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# HUMILITY, RELIGIONS, AND DIALOGUE

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## Introduction

Humility may initially be understood as one of the principal moral and epistemic virtues and is often appealed to within discourse about intercultural and interreligious dialogue. On the other hand, a full or proper understanding of humility proves to be demanding and elusive. In this introduction I will begin with a brief discussion about so-called general humility and will later differentiate its moral and epistemic aspects. It will then focus on epistemic or intellectual humility in the subsequent section.

Humility in a general sense is a multi-faceted concept and cannot easily be captured within a simple or one-dimensional theoretical model. James Kellenberger identifies seven elementary dimensions that we generally associate humility with. These are: (i) having a low opinion of oneself, (ii) having a low estimate of one's merit, (iii) having a modest opinion of one's importance or rank, (iv) lack of self-assertion e.g. in cases where one has made a contribution or has merit, (v) claiming little as one's (merited) desert, (vi) having or showing a consciousness of one's defects or proneness to mistakes, and (vii) not being proud, haughty, condescending, or arrogant.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the conception of relational humility emphasizes that humility is closely associated with behaviour within a particular relationship, demonstrating that as a humble person we have an accurate perception of the evaluation of ourselves, and that in being humble we are other-oriented in the sense that we consider the wellbeing of others at least as much as one's own and that

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<sup>1</sup> James Kellenberger, "Humility," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (2010), 321–322.

this engenders trust in others.<sup>2</sup> Relational humility can also be defined in relation to “a relationship-specific judgment in which an observer attributes a target person with four qualities: (1) other-orientedness in one’s relationships with others rather than selfishness; (2) the tendency to express positive other-oriented emotions in one’s relationships (e.g., empathy, compassion, sympathy, and love); (3) the ability to regulate self-oriented emotions, such as pride or excitement about one’s accomplishments, in socially acceptable ways; and (4) having an accurate view of self”.<sup>3</sup>

Humility includes intrapersonal, interpersonal, and motivational dimensions or aspects.<sup>4</sup> Many definitions of humility explicitly include both moral and cognitive aspects. Cole Wright and colleagues define humility as the inherent psychological position of oneself or towards oneself, which includes cognitive and moral alignment, calibration, or situatedness.<sup>5</sup> From a cognitive point of view this means that it is the understanding and actual experience of ourselves as limited and fallible beings that are part of a larger creation and thus have a limited and incomplete viewpoint, and it is the perception of the whole that surpasses this being. This experience can be mediated or also formed within a spiritual connection with God or the experience of an existential connection with nature or the cosmos. Humility in this sense also restricts our tendency to experience exceptionality, special distinction, or superiority, and also restricts the priority given to our beliefs (it also restricts the claims of special recognition or commendation and the establishment of a supremacy over others). Intellectual humility is both a virtue and a stance that involves having an appropriate, modest, and non-haughty view of our mental abilities, advantages, and disadvantages, that we have the ability to properly evaluate and evaluate vari-

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<sup>2</sup> Everett L. Worthington, Everett L., “What are the different dimensions of humility?” 2016. [www.bigquestionsonline.com/2014/11/04/what-are-different-dimensions-humility](http://www.bigquestionsonline.com/2014/11/04/what-are-different-dimensions-humility).

<sup>3</sup> Don E. Davis, Everett L. Worthington and Joshua N. Hook, “Humility: Review of Measurement Strategies and Conceptualization as Personality Judgment,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 5, no. 4 (2010), 248.

<sup>4</sup> Don E. Davis et al., “Humility and the Development and Repair of Social Bonds: Two longitudinal studies,” *Self and Identity* 12, no. 1 (2013), 61.

