



BEYOND WORDS

THE COMMUNICATION OF UNIVERSAL VALUES THROUGH THE LANGUAGE OF ART

TEACHING UNIT 5



DOBROGEA, THE CRADLE OF ROMANIAN CHRISTIAN VALUES and VIRTUES

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THE VIRTUES:

One should try to develop good habits. Developing good habits will help us do the right thing without thinking about it too hard. Good habits protect us by making good use of the human tendency to fall into consistent patterns of behavior. If you consciously develop a good habit, you are in effect training yourself to do the right thing.

The Church has long recognized the benefit of having good habits. A habit can be defined as: *A custom or practice; an aptitude or inclination for some action, acquired by repetition.* Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (5th Edition) tells us that the word habit "*implies a settled disposition or tendency due to repetition*". The Church has used the single word "**virtue**" instead of "**good habits**" to describe these "dispositions" but the concept is exactly the same.

The Catechism divides the virtues into three basic categories. There are *theological virtues, human virtues, and moral virtues.*

The theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, lead us to God. Since the theological virtues have a supernatural end they are impossible to attain without God's help.

The human virtues on the other hand, *are oriented toward natural ends.* They can be achieved by natural means. Any pagan can achieve them. The Catechism defines the human virtues as "firm attitudes, stable dispositions, habitual perfections of intellect and will that govern our actions, order our passions, and guide our conduct". It then indicates that "human virtues" is a larger general category which includes the smaller category of the moral virtues.

The moral virtues, according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, are those virtues which "perfect the appetitive faculties of the soul, namely, the will and the sensuous appetite".

Introduction – A Call for the Human Likeness to God

The theological virtues:

Faith - belief in God, and in the truth of His revelation as well as obedience to Him

Hope - expectation of and desire of receiving; refraining from despair and capability of not giving up

Charity - selfless, unconditional, and voluntary loving-kindness such as helping one's neighbors.

The human being was created in the image of God and has the capacity to reach His likeness. We have been endowed with the image of God through Creation and we can reach His likeness only through the exercise of our own free will. Creation has set the grounds of dialogue between God and the human being: God has given humans His image, and they should answer back by striving to reach His likeness as best they can. Or, to quote St John the Damascene, the former refers to reason and the latter to virtue.

Being in the likeness of God is premised on the continuous human effort towards accomplishment by observing the divine commandments and practising *Christian virtues*. Christian life should be led as an uphill struggle which starts with being in the image of God yet reaches to His likeness through deeds of the soul and body alike. The fathers of the Church teach us a spiritual ascension technique in several steps: first, a spiritual cleansing of passions and moral healing, which leads to acquiring the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Love (Charity). With the third and foremost virtue of Love, the human being reaches the stage of sinless. Reaching the likeness of God, communion with Him, is a call to each and every human being.

We could say that Constantin Brancusi's *Endless Column* suggests the human ascension to spiritual light, an endless vertical motion towards God. Brancusi himself construed his work as 'the spiral of life'; accordingly, life itself is change and perfection. Nonetheless, some see in the units of the *Column* a train of hourglasses which suggest the flow of time all the way to eternity. In Michael

Hart's words, Brancusi's *Column* is 'an aerial tree of life, the heavenly ladder. It is a representation of all ages, luminaries and generations, the symbol of grandeur and vitality, of infinity'.¹



Constantin Brancusi- “Endless Column”

The sculpture is a stylization of funeral columns specific to the southern Romania. Its original name was “Endless gratitude column” and was devoted to World War Romanian soldiers who died in 1916 in the battles on the banks of the Jiu river.

Love (Charity) represents the central Christian virtue: ‘God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him’ (1 Jn. 4.16). Love is the motor force of the world, which God created out of love and for whose redemption He sacrificed His Son: ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ (Jn. 3.16). We can prove our love for God by loving our neighbour, for each and every human being is the image of God. The golden rule of Christian ethics is given by no other than Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount: ‘Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets’ (Matt. 7.12).

¹ Michael H. Hart, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, Ro. trans. Dumitru Constantin (Bucharest, Lider Publishing House, 1992)

The three theological virtues may be achievable through *prayer*, but the moral virtues are more at hand, since they also depend on human faculties such as intelligence, will power and feeling.



Constantin Brancusi – “*The Prayer*”

“The Prayer” is a funerary monument, made by Brancusi while he was in Paris. Originally, the assembly was a platform with three steps, where a woman covered with a veil, cries of pain. To avoid scandal because of carving a nude, Brancusi used to simplify the forms, eliminating many anatomical details, giving practically part, to figurative manner. Finally, the sculptor, always dissatisfied with his works, unable to balance the work, severs her arm.

