# Chapter 8
# Altruistic Concern for the Other and the Development of the Virtue of Humility

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**Abstract**  Humility is often defined by what it is not; as the antithesis to various vices such as pride, arrogance, conceit, or vanity. This negative definition leaves open the possibility of some underlying characteristic or trait that influences the formation of this virtue. *Homo amans* lays out the classic theological triad of faith, hope, and love as a natural inclination in humanity. This chapter explores one aspect of this triad, love, as a possible underlying characteristic or trait that uniquely informs the formation of the virtue of humility: specifically, love as altruistic concern for the other that puts them ahead or before the self. Contemporary psychological studies of humility demonstrate a connection between this virtue and altruistic concern for the other. Altruistic concern becomes a part of moral schemas that greatly influence moral behavior and are the basis for the development of moral identity. Holocaust rescuers demonstrate that moral schemas, which contain altruistic concern as a primary component of their view of the world, cultivate a moral identity that makes rescuing a consequence of their self-identity and naturally leads to humility about their actions.

## 8.1   Introduction

Humility is commonly defined according to what it is acting against; most often some form of pride.

> Humility is most easily defined as the virtue that opposes pride, that is, the virtue which opposes ascribing to oneself an excellence one does not possess, or wrongly thinking of oneself as the cause of one's own excellence, or wishing to be the exclusive possessor of the excellence (Pinsent 2012, p. 261).

Aquinas defines humility as a restriction against thinking too highly of oneself and a type of restraint against forming an identity based on the over-estimation of

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oneself (1912/1981). Humility is foundational to the formation of virtue, generally through the actions and resistance it takes against pride.

Wherefore, the first step in the acquisition of virtue may be understood in two ways. First by way of removing obstacles: and thus humility holds the first place, in as much as it expels pride, which "God resists," and make man submissive and ever open to receive the influx of Divine grace (Aquinas 1912/1981, ST II-II.161.5.ad 2).

Both of these definitions focus on a type of negative claim, the presence of humility is the absence of some other sort of vice. Humility is present when something else is regulated or restricted.

Roberts and Wood (2010) argue that humility is best described by paying attention to its vice counterparts because it has a negative character. They list a number of its opposite vices including "arrogance, vanity, conceit, egotism, hyper-autonomy, grandiosity, pretentiousness, …" among many others (p. 236). Humility is ultimately defined by being opposed to vanity and arrogance. Vanity is excessive concern or anxiety with how one appears to others, which can be focused on a number of personal qualities such as intelligence, attractiveness, or social status. Thus, a humble person is one who is unconcerned or inattentive to their appearance to others, based on these qualities (Roberts and Wood 2010). Arrogance is defined as a type of entitlement that is afforded to oneself based on some quality (real or imagined) where a person sees himself or herself as superior to others and thus deserving of special treatment. The humble person may accurately perceive a special quality in themselves (a skill, a strength, or some other asset), but the difference is that they do not use that information to see themselves as superior or requiring special treatment.

Descriptions of some property using contrasts are certainly helpful, and aspects of the virtue of humility contain elements that are antithetical to its corresponding vices. Roberts' (2003, 2013) overall method of focusing on detailed descriptions of virtues, using a Wittgensteinian family resemblance approach, is very helpful to understanding virtue formation. However, definitions focused on absence or restriction seem to indicate the possibility that there might be a separate property or character trait that lies underneath, which actually plays an essential role in the overcoming of vice. My suggestion is that altruistic concern, which views the other as intrinsically valuable, is the ultimate foundation or bedrock of the virtue of humility.

The idea of *Homo amans* uses St. Paul's tripartite view of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love as a new paradigm for understanding certain predispositions in humanity and argues against the typical idea of *Homo economicus* as a foundation for human anthropology (See Chap 1, this volume). One aspect of this view, love, understood as altruistic concern for the other, is foundational for the development of the virtue of humility. Part of the development of this virtue is dependent upon a certain view of other people, a view that sees intrinsic worth and value in the other. When this altruistic view of the other is present, humility becomes a natural consequence because the temptations to various vices related to selfishness no longer take hold in the virtuous person.

In this way, a certain sense of relational connection and identification with the other provokes the various cognitive states and behaviors associated with the virtuous state of being humble. Humble people have moral schemas that include a distinctive valuation for the other and places a high value on those relationships. Their moral identities are partially constituted based on this altruistic view of other people, which influences their actions and view of the world. Other people have an inherent value simply based on their status as fellow humans and this perspective promotes many of the factors commonly associated with the virtue of humility. This view of *Homo amans* is a helpful starting point for reconsidering human nature and the possibility of developing humility as a virtue.

