

Global Faculty Initiative

The Faculty Initiative

seeks to promote the integration

of Christian faith and academic disciplines

by bringing theologians into conversation with scholars

across the spectrum of faculties

in research universities

worldwide.

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Preview Response

VIRTUES / HUMANITIES

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This is a wonderfully compressed piece of writing, encapsulating so much about the virtues in its brief compass, and making me eager to see the full exposition that will follow. Full thanks to the author.

As a sociolinguist, whose interest is in the workings of language and speech in society, this inspires me to wonder where speaking and listening may fit among the virtues. Undoubtedly good speaking is a virtue: Jesus emphasised the importance of speaking truly, kindly and wholesomely from the heart, and the letter of James focuses extensively on traits of good and bad speaking.

Complementarily, listening is a virtue which we are to cultivate. Consider how few people you know who are genuinely good listeners rather than using what you say as a platform for what they themselves want to say next. Jesus also stressed listenership: 'Let those who have ears, hear!' And James urged his readers to be 'quick to listen, slow to speak'. Good listenership is the often unrecognized foundation of good interpersonal and institutional relationships, including in the academy.

Both individually and institutionally, then, I believe good speaking and good listening are among the virtues, although I am unsure exactly where they would fit in the schemas Professor Herdt lays out. They certainly have to do with kindness, justice and love, and we can take it that they are both infused and developed.

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