

WEEKLY MEDITATION

Excellence means to achieve a high state of performance, to exceed normal expectations, to be of the highest quality. It is both a value and a goal.

To my mind, the best secular or humanistic account of human excellence stresses breadth of skills and interests. Robert Heinlein expresses this sort of ideal in *Time Enough For Love*, where he writes: *A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects.*

Heinlein's notion of what it means to be truly human is a fine thing, but with the Apostle Paul we could say: *Yet I will show you are more excellent way* (1 Corinthians 12:31) - and that way, the way to true excellence and true humanity, is the way of love. Without love, every skill and all knowledge falls far short of its true potential, purpose and meaning. *If I have not love, I am nothing* (1 Corinthians 13:2).

In Christian life, true excellence is found in the pursuit of the good animated by love - *whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* (Phil 4: 8). It is found in our participation in Christ - the One in whom we find the source and content of all that is good, the One who models and offers authentic love. To grow in Christ is to share in His glory and excellence (2 Peter 1: 3).

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