The work is primarily a creative state. Sitting in front of it, you are placed face to face with a metaphor of humility and purity. The mystery that surrounds this work is equally given by the calm attitude and a deliberate amputation of her arm. The missing hand means pain. Death means pain. Among the tombs, the impact on the viewer is more powerful than one have it in a museum; the sculpture seems kind of spirit that is praying for the souls of the dead and once one see it, will never forget it.

The moral virtues of wisdom, moderateness, courage and righteousness are the grounding of other virtues, such as meekness, kindness, mercy and forgiveness. In truth, such virtues predate Christianity. Nonetheless, for Christians they are richer in meaning than they used to be in pre-Christian times, since the way to virtue and redemption is ultimately one's freely chosen option yet always blessed by holy grace: 'Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me' (Rev. 3.20).

In Dobrogea people tried to achieve the virtues by praying, and the Christian Church in Chalk at Basarabi is an ancient temple that proves it.

On a wall in the central room, there can be seen a bull head, on the right wall of the altar there is a bird, crosses and runic inscriptions, in a side room there can be seen chalk carved banks, in another room a tomb.



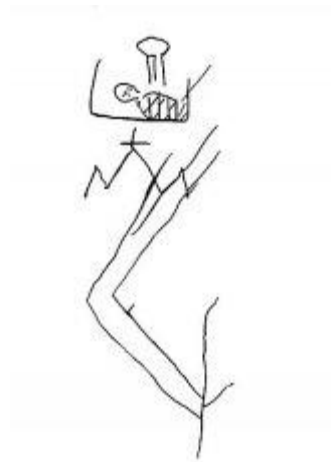
A bird with a cross (the Christian symbol) on a wall inside the Christian Church in Chalk at Basarabi, Dobrogea, Romania

The most interesting representations at Basarabi are the human ones. Most of the characters are praying, with their arms up, sometimes keeping a cross in one of their hands, some of them have even an aura above their heads. In the biggest church, there is a saint praying. A distinctive sign is the aura, which is specific to saints, and the specific clothes for priests. The representation is accompanied by a text which uses runic figures and which has not been deciphered yet.



A saint praying, figure on a wall inside the Christian Church in Chalk at Basarabi, Dobrogea, Romania

In another small church there is also an interesting and beautiful representation of the Christ's Birth, but it is presented so schematic, that its interpretation rose a series of problems. There is a curved road, a building with a cross above (which it is believed to be the Bethlehem), a manger where there is a baby in diapers and a star above from which three sun-rays are coming towards the baby in the manger.



***Christ's Birth*, figure on a wall inside the Christian Church in Chalk at Basarabi, Dobrogea, Romania**

Christianity has fostered the spirit of choosing between good and evil, a spirit which has often informed the achievement of countless theologians and Christian writers, as well as artists, scientists and other luminaries. Artists in particular are wont to voice their belief that the creation of a work of art provides a spiritual means of reaching towards God (G. Flaubert), of bridging the realm of humans and of God (E. A. Poe) and of alleviating the many sufferings of humanity (L. van Beethoven).

If art can lay a claim to contributing to the spiritual betterment of the human being, even stronger a claim should be laid by education as regards the modelling of human personality to aspire to the moral perfecting of the individual. In the latter case, of prime importance is precisely the interaction between the educator's personality and the beneficiary's willingness and openness to be educated. The 'teaching' relationship between infant and care-givers, first and foremost the mother, provides the earliest and most sensible educational model. As to religious education, it has often been regarded by some of the greatest European educators, such J. A. Comenius, as fundamental to

forming a hierarchy of sound moral values in humans which cannot be challenged, let alone replaced, by fads and fashions, by the lures of glamorous models.

The existing love between God, His Son and The Holy Spirit is compared with the love between the members of the family.



The Intertrinity Love, (love between God, The Holy Spirit and Christ), mural picture at Agapia Monastery (Northern Romania) painted by the great Romanian painter Nicolae Grigorescu, the symbol of family love

The moral virtues

Now that we know that the moral virtues are habits concerning our appetites and will, what are we to do about it? The Catechism gives us the answer. "The moral virtues are acquired by human effort..." There you have it. We have to acquire moral virtues. Although God's grace is beneficial in all things, the moral virtues can be attained on our own.