## 8.2    Human Nature and Altruistic Concern

Selfishness is often perceived as a core aspect of human nature. Theologically, original sin and the doctrine of total depravity describe human nature as fully corrupted by sin (Augustine 1961/1996; Calvin 1559/1999). Philosophically, Hobbes viewed the essence of human nature as egoistical, eventually leading to a brutal competition among people, absent a proper monarch to rule over them (1651). More recently, Dawkins' idea of a selfish gene has been interpreted as evidence that human nature itself is also inherently selfish (1976). De Waal (2006) has argued that a popular view among many biologists is that human morality and culture are just a façade that covers the selfish core of human nature. The view of *Homo amans* is a helpful corrective to the assumptions of human selfishness presumed to be foundational to human nature. By emphasizing the aspects of human nature that are searching for meaning, projecting the self into the future, and focusing on the inherent worth of human relationships, it is possible to re-imagine the basic characteristics of human nature and highlight the most positive attributes rather than relegating them to a secondary or cursory status.

Elsewhere, I have argued that this focus on the inherent worth of others or, as I have defined it here as altruistic concern, is not antithetical to the evolution of human nature. Rather, the evolutionary or natural processes that produced human nature as we know it today actually allows for the *possibility* of altruistic concern and behavior (Van Slyke 2010). The altruistic concern that is such a noteworthy part of many forms of moral exemplarity is actually based on the everyday evolved characteristics of human nature (Van Slyke 2012). Sociality is a basic aspect of many mammalian species and is most prominent in the primate lineage (de Waal 2005). Attachment processes establish a trajectory of care and concern for offspring that can later influence altruistic concern in other relationships (Shaver et al. 2016). Neuroeconomics has shown in a variety of experiments that people often prefer various types of transactions that emphasize cooperation and fairness rather than self-interest (Camerer and Fehr 2006; Fehr and Camerer 2007). When one person experiences empathy for another, similar areas of the brain are activated in the two people, thus each feels a facsimile of what that other person is feeling, based on

shared neural circuitry (Singer and Lamm 2009). Neural systems underlying empathy in concert with human mirror systems involved in imitation and specialized circuitry for theory of mind encompass a natural human propensity towards understanding another (Van Slyke 2014).

These human characteristics (along with a host of others) make the development of altruistic concern a very natural part of human nature. It is not so much working *against* a selfish core or intrinsic self-interest, rather it is an emphasis and development of the parts of human nature related to cooperation, trust, attachment (among others), toward the end of viewing the other as intrinsically valuable. The development of altruistic concern is foundational to the development of humility, in that showing humility seems to be dependent upon viewing the other as having an intrinsic worth simply by being a fellow human being. Thus, part of the development of this virtue will be dependent upon developing the relational or love facet of the *Homo amans* triad.

## 8.3   Recent Definitions of Humility

Recently, there has been a revival in the study of humility, both as a virtue and as a positive character trait associated with optimal human flourishing. Although humility has historically been defined in terms of low self-esteem, unworthiness, and self-deprecation, more recent definitions focus on the positive contributions it makes to human relationships and individual psychological functioning. Three components stand out as important characteristics of humility that have taken center focus in recent definitions of this virtue. Those components are (1) accurate self-assessment, (2) openness, and (3) low self-regard. Each of these components is related to how a person views the other and their relationship to other people in their lives.

Emmons initially identified accurate assessment as one of the primary components of a humble person.

> To be humble is not to have a low opinion of oneself, it is to have an accurate opinion of oneself. It is the ability to keep one's talents and accomplishments in perspective … to have a sense of self-acceptance, and understanding of one's imperfections, and to be free from arrogance and low self-esteem (Emmons 2000, p. 7)

Humble people are able to understand the limitations to their own knowledge; an understanding of their intellectual accomplishments without the belief that they are somehow all-knowing (Templeton 1997). Humble people are able to perceive themselves accurately, both their strengths and weaknesses, without defensiveness (Exline and Hill 2012).

Part of their accurate assessment is related to their understanding of dependence on others. Humble people realize that their accomplishments and relationships are not produced in a vacuum, but are dependent upon others. Humble people recognize that the formation of any virtue occurs in particular groups with unique

characteristics that help to foster the relational conditions necessary for virtue formation. It is through social formation that we begin to acknowledge our dependency on others for moral formation and virtue, even though dependency is not often acknowledged especially in academic circles.

> Dependence on others is of course often recognized in a general way, usually not as something that we need in order to achieve our positive goals. But an acknowledgement of anything like the full extent of that dependence and of the ways in which it stems from our vulnerability and our afflictions is generally absent (MacIntyre 1999, p. 3).

This view of virtue demonstrates that dependency on others is an essential element of overall flourishing; each of us is indebted to our parents, teachers, siblings, etc. for the type of formation they bore in us (Boyd 2014).

