

Quests of the Avatar



*Seeking virtue in the modern world,
a guide to living for gamers*

By Rohvannyn Shaw

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The Quest Begins

Have you ever wanted to embark on a great Quest, an epic adventure truly worthy of song and story?

You can, if you want to.

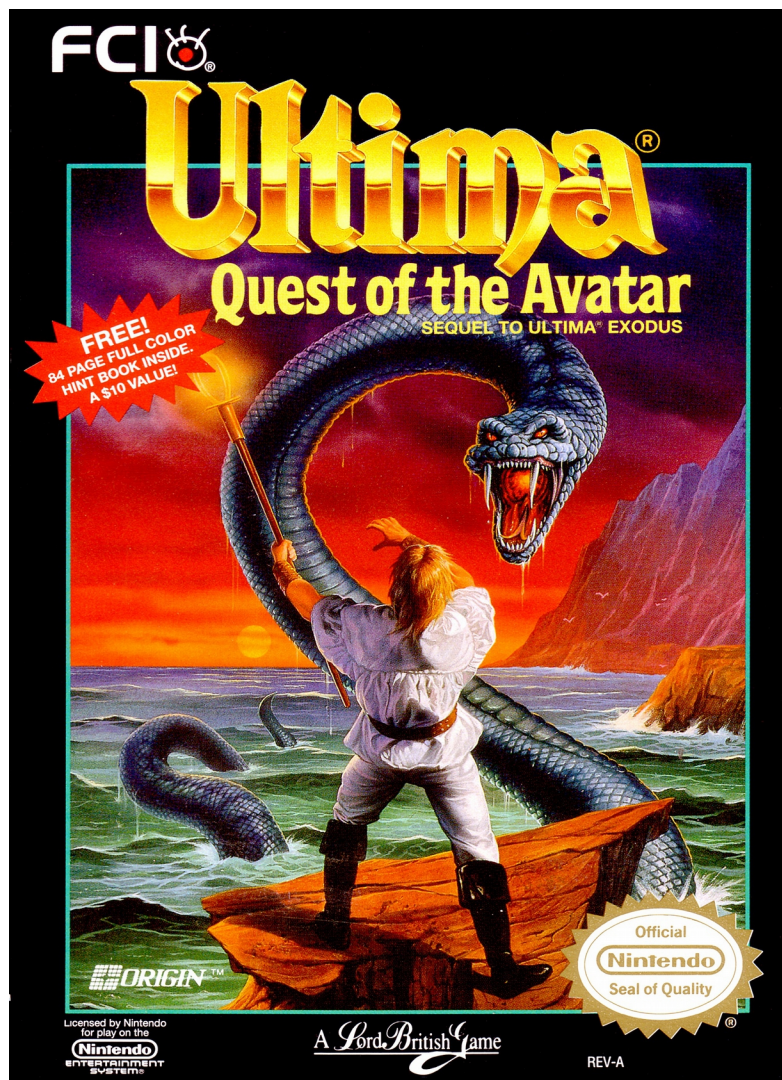
It's a journey deep into your Self.

I've found a system of ethics and morality that is utterly without stodginess, but still helps to develop a well rounded personality. At the same time, this can help in re-framing how you see, and think about virtue in a way that is fresh and hopefully thought provoking.

This Ebook is an offering to everyone out there who is seeking a better life. I've been greatly inspired by the ideas and concepts described below, and find them intriguing, but also different enough from other philosophies to have true value. Upon their rediscovery, I wanted to share them with others too, people who desire something new.

In the modern era, it seems to me that the idea of virtue is somewhat forgotten, particularly for those folks who are non religious, as I am. Everyone knows that it's better to be brave, truthful, compassionate, etc, but isn't it nice to have a coherent path to build those ethical muscles and improve yourself? Without being told you're a sinner? How about just building from where you are, without guild or judgment, using an organized system to keep everything organized, and have some fun while doing it?

I found this system of virtue in a rather unlikely place - a roleplaying game, actually the first one I ever played!



Background

Ultima: Quest of the Avatar was a game unlike anything anyone had seen before. It was released in 1985 for the Apple II. Originally conceived by Richard Garriott and made first for computers and then for the original NES, it had no major boss fights, no global disaster to solve, no set story to play through. Your character was selected based on your answers to questions that Hawkwind the Sage asked you in the beginning. Since Britannia was an entirely free roaming world, the story told was entirely up to you. You could recruit other characters in any order, or not at all, and choose to do good or evil acts which would affect your progress.

Ultima was so compelling because it was like life - every choice is yours. Challenges can be overcome based on your actions. Though there was magic in the game, it was a fairly rational world. Richard Garriott identified enough with the game that he put himself inside it, personified by the king "Lord British." I remember one place in the game where you can find a townsman who says that he is Richard Garriott. There is a strong link between real world philosophy and the enjoyment of the story you create in this game.