What are these virtues which we need to work toward? The Catechism identifies four virtues as "pivotal". These are known as the cardinal virtues. They are identified below:

Prudence is the virtue that disposes practical reason to discern our true good in every circumstance and to choose the right means of achieving it.

Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor.

Fortitude is the moral virtue that ensures firmness in difficulties and constancy in the pursuit of the good.

Temperance is the moral virtue that moderates the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods.

These cardinal virtues then, are moral virtues, they play a pivotal role, being acquired by human effort. They are not like sanctifying grace that is infused at baptism. We have to work to get them, and work to keep them. Unfortunately we do not seem to have a ready-mix, shake-and-bake formula for acquiring these virtues. The Catechism does give us some hints. It tells us that virtues "guide our conduct according to reason and faith." Virtues therefore guide us according to reason. It is reason, the power of our intellect, which will tell us how to act. Since we must attain the moral ourselves, we must use our intellect to attain them. With the scriptures and Tradition as our guides we must actively use our minds to figure out how to acquire the virtues by our own effort.

The Catechism also tells us that the moral virtues "are the fruit and seed of morally good acts". That is the other half of the equation. We must not only use our minds to acquire the moral virtues. Once we have determined a plan to help us acquire the moral virtues we actually have to put it into practice. As it says, they are the fruit and seed of acts.

Some people like to say "In my day we had to make our own". When it comes to the moral virtues, we still have to make our own.

The Apostle Andrew and the Founding of the Church of Scythia Minor (Dobrogea)

Christian tradition, with some historical support, connects the founding of the Christian Church in the territory of present-day Romania to the apostolic mission in Scythia Minor – present-day Dobrogea, or Dobruja – of Andrew, one of the twelve Apostles. In his *History of the Church*, Church writer Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 340) refers to second-century writings by Origen and Clement of Alexandria, to the effect that in the assignment of territories for evangelization, Andrew chose Scythia.² Likewise, Hyppolithus of Rome writes that Andrew taught the gospel to the Scythians and the Thracians.³ In the eighth century, the monk Epiphanius, in his *Life of Andrew the Apostle*, numbers the Scythians among the peoples evangelized by Andrew, as does the Byzantine writer Nicephorus Callistos in the fourteenth century.⁴

Furthermore, Romanian legends, carols and folk stories preserve the memory of the Apostle's mission in Dobrogea, as do place and river names, such as the River and Cave of St Andrew. Situated on the fringe of Ion Corvin, a locality in Constanta county, some 4 km off the Constanta-Ostrov road, the cave which perhaps offered shelter to the Apostle has turned into a monastic centre and a pilgrimage shrine. Already in its early day, the cave irradiated symbolically its missionary power through Andrew's preaching and ordaining of priests, deacons and bishops to continue his evangelization work through apostolic succession, as it has happened to the present day. The first known diocese in what is now Romania was Tomis, which has given the Christian world some noteworthy hierarchs and theologians. No wonder that the Apostle Andrew, whose apostolic legacy in Scythia Minor is the grounding of any spiritual endeavour in Romania, has been named by the Romanian Orthodox Church its patron saint.

² Adrian Radulescu and Ion Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei [History of Dobrogea]* (Constanta, Ex Ponto, 1998), p. 155.

³ Hyppolithus of Rome, *On the Twelve Apostles*, PG.X cols. 951, FHRD, 1, p. 713.

⁴ Mihail Diaconescu, *Antologie de literatura daco-romana [An Anthology of Dacian-Roman Literature]* (Bucuresti, Corifeu, 2007), p. 412.

The Scythian Monks' Contribution to the European Cultural Unity

Scythia Minor – the Dacian territory between the lower Danube and the Black Sea – played a crucial role in the development of early Christianity, since from the fourth to the sixth centuries this region was the home and cradle of the great theologians John Cassian, Dionysius Exiguus, aka Dionysius the Little, John (Johannes) Maxentius and other Scythian monks. St John Cassian is the founder of Western monasticism: not only did he establish monastic communities on the outskirts of Marseille, France, but he also wrote highly influential ascetic and ethical treatises whose readership between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries came as much from the ecclesiastical as from the lay world.⁵ Dionysius Exiguus is regarded as the father of Western canon law because he compiled the first ecumenical collection of Christian canonical writings. What is more, he devised the calendar division still in use today worldwide, viz. the AD – BC labelling of periods to show the inception of the time of redemption with the birth of Jesus Christ. To these two luminaries should be added the famous Scythian monks, such as John Maxentius, Leontius, Mauritius and Peter the Deacon.