The second primary component in humility is a sense of openness, both towards others as well as in regard to taking advice from others, hearing new ideas, and graciously receiving criticism. Humble people are often open-minded and willing to admit their mistakes in different areas while also interested in learning from and seeking advice from others (Tangney 2000; Templeton 1997). They are able to see and acknowledge their own imperfections and refuse to use their own influence or power to control others (Sandage 1999). Humble people recognize the importance and need for others based on an accurate appraisal of their own limitations and gaps in their knowledge, often in regard to some form of a higher power or spiritual truth (Tangney 2000). This openness to others is foundational to their development of altruistic concern because so much of their life is built upon and sustained by relationships. When relationships are valued at that level and the openness to the other includes emotional availability, the development of altruistic concern is a natural outcome.

The third primary component of humility is related to the stereotypical definition of humility in terms of low self-regard; humble people lack a strong focus on the self. However, this focus on others does not include the types of self-effacement often associated with the stereotypical definition. Humble people show empathy, respect, and kindness toward others; they value others in such a way as to promote equality and compassion (Sandage 1999). Humble people are not preoccupied with themselves and are willing to share the spotlight with others. They do not have an exaggerated sense of self-importance, but are able to forget themselves while recognizing that they are one part of a much larger universe (Exline and Geyer 2004; Tangney 2000). They are much less likely to distort information about themselves, because of, in part, the type of security experienced by them both in terms of their estimation of themselves and their self-esteem deriving from more stable sources (such as unconditional love in relationships; devotion to meaningful causes) rather than transient sources such as physical attractiveness, climbing the social ladder, or projects focused on self-enhancement (Exline and Geyer 2004; Peterson and Seligman 2004).

Nadelhoffer and Wright (2016) condensed these three components along two primary dimensions, low self-focus and high other focus. Their definition assumes a "particular psychological positioning of oneself … one that is both epistemically

and ethically aligned" (Wright et al. 2017, p. 4). Epistemically aligned refers to the proper knowledge of oneself as but one person that is a part of a much larger universe and all the limitations and imperfections this imparts on one's singular perspective. Ethically aligned refers to the recognition of the moral value of the other who is worthy of dignity, respect, concern, and compassion. As other definitions have emphasized, low self-focus does not necessitate an overly negative or diminished view of the self, rather the attention is directed to a low level of "self-prioritization or self-importance" while high other-focus refers to an "increase in one's orientation outwards – towards other morally relevant beings" (Wright et al. 2017, pp. 5–6). This suggests a type of re-orientation in which a person does not necessarily need to diminish or downplay the self in order to focus on the other but adjusting the balance between emphasis on self and other towards more of an integration between the two.

## 8.4   Humility and Concern for the Other

Recent research on the psychological functions of humility demonstrates a relationship between humility and concern for the other. Humility is related to a host of pro-social relational variables including generosity, helping behavior, repair of social bonds, forgiveness, and gratitude. These types of pro-social variables would seem to include a component of concern for the other in that they naturally involve showing affection (at some level) for another whether through giving generously, showing gratitude or extending forgiveness to another. I would argue that altruistic concern and humility actually build on each other such that displays of humility engender more closeness and connection between people and the feeling of relational connection induces more humility towards others. People are more likely to show humility and contribute to a common purpose when they know and experience a sense of affinity with particular individuals. Thus, altruistic concern creates the context in which humility is more clearly experienced and displayed among persons of similar character and conviction.

Exline and Hill (2012) found that humility was often associated with generosity. Humility predicted higher levels of charitable donations as well as mailing back an extra survey to the researcher. Humble people most often passed on anonymous donations to future participants, and this form of generosity was positively correlated with a lack of self-focus. Humility was also associated with greater levels of self-reported motives to be kind to others, such as close friends, strangers, and enemies. Humility played a larger role in the generous acts in contrast to other individual variables such as self-esteem, entitlement, religiosity, gratitude, or social desirability.

LaBouff et al. (2012) found that humility was associated with different instances of helping behavior. Both explicit and implicit measures of humility were used to analyze the presence of humility as a character trait in participants. Humility was most strongly correlated with a self-reported measure of helpfulness and was also

correlated with agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and impression management (IM), however the effect of humility on helpfulness remained even when IM was statistically controlled. In a second study, participants who scored high on an implicit measure of humility (IAT) were more likely to offer help to a fellow student in need. The same effect was found when agreeableness was added as a covariate, and there were no gender differences in the amount of help offered. In a third study, two different conditions were introduced one with high social pressure to help (five out of seven confederates had already agreed to help) and a second with low social pressure to help (two out of the seven confederates had already agreed to help). Although humble people did not help out more than others in the social pressure condition, they did offer more help in the low social pressure condition (76.9%) in comparison to the non-humble group (47.8%).

