



THE
JUBILEE CENTRE
FOR CHARACTER & VIRTUES



LESSON 31

VIRTUE, VICE AND THE NATURAL WORLD

31



SESSION 1

A MORE VIRTUOUS WAY...?

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Courage, Justice, Honesty, Compassion,
Self-discipline, Gratitude, Humility

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMAS



What images come to mind under the headings:

Flourishing Earth

Suffering Earth

Construct a presentation using static or moving images to convey your imagination.

What would you identify as our environmental dilemmas?

You can use any search engine, or any video sharing website for this. You may wish to include images that cover dramatic desert, mountain, ocean and landscape scenes.

You may wish to include images that cover pollution, waste management, GM food and livestock or the environmental impact of agri- and mining-industries.

**CHOOSE THREE EMOTIONS THAT
BEST DESCRIBE YOUR FEELINGS
TOWARDS THE FLOURISHING AND
SUFFERING EARTH IMAGES.**



anger	peaceful	apathy	indifference	disgust
repugnance	frustration	joy	shame	futility
humbling	breath taking	awe-inspiring	full of wonder	anxiety
anguish	soothing	invigorating	restful	Despair
	alarm	cynicism		

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● **DISCUSS WHAT OUR EMOTIONS MIGHT
BE TELLING US ABOUT OURSELVES
AND ABOUT THE ISSUE?**



What are our emotions telling us about the kind of claim such issues of a flourishing and suffering earth have on us?

What are our emotions telling us about the kind of response that might be suitable to the images?

Why should we be concerned whether the earth is flourishing or suffering?

● Discuss the following statement:

As our power over the earth has extended, so too has our responsibility.

Ask ourselves:

How seriously am I taking my responsibility for the earth?

IS THERE A MORAL PROBLEM HERE?



If so, how would you define it?

How have our emotions guided us in this respect?

Think about it under the headings of:

- Living Wisely
- Living Moderately
- Living Courageously
- Living Justly

WHEN CONFRONTING THESE ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMAS, WHAT KIND OF PERSON DO I ASPIRE TO BE?



BEING RESPECTFUL, SHOWING:	BEING DISRESPECTFUL, SHOWING:
Good sense	Short-sightedness and folly
Justice	Injustice
Courage and resilience	Cowardice or rashness
Moderation and self discipline	Excess and greed
Humility and appreciation	Arrogance and callousness
Gratitude, attentiveness and generosity	Selfishness
Solidarity	Individualistic

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- **REASONING IT OUT: HOW MIGHT THESE VIRTUES AND VICES SHOW THEMSELVES WHEN APPROACHING ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMAS?**



- previous slide might show themselves when approaching the environmental dilemmas previously

~~Now, look at the material that lists possible ways in which the virtues and vices might show themselves in an environmental context~~

- Categorise the examples under the appropriate headings.



SESSION 2

THINKING IT THROUGH; HOW THE VIRTUES SHOW THEMSELVES IN ENVIRONMENTAL CONTEXTS

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GOOD SENSE – THE META VIRTUE



ENVIRONMENTAL GOOD SENSE	ENVIRONMENTAL SHORT SIGHTEDNESS
By responsible management of the environment for the good of all	By irresponsible use of the earth's resources, to the advantage of only a few
By learning from experience – interference in one area of the ecosystem must be balanced with consequences to other areas	By failing to learn from our mistakes; and being slow in carrying out our lessons
By seeking innovative ways to reduce the environmental impact of production and consumption	By putting short term gains over long term and sustainable development
By balancing out the welfare of the planet as a web of natural systems, justice for the living, and justice for future generations	By advantaging, or failing to balance, one positive impact over many negative impacts

SELF MASTERY



LIVING MODERATELY	LIVING EXCESSIVELY
Moderate and appropriate desire for food, fuel and things	Greedy and grasping desire for things; hoarding and squandering; seeking my instant gratification
Knowing when enough is enough, and not seeking for too much control, possession, or exploitation	Callous disregard for the order and harmony of the world
A spirit of humility, simplicity and gentleness, that recognises: that we are earthlings that live in the world of nature, and not apart from it; that the environment is our home, and our resource.	With arrogance and an exploitative sense of superiority, engaging in inconsiderate exploitation and malicious destruction of the earth's resources

GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION



LIVING GRATEFULLY AND ATTENTIVELY	LIVING SELFISHLY
Being attentive to what the earth and its atmosphere are telling us about the need to respect the universe	Showing a reckless disregard to environmental damage
Nurturing the environment	Damaging the environment
Cultivating an attitude of awe and wonder, that can appreciate the beauty of the environment and its restorative power	Blindness to the scope, beauty, power and majesty of the natural world
Peace and serenity	Acquisitively grasping the earth's goods and hoarding them to oneself

RESILIENCE AND COURAGE



LIVING COURAGEOUSLY	COWARDICE AND RASHNESS
Endurance, resilience and perseverance in carrying out the good, and in realising justice	Not carrying out our resolutions, or sticking to them, or thinking about them realistically
Remaining hopeful – and basing our hope on personal actions to make a difference	Not becoming embittered and falling into despair
Remaining confident, bold and adventurous in tackling environmental issues	Lazy, blind and malevolent; indifferent to the plight of others and to the damage inflicted by ourselves on the earth

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE FOR ALL, OR ONLY SOME?



LIVING JUSTLY	LIVING UNJUSTLY
Taking my share of the earth's resources, and letting others take their fair share.	Greedily hoarding and grasping more than my fair share of the earth's resources
Defending the right to a safe and healthy environment	Prioritising my right to a safe and healthy life over the rights of others
Punishing those who damage the environment	Letting the victims of environmental damage bear the costs
Showing concern for the poorest, who suffer the worst effects of environmental damage	Exploiting others, and putting the interests of production and consumption before their dignity
Enabling all to benefit from the goods of the earth, both present and future generations	Letting the many suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of the few

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SESSION 3

BEING THE CHANGE I WISH TO SEE IN THE ENVIRONMENT

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MY OPTIONS



How might I use the following opportunities as challenges to growth in virtue?

- Any self defined environmental dilemma that is relevant to you, or;

- Whether to pay a green tax for travelling to College by car, or some other means of off-setting the environmental damage; or, not bothering;

- Whether to make more of an effort to throw away, or reuse, reduce and recycle my stuff

- Whether to eat genetically modified food, or make the sacrifice for organic

- Whether to actively support or oppose fracking

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● **SO, WHAT ARE MY REALISTIC OPTIONS
WHEN APPROACHING MY DILEMMAS?
WHICH IS THE MORE VIRTUOUS PATH?**



FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING:

- My pollution
- My waste management
- My food: GM or organic?
- My support or opposition to fracking
- Any other self defined environmental issue of relevance

● **EXPLORE:**

- What are the issues involved, both for and against?
- What are the issues that are directly relevant to me – ones that I can make a difference to now?
- What traits do I need to be aware of and develop when tackling these issues?
- What am I doing about the issue?
- What can I do about the issue?
- What will I do about the issue?

MY ACTIONS – SOME SUGGESTIONS:



WILL I:

Resolve an agreed and self defined environmental issue? Or,

Lead a campaign to initiate a green tax on cars coming into College?

Reuse, reduce and recycle my personal stuff more systematically?

Make an effort to eat organically; or, at least to be more aware of what's going on with GM crops?

Lead an initiative to twin with a local farm to sell good food in the canteen?

Lead an initiative to set up a 'grow our own' garden – and sell this in the canteen?

Set up a reforestation fund?

Decide whether to support or oppose fracking in my local area?

Spend more time deepening my appreciation of the wonders of the natural world?