<sup>5</sup> Jennifer Cole Wright et al., “The Psychological Significance of Humility,” *Journal of Positive Psychology*. Online first (April 2016), 2.

ous ideas and positions in a way that includes respect for others who disagree with us, etc.<sup>6</sup> Intellectual humility can, on such a basis, also be understood as an element of the afore-mentioned general humility, which interrelates intellectual and moral, cognitive, and non-cognitive aspects.<sup>7</sup> In the moral sense, this means that humility includes the understanding and genuine experience of oneself as merely one of the morally important beings whose interests and well-being are as worthy of equal consideration and care as the interests of others. In this sense humility limits our aspirations to attribute the advantages to our own interests and well-being.

### Humility as an Epistemic Virtue and Agency

Intellectual humility can be initially understood as a part of general humility, i.e. the part oriented at intellectual and epistemic aspects.<sup>8</sup> Intellectual humility is thus a virtue or attitude, which implies that we maintain an adequate or realistic and a non-haughty look at our intellectual capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses, that we exhibit the ability to properly assess and evaluate different ideas and views in a way that includes respect for others that do not agree with us, etc.<sup>9</sup> It therefore includes both intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. It enables us to establish a proper relationship with ourselves as epistemic agents, which inter alia includes us being open to new facts and insights, the ability to integrate new knowledge into our existing knowledge, the ability to assess the relevance of this knowledge, etc. At the same time it puts us into a cognitive space with others in a way that allows non-haughty, non-condescending, and solidary participation in the common pursuit of truth and in public discourse. Understood in this way we can distinguish intellectual humility as an epistemic virtue.

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<sup>6</sup> Joshua N. Hook, "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Leaders," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 10, no. 6 (2015): 499–506; Vojko Strahovnik, "Razsežnosti intelektualne ponižnosti, dialog in sprava [Dimensions of Intellectual Humility, Dialogue and Reconciliation]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 76, no. 3/4 (2016), 471–482.

<sup>7</sup> Don E. Davis et al., "Distinguishing Intellectual Humility and General Humility," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 11, no. 3 (2016), 215–224.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Hook et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Leaders".

One might object that in the epistemic domain, where the primary focus is on belief-fixation (belief formation and belief maintenance), we cannot speak about exercising one's agency or, for that matter, virtuous agency, since belief-fixation is not voluntary. In my previous work I have already argued for a view that includes a viable notion of epistemic agency, thus I will just reiterate some of the main points here before proceeding to address specificities of epistemic humility.<sup>10</sup> Virtuousness can be understood as a feature of agents, as a matter of exercising agency in certain ways. In order to include in this epistemic virtuousness one must leave behind the idea that virtue is entirely a matter of what is under one's voluntary control. I hold that belief fixation is virtually always non-voluntary, but still broadly agentive. This is supported by considerations based on epistemic phenomenology. Epistemic inquiry is experienced not passively, but rather as a product of epistemic competence, which includes the capacity to appreciate epistemic reasons and to form and maintain beliefs because of their evidential import. Rational belief-fixation is a virtuous exercise of one's epistemic agency and can thus facilitate understanding of rational belief-fixation as the core epistemic virtuousness, while other habits of mind pertinent to belief-fixation, including intellectual or epistemic humility, are understood as supplementary epistemic virtues. In addition to epistemic humility these include things such as epistemic conscientiousness, intellectual sobriety, impartiality, intellectual courage<sup>11</sup>, synoptic grasp, a sense for alternative points of view both perceptual and theoretical, salience recognition and focus, and practical wisdom.<sup>12</sup> Supplementary epistemic virtues can be defined as abilities, dispositions, learned habits, or personality traits that assist people in achieving their epistemic goals, e.g. the formation of true beliefs about the world, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, etc. There are two aspects of epistemic virtues, one of them being oriented more towards virtues as reliable epistemic mechanisms while the other towards virtues as character traits (e.g. imaginative abi-

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<sup>10</sup> Terry Horgan, Matjaž Potrč and Vojko Strahovnik, "Core and Ancillary Epistemic Virtues."

<sup>11</sup> James Montmarquet, "Epistemic Virtue," *Mind*, 96 (1987): 482–497.