Gratitude is the recognition that something of value was received from another person, which was given and received openly and freely. Grateful people are less likely to engage in hierarchical comparisons with others, which often leads to envy or resentment (Emmons and Mishra 2011). Being in a state of gratitude toward another is incompatible with feeling envy and resentment toward them, thus this type of state in a sense blocks out negative comparator judgments and emphasizes the good qualities of another person (Smith et al. 1996). Psychological measurement scales of gratitude have been shown to be negatively correlated with envy (Ger and Belk 1996; McCullough et al. 2002). Gratitude also has a reciprocal relationship with humility. Participants who wrote a gratitude letter demonstrated a higher level of state humility in comparison to those who wrote a neutral one. Persons identified as being humble felt higher levels of gratitude after writing a gratitude letter and in a 14-day diary study, humility and gratitude mutually predicted each other (Kruse et al. 2014). Thus, gratitude is another form of relational connection that may be related to concern for the other and may help to develop altruistic concern over time for a wider network of social relationships.

## 8.5 Humility in Relationships and Organizations

Not only is humility associated with a host of prosocial variables, it is also associated with the maintenance and repair of social relationships. It is a preference in potential romantic partners, business leaders, and coworkers. I would argue that part of the reason for this is that humility is related to the perception of care and concern in others. A humble relationship partner demonstrates that they value the perspective of the other and a humble business leader demonstrates that they value the contributions of those in their charge. Although this may not be full-blown altruistic concern, it sets people on a trajectory toward valuing the other beyond a mere instrumental relationship. It allows for the development of a concern that goes beyond self-interest toward a type of humility that tips the scales away from the self toward the other.

A longitudinal study of couples that had experienced some sort of hurt or offense in their relationship rated their feelings of unforgiveness as significantly less over time when they saw their partner as more humble rather than viewing their partner as superior (Davis et al. 2013). Thus, perceiving a romantic partner as more humble is associated with greater levels of forgiveness on the part of the romantic partner who was hurt in some way. In a second study, groups of participants who were told they were part of a leadership workshop were also measured based on relational dynamics and humility. Based on ratings of individual members by the group, the trait of humility was positively associated with group acceptance and status. A second analysis also demonstrated that the same effect occurred over time, in that as people demonstrated more aspects of the humility trait during the group activities, they were rated higher in terms of acceptance. There was also some evidence that the group was able to discriminate between genuine and feigned humility, in that there was a negative relationship between people who scored *themselves* as higher in humility in comparison to observer scores who scored them lower.

In the initiation and maintenance of romantic relationships, Van Tongeren et al. (2014) found in an initial study that potential romantic partners who were considered very humble were rated more favorably and people were more likely to initiate a romantic relationship with them in comparison with less humble people. In a replication of the first study, participants found humble potential dating partners as more attractive in comparison to arrogant dating partners. Humility also had a demonstrated effect on the maintenance of long-distance relationships, by helping to facilitate greater levels of forgiveness and relationship satisfaction, especially in connection to higher levels of commitment in romantic relationships (Farrell et al. 2015).

Humility has also recently been identified as a helpful factor for various business organizations and a character trait sought after in corporate leaders. Among students who participated in ten-week-long project teams, those identified as expressing different cognitive and behavioral traits of humility were significantly related to identifiable positive traits including overall contributions to the team and individual performance (Owens et al. 2013). Humility was also shown to help compensate for lower mental ability on tasks, presumably by helping to better facilitate different social factors involved in group dynamics. Honesty-humility, as a unique personality trait, was strongly predictive of positive ratings of job performance by supervisors especially in jobs that involve some form of care taking (Johnson et al. 2011). Vera and Rodriquez-Lopez (2004) argue that humility actually offers a competitive advantage for organizations because humility helps to foster more realistic perspectives on a number of different factors related to organizational effectiveness.

Humility has been identified as a primary contributor to leadership effectiveness, too. Humility expressed in leaders, which was identified by group members, was positively correlated with job engagement (individual investment in work-related activities) and job satisfaction, while being negatively correlated with voluntary job turnover (Owens et al. 2013). Through an analysis of 55 in-depth interviews of leaders who implement humility in their organizations, these types of leaders were identified as effective by acting as role models for growth over time and creating space

for team members to express their own areas of growth and uncertainty, leading to more positive organizational outcomes (Owens and Hekman 2012). Additionally, humility is able to counteract certain negative effects of narcissism. Among a large health insurance organization, survey data revealed that interactions between the traits of narcissism and humility were actually associated with more positive perceptions of leader effectiveness, increased job engagement by followers, and both subjective and objective measures of job performance in members of the organization (Owens et al. 2015).

Psychological research on humility demonstrates its association with a number of different types of relationships at various levels of intimacy from co-workers and friends to both potential and current romantic partners. This indicates that humility is part of a general suite of relational pro-social capacities at the heart of which, I would argue, is the general foundation of relational connection to, and value of, another human being. In the formation of humility in individuals, it would be impossible to separate out the valuation of the other from humility itself, both would be highly intertwined and interdependent in their workings toward the development of this virtue. It would seem that a part of us prefers or seeks out individuals who demonstrate these qualities because we believe they will be better relationship partners, leaders, and coworkers. This intuition is connected to our own need or desire for relationships that value others and the opportunity to show love, care, and concern for another person. The next section explores different cognitive and psychological mechanisms involved in the development of altruistic concern and humility – specifically moral schemas and morality identity. Finally, these two mechanisms will be fleshed out in Holocaust rescuers, exposing how they demonstrated humility and altruistic concern for Jews during the Holocaust.

