

# The 7 deadly sins and 7 cardinal virtues essay



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## The 7 Deadly Sins and 7 Cardinal Virtues

===== Overview

— The “ Seven Deadly Sins”, also known as the “ Capital Vices” or “ Cardinal Sins”, are a classification of vices that were originally used in early Christian teachings to educate and instruct followers concerning (immoral) fallen man’s tendency to sin. The Roman Catholic Church divided sin into two principal categories: “ venial”, which are relatively minor, and could be forgiven through any sacrament of the Church, and the more severe “ capital” or “ mortal” sins, which, when committed, destroyed the life of grace, and created the threat of eternal damnation unless either absolved through the sacrament of confession, or otherwise forgiven through perfect contrition on the part of the penitent. Beginning in the early 14th century, the popularity of the Seven deadly sins as a theme among European artists of the time eventually helped to ingrain them in many areas of Christian culture and Christian consciousness in general throughout the world. One means of such ingraining was the creation of the mnemonic “ SALIGIA” based on the first letters in Latin of the seven deadly sins: superbia, avaritia, luxuria, invidia, gula, ira, acedia.

Listed in the same order used by both Pope Gregory the Great in the 6th Century AD, and later by Dante Alighieri in his epic poem The Divine Comedy, the Seven deadly sins are as follows: (7) Luxuria(extravagance, later lust); (6) Gula(gluttony); (5) Avaritia(greed); (4) Acedia(sloth); (3) Ira(wrath); (2) Invidia( envy); and (1) Superbia(pride). Each of The Seven Deadly Sins has an opposite among the corresponding Seven holy virtues (sometimes also referred to as the Contrary Virtues). The identification and

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definition of the Seven deadly sins over their history has been a fluid process and the idea of what each of the seven actually encompass has evolved over time. This process has been aided by the fact that they are not referred to in either a cohesive or codified manner in the Bible itself, and as a result other literary and ecclesiastical works referring to the Seven deadly sins were instead consulted as sources from which definitions might be drawn. Part II of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, *Purgatorio*, has almost certainly been the best known source since the Renaissance, though many later interpretations and versions, especially those of the more conservative and Pentecostal Protestant denominations, have instead tended to portray the consequence for those guilty of committing one or more of these sins as being eternal torment in Hell, rather than possible purification through penance in Purgatory. The Sins ---- ==> Lust (Latin: *luxuria*) Synonyms: Lust (fornication, perversion) Lust is usually thought of as involving obsessive or excessive thoughts or desires of a sexual nature.

Unfulfilled lusts sometimes lead to sexual or sociological compulsions and/or transgressions including (but obviously not limited to) sexual addiction, adultery, bestiality, and rape. Dante's criterion was "excessive love of others," which therefore rendered love and devotion to God as secondary. However, lust and love are two different things; while a genuine, selfless love can represent the highest degree of development and feeling of community with others in a human relationship, Lust can be described as the excessive desire for sexual release. The other person can be therefore seen as a "means to an end" for the fulfillment of the subject's desires, and becomes thus objectified in the process. In *Purgatorio*, the penitent walks within

flames to purge himself of lustful/sexual thoughts. ==; Gluttony (Latin: gula)  
Synonyms: Gluttony (waste, overindulgence) Modern views identify Gluttony with an overindulgence of food and drink, though in the past any form of thoughtless excess could fall within the definition of this sin.

Marked by unreasonable or unnecessary excess of consumption, Gluttony could also include certain forms of destructive behavior, especially for sport, or for its own sake. Substance abuse or binge drinking can be seen as examples of gluttony therefore. The penitents in the Purgatorio were forced to stand between two trees, unable to reach or eat the fruit hanging from either, and were thus described as having a starved appearance. ==; Greed (Latin: avaritia) Synonyms: Greed (treachery, covetousness) Greed is, like Lust and Gluttony, a sin of excess. However, Greed (as seen by the Church) applied to the acquisition of wealth in particular. Thomas Aquinas wrote that Greed was “ a sin against God, just as all mortal sins, in as much as man condemns things eternal for the sake of temporal things.