Alongside the early bishops of Tomis and missionaries, these monks and writers contributed to the edification and consolidation of Christianity in Scythia Minor. Formed in the ecclesiastical schools of Dobrogea, they militated as much to implement the dogmatic, canonical and cultic unity required by ecumenical synods as to foster ecumenical dialogue, without thereby abjuring from the ‘rule of the faith’, or the creed of the Eastern Orthodox Church.⁶ Their theologico-philosophical, ethical and canonical writings helped bridge ecumenicity in a divided Christendom (the *pars orientalis* and *pars occidentalis*), thereby familiarizing the Latin West with Eastern Christianity.⁷

A mural picture at a Romanian medieval monastery represents a ladder of virtues, which has to be climbed by those who want to achieve the Christian virtues.

⁵ I. G. Coman, ‘Teologi si teologie in Scythia Minor in sec. IV-VI’ [‘Theologians and Theology in Scythia Minor in the 4th-6th Centuries’], *BOR* XCVI.7-8 (1978), p. 786.

⁶ Nicolae Dură, ‘Regula de credinta si rugaciunea pentru unitate crestina. O evaluare ecleziastico-canonica’ [‘The Rule of the Faith and the Prayer for Christian Unity. An Ecclesiastical-Canonical Evaluation’], *Ortodoxia* LX.3-4 (2004), p. 29.

⁷ I. G. Coman, ‘“Scitii” Ioan Cassian si Dionsie cel Mic si legaturile lor cu lumea mediteraneană,’ [‘The “Scythians” John Cassian and Dionysius the Little, and Their Links with the Mediterranean World’], *ST* 3-4 (1975).



The ladder of virtues, Sucevita Monastery, Northern Romania



The entrance at St. John Cassian's Cage, Dobrogea

Outstanding Personalities of Present-Day Dobrogea

The ‘Romanian’ history of Dobrogea and implicitly of Christianity here was ‘interrupted’ by the Ottoman Empire rule for many centuries, until the War of Independence (1877) in whose wake Dobrogea was reincorporated into the Romanian territory and ‘recolonized’ by Romanian settlers. 1878 was the inception of reconstructing Dobrogea territorially and administratively, economically and financially, but especially culturally. In so doing, the ‘founders’ of modern Dobrogea tried, consciously or not, to carry out not just economico-administrative policies but also moral virtues which to a Christian sound very familiar: love thy neighbour and care for their needs.

It would be idle to list here all those founding ‘fathers’ of modern Dobrogea, whether they be mayors of Constanta such as Ion Bănescu (1851-1919), to whom a grateful city erected a statue after his death, engineer Anghel Saligny (1854-1925), who designed the bridges over the Danube at Cernavodă and Fetesti (opened in 1895), historians and archaeologists like Vasile Parvan (1882-1927) and Vasile Canarache (1896-1962), for whom Dobrogea was a major link in understanding the ancient history of our ancestors, the Dacians and Romans, zoologist Ion Borcea (1879-1936), who founded Agigea Marine Zoological Station in 1926, Constantin Brătescu (1882-1945), the geographer-teacher of Dobrogea, or journalist and writer Petru Vulcan (1870-1922), the founder of the first public library at Constanta (in 1898) and of the town’s literary circle and magazine. *What is the link between their professional dedication and success and moral values that everyone praises, perhaps even Christian virtues? Simply their commitment to the cause of offering their people what they, the ‘founding fathers’, thought to be indispensable to modern life: a city and region, its history, its present and future, its opening to the world. In a word, they put Dobrogea again on the Romanian map, yet with a crucial difference, brought about by the efforts to recuperate this alienated territory for the Romanian people.*

And they were not alone. No mayor ever succeeds in making a city flourish without the full co-operation of its inhabitants. No engineer can bridge rivers without the shared efforts of teams of builders. No writer can ever start a magazine without those willing to offer their time and thoughts and those eager to ‘absorb’ its pages. It is always a shared effort.

At times, though, such sharing seems to occur much later than during one’s lifetime. Generosity may become apparent only when an art collector bestows the largest part of his/her collection to the people s/he comes from. So did art collector Krikor Zambaccian (1889-1962), born

in Constanta yet settled in Bucharest, who in 1947 donated most of his collection, alongside his house, to the state. Amazingly, his passion for the arts had been spurred by the collection he saw in the home of Lazăr Munteanu, then the owner of the stately residence still known as ‘Casa cu lei’, the ‘Lion House’, situated in the historic centre of Constanta.