<sup>12</sup> Juli Eflin, "Epistemic presuppositions and their Consequences," *Metaphilosophy* 34, no. 1/2, (2003).

lity, epistemic courage, epistemic responsibility, intellectual sobriety, objectivity, creativity, etc.).<sup>13</sup> Intellectual humility falls mainly on the side of the latter of those aspects.

One aspect that highlights several facets of intellectual humility and interconnects it with moral humility is the interrelationship between humility and shame. A close connection between both humility and shame has already been recognized to a certain degree. Kellenberger puts forward a suggestion that humility can be understood in terms of two distinct core contrasts, the first being the contrast between humility and pride and the second the contrast between humility and what he calls the pride – shame axis.<sup>14</sup> According to the first understanding, humility is seen as the opposite of pride, arrogance, egotism, smugness, vanity, and this is reflected in the fact that we often simply equate humility with the absence of pride. According to the second contrast, humility is the opposite of the pride – shame axis. Both pride and shame are closely connected with our self-image, self-concern, and our centeredness on ourselves. On the other hand humility in a sense is not marked by focus on the self; quite the contrary, it rejects such a focus and thus cannot be placed on the mentioned axis. “If humility and the pride – shame axis of self-concern are operative as core contrasts, so that humility in this expression excludes both pride and shame, then shame would not be the response to a failure in humility or to other failures. Failure in exterior or interior behaviour would instead result in dismay, sadness, downheartedness, guilt, or an awareness of having sinned, of having violated one's relationship to another or to God, none of which must by its nature be tied to self-concern and a pride ideal.”<sup>15</sup> Humility in this sense is thus associated with a kind of eradication of the self and such a view was most sharply stated by Simone Weil, and is exemplified in the following characteristic quote: “True humility is the knowledge

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<sup>13</sup> Vojko Strahovnik, “Uvod v vrlinsko epistemologijo [Introduction to Virtue Epistemology],” *Analiza* 8, no. 3 (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Kellenberger, “Humility,” 324–331.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

that we are nothing in so far as we are human beings as such, and, more generally, in so far as we are creatures".<sup>16</sup>

My own proposal is that we can gain important insights by focusing our attention on the relationship between humility and (moral) shame.<sup>17</sup> I specifically underscore two aspects of shame, namely the reflective situatedness aspect and status aspect. The reflective situatedness aspect makes it possible to relate a given action or a given part of one's character to the self as a whole. This is what Bernard Williams pointed out when arguing that shame (as opposed to guilt) affects our whole personality, e.g. by implying a certain feeling in which our whole personality is revealed to us as diminished, weakened, lessened, or damaged. Furthermore, shame helps us understand our relationship to our (wrong) actions or lapses; a proper, reflective cultivation of shame can disclose this relationship and establish or re-build our personality and identity, both at the individual level and at the level of community.<sup>18</sup> Shame focuses on ourselves. It calls for confrontation with ourselves, for improvement and for progress that must be achieved, and also establishes a relationship between us and the other(s). If this aspect of reflective situatedness is transposed to intellectual humility, the focus must thus land firstly on the relationship between a belief, a set of beliefs or a part of our epistemic system, and the epistemic self a whole. This enables an overall framework for the epistemic appraisal that relates both mentioned parts. The second aspect of rank also closely associates shame and humility. For example, after a given wrongdoing (either by an individual or by a group) what the proper cultivation of moral shame and humility must establish is recognition, in the form of truthful moral responsiveness and humble attentiveness, of the other (in this case victim(s) of the wrongdoing) as fully equal to us, as having full human status.<sup>19</sup> Shame and humility impose such levelling

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<sup>16</sup> Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace* (London: Routledge, 1952), 40; cf. Tony Milligan, "Murdochian Humility," *Religious Studies* 43, no. 2 (2007): 217–228.

<sup>17</sup> Strahovnik, "Razsežnosti intelektualne ponižnosti, dialog in sprava," 475–480.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 94.

