

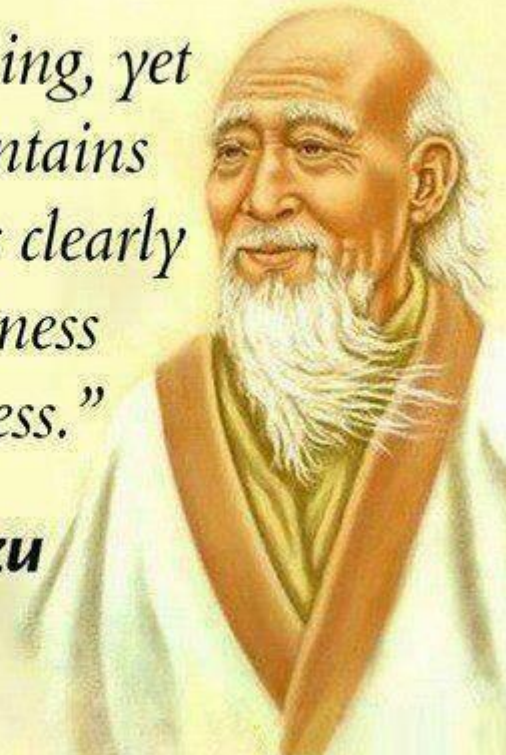
# THE SPIRIT & SCIENCE OF HUMILITY

Stephen G. Post  
DUKE 2024

# HUMILITY, WATER, KINDNESS

*“Water is the softest thing, yet it can penetrate mountains and earth. This shows clearly the principle of softness overcoming hardness.”*

**Lao Tzu**





**Humility is the solid  
foundation of all virtues.**

Confucius





## FROM ARROGANCE

- IS FAULT PROOF
- DOESN'T LISTEN
- INTERRUPTS
- WANTS TO BE RIGHT
- DOESN'T SEE DIFFERENTLY
- PUSHES POINT THROUGH
- SHOWS FRUSTRATION SOON
- AVOIDS ACCOUNTABILITY
- CREATES A FEAR CULTURE

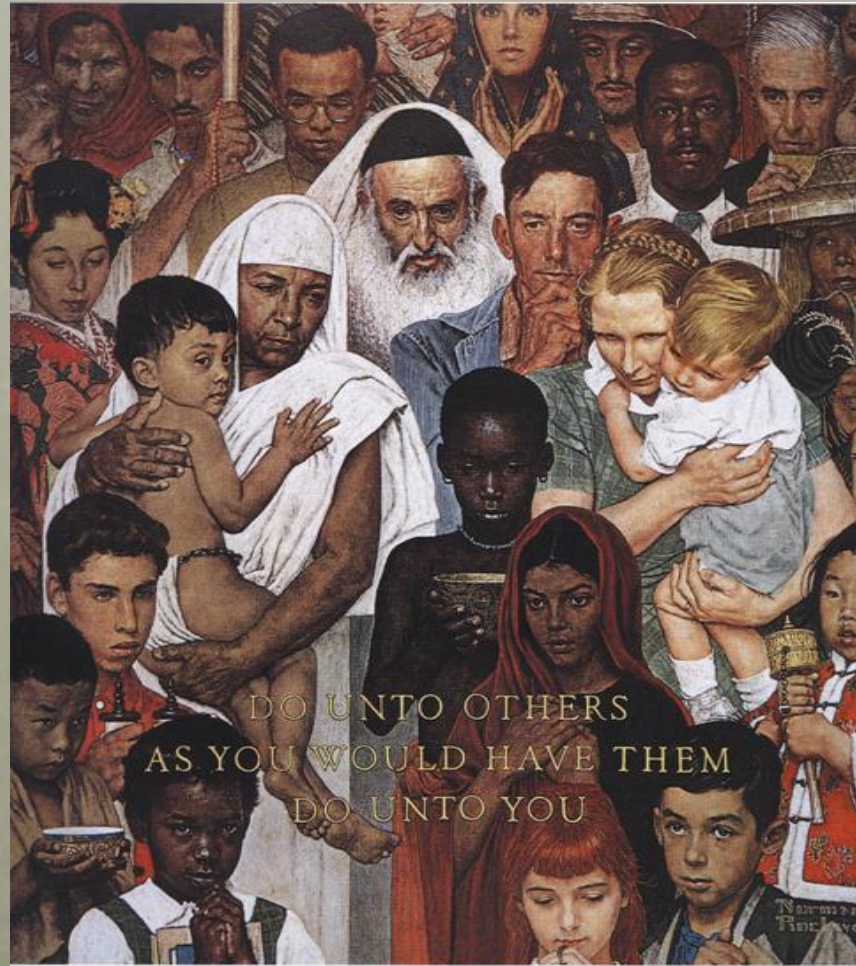


## TO HUMILITY

- ADMITS MISTAKES
- LISTENS TO UNDERSTAND
- GIVES SPACE
- HAS AN OPEN MIND
- EMBRACES DIFFERENCES
- ALLOWS IDEAS TO EMERGE
- DEMONSTRATES PATIENCE
- TAKES OWNERSHIP
- BUILDS LEARNING CULTURE

