

A ROAD MAP FOR LIVING IN
THE ERA OF GLOBAL WARMING

SESSION IV

LARRY R. CHURCHILL

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LARRY.CHURCHILL@VUMC.ORG



CLIMATE NEWS – WATER CRISIS IN THE WESTERN U.S.

- Voluntary efforts to restrict usage unsuccessful to date
- Interior Dept. may have to impose a rationing plan
- About half of water needed is available
- Hoover Dam may lose capacity to generate electricity if Colorado flow decrease and drawdowns on the reservoir continue

COLLECTING WAYS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- We will add things every week
- Please send me your ideas for inclusion

1. EAT PLANT-BASED FOOD

- Producing beef is 100 times as land intensive as cultivating potatoes
- Livestock use 80% of all arable land, but produce only 20% of needed calories
- Americans average 3 beef burgers a week
- Livestock are a substantial producer of methane gas, which is 80 times more toxic to the environment than carbon dioxide
- Cattle are the No. 1 reason for clearing the Amazon rain forests

MICHAEL POLLAN, *THE OMNIVORE'S DILEMMA*, 2006

- Eat food
- Not too much
- Mostly plants

Also, an analysis of how we source food, and the environmental costs of having produce from around the world

2. REDUCE OR ELIMINATE AIR TRAVEL

- In the year 2019, flights produced over 915 million metric tons of CO₂ out of the 43 billion metric tons of CO₂ collectively produced by humans. This accounted for about 2.1% of all human-induced carbon emissions on the planet.
- A round trip flight from London to NYC emits more CO₂ than most countries in sub-Saharan Africa in a year, and is the equivalent emissions for two years of driving a car.

WHAT VIRTUES WILL BE NEEDED FOR LIFE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE?

- Virtues speak not to actions but to *being*, not to what we do, but to *who we are* . . .
- Virtues focus on the agent behind the action, the interior aspects of the external choices, the person behind the judgments and decisions.
- Virtues, together, define character. . . qualities of heart & mind that *predispose* to certain actions/choices
- Virtues address who we are in the routines, when no big problems are at hand, as well as in the big choices.

BY CONTRAST: OTHER ASPECTS OF ETHICS

- Rules ---tell us exactly what to do, they are directive, or imperative, e.g., “Don’t lie.”
- Principles --- tell us what values to look for and uphold, e.g., “Respect others by telling the truth.”
- Theories --- tell us how to justify principles and choices, e.g., utilitarianism, e.g., “Not lying leads to the best outcomes.”

VIRTUE-ORIENTED ETHICS

- Moral standards are largely learned through example and having skilled mentors who will correct and encourage us
- Making good choices is more a matter of good character, developing the right habits, than a matter of using the right rules or principles.
- *Being* good leads to *thinking* appropriately, and then, to *choosing* rightly.

It takes a good person to appreciate moral reasoning.

--Aristotle

HOW VIRTUES WORK

- Virtues are things *only understood through practice*; we can't think our way into an understanding. Similar to skills. . . head work follows successful practice

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT VIRTUES?

Catholicism's Cardinal Virtues

- Temperance
- Prudence
- Courage
- Justice

- Faith
- Hope
- Love

7 virtues

- Humility
- Kindness
- Temperance
- Chastity
- Patience
- Charity
- Diligence

(7 vices)

- (pride)
- (envy)
- (gluttony)
- (lust)
- (wrath)
- (greed)
- (sloth)

BUDDHIST VIRTUES

4 Sublime Attitudes or Divine Abodes

1. Loving-kindness --- active good will
2. Compassion --- identifying with suffering of others
3. Empathic joy --- joy in the happiness of others
4. Equanimity --- impartiality toward everything and everyone

THE AESTHETICS OF ETHICS:

VIRTUE = BEAUTY

VICE = DEFORMITY

“The end of all moral speculations is to teach us our duty; and, by proper representations of the **deformity of vice** and **beauty of virtue**, beget correspondent habits, and engage us to avoid the one, and embrace the other.”

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, 1751



IS VIRTUE ITS OWN REWARD?

- Yes, because being good will not make us rich or famous. . .
- Yes, because the practice of the virtues leads to a superior form of happiness; something better than bigger houses, faster cars or older whisky. . . E.g., deeper understanding of ourselves and joy of relating well to others; satisfaction of personal integrity; more authentic spirituality. . .
- So, virtues are both intrinsically good, good in themselves; but also—as it turns out-- an instrumental good, leading to a superior happiness, or well-being, what Stoics called “joy”
- *Yet, virtues cannot be practiced primarily as a means to an end, e.g., happiness. Imagine someone who says, “I want to be happy, so if virtue will get me there, I’ll be a good person.”*

WHAT DO WINSTON CHURCHILL AND MAYA ANGELOU AGREE UPON RE: VIRTUES?



