

Red Sky at Morning: Ethics and the Oceanic Crisis

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Thank you. Thank you very much. And thank you, Anna, for that lovely introduction. You know, I'm reminded that Aldo Leopold said, after listening to all these talks, I'm reminded that he said, 'A cost of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds.' But that's not true. It's true we live in a world of wounds, but we don't live here alone, do we?

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I was walking here this morning and I passed a student whose t-shirt said, 'Make a life that matters.' The next students I passed were raising funds for Habitat for Humanity. And then here comes another student who's wearing a tux and carrying a trumpet. And I think, we may live in a wounded world, but we are not alone. We are surrounded by people who are doing the good, hard work of creating and protecting beauty and natural flourishing and social justice. And I don't think I've felt that so strongly in a long time as I have up here at Gustavus Adolphus College. [applause]

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So my thanks to all of you and to the students and faculty here. And thank you particularly for including a philosopher. You know, saying I'm a philosopher is a real conversation stopper. You know, Chris, I imagine it's kind of like saying, 'I'm a chemist.' And in fact I don't know how many people really know what philosophers do. Even my own daughter when she was 5 years old, a woman stopped her and said, 'Oh, this is your mom. Yeah. What does she do?' 'She's a philosopher.' 'Well, what is philosophy?' And this little 5-year-old girl says, 'Oh, it's just something women do.' So you can be sure that I took her home that night

and from then on she said, if she was asked, 'Philosophy is the study of ideas. And ideas rule.'

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So, OK, let's set up the problem. Let's figure out what's going on here. What is the issue that we need to address as philosophers. Can you imagine what aliens would think of us if they came onto the planet unawares of who we are and what we did? They might approach with some trepidation and fear. They might come in from the dark side of the planet.

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And what they would see first was the way that the lights are lined up all along the edges of the water and lined up along the edges of the river. And it might almost stop their little hearts, if they have hearts, at the beauty of it. And they might call us luminaria hydrophilia, the lights that love water. And as they get closer, as they get closer, they might realize that these earthlings are not in fact made of light. These earthlings are in fact made of water. They are, come from the sea and they return to the sea. They are of the sea. The tears in their eyes and the moistness in their minds and the blood in their hearts, it's all one river, the aliens would realize. It all flows to the same sea.

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The aliens know this. I mean, the creatures, the earthlings know this and the aliens are quite moved by the way they express that. And they are particularly moved by the words that they heard in a funeral service for a person named Rachel Carson. And the words were from "The Sea Around Us," 'For the sea lies all about us. The continents themselves dissolve and pass to the sea in grain after grain of eroded land. In its mysterious past, it encompasses all the dim origins of life and receives, in the end, after many transmutations, the dead husks of that same life. For all, at last, return to the sea, to Oceanus, the ocean river, like the ever-flowing stream of time, the beginning and the end.'

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And then these aliens start really poking around and they start sending out their sociologists. They send an economics professor down. Aliens have economics

profess-, or alien, yeah, economics professors. I'm confused, are they aliens? Anyway. They learned, they learned that people pay more to live on the ocean side of a building. And, in fact, they learned that ocean view is the most valuable word in the real estate world, or the most valuable word in the real estate world. And when they started calculating the difference between what people pay to live with an ocean view and what they pay for the garden view of the same building, they came up with a figure of one trillion dollars.

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And then they realized, man, these earthlings love the ocean. Look at how they go to the sea. Why? I don't know. But that's what they do. They go there and when they're there, what they do is they stare at the water. And then they realized that people take boxes and they put pieces of the ocean inside there and they put them in dentists' office to relieve the pain.

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And they started to try to investigate this love and they sent a sociologist down and lo and behold, the sociologists found the Corvallis Gazette-Times, Saturday Edition, the love ads. And the aliens started to read what it is that people really yearn for when they're allowed to say that in 25 words or less. And they discovered that 71 percent of the time, the people said that they yearned for a soulmate for long walks on the beach. 71 percent in Corvallis, which is almost a beach town. It was such a winner that it absolutely obliterated all of the runners up, which were in order: romance, tattoos, cuddling, fishing, Harleys, handholding, friendship, and vampires.