## 8.6   Moral Schemas

Schemas have been used in a variety of different domains such as social psychology, perception, and cognition to demonstrate how expectations and learned information can affect current interpretations of a context or visual scene. Schemas are based on "general knowledge or expectations, which is distilled from your past experiences with someone or something" (Matlin 2013, p. 152). Schemas decrease cognitive load by creating expectations for familiar contexts and people by encoding in memory the regularities of various situations so that each time the situation is re-experienced the entire scene does not need to be re-encoded. Piaget (1970) originally suggested that schemas play an important role in learning through assimilation (encoding bias based on current schemas) and accommodation (adjusting schemas to fit new information). Brewer and Treyens (1981) demonstrated that when remembering a scene (in the case of this experiment the contents of an office), people will use an office schema to help remember different items. Items often associated with this schema (i.e. desk, chair, pencils) are easier to remember than items not consistent with the schema (a skull placed on the desk). People will also *mistakenly*

remember items consistent with the schema that were not actually present in the setting. Schemas are not limited to perceptions of a visual scene; the actions associated with different contexts are also present in memory through the use of a particular schema often referred to as a script. For example, going to a restaurant has specific actions to be performed in a particular order, which is widely shared in particular cultures without the need for detailed conscious recollection (Bower et al. 1979).

Based on their general usage in human cognition, several authors have suggested the importance of *moral* schemas for understanding the factors associated with moral action in children and adults (Narvaez and Lapsley 2009). Moral schemas primarily involve social information, especially regarding the self in relation to others.

> Schemas are structured parcels of knowledge from memory situating the self in relation to others. Schemas can give rise to scripts or conceptual representations of action sequences associated with particular social situations (Reimer et al. 2011a, p. 72).

Moral schemas are the ethical lenses people use to perceive the world and their place in it. Moral schemas contain perceptional content in terms of how different situations are interpreted as well as potential action sequences to be enacted.

Several lines of research indicate that moral formation is significantly dependent on relational ties and variables in the formation of a self-concept. This self-concept would be at least partially substantiated and demonstrated in a particular moral schema that viewed the self in connection to other important social relationships. Adolescents from an urban neighborhood were selected based on their identification as care exemplars who embodied several moral traits including community involvement, responsibility toward family, helpfulness toward others, emotional maturity, leadership, and others (Reimer 2003; Reimer and Wade-Stein 2004). Using computational analysis, it was identified that a significant proportion of their understanding of the self was based on the integration of peer and parental representations into their own internalized representation of the self in comparison to matched controls who did not demonstrate this tendency. These representations would be a part of the moral schemas that these adolescents used in their development as care exemplars. Among L'Arche caregivers (people who willingly volunteer to live with and serve the mentally and physically disabled) who have served for more than three years, aspects of their moral schemas were related significantly with expectations regarding close intimate partners who may act as models for moral action (Reimer et al. 2011b). Among spiritual exemplars, adolescents who are actively involved in a specific religious group report more resources in terms of social capital (including positive peer and family relationships), which led to higher levels of positive views on various moral perspectives (empathetic concern, perspective taking, and altruism) (Ebstyne, King and Furrow 2008).

Several perspectives in psychology demonstrate the importance of relational ties to moral development and character formation (Narvaez and Lapsley 2014). Parental socialization plays an important role in the development of self-regulatory functions and the development of moral emotions and, ultimately, conscience (Kochanska and

Aksan 2006). From birth, parental interaction plays a vital role in the development of the physical, emotional, and cognitive systems of the infant, while many forms of dysfunction in these systems is at least partially attributable to deficits in parental interaction and regulation (Narvaez and Gleason 2013; Schore 2001, 2002). Insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) negatively affect pro-social emotions, motives, and behaviors while secure attachment styles are positively related to increases in empathetic concern, compassion for others, and different forms of altruistic behavior including gratitude and forgiveness (Shaver and Mikulincer 2012). Although some perspectives have argued that young infants and children have little to no interaction with moral concerns, new perspectives seem to indicate a wealth of different social and moral information that is being processed and used by children throughout their early development (Narvaez and Lapsley 2009; Thompson 2012).