The whole point of Ultima: Quest of the Avatar was to become an Avatar of Virtue. The idea was that the world was reeling from wars and strife, and the people needed a paragon of virtue to give them

hope. Throughout the world were Shrines, each dedicated to a Virtue. In the game, there are eight of those, and we'll discuss them later. The Virtues were made of Principles, and everything was color coded. This is helpful because it speaks to the deep parts of the mind, aiding memory.

There are so many treasures to be found in Ultima, treasures that will go unknown to players of modern console RPGs, modern MMOs, and various handheld scenarios. This game was a veritable gem in 8 bit format. In these few pages, I'm going to explore the moral system Ultima uses, and discuss the ways it plays out in the context of the game. Then, I'll follow up with various ideas for personal Quests. These are suggestions, simple ways to practice the different concepts in the real world. Some of them may seem silly or obvious, but I hope you take them in the lighthearted way I wrote them. After all, everything's more fun when it's a Quest! In this way, what started as a moral system for a work of fiction can become inspiration for a better life!

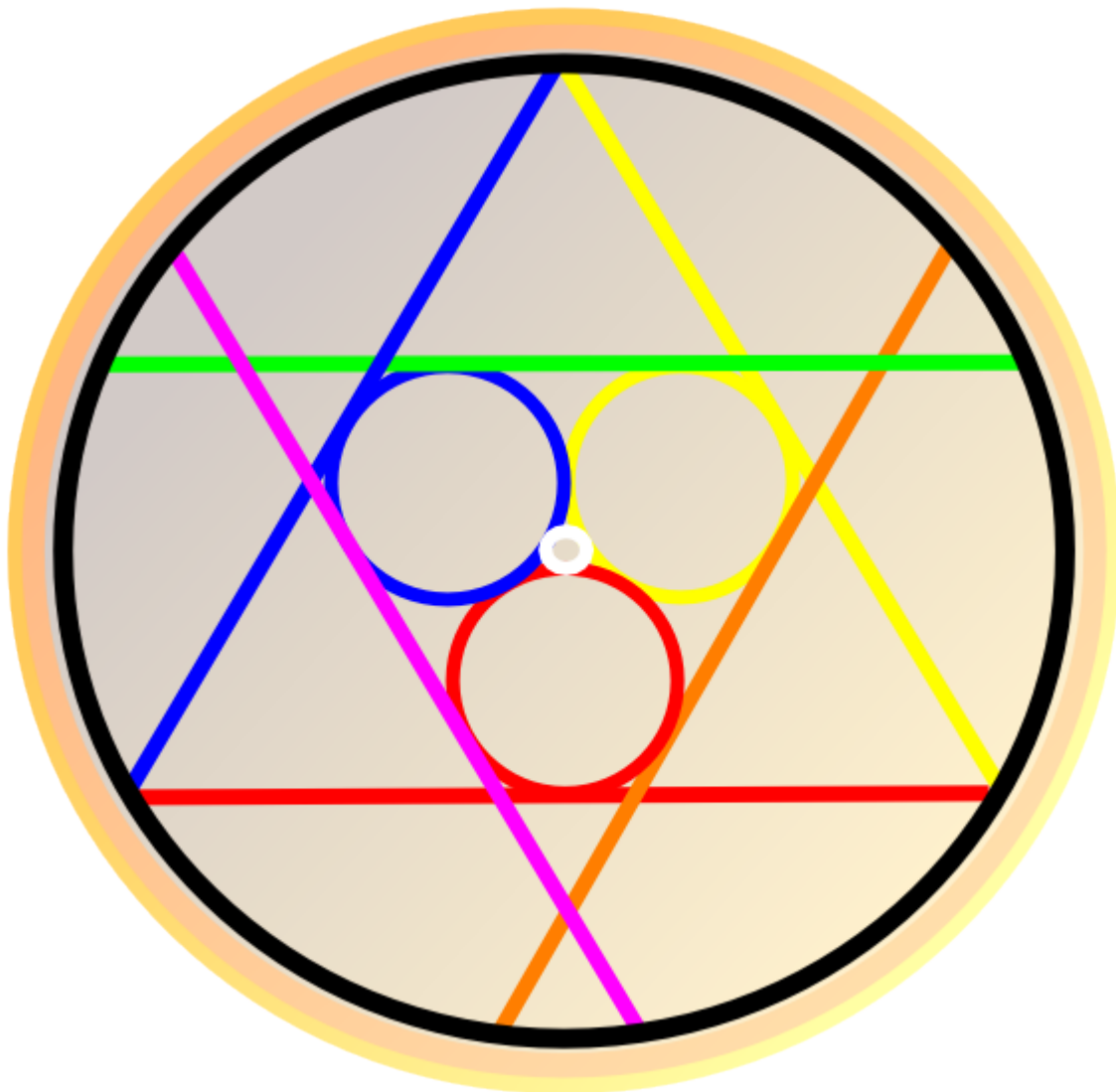
Colors and Symbolism

Color is very important. It adds beauty to the world, but it also makes life more varied and interesting. The great thing about attaching color to abstract concepts is the way you can be reminded of those concepts when you see a color. Wouldn't it be neat to see a red flower, say, and have the color remind you to be brave? Or see a yellow shirt, perhaps, and be reminded of being kind to people? This kind of thing is a valuable and appropriate use of symbolism. It can enhance your daily life by keeping important concepts in the forefront of your mind.

The colors we will be using are simple, vibrant, and unambiguous. Those are important qualities for any symbol. As you go through the Virtues, you will note that they are all represented by colors that make sense. For example, if Honesty is symbolized by Blue, and Love is symbolized by Yellow, then it makes sense that Justice, which is the Love of Truth, would be associated with the color Green.

If you like, you can use color throughout your Quest - if you feel the need to be brave, maybe wear a red bracelet and think about what the color needs throughout the day. Or if you really need to remember to be humble, wear a black T-shirt instead of something more showy. There isn't any magic in this beyond the power of guided symbolism. Always remember though, not to mistake the map for the land. Symbols mean nothing if we don't change our behavior to match the reminders we leave for ourselves. You won't become braver by wearing a red bracelet if you don't try!

The Ankh is used as a symbol throughout the game, but it is not a standard Ankh - this one has a pointed end. To Ancient Egyptians, it symbolized immortality. Richard Garriott wanted to use something unique and identifiable. The other symbol you will see often is this pattern of circles and lines. Sometimes it is depicted in black and white, but in this case you can see how the colors interact with each other to form a visual map of the virtues.