” In Dante’s Purgatory, the penitents were bound and laid face down on the ground for having concentrated too much on earthly thoughts. “ Avarice” is more of a blanket term that can describe many other examples of sinful behavior. These include disloyalty, deliberate betrayal, or treason, especially for personal gain, for example through bribery. Scavenging and hoarding of materials or objects, theft and robbery, especially by means of violence, trickery, or manipulation of authority are all actions that may be inspired by greed. Such misdeeds can include Simony, where one profits from soliciting goods within the actual confines of a church. ==> Sloth (Latin: acedia)  
Synonyms: Sloth (laziness, sadness, apathy) More than other sins, the  
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definition of Sloth has changed considerably since its original inclusion among The Seven Deadly Sins.

It had been in the early years of Christianity characterized by what modern writers would now describe as apathy, depression, and joylessness — the latter being viewed as being a refusal to enjoy the goodness of God and the world He created. Originally, its place was fulfilled by two other aspects, Acedia and Sadness. The former described a spiritual apathy that affected the faithful by discouraging them from their religious work. Sadness (*tristitia* in Latin) described a feeling of dissatisfaction or discontent, which caused unhappiness with one's current situation.

When St. Thomas Aquinas selected Acedia for his list, he described it as an “uneasiness of the mind,” being a progenitor for lesser sins such as restlessness and instability. Dante refined this definition further, describing Sloth as being the “failure to love God with all one's heart, all one's mind and all one's soul.” He also described it as the middle sin, and as such was the only sin characterised by an absence or insufficiency of love. In his *Purgatorio*, the slothful penitents were made to run continuously at top speed. The modern view of the vice, as highlighted by its contrary virtue zeal/diligence, is that it represents the failure to utilize one's talents and gifts.

For example, a student who does not work beyond what is required (and thus fails to achieve his or her full potential) would be slothful. Current interpretations are therefore much less stringent and comprehensive than they were in medieval times, and portray Sloth as being more simply a sin of

laziness, of an unwillingness to act, an unwillingness to care (rather than a failure to love God and His works). For this reason Sloth is now often seen as being considerably less serious than the other sins. ==> Wrath (Latin: ira) Synonyms: Wrath (anger, hatred, prejudice, discrimination) Wrath may be described as inordinate and uncontrolled feelings of hatred and anger.

These feelings can manifest as vehement denial of the truth, both to others and in the form of self-denial, impatience with the procedure of law, and the desire to seek revenge outside of the workings of the justice system (such as engaging in vigilantism), fanatical political beliefs, and generally wishing to do evil or harm to others. The transgressions borne of Wrath are among the most serious, including murder, assault, and in extreme cases, genocide. (See Crimes against humanity. ) Wrath is the only sin not necessarily associated with selfishness or self interest (although one can of course be wrathful for selfish reasons, such as jealousy). Dante described Wrath as “love of justice perverted to revenge and spite”.

The wrathful in his Purgatorio were enveloped in blinding smoke. ==> Envy (Latin: invidia) Synonyms: Envy (jealousy, malice) Like Greed, Envy is characterized by an insatiable desire; they differ, however, for two main reasons: First, Greed is largely associated with material goods, whereas Envy may apply more generally. Second, those who commit the sin of Envy desire something that someone else has which they perceive themselves as lacking. Dante defined this as “love of one’s own good perverted to a desire to deprive other men of theirs. ” In Dante’s Purgatory, the punishment for the envious is to have their eyes sewn shut with wire, because they have gained sinful pleasure from seeing others brought lowly.