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Except that they learned that nobody who likes to fish like to cuddle. But at any rate, there you are. I should say, you know, my husband is a self-identified hard scientist. And he learned that I was going to try to convince you that people love the oceans and that was gonna be my premise. And he said, 'Kathy, you cannot just say that. You have to have data.' I go, I'm a philosopher. We don't do data. But I did that study anyway. I did, I got out the newspaper and I got out an envelope and I ticked it all off. And I did the math. And got to that 71 percent. And then I brought my results back to him and I showed him my envelope and I said,

I have data. And he gives me this look. He says, 'Kathy, that is bad science.'
[laughs] I said, oh, I don't care. It also happens to be the truth.

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So the conclusion we would draw and the conclusion any reasonable alien would draw is that people are in love with the oceans. We are deeply irretrievably besotted. So, of course, the aliens were baffled. You know where I'm going with this. The aliens were baffled by what they found, and you can imagine the reports that were coming back from their investigators. 'They treat the oceans and oceanic life like dirt. Although maybe some of them treat dirt better than that.' One alien saw a giant dredge scraping the bottom of the ocean and lifting this billowing crowd of torn lives. And another one saw a fisherman in a storm cut loose a gill net 100 leagues long. It floated and floated day after day, catching fish by their silver moon gills until the weight of their bones and the skirts of skins dragged them down to the bottom of the sea.

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Another one saw a fisherman pull up a seine so full of pink salmon that the weight of the net capsized his boat and he drowned. 'They dump their garbage overboard. They empty their toilets into the sea. They pump oil into the ocean. They cool it, they warm it. They change its very chemical composition. Ocean creatures die and die and die. What kind of love is this?' That's a reasonable question, isn't it? How can this be okay? In what morally corrosive world can this be justified? Or how can it even be thinkable? That's a good question and I think I know the answer and I want to get there. But first I want to say that that question, that's a moral question. It isn't a scientific question. The condition of the oceans is an economic issue, yes. It's a political issue, yes. It's a scientific and technological issue. But I'm here today to make the claim that the crisis we face is a moral crisis. And it calls for a moral response.

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And let me be clear in what respects I think that is the case. The oceanic crisis as a human rights crisis. One out of every seven people on this planet depend on food from the sea as their primary source of protein. One out of seven, do the math, that's a billion people. And when Chris tells us that the oceans will change, that

we will see winners and losers, I would suggest to you that those people who depend on the food from the sea will be losers.

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1 out of every 10 people in this planet live in places that are going to be inundated by the rising seas. Imagine the displacement of people. Imagine the refugee camps. Imagine people turning others away at the point of a gun. Imagine the impossibility of education or of any kind of self-determination. The point is that if people, as the universal declaration of human rights says, if people have the right to life and liberty and security of person, then this oceanic crisis coupled with climate change, is going to create the greatest violation of human rights the world has ever see. That is a moral issue.

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Sheila Watt-Cloutier, who is the former head of the Inuit Circumpolar Council claims that her people, the Inuit people in the very far north lands, are seeing their culture destroyed, their way of getting food, their way of clothing themselves, their way of living, their way of housing. All of these depend on ice. So what she's saying is that as the world warms, it's violating their right to culture because it's taking away the ice that's the basis of their way of life.

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I would say, too, that the oceanic crisis is a crisis of justice. It's not just that people will suffer. They will suffer unjustly, in violation of anybody's principle of equitable distribution. It's not the people who create the problem who are going to suffer. One roof enjoys the putative rewards of the profligate use of consumer goods and fossil fuels. And then they offload the burdens of that on people who never will enjoy those so-called benefits. And who don't have the power to resist.

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These are the voiceless people, who are the voiceless people literally, the people who cannot protest. Future generations. Plants and animals, the little sea angel. Marginalized people, people on the margins of the continent, people on the margins of the economy. And I'm talking to you, balcony. People who choose to not speak.

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So we might think about the world as a kind of a penthouse. And all of us people are scattered around. Some of us live at the top. Some of us live at the bottom. But every day, the people who live at the top send their workers down to the bottom to remove a couple of bricks to make their penthouse fancier, more luxurious. They can do that for a day, week, 30 days, 30 weeks, but after a while they will introduce channels of emptiness into that structure and the whole structure will collapse, bringing down all of the creatures who lived in that penthouse. That's not fair.