This evidence suggests that moral behavior generally is related to representations of relationships that are a part of the self-concept and, ultimately, facets of a moral schema. How other people are perceived within their moral schema is at least partially constituted by past relationships, which form the expectations that are so critical to moral perception in the present. Thus, our relational connections, both from our past and our current relational ties, inform the way that we view the world and others as well as modifying the ability for someone to develop certain aspects of humility. As altruistic concern and valuation of the other increases, the ability to exercise and sustain humility increases because these two aspects of both cognition and behavior are so highly intertwined. Our ability to show altruistic concern is based on the relationships from our past but can also be modified based on new relationships and new experiences. Thus, moral schemas can be adaptive and transformed over time and lead to greater levels of humility. Related to moral schemas is the concept of moral identity, which also plays a key role in moral development generally and humility specifically. This will be discussed in the next section.

## 8.7    Moral Identity

Generally, moral identity refers to the importance of morality to the self-conception of the individual (Hardy and Carlo 2011). Thus, moral identity increases as a particular moral perspective becomes more central to the way in which a person understands themselves and identifies with the moral perspective. Morality and self-identity become more closely linked such that a person with a high moral identity, a moral exemplar for example, tends to prefer or purse personal goals that are morally right (Colby and Damon 1992). Moral schemas are foundational to the development of moral identity; having a moral schema that is readily accessible to process current social situations in terms of their morality would be key to proper accounts of moral action (Narvaez and Lapsley 2009). Thus, moral identity forms as the moral schemas used to instantiate moral actions become solidified and consistent over time such that certain forms of moral action become part of one's identity (Van Slyke 2015).

Several areas of research indicate that moral identity has an important effect on moral actions in a variety of different domains. Aquino and Reed (2002) found that the importance of moral identity for self-identity had a marked effect on moral behaviors. Participants with a strong internalized sense of moral identity donated more food and had an increased commitment to various forms of volunteerism. For each step upwards on a measure of internalization of moral identity there was a corresponding increase in the probability of some form of volunteer work such as working in a homeless shelter, mentoring troubled youth, or visiting patients in a nursing home. In a second study, among high school students, higher scores on the same moral identity internalization measure (which was second only to gender differences) was associated with more donations of food to an end-of-the-year food drive that was conducted three months after the instrument was originally given to the students (Aquino and Reed 2002).

Moral identity was found to play a mediating role between adolescent religiosity, empathy, and aggression (Hardy et al. 2012). Using structural equation models to analyze an online survey of 502 participants, religious commitment was indirectly related to aggression (through decreased scores on the measure) and empathy (through increased scores on the measure) through the variable of moral identity. Religious commitment and involvement also predicted scores on the moral identity measure, which suggests that the pro-social behaviors often associated with religiosity may be closely associated with moral identity. Similarly, religious identity has been shown to be associated with a variety of prosocial personality factors including empathy, perspective taking, helpfulness, and personal responsibility (Furrow et al. 2004). Adolescents who were highly committed to their religion were involved in twice the national average of acts of service to homeless and needy people in comparison with non-religious people (Smith and Denton 2005).

In terms of humility, moral identities become formed in such a way that the value of the other person becomes a dominant theme of the way a person interacts with and views the world, and engenders the types of humility demonstrated in moral exemplars and others. Several areas of research show a close association with moral identity and concern for out-group members. This would suggest that an important aspect of moral identity is developing a proper concern for other people, especially people who are different or represent different groups and ethnicities.

From a national online database, it was demonstrated that activating moral emotions associated with in-group solidarity increased negative associations with out-groups (Smith et al. 2014). Moral foundations theory, which suggests intuitive moral categories that function as the foundational building blocks of different cultural moral systems, has identified three categories primarily involved in binding groups together: loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, and purity/degradation (Graham et al. 2011). Reliance on the three binding categories strongly predicted low support for helping out-groups through the sharing of water, and negatively predicted condemnation for torture of out-groups. However, moral identity actually mitigated this effect in that for those who relied heavily on the binding foundations, if they also had a strong sense of moral identity, they were more supportive of

offering water to out-groups and showed more condemnation for torture of out-groups (Smith et al. 2014).

An earlier study also demonstrated similar results in that a strong sense of moral identity was associated with a more positive view of out-groups (Reed and Aquino 2003). Those who scored high on a measure of the self-importance of moral identity (meaning those individuals whose moral identity was central to their self-conception) also scored higher on a measure of moral obligation toward out-groups (while also controlling for gender and ethnicity variables). The same measure of moral identity also showed a positive relationship with perceived worthiness of relief efforts for an out-group (Afghanistan, which at the time was identified as one of the countries related to the 9/11 attacks). This was studied further by directly comparing support to in-groups (New York police, fire widows, and children's benefit fund) vs. out-groups (UNICEF for Afghan children and families). The self-importance of moral identity also predicted higher levels of donation to the out-group in this situation as well. In a final study, higher levels on the self-importance of moral identity scale were significantly related with lower levels of acceptable collateral damage to civilian Afghanis, negatively correlated with the morality of killing the perpetrators of 9/11 attacks, and positively correlated with the morality of forgiving the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks (Reed and Aquino 2003).