- “In humility is the greatest freedom. As long as you have to defend the *imaginary self that you think is important, you lose your peace of heart.*” ~Thomas Merton

# ROCKWELL'S CIRCLE





# HUMILITY QUOTES

- “They weave in an imperfection in every Persian rug because God alone is perfect. How can we not be humble?” ~*Anonymous*
- “Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less.” ~ *wrongly attributed to C.S. Lewis (but nevertheless a fine quote)*
- “How little we know, how eager to learn.” ~ *John Templeton*
- “*Not God*” AA

# WHAT IT IS NOT

- Humiliation
- Self-humiliation
- De-dignification
- Submission



# WHAT IT IS

- Freedom from pride and arrogance
- Reinhold Niebuhr (d. 1971) “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.”
- Ernest Kurtz, in his classic work *The Spirituality of Imperfection* (1992). Kurtz writes that humility signifies “the acceptance of being human, the acceptance of one’s human being” (p. 187), and a wariness of grandiosity.
- Lutheran influences on AA’s understanding of humility (via the Oxford Group) as complete and unconditional submission of the human will, in contrast to Aquinas’s “right sized” equal regard
- *Maybe: Humility is the virtue of equal regard for all people recognizing a fundamental human equality of moral standing and worth. Humility means that we see the inherent dignity in every person, never diminishing or humiliating them. There can be no language of “life unworthy of life.”*

# HUMILITY IS CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH KINDNESS

- Making space in the room for others
- Not self-inflating
- The Long Island Blowfish



# “HUMUS-EARTHEN”

- Sam Gamgee, Candide, etc.
- Frederick Olmsted (1822-1903) the great landscape architect who struggled with severe depression and spent his last five years at McLean was “saved by the gardens” there and in Central Park



# HOPEWELL.CC







# HOPEWELL.CC (MAINLY BI-POLAR & SCHIZOPHRENIA)

- “Moral Treatment” serving
- Natural Setting (Olmstead)
- Small groups for positive psychology
- Humility, kindness, giving, forgiveness, gratitude, etc.
- Now ARTA (Residential Treatment Association)
- “inner city farming”



## HOPEWELL

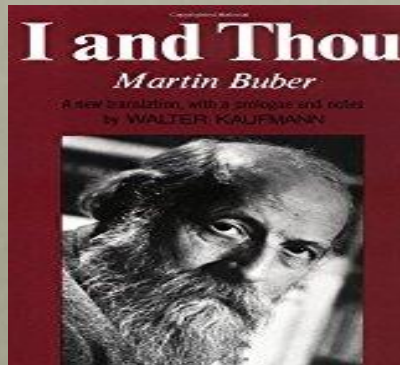
*A therapeutic farm community for adults with mental illness*

### RESULTS/RESEARCH EXAMPLE



# ETHICS OF EQUAL REGARD

- Logic of equal regard (Kant, Kierkegaard)
- Spirituality/ethics of equal regard (Buber “I &Thou”)



- Namaste (“I-I”) OR “Thou Art That” (the nurses in Mt. Vernon)

THE ESSENTIAL  
Worldwide  
Laws of Life



SIR JOHN TEMPLETON

*With a Foreword by Stephen G. Post*



# SIR JOHN'S LAWS OF LIFE

- Gratitude
- Kindness
- Honesty
- Service
- Humility (Humility Theology)
- Perseverance
- Patience
- Future-mindedness/vision
- Thrift
- Forgiveness