THE PRIMACY OF COURAGE

- Courage is rightly esteemed the first of human qualities... because it is the quality that guarantees all the others.

--Winston Churchill

- Courage is the most important of the virtues, because without courage you can't practice any other virtue consistently.

--Maya Angelou

HECTOR, DEFENDER OF TROY

- ... for our country, 'tis a bliss to die./
The gallant man, though slain in fight
he be,/Yet leaves his nation safe, his
children free;/Entails a debt on all the
grateful state;/ His own brave friends
shall glory in his fate;/ His wife live
honour'd, all his race succeed, And
late posterity enjoy the deed!
- Homer, *The Iliad*



ADAM SMITH 1723-1790

- “Self-command is not only itself a great virtue, but from it all the other virtues seem to derive their principal luster.”

*The Theory of Moral
Sentiments, 1759*



GORDON GEKKO

WALL STREET, 1987; MONEY NEVER SLEEPS, 2010

- “Greed, for lack of a better word, is good.”



CHANGING VIRTUES, CONTEXT AND LIFE CHANGES

- Virtues as Life Skills; What virtues are needed to survive and flourish under the demands of living a life?
- Are these the same for everyone? Do certain occupations or life situations call for special virtues? For example, a banker, doctor, teacher, or fireman.....
- Are there age-appropriate virtues, e.g., different for the 20 year-old and the 70 year-old? Different for grandparenting than for parenting? Different for 2023 than 1945?

WHAT VIRTUES WILL BE NEEDED FOR LIFE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE?

Concepts explored in Session III, emerging from Peak Experiences

- Love in form of Biophilia
- Wonder & Awe, especially as related to nature
- Reverence, opposite of hubris

How do we turn these concepts into virtues? By embodying & living them. . . *they can only be appreciated by being practiced.*

VIRTUES THAT NEEDED TO BE REVIVED

- Empathy
- Compassion
- Humility

EMPATHY: EVOLUTIONARY ROOTS

- “Our brains have been designed to blur the line between self and others. It is an ancient, neural circuitry, that marks every mammal, from mouse to elephant.”
- “being more systematically brutal than chimps and more empathic than bonobos, we are by far the most bipolar ape.”
- --Frans de Waal



MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT EMPATHY

- Empathy is not sympathy, or emotional merging; not simply feeling what others feel (Yawning, giggling, sadness, fear).
- Empathy is not primarily emotional.
- Empathy is not a mysterious gift that some have and others don't, something tied to a personality type, but a basic human capacity that can be enhanced, and directed through practice.

EMPATHY DEFINED

Empathy is the imaginative ability to place oneself in another situation (always partial); it requires an intention to pay attention.

--Richard Sobel, MD

The essential elements are a willingness to reach out for, and accredit, another person's experiences and perspectives

DO RATS HAVE EMPATHY?

Science, Dec. 9, 2011

Report of Bartal, Decety and
Mason, Univ of Chicago

- Free rats opened the cages of trapped rats and shared the chocolate



ABSENCE OF EMPATHY

- “It wasn’t only wickedness and scheming that made people unhappy. It was confusion and misunderstanding; above all, it was failure to grasp the simple truth that other people are as real as you.”

--Ian McEwan, *Atonement*

- The protagonist explaining how he came to murder a young woman. . . . “This is the worst, the essential sin . . . I never imagined her vividly enough; I did not make her live. Yes, that failure of imagination is my real crime. . . .What I told the policeman is true---I killed her because for me she was not alive,”

--John Banville, *The Book of Evidence*

COMPASSION BEGINS IN EMPATHY AND ENDS IN RESPONSES OF CARE

Compassion is *suffering recognized and responded to* . . .

Gestures of compassion for the sick:

- “You’re a brave person to put up with all this pain”
- “I admire the way you are taking responsibility for your care”

COMPASSION AS A NECESSITY

“Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive.”

Dalai Lama XIV,

The Art of Happiness



COMPASSION BEGINS AT HOME

- “Compassion for others begins with kindness to ourselves”

-- Pema Chandra



INHIBITORS TO EMPATHY AND COMPASSION

1. *Snap judgments*, generalizing about others from first impressions.
 - Labeling, stereo-typing
 - Empathy and compassion require suspension of judgment
2. *Preoccupation with appearances*, demeanor, dress, accent. . .
3. *Prejudice*: the (usually tacit) sense that others are not really worth our time, because of their race, status, age, etc.

