

Order (virtue)

Order is the planning of time and organizing of resources, as well as of society.^[1]

Although order is rarely discussed as a virtue in contemporary society, order is in fact central to improving efficiency, and is at the heart of time management strategies such as David Allen's *Getting Things Done*.

1 Emergence

The valorisation of order in the early stages of commercialization and industrialisation was linked by R. H. Tawney to Puritan concerns for system and method in 17th-century England.^[2] The same period saw English prose developing the qualities Matthew Arnold described as “regularity, uniformity, precision, balance”.^[3]

“Let all your things have their places; let each part of your business have its time” is a saying attributed to Benjamin Franklin in 1730, while he was 20 years old. It was part of his 13 virtues.^{[4][5]}

A darker view of the early modern internalisation of order and discipline was taken by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things* and *Discipline and Punish*;^[6] but for Rousseau love of order both in nature and in the harmonious psyche of the natural man was one of the tap-roots of moral conscience.^[7]

2 Romantic reaction

The Romantic reaction against reason, industry and the sober virtues, led to a downgrading of order as well.^[8] In art, spontaneity took precedence over method and craft;^[9] in life, the Bohemian call of wildness and disorder eclipsed the appeal of ordered sobriety – as with the cultivated disorganization of the sixties hippie.^[10]

“Latter-day attempts such as those of Deidre McCloskey to reclaim the bourgeois virtues like order may be met in some quarters only by laughter.”^[11]

3 Sociology

Sociologists, while noting that praise of order is generally associated with a conservative stance – one that can be traced back through Edmund Burke and Richard

Hooker to Aristotle^[12] - point out that many taken-for-granted aspects of social order (such as which side of the road to drive on) produce substantial and equitable advantages for individuals at very little personal cost.^[13] Conversely, breakdowns in public order reveal everyone's daily dependence upon the smooth functioning of the wider society.^[14]

Durkheim saw anomie as the existential reaction to the ordered disorder of modern society.^[15]

4 Psychology

Jungians considered orderliness (along with restraint and responsibility) as one of the virtues attributable to the senex or old man - as opposed to the spontaneous openness of the puer or eternal youth.^[16]

Freud saw the positive traits of orderliness and conscientiousness as rooted in anal eroticism.^[17]

5 20th-century examples

Freud himself was a highly organised personality, ordering his life – at work and play – with the regularity of a timetable.^[18]

William Osler was another highly successful physician who built his life on a highly organised basis.^[19]

6 Culture

Wallace Stevens wrote of the “blessed rage for order” in *Ideas of Order* (1936).^[20]

7 See also

- Conscientiousness
- Convention
- Norm
- Orderliness
- Prudence
- Temperance

8 References

- [1] Erving Goffman, *Relations in Public* (1972) p. 15
- [2] R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1937) p. 193-5
- [3] Quoted in Deirdre N. McCloskey, *The Bourgeois Virtues* (2006) p. 164
- [4] Franklin, Benjamin. "The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin: Chapter Eight". earlyamerica.com.
- [5] Kurtus, Ron (7 February 2005). "Benjamin Franklin's Thirteen Virtues". school-for-champions.com.
- [6] G. Gutting ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (2002) p. 97-9
- [7] Lawrence D. Cooper, *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life* (2006) p. 92-6
- [8] McCloskey, p. 31-2 and p. 69
- [9] M. H. Abrams, *The mirror and the lamp* (1971) p. 24
- [10] E. Hoffman ed., *Future Visions* (1996) p. 144
- [11] McCloskey, p. 5
- [12] Shelley Burke, *Virtue Transformed* (2006) p. 54
- [13] Goffman, p. 16
- [14] Goffman< p. 16-17
- [15] John O'Neill, *Sociology as a Skin Trade* (1972) p. 181
- [16] M. Jacoby, *The Analytic Encounter* (1984) p. 118
- [17] Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality* (PFL 7) p. 209
- [18] Peter Gay, *Freud* (1989) p. 157
- [19] Eric Berne, *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* (1974) p. 268
- [20] Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poems* (1984) p. 130

9 Further Reading

William Osler, *Aequanimitas* (New York 1963)

10 External links

11 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

11.1 Text

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