Characters

In the story of your life, characters are important too. The things you believe, and how they affect the things you do, help make up the persona that others see. You can literally change how others see you by changing your behaviors and your actions. So if you do not like yourself, consider what you could do to change yourself into a person you do like. In the virtue descriptions, I am going to include descriptions of the characters associated with them. They are interesting to think about and could easily become archetypes.

Remember that having companions on your quest is a very good thing. Value the people in your life that are supportive. However, there is more than one way to be supportive. If an honest friend of yours is aware of your shortcomings and still tries to help you improve, be as nice to them as you can be and treat them with great respect. Value their input as you would value a mechanic who let you know how to fix that grinding sound in your car's engine. We all have too many "yes men" in our lives and we don't grow if we never face our flaws.

How the Virtues and the Principles work

In Ultima: Quest of the Avatar, the eight Virtues are Honesty, Compassion, Valor, Honor, Justice, Sacrifice, Spirituality, and Humility. These are important universal concepts that are independent of any sort of faith, religion, or belief structure. The game portrays them as all being made up of the Three Principles, represented by the Three Keys, which are Truth, Love, and Courage. I have found that to be true as well. Having a framework to think about these things is an aid to contemplating them.

Hawkwind, the Court Sage, would gauge your virtue throughout the game. You could go to him and ask how you were doing in any area. Similarly, it's very helpful to have a 'reality check' available to you, be they friend, parent, spouse, or whoever. That way you can know if you are doing well, doing poorly, or backsliding. After all, Virtue isn't instant, it's build through practice, just like building your muscles.

In the game, you will find three different strongholds, each representing a Principle, eight shrines, each representing a Virtue, and eight gloomy dungeons, each representing a Vice. Your mission is to do good deeds until you are qualified to go to the Shrine and gain Partial Avatarhood, but also to explore the deepest depths of every dungeon. You can't succeed unless you know yourself, both negatively and positively. Avatarhood requires time, effort, and the willingness to go into dangerous places. The Strongholds contain information and help to seekers. The parallels to modern life are clear.

The Three Principles

Truth's symbol is, as you would imagine, the Book of Truth. Its stronghold is the Lycaeum, a huge library on the same heavily forested island as Moonglow, town of the Mages. There's even a telescope at the top!



Love's symbol is the Candelabra of Love, and its stronghold is Empath Abbey. Empath Abbey is located deep in the forest near the northwestern coastline of Britannia.



Courage's symbol is the Bell of Courage, and its stronghold is the Serpent's Hold. It is a large castle on a barren island far to the south, near rocky and dangerous waters.



