

Can only difficult action be called good and virtuous?

By [Don Scrooby](#)

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The German poet Schiller said this: "How gladly I'd serve my friends, but alas, I do so with pleasure. And so I have this nagging feeling that it's unethical."

What I find so sad about this quote is that Schiller feels almost guilty about something good (serving his friends) which he naturally finds pleasure in doing. And so because it's pleasurable it has this unethical flavour about it.

Where does this kind of feeling stem from? I think it comes from that unbalanced view that we are naturally evil and that our natural inclination is always to do evil. It says further that only action which is hard and difficult to perform can ultimately be called good or virtuous. Many will say, well, yes, the words of St Paul affirm this - "**For what I do is not the good that I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing.**" There's truth here, but as with everything, when you push it too far it starts becoming false.

What about balancing, then, Paul's experience with Jeremiah's words; "**I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.**" Just maybe in these words a natural going with the grain of our inmost being naturally issues forth in goodness and virtue. Maybe, expressing virtue doesn't have to be this hard and demanding struggle. Maybe it's the most natural thing we can do. Perhaps, we've just lost touch with this part of ourselves because for too long we've been told otherwise.

Matthew Fox makes the point that for ages we've laboured under the weight of original sin conveniently forgetting the innate beauty of our original blessing, and that the time has now come to correct this sad imbalance. What would that ultimately mean for us? A new found trust in

the Divine and ourselves? I believe so.

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