

# **Capital Sins and Virtues in Higher Education:**

**How do human failings cause  
problems and what can  
ombudsmen and university  
management do?**

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# Who we are

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# What we are going to do

Conflicts may arise in situations where human commit sins.

- We introduce you to the “capital sins” as a metaphor to explore the weaknesses and excesses that can happen in a university context.
- Then, we ask you for a tour d’horizon on these and the virtues/strengths desired.
- We present our cases and we are looking forward to your cases.



# “Sins”

- “sin” comes from the Old English word *syn(n)*, “offence, wrong-doing, misdeed”
- sin entered the human world through Adam and Eve’s sin in the garden of Eden
- but: the “concept” is also around in other religions
- you can repent, while still on earth (if you believe in the “two-worlds-concept”) or in Purgatory (if you believe in that)
- being an ombudsperson: = Purgatory on Earth

# How to find your way around thru Vices and Virtues?

Vice	<a href="#">Latin</a>	<a href="#">Virtue</a>	Latin	Not Wikipedia (other words)
Lust	<i>Luxuria</i>	<a href="#">Chastity</a>	<i>Castitas</i>	<i>Lust/respect</i>
Gluttony	<i>Gula</i>	<a href="#">Temperance</a>	<i>Temperantia</i>	<i>Gluttony/moderation</i>
Greed	<i>Avaritia</i>	<a href="#">Charity</a> (or, sometimes, <a href="#">Generosity</a> )	<i>Caritas</i>	<i>Greed- avariciousness/generosity</i>
Sloth	<i>Acedia</i>	<a href="#">Diligence</a>	<i>Industria</i>	<i>Sloth-laziness/diligence- thoroughness-fortitude- courage</i>
Wrath	<i>Ira</i>	<a href="#">Patience</a>	<i>Patientia</i>	<i>Anger/patience</i>
Envy	<i>Invidia</i>	<a href="#">Kindness</a>	<i>Humanitas</i>	<i>Envy-jealousy/kindness- compassion</i>
Pride	<i>Superbia</i>	<a href="#">Humility</a>	<i>Humilitas</i>	<i>Pride/humility</i>

# Sinning in HE?

## Can that be true?

- Issues in real conflicts in HEIs (according to 10 expert interviews carried out in 2012; mind you, this list is not complete!):
  - job descriptions
  - employment procedures
  - **jealousy**
  - mobbing
  - **envy**
  - privileges
  - **sexual harassment**
  - **scientific integrity**

# “Capital Sins” and Virtues from a management perspective

- **Pride** of professors and management
- **Envy** of all stakeholders
- **Anger** of all stakeholders (students on grades or non-admission; research assistants on research conditions; chairs on decisions or non-decisions of university top management .....)
- **Sloth** of some faculty members
- **Greed** of some professors and research assistants (e.g. on research output)



# Fun with metaphors...

- Universities as royal courts with ombuds as court jester (Don Hartsock, CCCUO co-founder)
- Fools and tricksters as critics and 'disturbers' of established order // Ombuds as mirrors and 'collective conscience' of an organization (Conway and Ziff, 2005)
- People (and organizations?) in conflict: villain-victim-hero projections (Harper, 2005) v. Jung's integration of the 'shadow' for ethical development

# Sins and Virtues in HE

- Interactive exercise:
  - use the post-its to name sins and virtues
  - use the dots to vote for the most common sins and virtues you encounter

# Case A: Questions

- What are the sins or weaknesses/the possible virtues or strengths of the acting people?
- Who could have done something earlier in order to prevent escalation?
- What could the student have done differently?
- What can university leaders do to prevent such a situation in the future?

## Case B: questions

- What are the sins or weaknesses/the possible virtues or strengths?
- What could the professor have done differently to improve the situation?
- What could the student have done differently?
- What can university management do to prevent such a situation in the future?

# Case C: questions

- What are the sins or weaknesses/the possible virtues or strengths?
- What are people/systems failing to see?
- What are they projecting, ignoring, rewarding/not rewarding?
- What could change the dynamics?

**Your cases!**

# What can we learn from this?

- How ready are we to deal with these entrenched or difficult situations?
- Strategies for discouraging 'sins' or weaknesses and allowing 'virtues' or strengths to flourish?
- Authenticity: willingness to look at oneself in the mirror (for the ombuds as well).
- Other?

# Sources

- The Bible, first printed version 1454
- Conway, M. and Ziff, K. 2005. Speaking Ourselves into Existence : the Trickster Metaphor as a Means to Reflective Ombuds Practice) in *Journal of the California Caucus of College and University Ombudspersons..* Vol. 7, #1. <http://journal.calcaucus.com/>
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