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The oceanic crisis is a crisis of compassion. We know the word compassion, come with passion, feeling, the ability to feel with other people, the ability to empathize, the ability to put ourselves in other people's place. If we only knew, if we could only imagine what it's like to pull up an empty net and walk home and know that your children will have nothing to eat that night, we would act differently. But it's a failure of imagination. It's a failure of reverence. And I don't know if you believe that God created the oceans and [inaudible] lives or whether you think that all those beautiful lives are the result of the natural flowering of the created universe, either way, they deserve our respect.

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Let's just say that God created the oceans. We know that, listen to the refrain, though, you know these words, but listen to the refrain. In the beginning, the Earth was without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, 'Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place and let the dry land appear,' and it was so. And God called the dry land earth. And the gathering together of the waters, he called seas, and God saw that it was good. And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that have life and fowl that may fly above the earth and the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales. And every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind, and God saw that it was good.

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Imagine the grief God would feel as he sees his creations vanish. Imagine God's fury. The destruction of nature isn't just bad economics or bad stewardship or stupid stewardship. It's blasphemy. It's flinging God's gifts into his face as if they didn't have any worth. But let's just say that you don't believe in divine creation. Maybe you believe that the oceans and all were created by the evolution of this great rich and diverse lyrical lives. Then it's even as much of an obligation of reverence.

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Here's what I think. I think that this world is irreplaceable. It's essential. It's eternal and unchanging. It's beautiful and fearsome. It's beyond human understanding and it's crazy creative. And if the good English word for that is sacred, then that word is just fine with me. Either way, the reckless destruction of oceanic life is a failure of reverence. And I would agree, finally, with the aliens that it's a betrayal of love.

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So let me be clear. I think it's wrong to take whatever we need from the land and the seas to support our comfortable, profligate lives and leave for the future a ransacked and dangerously unstable ocean. And to let it all slip away through indifference or recklessness or maybe because we're too busy to, you know, too busy to save it. All those billions of years it takes to grow the feathers of an albatross or the silver skin of a squid, to let it all slip away, that's a sin. And when to enrich a few lucky people, the fossil fuel industry threatens to disrupt forever the great planetary cycles that support all the lives on earth, then I would say, as gently as I can, that that's moral monstrosity on a cosmic scale. So I'm done with my introduction. [laughter][applause]

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OK. Here's our work. Let's do it. How did we lose our way? How we will create a new moral compass? How do we move in the new directions? These, I think, are the questions that we have to ask. And I would submit that our actions and our sense of what is okay, our sense of even what's thinkable, is shaped by a world view. And that that's a set of beliefs that we swim in and are oftentimes are very

unaware of. A world view is a culture's answers to the three fundamental questions of humanity. What is the world? What is a human's place in the world? How, then, shall I live? And what we do as a culture is we come up with a set of answers to those questions, call it a world view, and then we design our lives around them and then we go on to see if we will thrive.

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I would say that right now we are embarked, we are in the final stages of an experiment that tests the ideas of the world view of the industrial growth economy. There are no informed consent forms. There are no controls. There are no going back. And the experiment is testing the hypothesis that human beings are fundamentally different from, fundamentally independent of and superior to the rest of the world, which was created solely to serve human ends.

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The aliens figured they were really onto this when they saw this figure all over the place. They said, look at this. There's a fundamental fissure in the world view of these earthlings. Right up there on the top, that star, that's how they think of themselves as human beings. All the rest of that greenery down below, they imagine that that was created to serve their ends. So here we have, they say, this kind of emblem of the industrial growth economy that is marked by dualism, the notion that we're separate from the earth. It's marked by materialism, the notion that we at the top are the only creatures of soul and spirit in a world of stones and insensate matter.

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It's a world that focuses on human beings, it's anthropocentric. It assumes that the non-human world was created for our use and it derives all its value from its usefulness to us. Think, for example, of the words we use for sea angels and these cycles. Ecosystem services. Provisioning services. Natural resources. That's a giveaway. It's marked by individualism, the notion that humans are essentially isolated rights holders who create ourselves apart from or in conflict with or in competition with each other. It's marked by a faith in technology that because of our increasing knowledge and our increasing technology, we can harness the

planet to our purposes. And we can amass material wealth, which is, after all, the foundation of human happiness.

