

The Manly Virtues

Too often, a guaranteed way to ruin a good day is to read the morning paper. The execrable and morally lacerating descriptions of the Paul Bernardo trial have simply reminded me how often I have to junk the paper before the children see such bad taste and grotesquerie. Hiding a newspaper is surely cause to ask, What is happening to the world?

For ever since the decline of communism the West has seemed in a state of accelerating moral uncertainty. It's as if, having spent so much effort telling citizens what liberal democracy is not, we have forgotten how to say what it is (which points out the value of a clearly-defined enemy). It's not war, but peace that is problematic, especially for wealthy nations whose citizens are unsure why they are alive.

Many are even asking the vertiginous question whether the core assumptions and values of liberalism and democracy might be mutually exclusive, for reasons no one can control. That is to say, is the idea of well-ordered freedom with majority rule by virtuous citizens, a goner?

Think about it. Few dare to defend responsible freedom any longer (freedom is now licence, with no limits); majority rule has been trumped and circumvented (by interest groups, judges, and the Charter); and the classical virtues have been, uh, feminized.

Hold on. I say feminized, or womanized, because the Latin word "virtue" means "manly excellence", both in the plain sense of Man (we are humans, not animals), and in the sense of bold, disciplined virtues, shaping citizens for risk and heroism, against which the more feminine, nurturing virtues seek all-encompassing security. We need both in balance, but have lost just that.

What, after all, is Marxist socialism - any kind of socialism - if not an organization (at the extreme, a militarization) of society designed to appeal to our hunger for security - to what is most unheroic.

For better or worse, there have always been only two options. Either leave people free to heroically take risks and organize their own security as individuals and families, with government restricted to minimal influence. Or deliberately assign the duty of eliminating all human risk to government itself, in exchange for total control of the people, their property, wealth, and work. You can't have it both ways. Alas, the latter method necessarily entails the elimination of the manly virtues.

In classical times, these virtues were Prudence (doing the right thing at the right time); Courage (required to take risks); Temperance (self-limitation of the passions); and Justice (equality under the law for all). What is stirring about these virtues, is that they have no meaning unless exercised by free men and women. But it was the clear conviction of the ancients that if citizens were not inculcated with these virtues (to which the later Christian era added Faith, Hope, and Charity - arguably, more feminine virtues), democracy would soon deteriorate into soft, then hard tyranny. For only a citizenry rich in the manly virtues could possibly stave off the equalizing tendencies of democracy that will always, if unchecked, eliminate shalls and shall-

nots altogether, thereby destroying heroic notions of the good, thus raising the unworthy, and lowering the worthy.

I've just received a mailing from the Council of Canadians imploring recipients to "Stand on Guard" for our "right" to health care, education, a pension, jobless pay, welfare, daycare, and ... the CBC (!), things which I am told "bind us together as a nation." At least they could have said, "Give me security, or give me death!" But no such luck. No manly virtues here. Just gimme, gimme. Someone else owes me security, is the message.

Real dangers (such as hardened murderers, rapists, and burglars, patrons of our nanny criminal justice system), walk the streets to strike again, while oblivious media prattle on about false dangers such as "inequality," or "stigma," or "discrimination," or "inappropriate sexual touching." Have we become, as one writer put it, a nation of cowards? Any daily count of stories about things we now must fear, tallies in dozens. Is this the sign of a great people, this grovelling in what is petty, low, fearsome, or unequal?

We discover this same softening trend in the "Goddess" movement in the churches, in feminized university curricula, in politically fearful professors, and in the "Gaia" movement (where Earth Mother devours Sky Father) in environmentalist ranks. We sicken, too, of the silly, maleness-dissolving notion that our opposite genders are "socially constructed" and not an obvious, wonderful, and very exciting natural fact of normal biology around which all human life revolves; especially of the message that men and their manly values are bad. Nonsense. This is the sour grapes of politicized, security-drugged intellectuals who themselves feast on the impressive achievements of a risk-based male culture - only to criticize it. As the more honest (and feminist) Camille Paglia has put it, "If civilization had been left in female hands, we would still be living in grass huts." The dominance of the urge for security stifles achievement in individuals, and civilizations.

Better ordered freedom, natural biological differences, risk, and the manly virtues taught to children, I say, than the nurturing nightmare we have left behind - or the softer version in our midst.