

Courage: “Courage is the most important of the virtues because without courage you can’t practice any other virtue consistently.” – Maya Angelou

The word for courage comes from the Latin word which means “heart.” (It is related to the word which we derive cardiac from). A person’s heart in the ancient world was more than a bodily organ, it was the foundation of their identity. To be a person of courage was to act in such a way that encompassed one’s entire being. The converse is to act with cowardice, which causes a “shrinking back.” When a person allows fear to control their actions, their “heart” shrinks and literally stunts the development of virtues. This is what Maya Angelou is trying to convey in the quote above; courage unites our being and drives us to live a life of virtue development.

Application: Human flourishing is directly tied to virtue development. However, virtue development is difficult and painful as it forces us to confront the “heart” of our identity. It takes courage to be honest with yourself about the areas in life you need to develop. As you develop your courage, it will be the catalyst that spurs the growth of other virtues in your life.