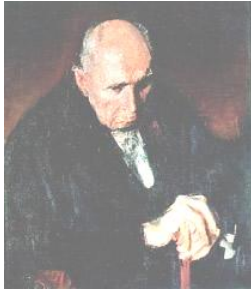


Figure 1 Corneliu Baba, *Portrait of Krikor Zambaccian* (1957), Zambaccian Museum, Bucharest

Inhabitants of and visitors to Bucharest can now admire his collection of Romanian and European art in the Zambaccian Museum, a branch of the National Museum of Art of Romania, at 21A Muzeul Zambaccian Street.

Zambaccian is recorded to have said, ‘Rather than gamble in the casinos of Monaco or Nice I’d better be staying at a second-rate hotel to save and buy a painting or two, which I will thereafter treasure all life long’.⁸ Taken out of their context and his lifelong practice, these words could rather sound an alarm bell: wasn’t he the very opposite of a generous person – the selfish, rapacious collector? No, he wasn’t. In fact, Krikor Zambaccian did share his artworks already during his lifetime: loans from his collection would grace exhibitions of Romanian art organized both in Romania and abroad (in Paris, The Hague, Amsterdam and Brussels).

Generosity is not the only one virtue demonstrated by Dobrogea-born or connected personalities. Novelist Cella Serghi (1907-1992), born in Constanta and famous for her debut novel, *The Cobweb* (*Pânza de păianjen*, 1937), a beautiful love story with many autobiographical elements, illustrates another virtue: the capacity for self-sacrifice. Not only wouldn’t she have become a writer without sacrificing her personal life to give life to her books, as most artists do, but her debut was an assumed break-up with her husband because of his unflattering fictional role there, even as she depended financially on him to be able to create. In an interview with Cleopatra Lorințiu, Cella Serghi confessed, late in her life: ‘If I had had to choose between a voyage across the world on a

⁸ Quoted in ‘Krikor Zambaccian’, <http://biografii.famouswhy.ro/krikor_zambaccian/>.

deluxe cruiser and my book [*The Cobweb*], I would have chosen my book, with all the uncertainties about its publication. I still haven't changed.'⁹



Figure 2 Magdalena Rădulescu, *Portrait of Cella Serghi (1941)*, oil on canvas, Art Museum, Constanta

What is more, Cella Serghi was also an art lover and collector. The portrait on the left, made by Magdalena Rădulescu, is part of the collection the writer donated to the Art Museum of Constanta, her native town, in the mid-1980s, whose core comprises paintings by Magdalena Rădulescu.

In effect, the Art Museum of Constanta boasts, like all museums of its kind, entire collections donated through the generosity of art lovers driven, in this case, by their fond feelings for their home place.¹⁰ The largest such donation was made in the early 1960s by dr. Gheorghe Vintilă (1898-1978), who bequeathed his artworks by Romanian painters to Topalu, his birthplace. The Topalu Museum is now a department of the Art Museum of Constanta, and a lot of the Dinu and Sevasta Vintilă collection is exhibited in the latter. Indeed, sometimes the former socialist regime abused such feelings and generosity and forced the collectors to donate everything they owned, despite their own wishes, as happened with the collection of dr. Ion and Cora Cornățeanu. The reparation – through rightful restitution – could only be made after 1990.

That generosity is what drove many Romanian collectors to donate their treasured artworks to museums during the socialist regime is proven by donations made after the late 1990s, such as the collection of Maria Angela Paschievici and Dimitrie Cosmescu. Generosity and the desire to preserve the memory of artists at their workplace also underlie the donation made by Anamaria Smigelschi and Nina Gheorghiu of their brother and husband's artworks and entire studio. Visitors to the Art

⁹ Quoted in Daniela Titire, 'Cella Serghi sau o viață ca un roman', *Jurnalul National*, 13 Apr. 2009, <<http://www.jurnalul.ro/cultura/arte-vizuale/cella-serghi-sau-o-viata-ca-un-roman-504263.html>>.

¹⁰ Doina Păuleanu, *Valori ale artei romanesti in Muzeul de Artă Constanta (Romanian Art Assets of the Art Museum of Constanta)* (Constanta, Muzeul de Arta Constanta, 2001), pp. 3-43.

Museum of Constanta can now have a look at Ion Gheorghiu's (1929-2001) artistic lair *cum* curiosity cabinet as they wouldn't have had during the artist's lifetime.¹¹



Figure 3. Ion Gheorghiu's studio, Art Museum, Constanta



Figure 4. Ion Gheorghiu's paintings, Art Museum, Constanta

Generosity as well as the desire to see their artworks treasured, well preserved and kept in the limelight has motivated a number of artists to donate some of their artworks to the Art Museum of Constanta, as did Alexandru Ciucurencu (in 1960 and 1975), Ion Jalea (during his lifetime and then posthumously also his family), Marius Bunescu, Celine Emilian, Boris Caragea and Cristea Grosu.