The Eight Virtues

Honesty



Honesty is made only of the Principle of Truth. Its color is blue. In the game, it is represented by Mariah, the Mage. She lives a life of the mind on Magician's Isle, in the town of Moonglow. Being a scholar, she demonstrates that the Virtue of Truth is about learning, too. After all, a person learns more about the world if they are honest about what they experience. She is lightly armored but can cast strong magic. Mariah can also heal, just as properly directed Truth can. She's rather hard to play as a new character but can become strong later in the game as she learns more powerful magic. So it is with honesty. It's hard at first but you become more powerful as a person, the more honest you are with yourself and others.

It's harder to be truthful than it first appears. In the game, it's pretty much a matter of not cheating the blind herbalist, and not opening chests you find in town. Sure, you can make money that way, and have an easier time getting decent weapons and armor, but it's hell on your Virtue. In real life it's amazing how hard it can be to be honest. We've all seen a hundred examples. For me, anyway, it's so easy to write something off as a "little white lie," to shade the truth so that I look a little better. There are so many places in life that I tell an untruth and don't even recognize it because it doesn't seem like a lie. I still believe that it's best to be truthful in nearly everything, however I don't take it as an absolute. While there are usually times where speaking less than the absolute truth is better (does this

make my butt look big?)), still, as a general rule, misrepresentation of facts is one of the worst things we can do in life.

As wrong as it is to deceive others, it's even worse to deceive yourself. A good relationship with a perceptive friend can help here. No matter how much the truth hurts, it is a gift that should be prized as much as a hard-won Avatarhood.

Luckily, life gives all of us plenty of time to practice our honesty!

Quest ideas:

The next time a store charges you the wrong amount, either more or less than they should, let them know.

Make a list of your core values, the things you value most. Compare how you live right now with that list.

Pick a time when someone is asking you to do something you really don't want to do, think about the real reason why you don't want to do it. Gently communicate that.

Next time you try to do something and fail, and it really was partly in your control, be honest about why you failed--but also, what you can do better in the future. It's easy to see that blaming circumstance robs you of opportunities to learn.

Take a moment, here and there, to reflect on your actions. Be honest with yourself about your motivations and the effects of your actions, good and bad.

Take a day where you refuse to blame anyone for anything. Then take two.

Finally, each of us can resolve to just plain tell the truth!

Compassion



Compassion is made only of the Principle of Love. Its color is Yellow. The character who represents this Virtue is Iolo, a Bard who lives in Britain, the capital city of Britannia. He brings joy to people in the form of music, and carries light weapons, mostly bows, and light armor. He's a somewhat balanced character to start with, though a bit weak in both strength and magic ability.

Compassion is easy to show in the game but it takes a long time. In each town you will find at least one beggar, asking for alms in a public place. You must give them at least one coin. The interesting thing about this is that you will not progress any faster giving a lot of money at one time, but instead you must develop a habit of giving frequently. It becomes a part of your habits as a player character. It's like that in life. Compassion is a skill that must be practiced. Compassion for the self is as important as compassion for others, it's not healthy to only feel one or the other. It can be difficult to develop at times, but it's really worth it. The hopeful thing is that self compassion can be fostered and learned.

Though it can be tempting to confuse pity with compassion, but it's very important not to do so. Pity is closer to Despise, the shadow side of compassion. Instead of saying "I feel your struggles, and I'm with you," or "I understand what you are going through and I want to help," pity says "I'm so glad I'm not you. I'm better than you." Further, self pity is as destructive as self hatred.

Quest ideas:

Practice "just like me." For a day, or an hour, or a few minutes, with everyone you see think "they are just like me. They breathe, they live, they have hopes and dreams, they have fears and dislikes, they have desires, and they are worthy of respect just like me." This makes a great compassion meditation.

Be kind to someone you normally wouldn't be. This can be as simple as a smile in the checkout line, or a little extra courtesy to someone you have to work with on the phone. Take an extra breath before becoming frustrated. Remember, they are like you.

The next time someone asks you to do something, and you were going to do it anyway, smile and say "I'll be happy to," and do it cheerfully.

The next time your spouse cooks a meal or someone does something for you, if you are in a habit of not doing this, make an extra effort to thank them.

Practice self compassion. The next time you fail at something, take an extra moment to realize why it happened, forgive yourself, and vow to try again. Treat yourself like your own best friend.

Write down a list of things you love about your partner. Share them, or don't, as you choose.

Write down a list of things you love about yourself. Try hard to think of something.

Do something kind, randomly, for someone you have no reason to be kind to such as a neighbor.

The next time you think someone is wrong, try to understand their point of view. They may still be wrong when you have done that, but it's good practice.

Valor



Valor is made of courage only, and its color is red for these purposes. It is represented by a Fighter named Geoff. Hailing from a town called Jhelom, he is strong and is a good fighter. He doesn't give up, no matter what. He can wear any armor and use almost any weapon. He has absolutely no magic skill. In the game, valor basically means you don't run from battle and is one of the easiest Virtues to earn.