<sup>19</sup> Raimond Gaita, *A Common Humanity. Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice* (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), 102; cf. Robert Petkovšek "Demonično nasilje, laž in resnica [Demonic violence, lie and truth]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 75, no. 2. (2015): 233–251.

of statuses and ranks, recognizing others as being our equals. Given an understanding of epistemic or intellectual norms, standards, and ideals as social norms<sup>20</sup>, which function to direct, adjust, and control our intellectual endeavours including open and responsive public discourse as a complex form of coordination and cooperation activities with a set of expectations, standards, and demands, then humility and shame can function as part of such a system of regulation.

Promoting intellectual humility fosters overall recognition of our epistemic limitations, stimulates overcoming of our intellectual flaws, and motivates us to achieve epistemic ideals and to flourish intellectually. Just as moral virtues, emotions, and reactive attitudes can play the role of promoting pro-social, moral behaviour, the idea is that one can draw parallels for intellectual virtues and epistemic reactive attitudes, including intellectual humility and shame. The intellectual correlates of shame and humility also play an important role in levelling out the current of public discourse by emphasizing participants' equal status (besides the question of their being or not being our epistemic peers defined in terms of available evidence, capacities for reflection, etc.) in the sense that impedes pre-existing biases, stereotypes, etc.

### A Deepened Understanding of Humility

In this section I will elaborate a deepened understanding or conception of humility, which will be based on the work of Raimond Gaita, in particular on his understanding the language and space of saintly love, compassion, moral vision, and common humanity. Gaita begins his paper on the relationship between morality, metaphysics, and religion with two autobiographical reflections.<sup>21</sup> The first related to his father and the second to the meeting with a nun, whom he himself met while working at a mental-health institution and who was confronted with

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<sup>20</sup> Peter J. Graham, "Epistemic Normativity and Social Norms," In *Epistemic Evaluation: Purposeful Epistemology*, ed. David Henderson and John Greco (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Raimond Gaita, "Morality, Metaphysics, and Religion," in *Moral Powers, Fragile Beliefs: Essays in Moral and Religious Philosophy*, ed. Joseph Carlisle, James Carter and Daniel Whistler (New York: Continuum, 2011).

patients with the very worst illnesses. Gaita reflects on his father's life story – which he also described in the novel *Romulus, My Father* – and highlights some particular aspects of it. What is in the centre of attention are his actions and his attitude towards the madcap homeless man named Vacek, who lived in the wild on the edge of the estate, where Gaita lived with his father. Gaita's father treated Vacek of fully human and thus fully equal to any other. Gaita himself also describes how his original attitude toward the homeless Vacek was marked by the complete absence of all superiority or condescension and showed the full and humble recognition of his humanity. In doing so, he points out that this was not a sign of his special virtue, but he saw him in such a “normal light” in the context of the space of meaning that his father had already established.

A similar experience was predominant in the case of the nun. Until meeting the nun at the mental institution, Gaita admired certain doctors who spoke of their heavily affected patients as people with full human dignity (unlike most of the remaining staff, who saw them at best as “sub-human”). But after the arrival of this nun, who turned to all the patients with saintly love, treated them as precious beings, with the purity of love for them as children of God, a new moral level opened up, which goes beyond the recognition of human dignity. “The works of saintly love [...] have, historically, created a language of love that yields to us a sense of what those works reveal in any individual instance, in, for example, the demeanour of the nun towards the patients in the hospital.”<sup>22</sup> Her actions were not overwhelming or awe-inspiring (merely) because of the virtue they reflected, neither because of the good that they had achieved, but because of their power to reveal the full humanity of these patients. I cannot offer more detailed and richer descriptions of all the facets of these two stories that Gaita puts forward, but this short exposition allows us to analyse the central issue further.