# Character Strengths and Virtues

A HANDBOOK AND CLASSIFICATION

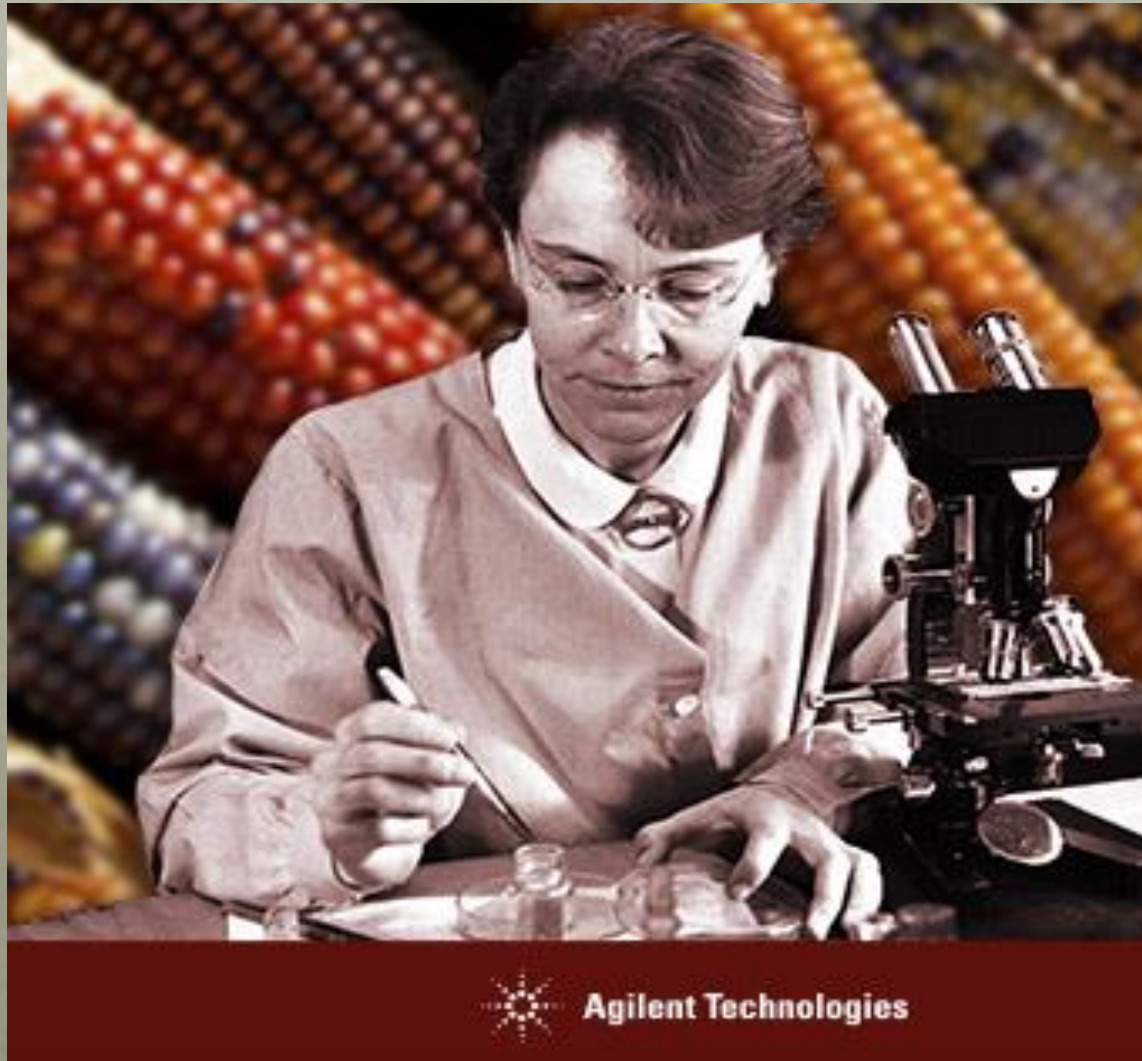
Christopher Peterson  
Martin E. P. Seligman

# POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

- Humility
- Creativity/imagination (Penn)
- Perspective/wisdom (Chicago)
- Persistence
- Kindness/empathy (IRUL)
- Purpose (Berkeley)
- Forgiveness (Virginia)
- Awe/beauty Self-Regulation (Miami)
- Gratitude (Davis)
- Hope
- Resilience (UNC)
- Happiness (hedonic, flow, eudaemonistic [good actions])



# HUMILITY IN THE GREAT SCIENTISTS: BARBARA MCCLINTOCK & FRED ROBBINS



# MANIFESTATIONS OF HUMILITY

- 1. Intellectual Humility (Barbara McClintock, Fred Robbins)
- 2. Interpersonal Humility (Jimmy Carter, Paul Farmer, Dalai Lama)
- 3. Existential/Spiritual Humility (Dr. Cicely Saunders)
- 4. Cultural Humility
- *Maybe: Humility is the virtue of equal regard for all people recognizing a fundamental human equality of moral standing and worth. Humility means that we see the inherent dignity in every person, never diminishing or humiliating them. There can be no language of “life unworthy of life.”*

# PASTOR OTIS MOSS JR.





# WORLD YOUTH DAY 2016 UN



# THE HUMILITY (OR SERENITY) PRAYER AS READ AT THE START OF AA MEETINGS

- Reinhold Niebuhr (d. 1971)
- “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.”
- As the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, first published in 1939, states, “We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God’s people we stand on our feet; we don’t crawl before anyone” (2001, p. 83).