=> Pride (Latin: superbia) Synonyms: Pride (vanity, narcissism), Hubris In almost every list Pride is considered the original and most serious of The Seven Deadly Sins, and indeed the ultimate source from which the others arise. It is identified as a desire to be more important or attractive than others, failing to give compliments to others though they may be deserving of them, and excessive love of self (especially holding self out of proper position toward God). Dante's definition was "love of self perverted to hatred and contempt for one's neighbor. In Jacob Bidermann's medieval miracle play, *Cenodoxus*, Pride is the deadliest of all the sins and leads directly to the damnation of the famed Doctor of Paris, *Cenodoxus*.

In perhaps the most famous example, the story of Lucifer, Pride was what caused his Fall from Heaven, and his resultant transformation into Satan. Vanity and Narcissism are prime examples of this Sin. In the *Divine Comedy*, the penitent were forced to walk with stone slabs bearing down on their backs in order to induce feelings of humility. Dante —Dante Alighieri (1265 - 1321) was a Catholic layman who wrote "The *Divine Comedy*," which is really three epic poems in Italian: "Inferno," "Purgatorio," and "Paradiso," which are about Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven/Paradise, respectively. In "Purgatorio," Dante places each of the seven sins on a level, with the higher levels closer to Paradise and the lower ones closer to Hell.

The numbers in parentheses, in the above table, indicate the level where they are found in "Purgatorio." Dante considers these sins as offenses against love, and groups them accordingly: PERVERTED Love:(1) Pride (2) Envy (3) Wrath/Anger INSUFFICIENT Love:(4) Sloth EXCESSIVE Love of EARTHLY GOODS:(5) Avarice/Greed (6) Gluttony (7) Lust Dante seems to

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have had a well-formed conscience. His emphasis on love, in the sense of Christian charity, is impressive. That is not to claim some sort of sainthood, but his ideas were very much in keeping with the teaching of the Catholic Church at a time when the practice of the clergy often fell short of the doctrine.

The Divine Comedy —————Dante Alighieri’s “ The Divine Comedy” is composed of three canticas (or “ cantiche”) — Inferno (Hell), Purgatorio (Purgatory), and Paradiso (Paradise) — composed each of 33 cantos (or “ canti”). The very first canto serves as an introduction to the poem and is generally not considered to be part of the first cantica, bringing the total number of cantos to 100. The first cantica, Inferno, is by far the most famous of the three, and is often published separately under the title Dante’s Inferno. As a part of the whole literary work, the first canto serves as an introduction to the entire Divine Comedy, making each of the cantiche 33 canti long.

The number 3 is prominent in the work, represented here by the length of each cantica. The verse scheme used, terza rima, is the hendecasyllable (line of eleven syllables), with the lines composing tercets according to the rhyme scheme ABA BCB CDC . . . YZY Z.

The poet tells in the first person his travel through the three realms of the dead, lasting during the Easter Triduum in the spring of 1300. His guide through Hell and Purgatory is the Latin poet Virgil, author of the Aeneid and the Fourth Eclogue, and the guide through Paradise is Beatrice, Dante’s ideal of a perfect woman. Beatrice was a real Florentine woman whom he met in



childhood and admired from afar in the mode of the then-fashionable courtly love tradition which is highlighted in Dante's earlier work *La Vita Nuova*. The Satanic Bible ————— In the *Satanic Bible* (Anton Szandor Lavey), it is addressed that these seven sins are all "Satanic" in nature, as they all lead to mental, emotional and physical gratification. The Seven Holy Virtues ————— The Seven Virtues were derived from the *Psychomachia* ('Contest of the Soul'), an epic poem written by Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (c.

10) entailing the battle of good virtues and evil vices. The intense popularity of this work in the Middle Ages helped to spread the concept of Holy Virtue throughout Europe. Practicing these virtues is alleged to protect one against temptation from the Seven Deadly Sins, with each one having its counterpart. Due to this they are sometimes referred to as the "contrary virtues". There are two distinct variations of the virtues, recognized by different groups.