In real life, it can be one of the hardest. Valor doesn't mean you have to be a soldier or a firefighter or save lives for a living. Valor can mean that you calmly stand up to an overbearing boss when you know you are being wronged. It might mean that you ask a question when it might be embarrassing to you, but you need the information. It might mean that you learn a new skill that is difficult. It might mean that you go somewhere you've never been before. It can mean stopping a friend when they are going to do something that will harm them. It might also mean that you face a difficult decision and think it out rather than letting your emotional reactions take control. There are many kinds of courage, and many ways to show it.

Quest ideas:

Learn a new skill.

Make a ruthless list of all your fears, ranked by severity. Be honest.

Ask someone a question. That can be surprisingly hard.

The next time someone else knows something you don't, have the courage to learn and admit you don't know.

Push your limits - work on conquering a fear. For example, if it were me, I might drive the windy road over a hill that always makes me nervous until it doesn't make me nervous anymore.

Breathe instead of panicking when you do encounter something scary. Refuse to let the fear rule you, embrace the fear and move through it.

Being brave doesn't mean being foolhardy. Sometimes it is braver not to take a risk, if taking that risk was mostly to impress others. It can also be brave to know your own limits and stick to them where it's appropriate or wise to do so.

Consciously choose to do something you've never done before. Take a class, learn a skill, read something you never thought you'd read.

Talk to a stranger.

Honor



Honor is the courage to be truthful. Being made of Valor and Honesty, it is represented by the color purple. Dupre the Paladin, who comes from Trinsic, represents Honor here. He can wear many kinds of armor, can cast a little magic, and is one of the easiest characters to play. Honor is mostly proven in the way you respond to questions. This is true in life, how we act and how we treat people shows our honor.

Strangely, though, Dupre is an easy character to play, Honor is definitely not so easy. Many don't have a true understanding of it. It can mean being brave enough to hold to your promises and convictions. It can mean being reliable. It can mean being brave enough to always tell the truth.

Honor is best shown by keeping one's word, in my opinion. "Your word is your bond." Wanting to keep your "good name" and be known as someone who is steadfast and trustworthy is another aspect of embodying Honor. I've made the mistake in the past of thinking just of knightly deeds and fantasy heroes when I've thought of honor. But it can mean as little as just calling a friend when you said you would, or remembering to pick something up at the grocery store when you made a promise.

Quest ideas:

Pick a promise, and make sure you keep it. Even if it's to yourself. If you forget or fail, accept it and try again.

In the larger view, if you say you will do something, do whatever it takes to make sure you remember.

When someone asks you something, remember to listen so you can keep the promises you make in the way the other wants you to keep them. It sounds strange but this can be critical.

If you feel bad, set yourself an assignment to be polite anyway.

Get in the habit of always treating others with respect.

Next time you are called on to do something questionable, challenge yourself to do the right thing, even if others disapprove.

Look over your life and find times you did not behave honorably - we all have them - and think about what you could have done differently. Make a commitment to yourself to do things differently next time.

Justice



In Ultima, Justice is the Love of Truth and so is represented by the color green. The Virtue is represented by a Druidess named Jaana who comes from the village of Yew. It's in the middle of the northern forest and there is a great courthouse. She is a magic using character but is more balanced than the Mage and can use better weapons, such as a bow. She is a mistress of herb lore, and values knowledge.

In reality, I rarely see true Justice done in the courts. That only means that the courts have forgotten the meaning of Justice, but we don't have to. It truly should be the Love of Truth, supplemented by fairness. Justice means equal treatment, equal privileges, and respect for everyone's rights. If someone wrongs another, they should pay for their action in some way - through apology, compensation, learning, or all three. Justice means to treat others fairly and to see the world as it really is, since it is the marriage of Compassion and the learning that is inherent in Truth. The Druids of the game are portrayed as scholars, nearly as much as the Mages are.

Quest ideas:

Try to be fair in all things, but start with an 'assignment' of being fair in one particular situation or another.

Be your own judge, and think deeply about what you do before you do it.

If you have a choice to make, never wrong anyone knowingly.

If you make a mistake or hurt someone, proactively offer to make amends, starting with a sincere apology.

Show mercy if another has wronged you if they are offering amends.

Always try to determine the facts of a situation before you make any kind of judgment, it's too easy to be swayed by surface appearances.

Next time you are tempted, do not misrepresent facts or tell lies about another person.

Help with a charity that helps rehabilitate people who have committed crimes.