The key question is how to understand these actions and attitudes. Gaita bases this understanding on the notion of saintly love (in relation to the sanctity of life or the dignity of a human being in the case of a nun) and the mode of moral vision (in the case of his father) that,

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.



however, are not to be understood at the level of (supplementary) moral and epistemic virtues, but they reach beyond that. The absence of condescension in the described relationships is humility, and the key towards such humility is compassion, which makes such a mode of (moral) vision possible, including the actions of saintly love and the language of love. "The nature of charity or compassion depends on the concepts under which one sees those towards whom one responds charitably or compassionately. The concepts under which my father and Hora saw Vacek were historically constituted, I believe, by the works of saintly love, by the language of love that formed and nourished those works and which was, in its turn, enriched by them. That was their cultural inheritance, although neither would have thought about it as I have just put it."<sup>23</sup> There are two levels mentioned here, namely the attitude of the individual, and the background or tradition that fosters such an attitude. Later on we will return to this question by focusing on how religious traditions can be a source of such a mode of moral vision that enables humility. Gaita also appeals to Simone Weil and her idea that sympathy for those who suffer in misery is more miraculous than the healing of the sick or the resurrection of the dead, but this must be understood on the conceptual or metaphysical level and not (only) at the level of moral psychology (including virtues and moral emotions). What is at play here is compassion without condescension and with humility, with humble attention to the other. Gaita thus speaks about two types of ethics or two fundamental views on morality. The first is being framed in a network of concepts such as autonomy, integrity, courage, honour, flourishing and heroism, including heroic virtues, while the other is focused on the good as a central concept and emphasizes the importance of awareness about our sensitivity to vulnerability and adversity, and the meaning of renouncement, sacrifice, and godlikeness. This latter understanding also implies the concept of an ethically necessary response (in terms of moral necessity), for example, in the form of compassion that goes beyond the emotions you can choose, form, try to stop, redirect, etc., insofar as you judge that the other is not worth or deserving your compassion or moral attention. Compassion

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

in this sense is a form of recognizing suffering; it is an indispensable response to this perception and this is closely related to the Christian view of love as being our duty.<sup>24</sup> This now opens up space for a deeper understanding of humility. In the first sense it can be understood as our response to understanding our limitations or mistakes as the *cause(s)* of our moral wrongdoing or false beliefs. Another, deeper understanding sees humility as one of the forms of moral and cognitive thought, which establishes a special space of meaning. Not being humble is not seen as the cause of an error, but as a form of error.

### Humility and Interreligious Dialogue

“Honest and respectful dialogue nurtures humility and offers a corrective to the excesses of our own traditions. Dialogue can create trust and imbue a sense of security to help overcome the suspicion and fear our traditions have often instilled about the other. By forging bonds of support and solidarity across religious boundaries, people of religious good will can help overcome ethnic and national xenophobia. I believe that this is the challenge confronting people of faith today.”<sup>25</sup> I have demonstrated that humility stands in relation – of opposition – to pride, arrogance, self-glorification, and haughtiness. Iris Murdoch understands it along similar lines. Furthermore, Murdoch highlights it as one of the most central, but also as one of the most difficult or demanding virtues, which allows us to perceive the other justly. She argues that the greatest enemy of excellence in morality is personal fantasy a mixture of self-conceit, haughtiness, and wishful thinking, which prevents us from seeing what is outside of us.<sup>26</sup> For Murdoch moral experience is best characterized in perceptual terms, and she characterizes moral differences as differences in vision, namely that “moral differences look less like

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<sup>24</sup> Bojan Žalec, “Kierkegaard, ljubezen kot dolžnost in žrtvovanje [Kierkegaard, Love as Duty and Sacrifice],” *Bogoslovni vestnik* 76, no. 2 (2016): 277–292.

<sup>25</sup> Shira L. Lander, “Supernatural Israel: Obstacles to Theological Humility in Jewish Tradition,” in *Learned Ignorance. Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, ed. James L. Heft, Reuven Firestone and Omid Safi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 150.