On a different scale, art donations are sometimes aimed at institutions other than the classic art museum. An amateur painter, Niță Manolescu, has donated one of his seascapes, *Pescărie* (*Fishing Boats*) to Pedagogical High School Constantin Brătescu, where he teaches arts.



Figure 4 Niță Manolescu, *Fishing Boats*, Teachers' Office, Pedagogical High School (painter's donation)

¹¹ We should like to thank the Art Museum of Constanta and curator Geta Deleanu for permission to photograph the Ion Gheorghiu collection and studio.

A well-known Romanian painter born in Mangalia, Traian Marinescu (1935-2002), has donated a number of paintings to the selfsame institution out of admiration for the mentors and future primary school teachers who work and train there.



Figure 5 Traian Marinescu, Seascapes, Art Gallery, Pedagogical High School (painter's donation)

Perhaps there is no more appropriate conclusion to this introduction to the tradition of values in Constanta and Dobrogea than a remark by Romanian painter Francisc Sirato (1877-1953) in 1932: A museum is not, shouldn't be, exclusively a place for the care-taking and scholarly study of valuable artefacts, which are thus housed, preserved and protected from the weathering that bites into their stuff... [The museum] should be conceived of spiritually – like a church; but first and foremost, it must be a school for today and tomorrow.¹²

¹² Quoted in Doina Păuleanu, *Valori ale artei romanesti in Muzeul de Artă Constanta* (2001), p. 39.

Beliefs, Morals, And Values

For as long as man has been around the question as to whether man is inherently good or evil has been debated. We look at the events that are happening in the world today and find ourselves asking that same question. As we study humanity, we discover that there are certain factors that lead to human development; biology, psychology and sociology.

Some think that man is born evil and either continues to be evil or learns to become good. Much of this stems from the thought of ‘original sin’ which states that everyone is born a sinner because Adam, the first man had sinned. Others think that man was born neither good nor evil; a blank slate called ‘Tabula Rasa’, and thus is influenced by the family and environment around them. Yet, still, there are those who believe that man is inherently good and learns to do evil. Although there are some people that do things that society considers evil, man is inherently good.

A belief is something that we as individuals hold to be true. There are different types of beliefs, such as spiritual and cultural. These types of beliefs can arise from tradition or experience. People usually develop expectations of life events through their beliefs, and attach personal meanings and values to them.

A moral is a message or a lesson that we have learned – whether through our own experiences or that of another. Morals mold our decision-making process as we gain more and more from our experiences.

A value is a measure by which we base our integrity. As individuals our values are our judgments on what is important in life. There are different types of values, such as ethical, moral, social, cultural and aesthetic values.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VALUES AND MORALS IN ONE'S LIFE

Everyone knows that life is precious – that life is important. We all protect our life because we care for it more than anything else. If life is so important, the values of life are even more important. Values are guiding principles, or standards of behavior which are regarded desirable, important and held in high esteem by a particular society in which a person lives.

Values make up who you are.

They define your character. That makes them important. People have many different values for many different reasons. Some have the same values, some may place more of a value on one thing than another. This is what makes us different us one from another.

Values are shaped and formed through different circumstances; how you may or may not have been brought up; through any religious beliefs you may hold; or even from just personal likes and dislikes. I would define a true value or values for anyone is about those values which are unaltering.

No matter what happens our thoughts and opinions on that value are unchanging. Other values may become stronger or diminish depending on changes of circumstances; religious beliefs and such like. These unchanging values are at the core of who we are. And it is these values which shape our life and actions maybe even subconsciously.

Circumstances and experience may both be the forces which shape our character but through that we institute our values. Values in a sense become the definition of the cumulative circumstances and experience that we have had throughout our lives. Through them they give insight into who you are.

Values are important. Without them we would be easily persuaded, moved, changed. Without them we would not have an individual identity, it would constantly waver and change like the tide. I will say again values are important; know your values: know who you are.

The Importance of Values and Morals are the code we live by in a civil and just society.

Suggestions for debate topics on the theme:

- The Importance of Values and Morals are the code we live by in a civil and just society.
- With and without values; what makes the change?
- How can circumstances and experiences shape our character?
- Values make up who you are.