



What Will it Look Like if We Lose Our Civilization?

“Make America great again” has become a rallying cry. But do we as a people really know what makes greatness? The old adage informs, “America is great because she is good, and if she ever ceases to be good, she will cease to be great.” But this only helps if we know what is goodness.

Writing at *American Thinker*, author John Dietrich [asked Tuesday](#), “What will it look like when we lose our civilization?”

Contrasting the past and present, he gives examples of maritime disasters. He illustrated how, during the sinking of the HMS *Birkenhead* in 1852 and the *Titanic* in 1912, it really was “Women and children first.” As commentator Mark Steyn [related](#) in 2012 about the *Birkenhead*, the men “were ordered not to dive in the water lest they risk endangering the ladies and their young charges by swamping the boats. So they stood stiffly at their posts as the ship disappeared beneath the waves.”

Of course, insofar as our youth have even heard of the women-and-children-first principle, they likely think it a myth.

It certainly is not a reality today. Dietrich tells us that when the MTS [Oceanos](#) sank in 1991, “The crew fled in panic without raising an alarm”; it was the rising water in the ship that alerted the passengers to trouble. When the *Costa Concordia* ran aground and took on water in 2012, not only was the captain among the first to flee (later claiming he “fell” into a lifeboat), but one female passenger stated, “There were big men, crew members, pushing their way past us to get into the lifeboat.”

Of course, given feminism’s effect and our incessant “equality” blather — and that men (as a group) no longer possess the greater authority that balanced their sacrifices — this may appear logical. But the point is that it’s simply one example of a wider loss of virtue, with that of “courage” being conspicuously lacking in the above cases.

Dietrich also contrasts our nation with others in more recent times. He mentions how after Japan’s Kobe earthquake, in 1995, which killed 5,200 people, violence and looting were essentially unseen. (Incidentally, Fox News pundit Tucker Carlson, broadcasting from Japan this week, noted Wednesday how a train station he entered was wholly free from litter and anti-social or strange behavior.)

Moreover, the two million people recently protesting for freedom in Hong Kong were voluntarily orderly and peaceful, Dietrich relates; nothing was destroyed or burned, no fecal matter was deposited in streets, and young people remained afterwards to ensure no litter was left behind.





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Do note that this sounds much like Tea Party gatherings. Yet contrast it with the violent Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, and Antifa protests, which left destruction, vandalized property, trash, and sometimes bloodied victims in their wake. This illustrates that there is civility left in America — and who it is, more than anyone else, destroying civilization.

Actually, though, it's not mainly the useful-idiot foot soldiers in the street. Consider what Dietrich also relates:

“People who see this decline in virtue are described as ‘nostalgia merchants.’ [Hillary Clinton](#) wrote, “The nostalgia merchants sell an appealing Norman Rockwell-like picture of American life half a century ago, one in which every household was made up of stable parents, two kids, a dog, and a cat who all lived in a house with a manicured lawn and a station wagon in the driveway. I understand that nostalgia. I feel it myself when the world seems too much to take. There were many good things about our way of life back then. But in reality, our past was not so picture-perfect.” Historian [David Halberstam](#) wrote, “One reason that Americans as a people became nostalgic about the fifties more than twenty-five years later was not so much that life was better in the fifties (though in some ways it was), but because at the time it had been portrayed so idyllically on television.” In other words, this nostalgia is an illusion.

In reality, this claim is illusion — one the culture destroyers desperately want to advance.

It's silly, and unnecessary (and in this case reflects ill intent), to point out that _____ isn't picture-perfect. This isn't a perfect world and man isn't a perfect being, so imperfection is always a given. This is why perfection isn't a prerequisite for role-model status.

As for '50s *Leave it to Beaver*-type entertainment, portraying that idyllic American life, what is art's purpose? I've heard it said, in defense of vulgar, corruptive rap music, that “they're just showing you what's going on out there.” But something showing you “what's going on out there” isn't by definition art.

It's called “news.”

If art doesn't make society better in some way, what's its purpose? The corruptors' complaint, essentially, is that '50s entertainment was unrealistic. This is as insincere as it is unserious. Were ancient Greek literary heroes or those of any civilization realistic? Are the corruptors' Hollywood girl-power portrayals of masculinized, indomitable female characters “realistic”?

Art doesn't have to be realistic, only positive in effect. Just as heroes were typically embodiments of virtue that inspired emulation, those picture-perfect '50s families can serve, for whatever effect it has, as good examples.

The corruptors' actual complaint, translated, concerns not a lack of realism per se, but a lack of realism that doesn't advance their unrealistic conception of what reality should be. What really drives them was well illustrated by *New York Times* columnist [Nicholas Kristof's](#) reaction to the aforementioned Kobe earthquake.

“He wrote, ‘I looked all over for a case of looting, or violent jostling over rescue supplies. Finally, I was delighted to find a store owner who told me that he'd been robbed by two men,’” Dietrich relates, quoting the journalist. “Mr. Kristof was later disappointed to learn that the looters were Iranians.”

Kristof's delight to disappointment provides insight. “Misery loves company,” as the saying goes. The Bible rhetorically asks, “What fellowship hath light with darkness?” The darkness hates the light. Not



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only do more virtuous people's existence make the corrupt feel bad about themselves, but on some level they're often jealous; virtue is a good they don't possess — and they don't want anyone else to have it, either.

(This, mind you, is generally the real reason such people can't tolerate Christians' "intolerant judgments" about their behavior.)

But rationalize as many may, "the decline has become so obvious that it cannot be denied," writes Dietrich. "William Bennett pointed out that '[o]ver the years teachers have been asked to identify the top problems in America's public schools. In 1940, teachers identified talking out of turn; chewing gum; making noise; running in the halls; cutting in line; dress code infractions; and littering. When asked the same question in 1990, teachers identified drug abuse; alcohol abuse; pregnancy; suicide; rape; robbery; and assault.' We are operating under a completely new set of values."

Yet the problem is reflected in Dietrich's last line: The issue is that we *are* operating under values.

That is to say, the solution to moral decay is morality. But if morality came in a jar, what would be on the ingredients label?

Virtues — not "values."

"Values" aren't good by definition; they're just valued, by somebody, by definition. Mother Teresa had values, but so did Adolf Hitler. But since they're completely relative, not reflecting anything transcendent and being synonymous with preference, they're fashionable in this atheistic/relativistic time.

In contrast, virtues are "good moral habits." They reflect Truth (absolute by definition), which in turn implies God. Great thinkers have expounded upon them throughout the ages, and our nation's Founders [emphasized](#) their necessity. (Example: "Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. As nations become more corrupt and vicious, they have more need of masters — Benjamin Franklin.) Someone embodying them is called virtuous, and this perhaps best illustrates the folly of our values-centrism. Did you ever hear anyone praised as "valuous"?

There also is no ambiguity in virtue: They were [defined long ago](#). Examples are prudence, chastity, diligence, courage, faith, hope, charity, justice, temperance, fortitude, and humility.

Virtues matter because just as teaching tennis effectively requires knowing and imparting the game's principles, becoming a good person — and molding a child into one — requires knowing and instilling morality's principles. Moreover, forget tennis' principles and your nation's Davis Cup fortunes collapse.

Forget morality's principles, virtues, and your nation collapses.

So what does a lost civilization look like? If we keep to the road we're on, we'll find out firsthand.



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