<sup>26</sup> Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

differences of choice, given the same facts, and more like differences of vision. In other words, a moral concept seems less like a movable and extensible ring laid down to cover a certain area of fact, and more like a total difference of Gestalt. We differ not only because we select different objects out of the same world but because we see different worlds".<sup>27</sup> Humility facilitates such a moral perception. Murdoch also claims that, for a religious person, purity of the heart and humility are the backbone of moral behaviour. Similarly, Charles Bellinger understands humility as the basic emotional posture or attitude of the type of personality that is also marked by maturity, the fullness of time, and basic acceptance of the continuous creation process with a dynamic form of life.<sup>28</sup> Humble situatedness within a given epistemic and moral space is, therefore, an important factor of morality and dialogue. But we can also see that such an understanding of humility goes beyond the framework of virtue or character traits and it already, *inter alia*, lies in the domain of attitudes, gestures, practices, and traditions, and thus concerns the deeper ethical dimension that we have already indicated above. Humility, compassion, or other similar responses in the light of that which is good are not emotional responses in the sense of something that accompanies our beliefs about the suffering of the other, but a form of recognition of this suffering.<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, religion and religious thought are what help us cultivate such a humble moral perception; religious depth and authenticity allow for such moral vision and understanding. They enable us to overcome shallowness and superficiality, and by following the role models (in Christianity, for example, Jesus and the saints) the depth of religion is a space of meaning that facilitates such a moral vision. Here we can invoke talk about sanctity, us being made as the image of God, and our relationship with God. Moral exemplars, e.g. Jesus, are some-

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<sup>27</sup> Iris Murdoch, "Vision and Choice in Morality," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 30 (1956): 40–41; cf. Vojko Strahovnik, "Moral Perception, Cognition, and Dialogue," *Santalka* 24, no. 1 (2016): 14–23.

<sup>28</sup> Bojan Žalec, "Človekovo nesprejemanje temeljne resnice o sebi kot izvor njegovih psihopatologij, nasilja in nesočutnosti [Human Refusal to Accept Basic Truth About Self as Origin of Psychopathologies, Violence and Non-Compassion]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 75, no. 2 (2015): 221–231.

<sup>29</sup> Gaita, "Morality, Metaphysics, and Religion," 11.

thing that goes beyond the virtues or set of rules that we must obey (Mk 10,17-31). We can agree with Gaita, who argues in the light of such a view that religion actually constitutes such a framework of meaning. "Think of how much of our sense of religious depth and authenticity is a function of our appeal to things in which we believe that form and content cannot be separated – art of course, but also prayers, hymns, religious rituals and so on. Appeals such as these and reflection upon them occur in what I have called 'the realm of meaning'."<sup>30</sup> And: "The language of love, reflection on it and on the God who informs it is, inescapably, in the realm of meaning."<sup>31</sup> That realm is a domain that makes theological and philosophical reflection possible. These aspects are also related to the meanings of concepts such as human dignity, inalienable dignity, the inner value of people, and unconditional respect, which Gaita denotes as so-called mid-level concepts, because their ultimate and full meaning can only be understood on the basis of a deeper background created by the aspect of common humanity and revealed by the aforementioned saintly love and the related acts of love. "Perhaps it is the biblical injunction, stories and parables that enable us to make sense of the idea of a person as an end in herself. Indeed, I think it is so. Or at least that it is so in contexts where the word neighbour carries resonances that derive from the belief that all human beings are sacred, insofar as that belief has been nourished by the works of saintly love."<sup>32</sup> If we apply this and follow Gaita, it shows the moral relevance of humility in a different context, e.g. in the context of reconciliation and the reconciliation processes. Here humility and the importance of humbled attentiveness for the victims are key. "When people's souls have been lacerated by the wrongs done to them, individually or collectively, openness to their voices requires humbled attentiveness. When one's nation has committed those wrongs, shame is the form that humbled attentiveness takes. Without it, there can be no justice."<sup>33</sup> Now we can