# 12 STEPS & SELF-ASSESSMENT

- [www.helpingotherslivesober.org](http://www.helpingotherslivesober.org)
- [www.newdirect.org](http://www.newdirect.org)
- [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

(fourth stepping with a sponsor)



KRUMREI-MANCUSO, E. J., & ROUSE, S. V. (2016). THE DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE *INTELLECTUAL* HUMILITY SCALE. J PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT, 98, 209-221.  
SELF-ASSESSMENT AND PEER ASSESSMENT

- 1. My ideas are usually better than other people's ideas.\*
- 2. For the most part, others have more to learn from me than I have to learn from them.\*
- 3. When I am really confident in a belief, there is very little chance that belief is wrong.\*
- 4. I'd rather rely on my own knowledge about most topics than turn to others for expertise.\*
- 5. On important topics, I am not likely to be swayed by the viewpoints of others.\*
- 6. I have changed opinions that were important to me when someone showed me I was wrong.
- 7. I am willing to change my position on an important issue in the face of good reasons.
- 8. I am open to revising my important beliefs in the face of new information.
- 9. I am willing to change my opinions on the basis of compelling reason.
- 10. I'm willing to change my mind once it's made up about an important topic.
- 11. I respect that there are ways of making important decisions that are different from the way I make decisions.
- 12. Listening to perspectives of others seldom changes my important opinions.\*
- 13. I welcome different ways of thinking about important topics.
- 14. I can have great respect for someone, even when we don't agree on important topics.
- 15. Even when I disagree with others, I can recognize that they have sound points.
- 16. When someone disagrees with ideas that are important to me, it feels as though I'm being attacked.\*
- 17. When someone contradicts my most important beliefs, it feels like a personal attack.\*
- 18. I tend to feel threatened when others disagree with me on topics close to my heart.\*
- 19. I can respect others, even if I disagree with them in important ways.
- 20. I am willing to hear others out, even if I disagree with them.
- 21. When someone disagrees with my ideas that are important to me, I feel insignificant.\*
- 22. I feel small when others disagree with me on topics that are close to my heart.

# Attentive Listening



# HUMILITY TIPS

- INTELLECTUAL, INTERPERSONAL, EMOTIONAL, SELF-PRESENTATION (PASTOR MOSS), SPIRITUAL & RELIGIOUS
- KNOW THYSELF: MORAL INVENTORY
- APPRECIATE OTHERS AND TAKE ADVICE
- SEEK GUIDANCE
- APOLOGIZE WHEN FITTING
- LISTEN A LOT BEFORE YOU TALK
- BETTER TO BE ALWAYS KIND THAN ALWAYS RIGHT



# NEAL KRAUSE

- Humility strengthens social bonds
- Diminishes social conflict and stress
- Older adults who are high quartile humility rate health more favorably than low quartile
- Krause, N. (2012). Religious involvement, humility, and change in self-rated health over time. *Journal of Psychology and Theology*, 40, 199–210.



## (LEE, POLOMA, POST) SELF-REPORTED EXPERIENCE OF DIVINE LOVE

- A random survey of 1,208 adult men and women across the U.S. (across the spectrum of age, race/ethnicity, geographic region, income, education, etc.) sheds new light on the experience of divine love (conducted by John C. Green, a leading survey researcher and Director of the Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron).
- 8 of 10 Americans report that they have felt God's love directly, and that it increases their compassion for others. Previous surveys have not picked up the centrality of experiencing a loving God in the lives of benevolent people.



# SPECIFIC SURVEY DETAILS

- Almost half (45%) of all Americans feel God's love at least once a day and eight out of ten have this experience at least "once in a while." 81% of respondents acknowledge that they "experience God's love as the greatest power in the universe." 83% indicate that they "feel God's love increasing their compassion for others," with 53 % claiming this is an experience they have "on most days" or more often. Almost half (48%) of the respondents who had a strong sense of purpose directly experienced God's love daily or more (as compared with the 14% who had a strong sense of purpose but never experienced divine love). Many speak of feeling humility.
- See [www.heartofreligion.net](http://www.heartofreligion.net) and [www.godlyloveproject.org](http://www.godlyloveproject.org)

# THE HEART OF RELIGION (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2013)

SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT, BENEVOLENCE,  
AND THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S LOVE

## *the heart of* **RELIGION**



MATTHEW T. LEE  
MARGARET M. POLOMA • STEPHEN G. POST

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