INHIBITORS TO EMPATHY AND COMPASSION

4. *Efficiency*, and the impatience it breeds;

being pressed for time, in a hurry. . .

5. *Reason devoid of feeling*; calculated relationships

“A life all logic is like a knife all blade—it cuts the hand that holds it.”

Tagore

6. *Psychopathology*—a deficit of oxytocin, with excess testosterone. . .

HUMILITY

- Not recognized by the Greeks, who thought pride a virtue and humility a weakness
- Theological history: self-abasement before God
- Modern ethics: accurate self-assessment; involves some de-centering, a fundamental move in ethics. . .

JUDITH ANDRE ON HUMILITY

“The humble person is more likely to rank herself accurately. Freed from the need to protect herself emotionally, she has no need to flaunt her merits, and can attend to the needs of others.”

Worldly Virtues, 2015

REWARDS OF HUMILITY

Humility works by opening us to recognition of mistakes, and to forgiveness, which permits survival in the face of mistakes...

*--Charles Bosk, *Forgive and Remember* (Chicago, 1979)*

URIAH HEEP AND FALSE HUMILITY: A VICE DISGUISED AS A VIRTUE



HUMILITY'S
OPPOSITES

Prideful Arrogance

Moral Certainty

Perfectionism

Narcissism



NARCISSISM AS A DEAD END



REVIEW OF VIRTUES

Virtues Needed for the Anthropocene

- Love as Biophilia
- Wonder & Awe
- Reverence

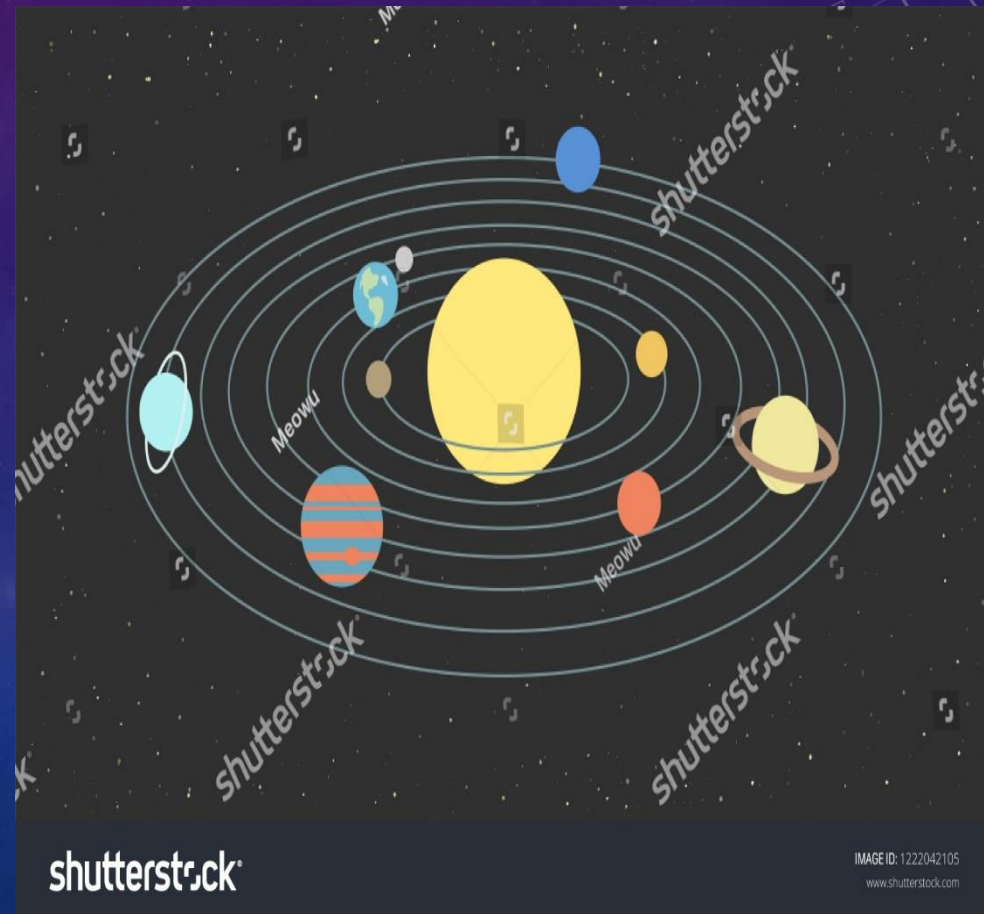
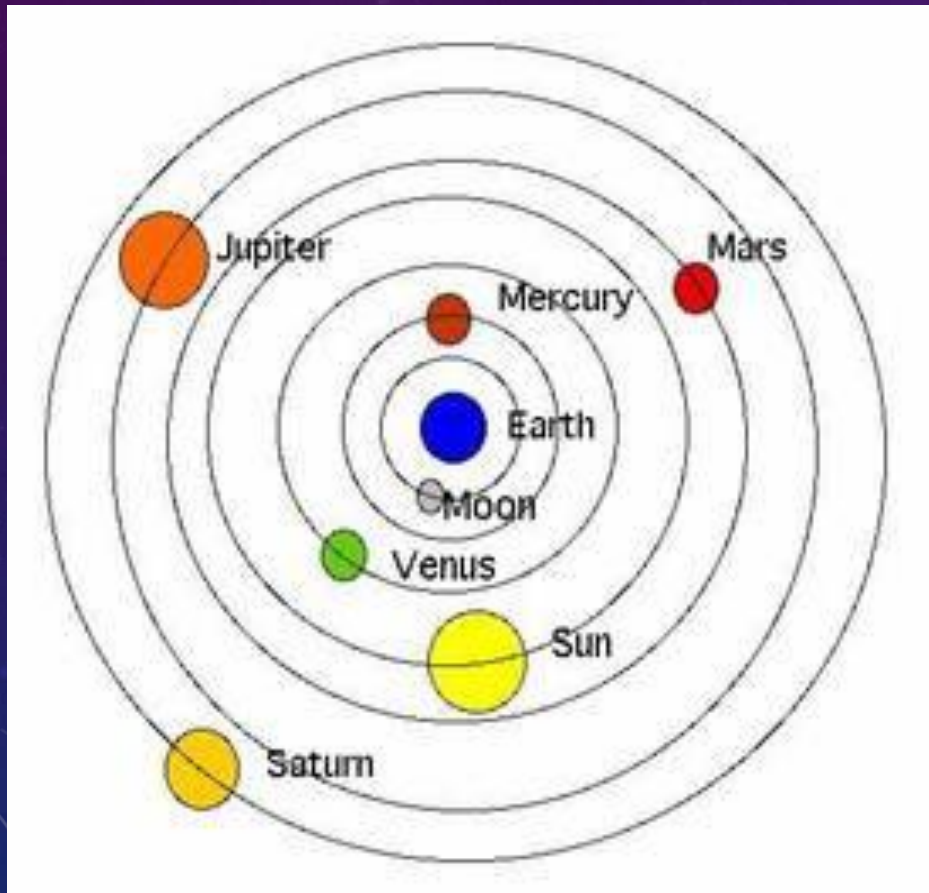
Virtues that need to be revived