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So it becomes a kind of philosophy of human exceptionalism, whereby because of our technological prowess and our superiority, we can make ourselves exceptions to the rules that govern all the rest of the life on earth. All those rules you've been seeing so far about the chemistry and stuff, we can be exceptions to those rules. And we can, Rachel Carson to the contrary, we can destroy our habitats without destroying ourselves.

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And, finally, it's a world view that's marked by a moral theory called utilitarianism that says an act is right if it's the act that more than any other creates the greatest good for the greatest number of human beings. That's the measure of whether an act is right or not. Does it benefit us more than any other act? Well, when you put that together with an economic system that glorifies greed and rewards short-term profits, and asks us to find ourselves as consumers, then you've got a recipe for disaster, and that is what we have cooked up.

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So the aliens ask themselves, how is this possible? How is it possible for a people to live on a planet if they believe these things and turns out that it's not. The results of the experiment are in. The results are definitive. We didn't get it right. We got it profoundly and disastrously wrong. A global civilization that's built on the idea that we're separate from the world and better than that world, a philosophy of separation, is going to end up destroying the systems that support it.

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And you can see us approaching the dead end of that experiment. So where are we going to go next? I want to play for you, because you've been so generous with your music, I want to play for you a song about this flaming place that we have reached in reference to all the metaphors we've used so far in this meeting. This is written by Libby Roderick. You may know the singer/songwriter from

Alaska who wrote the anthem, 'How Can Anyone?' So let's just listen to two verses of that song.

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Song lyrics: What do you do when the life rafts are burning and your babies are inside the barn? Where do you turn when the waters are churning and you're desperate to learn how to float? How do you pray when your prayers go unanswered and each crier feels so alone? What do you do when the lifeboats are burning? You turn, turn, turn, turn to each other, reach for each other, take one another by the hand. We'll form a life raft, a human life raft and we will swim towards land. If we make it, we'll start over. If we don't, we go down together. One for all, all for [inaudible], turn. What do you do when the iceberg is moving and the shore isn't turning away? How can you be heard when the roaring goes booming but the band just continues to play. Where do we turn when the engines catch fire and the life rafts are starting to burn? What do you do when the life boats are burning? Turn, turn, turn. Turn to each other, reach for each other, take one another by the hand. We'll form a life raft, a human life raft and we will swim towards land. If we make it, we start over. If we don't, we go down together. One for all, all for [inaudible], turn.

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If we make it, we'll start over. How do we start over? What is this new track that we can find that we can follow? What's the characteristics going to be? Well, we're smart people, we can figure this out. And it may be a self-evident truth but let me say it that a truly adaptive civilization is going to align its ways with the ways of the Earth. And contrary, a civilization that ignores the deep constraints of the world is going to find it exactly where we are now, on the threshold of making the planet inhospitable to humankind and other species.

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So the question for our time, as we try to figure a way to go forward, the question for our time is, how might we create a concordance between ecological and moral principles? And so imagine an ethic that's of the Earth rather than against it. Can we come up with a kind of moral biomimicry? And, of course, now we have realized that that separatist, that dualistic view of the world, is really quite

unrealistic and that we understand the world very differently. Emerging ecological and evolutionary science is telling us that humans are members of complex communities of independent parts. Not a dualism, but a holism. And, in fact, my ecologist friends show me something like this where this as a map of the trophic relationships among a variety of different species and the place of humans is over here. See that black thing? Touch, there. So the notion of a Christmas tree with we as the beautiful star at the top is being replaced by this view of a very, very complex whole. The notion being that the wellbeing of that whole depends on the thriving of its parts. And so all its parts have value. All of its parts have value. And that the planet is wildly creative and it is resilient and strong and it is fundamentally finite.

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That human beings reach their full potential as members of communities of shared caring and that we're dependent on the earth. The universe is dependent on us in a relationship of reciprocity. We, the creatures of consciousness and conscience, we offer to the universe a way of reflecting on its own meaning. And a way of celebrating its own beauty. And in return, the earth offers us all of its riches in this exchange.

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We also learn that there are many ways to be moral in this world. And let me just touch on this briefly because this is my analog to Chris' chemistry formula. Except mine is prettier. Any act is going to not be a single point in time but it's going to unfold along a timeline. So it begins here in a set of intentions and a set of character traits. And after those, they come along, and they create an act. You do something. And that act has consequences in the world.

