

Tuesday Reflection 12 October 2021

On the way back from visiting my children and grandchildren in Germany, I was going to write something about the aftermath of the German elections and compare the consensual German model which relies on dialogue, compromise and coalition with the antagonistic 'winner takes all' political culture in Britain.

On deeper reflection, I was pondering on virtue, and how virtue is a minus-sum game; I'm sure we often think of virtue and leading a virtuous life as being a question of acquiring new and better habits and ways of life. However, that is only possible if we make room by discarding old ways. There is little point in applying a veneer of - say - generosity or mercifulness to old habits of meanness or vengeance, because these will break through in the long run. It is only by emptying ourselves in the process of kenosis that we make room for the new. Our model for this is Our Lord himself "who did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Philippians 2:6-7). We can only follow this example if we no longer make our own selves the main focus of our interest, concern and attention but concentrate on the needs and interests of others.

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