression of society.
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