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Some of the consequences affect human beings and other consequences affect the other parts of the biota. Different moral theories focus on different parts of that timeline. So some moral theories, we call them virtue theories, say that an act is right or wrong depending on its intentions and the character you bring to the act. Other people say, no, or in addition, an act is right or not depending on whether it's in conformity with your duties. Is it just? Does it respect rights? And

others say, as I pointed out before, these would be the consequentialists or utilitarians, that an act is right depending on its consequences, either for humanity or for others.

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What I want to point out is that so far in the history of the industrial growth economy, we have been measuring the rightness or wrongness of our acts by this tiny, tiny, tiny little part of our moral possibilities. Can we achieve a moral holism, too, that includes virtue ethics and duty ethics and also the assessment of the consequences, and become whole as moral agents rather than focusing on this very tiny little question, what is that act going to do for us?

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So my colleagues and I, 25 of us got around a fire up in the Oregon Cascades and our question was, can we, can we invent this ethic? Can we give words to the ethic? Can we pull it out of the air and give it words? And because these were mostly philosophers and writers, we said, you're allowed to say one sentence. So that night we went around the fire and each person said one sentence and what was really amazing to all of us is that that sentence that we all said was almost always the same sentence. And it's something like what Aldo Leopold said. He said, 'The first premise of any ethic is that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts.'

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This isn't a call for a new ocean ethic. And it isn't a call for a new land ethic. It's a call for an ethic of the land and the sea and the air. It's a call for a planetary ethic that expands our view of who we are as moral agents in relationship to the earth. So if we can understand deeply the holism that is the ontology of the world, the way the world really is whole in the respects that I've been talking about, and if we can understand ourselves as whole moral agents, then I think we are on the verge of a new ethic. Can we thrive? How do we thrive in concert with the rest of creation?

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So let's ask that question. How can we go forward in a new direction? And first thing I want to do is I want to get rid of all the kinds of things that are going to defeat us before we even try. And the first one is the idea that science is all we need. I thought maybe I heard that this morning. Scientists have done a heroic job. They have done a magnificent job of telling us that there is this global scientific consensus that climate change is real and it's dangerous and it's upon us.

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What happened? Not much. So bless their hearts, they expanded their effort. They learned how to communicate. They made alliances and they redoubled their efforts, trying to speak more loudly and with one voice. All in this great faith in human knowledge. If only people knew, then they would act. If only people knew. I want to nominate that as the saddest sentence in human history. It isn't true. It's a logical and a practical error. And let me show you why. And I have to do a syllogism, sorry.

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Any argument that ends with a conclusion about what to do is going to have to have two premises. The first one is scientific, it's descriptive, it's empirical. This is the way the world is. The second one is normative. This is what we value. This is what we believe is right. You can't reason from the way the world is and reach a conclusion about what we ought to do without some affirmation of your values.

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So the complete argument in this case is that if we don't act immediately, anthropogenic changes to the climate and the oceans will bring serious harms to the future. That's an important first premise. That's come to us from these magnificent talks.

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To get from that to a conclusion about what we ought to do, we need to make a moral affirmation that it's wrong to harm the future and we need to know why that's the case. And once we have those two, the facts and the values, we can come up with some decision about what we ought to do. The work of the second

premise, where does that happen? It happens in groups like this. It happens in churches. It happens in art and poetry and fiction. It happens in families and traditionally it happens in colleges and universities. What is it that we deeply value and want to preserve?

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It's a great American tradition but let me pass that by. Because I want to talk about another belief that I think is erroneous that is blocking us from taking effective action and being full human beings, full moral beings, and that's this notion that we have met the enemy and he is us. I want to be really, really careful about this because it's tricky. In one sense it's true and in one sense it is really, really not. It may be one of the biggest triumphs of big oil, I would suggest, to make consumers blame themselves for climate change, even though they're spending millions of millions of dollars to transform us into mindless consumers of the most damaging products and fuels. To make us blame ourselves while they do everything they can to make sure that we don't have alternative ways of travel, that we don't have alternative jobs, that we don't have alternative ways to heat our homes, alternative ways to ease our grief.

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Yes, yes, I need to reduce my use of fossil fuels, absolutely dramatically. Yes, I need to live on the world as if it was a place of absolute severe scarcity, which it is. But I didn't cut corners and cause the oil gusher in the Gulf of Mexico. And I didn't do my best to undermine the EPA and every other agency that might've controlled fracking under farms. And I'm not lobbying congress to open oil drilling in the Artic Ocean. And I didn't fund, I didn't cut funding for alternative energy sources.