Moral schemas are foundational for the development of moral identity, which ultimately effects developing prosocial behaviors such as volunteerism, donating food, and donating time to various agencies working for the needy. Additionally, moral identities are related to more positive views of various types of out-groups in a variety of contexts. Both of these areas of research suggest that how a person views the other affects the types of positive moral actions they will initiate on their behalf. Thus, the development of altruistic concern is an essential component of moral schemas that view the world in such a way that others are perceived as having intrinsic value. This value becomes important to a sense of self-identity, which links this value to how one sees the self and one's natural inclinations toward treating others. Once this viewpoint is a part of the self-identity, moral actions on the behalf of others are not perceived to be extraordinary, but simply a natural outgrowth of altruistic concern for others. Thus, people can more easily be humble about their moral actions because they don't see themselves doing anything beyond what each person deserves based on their intrinsic worth. This becomes apparent when looking at the moral exemplarity of Holocaust rescuers who demonstrate altruistic concern, heroic acts of compassion, and humility.

## 8.8 Moral Exemplars

Moral exemplars provide a unique window into the virtue of humility through the minds of people who have performed incredible acts of moral courage. Biographical investigations of moral exemplars often cite humility as one of their primary qualities (Colby and Damon 1992; Oliner and Oliner 1988). One particular group,

Holocaust rescuers, is an example of people performing astonishing acts of bravery and compassion on behalf of Jews being persecuted, tortured, and exterminated at the hands of the German Nazis. Monroe (2004) has conducted extensive interviews with these people in order to begin to understand the rationale behind their extraordinary behavior. For example, Otto was an ethnic German who lived in Prague and saved 100 Jews before ending up in a concentration camp. John was a Dutchman who was placed on the Gestapo's most wanted list, yet was able to organize an escape route to Switzerland and Spain. He was ultimately captured and tortured by the Gestapo, but never revealed any information about his collaborators or their escape route. Irene was a Polish nurse who was forced into slave labor under the Nazis, but was able to rescue 18 Jews by hiding them in the basement of the Nazi general whom she was forced to work for. Knud took part in the rescue of 85% of the Jews who were living in Denmark, but was captured by the Gestapo. He was eventually able to escape from his captors and re-joined the underground rescue effort (Monroe 2004).

Despite the fact that these people put themselves and their families at enormous risk of retaliation from the Nazis (and in fact, many of them experienced retaliation in the form of violence and torture), most of them didn't feel like they had done anything that extraordinary. One of the rescuers remarked during a long interview about different factors involved in his actions that he didn't do anything that extraordinary, he simply did what anybody would do (Monroe 2004). Thus, despite incredible acts of bravery, courage, and compassion, these people showed astonishing amounts of humility in comparison to the type of moral actions they took on behalf of the Jews during The Holocaust. Yad Vashem, one of the primary organizations involved in remembering and documenting the atrocities of the Holocaust, has done considerable work to identify and reward Holocaust rescuers for their actions. However, many of the rescuers often refuse the monetary rewards and medals or give the money to charity. These types of moral exemplars demonstrate several different forms of virtue, including courage and compassion, while displaying an inordinate amount of humility in comparison to the moral acts they performed. Their form of humility is uniquely intertwined with their altruistic concern for other (which is a part of their moral schemas) and ultimately their morality identity, which made their actions during The Holocaust a natural outcome of their self-identity.

## 8.9   Moral Schemas of Rescuers

Monroe conducted several long-form interviews with Holocaust rescuers to investigate different components of the moral schemas used by rescuers to understand the reasons behind their actions (Monroe 2004, 2008, 2011b). Interestingly, many of the features of the moral schemas of Holocaust rescuers match some of the primary characteristics of humility discussed earlier (accurate self-assessment, openness, and lack of self-focus). They demonstrated accurate self-assessment in that they did not unduly elevate themselves because of their heroic actions; they recognized the

importance of the contributions of others to their rescue efforts. They often worked in groups and underground organizations to accomplish their goals and viewed themselves as part of a network of rescuers, rather than as solitary heroic individuals. In fact, rescuers did not see themselves as doing anything spectacular, they simply did what they felt was right. Rescuers thought it was simply natural to help others, not necessarily deserving of merit or praise, because each person was assigned a sense of common dignity and worth, simply by being a human being (Monroe 2011a).

Rescuers demonstrated an openness to others and considered themselves to be a part of a common humanity that did not discriminate against others, even the Nazis. One rescuer, Tony, remarked,

> I was to understand that you're part of a whole; just like cells in your own body altogether make up your body, in our society and community, we all are like cells of a community that is very important. Not America. I mean the human race. You should always be aware that every other person is basically you. Always treat people as though it is you. That goes for the evil Nazis as well as for Jewish friends in trouble. Always see yourself in those people, for good, or for evil both (Monroe 2008, pp. 711–2).