Sacrifice



Sacrifice is the courage to give of yourself through love and compassion. The color is orange. Sacrifice is represented by a simple Tinker who lives in the town of Minoc. His town has several beggars and a clinic for the sick. He's an interesting choice. He's bald and uses simple weapons. In the real world, tinkers were often maligned but they were usually humble and spent their lives fixing pots and pans, and selling tin work. Their lives were difficult and did involve some Sacrifice. In the game, you prove yourself by donating blood to the sick. In real life, I could easily see how giving blood would be a good way to show Sacrifice too!

Sacrifice can mean different things to different people, and shown in many different ways. It can mean giving up some of your own resources out of love for another, while being brave enough to know that you can recover. It can mean going out of your way to help, or giving something up that you love so that another can be safer. For example, my Grandmother quit smoking so that she could visit me when I was a baby. That was Sacrifice. The neat thing is, it helped her too. She is now nearly 94 and wouldn't have lived that long otherwise. The best acts of Sacrifice help everyone concerned.

Quest Ideas:

Donate blood or plasma.

Give to a food bank or animal shelter.

Give a coworker a ride home.

Spread awareness about a cause you believe in.

Do something for a friend or spouse when you'd rather not, but you know you are the best one for the job (like helping them move or cooking a meal).

Volunteer for a charity, especially an unpopular one.

Alternatively, you could sacrifice something for your own good. Like giving up sugary food for the sake of your health, or giving up buying unnecessary things for the sake of your savings. That can be sacrifice too. Keep in mind that in order to be a Virtue, Sacrifice must have a positive result for someone.

Spirituality



In the game, Spirituality is made of all three Principles, and is represented by a Ranger named Shamino who lives in the quiet town of Skara Brae. Rangers travel the world and gain many skills. They are generalists and they often work alone. They tend to protect the weak when they find them but they don't always serve a master - just as someone who is spiritual may not. The color is white, because if you mix all colors of light, that's what you get. In the game, you show your Spirituality as you work on all your other virtues.

I am not a religious person but I would like to be more spiritual. Being spiritual, for me, is the ability to recognize the specialness of human beings and other creatures. It is also the ability to appreciate the wonder of the natural world, be it a spiral shell on the beach or a massive planetary nebula. Spirituality can include knowledge of the self and the universe, as well as honoring people both past and present. My spirituality is a bit like Shinto. I value honesty, purity, and sincerity, which I think Shamino the Ranger would appreciate too.

Quest Ideas:

Meditate more often, even if just for a few minutes.

When you see something awe inspiring or beautiful, take a moment to breathe deeply and really notice all aspects of the experience.

Write down 3 things you are grateful for, every day.

Take a walk or hike out in nature.

Maintain a journal. Start one if you don't have one.

Pick an inspiring poem and memorize it.

Describe your ideal self. Name all the things about your ideal self that you like about it. Then, every week, pick a task to help become closer to that ideal self.

Choose an inspiring day to start your day. A morning ritual, an inspiring mantra, some deep breathing, a little meditation, a mindful stretch. Do it every day for a month.

Humility



Humility is a Virtue that is said to be related to neither Truth, nor Love, nor Courage. As such, it's color is black. The character that represents it is a humble shepherdess named Katrina. She can barely defend herself, let alone wear any armor. She never learns much magic either and she's the most difficult character to play. She comes from a devastated village called Magincia, which is populated only by ghosts and skeletons, and the streets are filled with poison swamp.

Just as in the game, Humility is one of the most difficult Virtues. It's especially difficult because it can be a sign of arrogance if you are too self effacing and humble! Be very careful, as the skeletons of self-pity and the ghosts of vanity can cloak themselves as false Humility. Only unswerving Honesty with yourself, total self-Compassion, and absolute Bravery can make you totally proof against that.

On a personal level, Humility is a Virtue that I really, really need to work on. I often am prideful by pretending to be humble, which completely turns me around and hampers me with self deception. Recognizing the worth and dignity of others, without shorting myself, is probably the best path for me right now - because it is just as unworthy to pretend to be too humble as it is to be too proud. Respect for others is a great way to show Humility.

Quest Ideas

Listen at least as much as you speak. Pay attention to what the other person is saying as well as how they are saying it.

Take a day, and spend it in "Learning Mode." Try to learn as much as you can about the world around you by listening, looking, and asking questions.

Help someone out. But ask if it's wanted before helping.

Accept responsibility for everything you do, whether good or bad. Do this one at a time if needed.

Work toward the success of others as well as yourself.

Make a habit of depersonalizing. The next time you are in an argument, work only toward finding a mutual solution. Do your best not to take anything personally. Focus more on the reasons why your partner might be saying the things they are.

Speak simply.

The Skull of Mondain



Working toward a Virtuous life takes just that - work. Shortcuts and easy paths will cheat you of learning and the character that comes only with effort. How strong is a weight lifter who never lifts weights? Only months or years of effort makes him strong.