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The point that I want to make is that we have met the enemy and I'm going to make absolutely sure that it isn't me. I'm going to change my life so I can say it isn't me. But I'm not going to let those people whose business plan is to wreck the world offload their moral responsibility onto me and disempower me from acting. Does that make any sense? [applause][laughs]

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Mobil Oil had this advertisement. Maybe you've seen it. It was this globe, the planet, beautiful view, cloud-splashed planet. And underneath it said, 'Mother Earth is a tough old gal.' Get it? You know? OK. So, maybe we're harming the earth but even if we are, it doesn't do any harm. OK, I wrote to them.

[applause][laughter] You don't even know what I said. And what I said was, if the Earth were your mother, she would hold you in one rocky hand and hold you under water until you no longer bubbled. [applause]

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We can draw down the amount of carbon dioxide in the air and in the ocean, but not until we draw down the power of the corporations. [applause]

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The third thing I want to say about what blocks us from action is this notion that there's no hope. I am tired of hope. I want to be rid of hope. Let me explain. Our options are limited. Our cities and our homes are disastrously designed. Corporations are behaving like psychopaths. We have run out of time. The most conscientious person is going to have a hard time making significant change. I admit that. And Gus Speth says, 'All we have to do is destroy the planet's climate and ecosystem and leave a ruined world to our children and grandchildren is to keep doing exactly what we are doing today.'

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This is a problem. And it's a problem because we are utilitarians. We can't help it. We judge the rightness and wrongness of our actions on an assessment of their consequences. So if we think our acts will have no consequence, then everything we do is wrong. This is a fallacy, too, the fallacy that says all we have as options are hope on one side and despair on the other. Let me point out that both of them are forms of moral abdication. 'Everything's going to be fine. I don't need to do anything.' Or 'Everything is going to be awful and nothing I can do to prevent it is, will prevent it.' Between those two, hope and despair, there's this huge center ground. And that ground is called moral integrity. Where you don't act because you think that it will save the world. And you don't act because you have no hope. But you act because you believe it's the right thing to do.

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So integrity, wholeness, remember I talked to you about moral holism? Integrity, a holism of action. So a matching between your beliefs and your actions so that we, we act reverently because we believe that the world is sacred. And we act gratefully because we believe life is a gift. And we act lovingly towards the oceans and the planet because we love it. That's the point I want to make is that there's a joy and a freedom in this kind of, this wholeness of integrity where we act in accordance with our values.

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I was going to ask you where you stood on that line but I don't think I have enough time because I want to talk a little bit more about what integrity means. And here I want these students to listen up because this is for you. How do I go forward? How do I live a life of integrity?

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There's two answers, a negative answer and a positive answer. The negative answer has to do with conscientious refusal. The notion that if we're going to live lives of integrity, there are certain things that we are not going to do. Many of us were alive when we said, 'Hell no,' to an unjust war. Can we find the way to say hell no to an even more unjust industrial growth economy? Can we reclaim our personhood? Can we reclaim our humanity against the forces that would define us as consumers?

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So every decision that we make, we need to make it with the possibility that we're going to refuse to go along with whatever it has to do. In decisions about where we find information, about where we eat, what we wear, how we make a living, what we invest in, how we travel. All of these are ways of expressing our values by saying, I know what you want me to do to serve you but I don't believe in that and I'm not going to participate.

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This isn't sacrifice, people. This is freedom. And to quote, let me quote Carl Safina, a very smart man, as you will learn tonight, he said, 'We think we don't want to sacrifice but sacrifice is exactly what we're doing. We're sacrificing our money,

sacrificing what is big and permanent to prolong what is small, temporary, and harmful. We're sacrificing animals, peace, and children to retain wastefulness while enriching those who distain us.' The grief and destruction, I would add, of doing day after day things we think that are wrong because we think we have no choice, that is soul devouring.