NOW, COMPLETE THIS GRID AND USE IT TO MONITOR THE FORMATION OF POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTAL HABITS



	WAYS IN WHICH I WILL SHOW GREATER SELF MASTERY IN MY ENVIRONMENTALLY RELEVANT HABITS	WAYS IN WHICH I WILL SHOW A DEEPER SENSE OF GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION FOR MY SURROUNDINGS	WAYS IN WHICH I WILL SHOW GREATER RESILIENCE AND COURAGE	WAYS IN WHICH I WILL LIVE MORE JUSTLY. NOW.
My Environmental Dilemma				
My Habits: Day/Week 1				
My Habits: Day/Week 2				
My Habits: Day/Week 3				
My Habits: Day/Week 4				
My Habits: Day/Week 5				

● **MONITORING MY ACTIONS OVER TIME:
AM I BUILDING THE TRAITS I IDENTIFIED
AS WORTHY OF ASPIRATION AT THE
BEGINNING OF THIS PATHWAY?**



● **Look back at the Virtues relevant to safeguarding the environment.**

Examine yourself in the light of them.

● **Where are your character strengths emerging in relation to safeguarding the environment?**

Where are your character weaknesses emerging in relation to safeguarding the environment?



SESSION 4

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● **CAN I DRAW INSPIRATION FOR MY APPROACH TO MY ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMAS FROM THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS?**



Research and present on the lives and writings of the following individuals and identify what you think are the environmental virtues and vices that they embody:

Henry David Thoreau

Aldo Leopold

Rachel Carson

Erin Brokovich (available on DVD)

Dorothy Stang

Any person in your local community who is leading on an environmental initiative, however large or small.

USE THIS TO CAPTURE THE KEY POINTS



ISSUE	RACHEL CARSON	ERIN BROKOVICH	DOROTHY STANG
WHAT WAS THEIR CONTEXT?			
WHAT WERE THEIR KEY IDEAS, WRITINGS AND ACTIONS?			
WHAT IMPACT DID THEY HAVE?			
WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL VIRTUES, OR VICES CAN I SEE IN THEIR LIVES?			
HOW DO THEY INSPIRE ME, AND WHAT DO I WANT TO LEARN FROM THEIR LIVES?			



SESSION 5

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THE BAR STOOL DEBATE



The ecological crisis is primarily a moral crisis.

Discuss with reference to any example of an 'ecological crisis'. This can be related to any local or global ecological crisis, such as conservation, pollution, deforestation.

In groups, each take one of the themes for exploration:

- Whether it is a crisis of good sense?
If so, how and in what way? If not, why not?
- Whether it is a crisis of justice?
If so, how and in what way? If not, why not?
- Whether it is a crisis of courage?
If so, how and in what way? If not, why not?
- Whether it is a crisis of self-discipline?
If so, how and in what way? If not, why not?
- How I can make a difference to this problem now . . .
Even if only in a limited way

THE BAR STOOL BORE



EXTENSION:

Go to a video sharing website: search for George Carlin on The Environment

Summarise his argument

Critique his argument, evaluating its strengths and weaknesses

Make use of the material you gathered from the previous slide.

Much of the problems that the environment faces have stemmed from the industrialisation process of developed communities.

How might our understanding of environmental virtue and vice help us to deal with the issue of less developed countries wishing to industrialise?

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REVIEW



I am aspiring to be a person who...
(relate to character traits explored)

I am particularly inspired by people like...

I particularly admire their...

I can develop these kind of traits in the following circumstances
of my life...

I have been enacting those kind of traits in the following ways...

I can see ways in which I am becoming more...

I can see ways in which I am becoming less...

I still need to think about ways in which I can...

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CONSIDER TRUTHFULLY:



How much of a challenge has this pathway been to my personal lifestyle decisions? Why? Why not?

Have I been challenged to use less fossil fuels?

Has my anger at injustice been tempered?

Is it realising itself in more positive environmental traits?

Has my resistance and indifference been challenged?

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MY CHARACTER: REVIEW AND REFLECTION



	SIGNS OF GREATER SELF MASTERY	SIGNS OF DEEPENING GRATITUDE AND APPRECIATION	SIGNS OF GREATER RESILIENCE AND COURAGE	SIGNS OF LIVING MORE JUSTLY
MY ENVIRONMENTAL DILEMMA				