In Ultima, there is an artifact that helps to demonstrate this. Once you get a ship and can sail the open seas, you can go to a distant part of the world and get the Skull of Mondain. It is the evil object which is said to have destroyed the town of Magincia. The advantages of this skull are vast. If used in battle, it kills every enemy instantly. You can lay waste to an entire village by using it in town. You can attack townspeople and kill them in single combat, too, an ability that is actually rare in most RPGs. The Skull makes even the longest dungeon crawl a breeze. But it puts all your Virtues down to zero.

It's easy to see how this relates to Virtue in real life. There is another side to the Skull, though. It's also possible to use the Skull liberally, be pretty much the worst person in the world, and beat everything in the game - then go back onto the Path of Virtue, do lots of good deeds, and seek redemption. This will let you win the game and be hailed as a paragon of Virtue, despite your soiled past. If you think this is wrong, you are not alone. But there's an important point, that I'd like to underscore here. If you want to go back to the Path of Virtue and be redeemed in real life, you must NEVER go back to your old ways. That would keep you from winning the game, and it would keep you from winning in life.

So even if you've slaughtered hundreds, cheated old herbalists, beat up beggars, stolen from chests, and killed monsters with no effort, you can still seek redemption - if you put in the work, and truly change. I find it interesting that much of the modern, religious world rejects this idea even as they claim that forgiveness is possible.

The Dungeons



In the game, there are eight dungeons, all twisty mazes, and they are each named after the opposite of a Virtue. I find this to be helpful also because it provides a framework to think about my actions in. For example, if I think that I'm behaving in a dishonorable way, I can say to myself "I'm deep in the dungeon of Wrong right now. I should get out of here. What can I do to find my way out?" Sometimes that's just enough of a different perspective to allow me to refocus and behave in a better way.

It also helps to remember the effect of ignoring the Virtues, that I will be trapped in their shadow side until I free myself by choosing the right path. Dungeons are dark and gloomy places, and I don't like to be lost in them! They can also be filled with monsters and hidden traps. Far better to turn toward the entrance, retrace my steps, and breathe the clean, fresh air of doing the right thing.

Torchlight

In Ultima, you can't just run around in the dungeons forever, expecting to be able to see all the time. You have to bring torches and after you run out, you have to bump around in the dungeons until you either die, feel your way out randomly, or consult a map. Easy lesson, here - you must prepare well for the dungeons!

However, once again, there's a larger message too. If you are going to find your way through the dungeons of your own problems you need to be well prepared, and you need to keep lighting the torches of Positive Effort. Good, positive thoughts will keep your way well lit. However, you can't expect to get out of a dungeon with just one torch. Just like bathing, motivation needs to be renewed daily.

Here are the dungeons:

Deceit	(opposite of Honesty)
Despise	(opposite of Compassion)
Destard	(opposite of Valor)
Shame	(opposite of Honor)
Wrong	(opposite of Justice)
Covetous	(opposite of Sacrifice)
Hythloth	(means Pride, opposite of Humility)
Abyss	(the final dungeon, corresponding to Spirituality)

I find it illuminating to meditate on the shadow side of the virtues, and see how they relate to each other. Intrepid Questers may want to write down examples of ways they indulge in these Vices, and then brainstorm ideas to overcome these behaviors using the Virtues as a guide.

Avatar Virtue: The Final Part

I've learned a lot by exploring the Virtues in depth, and thinking of Ultima's deeper meanings. I hope it has been at least amusing for others, or even enlightening. In this last part I'll describe the end of the game - facing the Stygian Abyss.

In order to reach the Abyss, you have to find the Bell of Courage, The Book of Truth, and the Candelabra of Love. You bring these three rare items across stormy seas to a forbidding, volcanic island. Standing in a barren caldera, you ring the Bell, and the ringing goes on and on. The flames of the Candelabra light the way so you can read the Book, and the words resonate with the sound of the Bell, revealing the gate to the last, deepest, darkest dungeon in the game.

Eight levels, many traps, and monsters from every other dungeon in the game await you. There are poison springs, lava flows, and false walls. There is no place to save your game, so if you die, you have to start all over from Lord British's castle. What awaits you at the end of all the monsters and traps?

Yourself.