The Virtues ——— Ranked in ascending order of sanctity, the seven holy virtues are: . Chastity (Latin: *castitas*) (purity, opposes lust, Latin: *luxuria*) — Courage and boldness. Embracing of moral wholesomeness and achieving purity of thought through education and betterment; . Abstinence (Latin: *frenum*) (self-control, opposes gluttony, Latin: *gula*) — Constant mindfulness of others and one's surroundings; practicing self-control, abstention, and moderation.

. Liberality (Latin: *liberalitas*) (will, generosity, opposes greed, Latin: *avaritia*) — Generosity. Willingness to give. A nobility of thought or actions. . Diligence

(Latin: industria) (ethics, opposes sloth, Latin: acedia) — A zealous and careful nature in one's actions and work.

Decisive work ethic. Budgeting one's time; monitoring one's own activities to guard against laziness. . Patience (Latin: patientia) (peace, opposes wrath, Latin: ira) — Forbearance and endurance through moderation. Resolving conflicts peacefully, as opposed to resorting to violence.

The ability to forgive; to show mercy to sinners. . Kindness (Latin: humanitas) (satisfaction, opposes envy, Latin: invidia) — Charity, compassion, friendship, and sympathy without prejudice and for its own sake. . Humility (Latin: humilitas) (modesty, opposes pride, Latin: superbia) — Modest behavior, selflessness, and the giving of respect. Giving credit where credit is due; not unfairly glorifying one's own self.

Theology ——— Restraint is the keystone of the seven holy virtues. The other holy virtues are created through selfless pursuits: . Valour — Pursuit of Courage and Knowledge . Generosity — Pursuit of Giving .

Liberality — Pursuit of Will . Diligence — Pursuit of Ethics . Patience — Pursuit of Peace . Kindness — Pursuit of Charity . Humility — Pursuit of Modesty

Roman Catholic Virtues ————— The Roman Catholic church recognized the seven capital virtues as opposites to the Seven Capital Sins or the Seven Deadly Sins. According to Dante's The Divine Comedy the sins have an order of greatness, and the virtues a respective order of greatness as well.

This order is shown below from the lowest to the highest. Sin/Virtue

----- Lust (excessive sexual

appetites) Chastity (purity) Gluttony (over-indulgence) Temperance (self-

restraint) Greed (avarice) Charity (giving)

Sloth (laziness/idleness) Diligence (zeal/integrity/Labour)

Wrath (anger) Forgiveness (composure) Envy (jealousy) Kindness (admiration)

Pride (vanity) Humility (humbleness) Cardinal and Theological Virtues

----- Another list of the Seven Virtues consists of a combination of the four Cardinal Virtues and the three Theological Virtues: .

Prudence, Justice (this is an eighth virtue), Temperance, and Fortitude .

Faith, Hope, and Love (charity) This formulation shows clearly the

combination of Greek virtues (the Cardinal Virtues, found in Plato, for

example) with Christian virtues (found in 1 Corinthians 13).

These virtues do not line up so nicely as opposites to the Seven Deadly Sins,

but are commonly referenced as the Seven Virtues. This allowed non-

Christians to base their behaviour on moral tenets other than those

prescribed by Christians. In medieval ideology, only a Christian would have

faith in God, look forward to a life after death and caritas, be able to carry

out acts of charity towards fellow men based solely on love of God. The

Eighth Virtue ----- The Eight virtues are sometimes known as the

Apostle Virtues, and is used in the anime/manga Chrono Crusade (Chrono

Crusade).

. Justice (Latin: *Justicia*) (honesty & righteousness, opposes wrongness or

dishonesty, (No Latin)) — Honesty, and the giving of righteousness. Being

fair or telling the truth. Doing what is right and not what is wrong. It is the light of truth that conquers the dark of the wrong.

Justness, equity, evenhandedness, impartiality, objectivity, neutrality, disinterestedness, morals, morality. . Justice — Pursuit of Righteousness and Honesty Bibliography ——— Boyle, Marjorie O'Rourke [1997-10-23]. “Loyola’s Acts: The Rhetoric of the Self (The New Historicism: Studies in Cultural Poetics, 36)”.

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