- Empathy
- Compassion
- Humility

VIRTUES AS DE-CENTERING the Copernican Move in Ethics

- Traditionally: de-centering means seeing others as just as real, complex, interesting and valuable as me
- For the Anthropocene: de-centering means seeing Earth and future generations as more important than me

PRACTICING THE VIRTUES SHIFTS THE CENTER



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VIRTUES FORM A WEB OF INTERCONNECTIONS



PRACTICING JUST 1 VIRTUE WILL LEAD TO OTHERS



ANN PATCHETT, "MY YEAR OF NO SHOPPING," NYT 12/15/2017

Once I got the hang of giving shopping up, it wasn't much of a trick. The trickier part was living with the startling abundance that had become glaringly obvious when I stopped trying to get more. Once I could see what I already had, and what actually mattered, I was left with a feeling that was somewhere between sickened and humbled. When did I amass so many things, and did someone else need them?



If you stop thinking about what you might want, it's a whole lot easier to see what other people don't have. There's a reason that just about every religion regards material belongings as an impediment to peace. This is why Siddhartha had to leave his palace to become the Buddha. This is why Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor." It's why my friend Sister Nena, an 85-year-old Catholic nun, took a vow of poverty when she entered the convent at 18.



The things we buy and buy and buy are like a thick coat of Vaseline smeared on glass: We can see some shapes out there, light and dark, but in our constant craving for what we may still want, we miss life's details.

SOME QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION



1. What do I consider the virtues that define me? What are my virtue deficits?

2. What virtues will be needed to survive and hopefully flourish in the Anthropocene? For example, what virtues do you hope your children and grandchildren have in their moral toolbox?