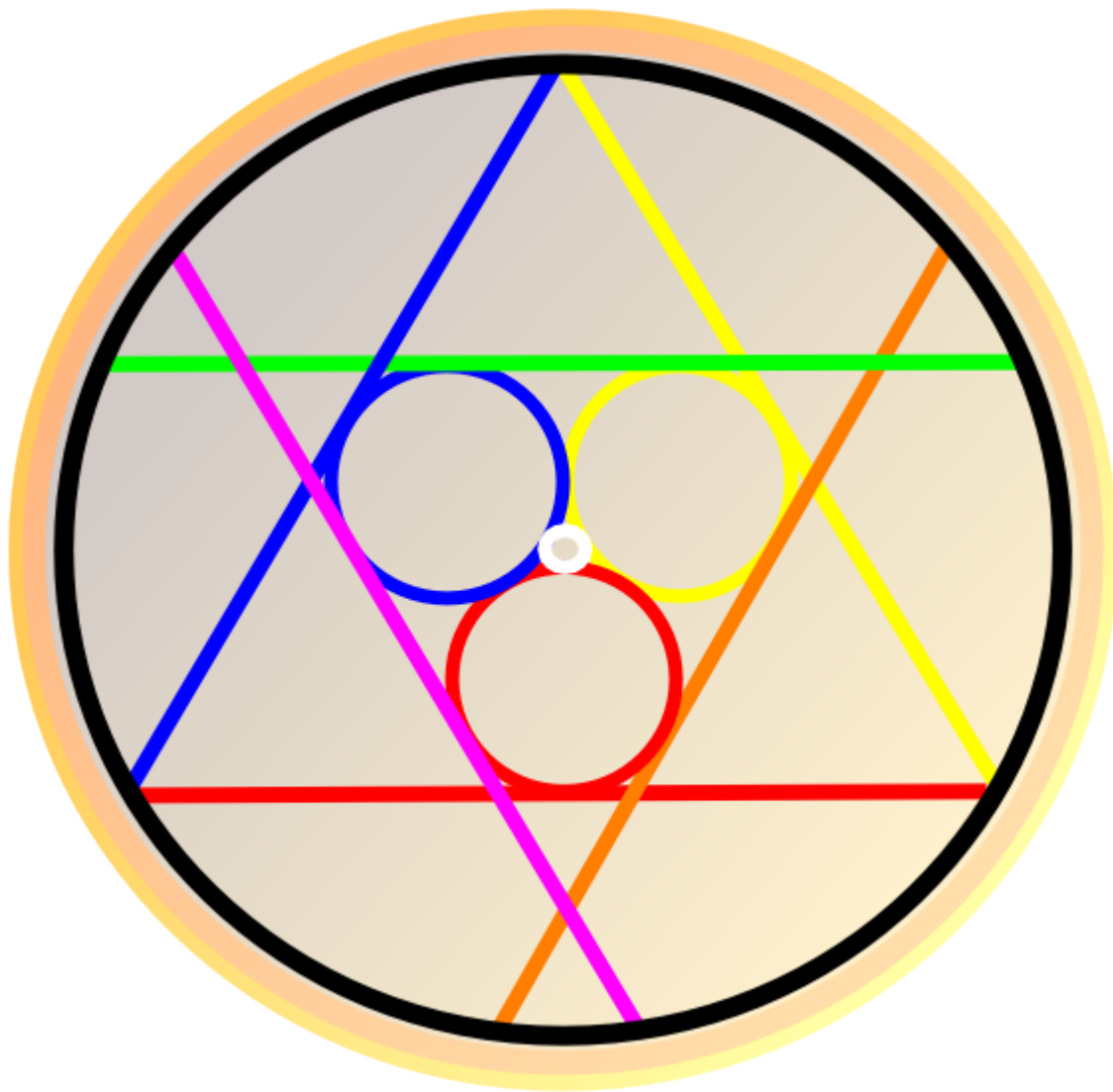
That's right, enemies that take on your exact likeness attack you at the end - all eight of the different character classes are represented. It's very true here that your ultimate test to become a paragon of Virtue is not to study, to work, to meditate, to fight, to do good deeds, though all of these things are part of the path. In the end, the final test is to overcome yourself.

What's the reward after this struggle? Knowledge. Bearing the Three Keys of Truth, Love, and Courage, your character earns a peek at the Codex of Ultimate Wisdom. The character is then hailed as the Avatar of Virtue throughout the lands.

This ending truly speaks to me. I've found that my self is my very greatest enemy, but also can be my greatest ally. Ultima: Quest of the Avatar was a great illustration of the idea that knowledge is indeed the greatest treasure in life, beyond any physical riches. Now that I am older, I can truly appreciate all the thought behind Ultima. I can use the analogies in this electronic myth to give me the will to continue, to remember that as I walk the road of life, the three principles of Truth, Love, and Courage should always be at my side. You are on this same road too. What direction you go, and what your destination is, are entirely up to you. As we learn to forgive ourselves, so that we can begin to learn a better way to live, we begin to attain wholeness and are a shining beacon to others.

Though you are in complete control of your own story, I wish you the best of luck in your Quest for Virtue...

For the Quest of the Avatar truly is Forever.



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