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What would happen if we all decided that we will refuse to enlist in the army of foot soldiers in the war against the world? We won't be in that gang of destroyers. [applause]

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And we need to recognize that a lot of the things that look to us like inevitability is our business plans. And that entrenched patterns of transportation are entrenched patterns of enriching the oil industry at our expense. And entrenched patterns of agriculture and eating are entrenched patterns of enriching seed industries, agriculture bearings [sounds like] and big oil, again, at our expense. So we need to sort this out and say, what really is inevitable? And what is part of somebody's business plan? And we need to refuse, find the strength to refuse, conscientiously, to do what we think is destructive.

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So that's the first thing is to get your house in order. But the second thing is far more beautiful. That was the one about refusal. We can refuse to be made into instruments of destruction. But we also can make our lives into works of art that express our deepest values. Refusal is not enough and everybody knows it. We're looking for something more. Something that isn't so negative and grief-stricken. Honor the grief, yes. As we contemplate those gorgeous animals that we've seen and anticipate their vanishing, we will grieve. But, you know, the writer Leonard Cohen said, 'Yes, we live with broken hearts in a broken world, but that's no alibi. We must sing a broken-hearted hallelujah. ' So we turn to our joy and the ability that we have to design our lives, to create ourselves, to make our lives into works of art, that is inspirational works of art that express our values.

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My students say, 'Hmm, uh, more specific. More specific.' OK. If you want to know what you should do, what your work is in the world, ask what are your gifts, my friend Apotowatame Elder [sounds like] says. The salmon was given the gift of red flesh and its work is to feed the people. The robin was given the beautiful song and its work is to wake the sky in the morning. What is your gift, young people? What have you been given as a gift? If you know that, then you have a very clear idea about what you ought to do.

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Second question to ask yourself is, what is my greatest joy? And people have said this again and again, and I think it's true, what am I absolutely passionate about?

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Your work, your calling is at the intersection of your greatest joy and the world's deepest need, the philosopher Eden [sounds like] Trueblood says. Your work is at the intersection of your greatest joy and the world's deepest need. Go to that place and do that work. It will be good and important work. So let's go back to the aliens and let's refer again to this great love of the great blue oceans. What does this love mean? How can this love coexist with destruction? And what kind of love do we need to summon? In order to address that issue, I'd like to read you three paragraphs - you know if you ask a writer to come, they will read to you - from this, My Essay in Moral Ground, that talks about what kind of love we are called to.

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The spring when our granddaughter was born, I brought her to the salt marsh so she could feel the comfort I had known there for so many years. Killdeer waddled in the mud by the shore but not so many as before. By then the marsh had flooded over its warm, weedy places, leaving an expanse of sea.

I held my granddaughter in my arms and sang to her then an old lullaby that made her soften like wax in a flame, molding her little body to my bones. Hush-a-bye, don't you cry, go to sleep you little baby. She fell asleep in my arms unafraid. I will tell you, I am so afraid. Poets warned us, writing of the heartbreaking beauty that will remain when there is no heart to break for it. But what if it's worse than that? What if it's the heartbroken children who remain in a world without beauty? How

will they find solace in a world without wild music? How will they thrive without green hills edged with oaks? How will they forgive us for letting albatross and salmon slip away? It isn't enough to love a child and wish her well. It isn't enough to open my heart to bird-graced salt marsh. Can I claim to love a morning if I don't protect what creates its beauty? Can I claim to love a child if I don't use all the power of my beating heart to preserve a world that nourishes children's joy? Loving is not a kind of la-de-da. Loving is a sacred trust. To love is to frame the absolute worth of what you love and to pledge your life to its thriving, to protect it, fiercely and faithfully for all time.

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So let me conclude by thanking you and sending out my wishes for you. I wish you balance. A balance like an albatross in flight, with every wing feather muscle taut and playful, family and friends and work and wildness and well-being, action and tranquility. I wish you work of substance and beauty and import. I wish you fresh wind and blowing waves and sun through fog and the time to stand in the weather breathing. I wish you a calm confidence that comes from knowing that although the earth is not solid under your feet, the ocean will lift you always and that you are invisibly and always supported by the spirit of people who love and respect you. I wish you perspective, which is the power to lift your eyes to the horizon, which is always bigger than what you hold in your hand. I wish you imagination, which is the gift the universe has given to us alone, to envision life ways that are different from what they are now. I wish you laughter and I wish you courage. You are a beautiful gift that the world has given to itself. You are literally a force of nature. Truly, you are the Earth's great hope to save the beauty and richness of its oceanic lives. Bless you. [applause]

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