Tony even extended humanity to the Nazis, despite their terrible violent actions. Rescuers placed a high value on the sanctity of life and their definition of what it meant to be human was wide and expansive and included many different types of people and points of view. Rescuers did not make strong in-group vs. out-group distinctions (which is consistent with research discussed previously on moral identity and views of out-groups), but rather saw themselves as part of a common universal humanity with each person being granted dignity and worth based on the sanctity of life (Monroe 2008).

This leads naturally into the final component of their moral schemas that matches one of the components of humility, lack of self-focus. This is clearly demonstrated in their moral actions of courage and compassion on behalf of the Jews. They perceived Jews as having a common humanity and worth that required action, and they sacrificed themselves, their families, their fortunes, their health, and risked the potential for capture, torture, and even death, which some of the rescuers, unfortunately, actually had to experience. This kind of forgetting of the self in the face of danger indicates that they lacked many of the features of selfishness and conceit common in the vices of pride. In contrast, bystanders during the Holocaust perceived the potential costs to be too great and the threat of loss of possessions, dignity, or life too severe to be pursued.

Thus, rescuers demonstrate many of the common features of contemporary definitions of humility. My contention is that their humility regarding their actions during the Holocaust was a natural consequence of the moral schemas of these types of exemplars, moral schemas which placed such a high value on the inherent worth of other people. It would seem strange to them to display the various vices of pride by bragging, showing arrogance, or being conceited about performing actions necessary to save something as precious to them as a fellow human being. It did not occur to them that their actions deserved abundant praise because their behavior and cognition were simply consistent with their moral schemas and the way they saw other

people, the world, and their role in it. Thus, displaying the vice of pride was simply not within their current repertoire of potential actions. Their humility was a natural extension of their altruistic concern for other people and the value they placed on a common humanity represented in their moral schemas and moral identity.

## 8.10 Importance of Moral Identity

The primary thesis of this paper is that altruistic concern or love is a primary underlying factor in the trait of humility. Humility is not simply *the contrary to* several different vices, but is an outgrowth of altruistic concern for other persons. Humility as a virtue is not detachable from an underlying altruistic ethic that consistently values others. In Monroe's study of Holocaust rescuers, she found that moral identity was the primary causal factor in the moral actions of Holocaust rescuers during World War II (2011a). This moral identity was uniquely intertwined with an ethical perspective that saw unique value in other people, expectations about how they should be treated, and an emotional connection that created a sense of responsibility toward Jewish people.

> It is this ethical perspective that helps us make sense of the ethical situations presented to us. The way we categorize and classify others, our perceived relationship to the person in need, our idealized cognitive models, and our canonical expectations about what constitutes appropriate behavior all work through the ethical perspective to produce both a cognitive menu of choice options we find available and a sense of moral salience, the feeling that the suffering of others is relevant for us and therefore demands action to help, not just a generalized sense of concern or sympathy (Monroe 2011a, p. 5).

Monroe's theory of moral choice highlights the importance of a bundle of character traits that facilitate the kind of moral actions exhibited by rescuers, primarily their view of the other.

The care, concern, courage, and compassion of rescuers toward the Jews was tied up in their moral schemas, identity, and views of others, which ultimately informed their humility in terms of the courageousness of their actions. Because they viewed the moral situation in Nazi Germany from a particular ethical perspective, it constrained the action possibilities that came to mind when faced with the situation. This was part of the reason for their humility because they viewed their actions as the norm, not something heroic or extraordinary. As one rescuer commented, "But what else could I do? They were human beings like you and me" (Monroe 2011a, p. 3). Thus, their humility cannot be separated from their underlying view of other people; in fact, it is a consequence of that view.

## 8.11   Conclusion

*Homo amans* provides a new foundation for understanding human nature that argues against the assumption that humans are inherently selfish. In this chapter, I have argued that one aspect of *Homo amans*, love, understood as altruistic concern for the other is foundational for the development of the virtue of humility. Research demonstrates that humility is related to a variety of pro-social variables, which at their core seem to revolve around some sense of concern for the other. Similarly, humble people seem to be preferred in both romantic and business relationships, based in part on the concern they show for others. This association reveals the importance of a relational connection for developing humility in people. Humility develops best, not in opposition to the vice of pride, but through the development of relational values and connection that provide the bedrock for forming this virtue. This type of concern for the other is the foundation for a more developed sense of altruistic concern that is demonstrated in moral exemplars such as Holocaust rescuers.

Humility is not merely the absence of the various vices associated with pride. Instead, altruistic concern is the bedrock or foundation for the development and sustainability of humility. Those who value the intrinsic worth of other people are less likely to express the various vices of pride and will more readily demonstrate humility towards others. Moral exemplars, especially Holocaust rescuers, embody moral schemas that contain particular views of others, specifically their value and worth simply by being a member of the human race. Holocaust rescuers demonstrate many of the characteristics associated with humility and it is my contention that their humility is a consequence of those characteristics associated with their moral identities and schemas, especially the altruistic concern they show for others.

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