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>33</sup> Gaita, *A Common Humanity. Thinking about Love and Truth and Justice*, 102; cf. Vojko Strahovnik, "Resnica, zgodovina, integriteta in sprava [Truth, History, Integrity, and Reconciliation]," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 75, no. 2 (2015), 253–263.

establish the role and importance of moral and intellectual humility in dialogue and in the reconciliation processes. Because dialogue and reconciliation often take place within the context of a heavily divided past and heavily burdened present, it is very important that – on the basis of humility – we situate ourselves in this space and develop a proper understanding of our position and of the relations that we are part of. At the same time humility balances the status of those involved in these processes and fosters moral renewal of relationships and forgiveness. All this as a result leads to the formation of responsibilities and the establishment of justice.<sup>34</sup>

A humble attentiveness toward the truth also helps us to overcome violence. “The answer to demonic violence as the ultimate form of violence must, therefore, be sought in the contradiction of truth – a lie. If a lie creates conditions and opportunities for increasingly aggravated violence, then the truth will abolish these conditions and possibilities. The truth does not abolish violence directly, routinely, or immediately: we have seen that violence can spread beyond the truth, given Pascal. In any case the truth does not create the conditions for the spread of violence. Truth creates an environment that fosters the formation of humanity, humanity, and genuine freedom.”<sup>35</sup> Humility is the key to solving this contradiction. In-depth understanding of the above-exposed dimensions of intellectual humility and shame further facilitates the planning of strategies for overcoming conflicts and cultivating an open, humble, tolerant, and responsive dialogue, which will still be committed and profound.<sup>36</sup>

Let me, for now, focus more specifically on the importance of humility for interreligious dialogue from an empirical perspective. Such a role and importance of (intellectual) humility has been confirmed by several threads of empirical research. Research on the relationship between intellectual humility and religious tolerance confirmed that

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*; Strahovnik, “Razsežnosti intelektualne ponižnosti, dialog in sprava [Dimensions of Intellectual Humility, Dialogue and Reconciliation]”.

<sup>35</sup> Petkovšek, “Demonično nasilje, laž in resnica [Demonic violence, lie and truth]”, 249

<sup>36</sup> Vojko Strahovnik, “Religija kot dejavnik ponižnosti in dialoga [Religion as a Factor of Humility and Dialogue]”, in *Religija kot dejavnik etičnosti in medkulturnega dialoga*, ed. Vojko Strahovnik and Bojan Žalec (Ljubljana: Teološka fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani, 2017).

individuals who have a high degree of intellectual humility (especially in relation to religious beliefs) also exhibit a high degree of religious tolerance towards different religious beliefs.<sup>37</sup> Intellectual humility is also a good predictor of people's religious tolerance in the sense that is relatively independent of the strength of their religious commitment and the conservatism of their religious beliefs or worldviews. Intellectual humility also weakens an excessively defensive posture towards others who do not share our religious beliefs. Intellectual humility has an important role in the formation of religious tolerance in a way that the simple exposure of different religious beliefs and religions (religious diversity) does not. The lessons learned can be summarized in the following way: "if religious tolerance is a goal, it may be important to promote religious intellectual humility in religious individuals,"<sup>38</sup> which is especially important in the broader picture of the contemporary world, where religious differences often lead to tension, conflicts, and even violence.

The perceived or attributed intellectual humility is furthermore a positive factor of forgiveness.<sup>39</sup> Perceived humility also concerns interpersonal dimensions and contributes to the regulation of social bonds, allows us to predict what will be the reaction of those around us and promotes non-selfish and solidary social bonds. Humility encourages forgiveness, in the sense that if the "victim" perceives the "perpetrator" as humble, it is easier to forgive wrongful behaviour.<sup>40</sup> Intellectual humility is important for establishing, maintaining, and restoring interpersonal and social bonds. "A high level of intellectual humility is an important virtue, especially for those individuals who are within their communities perceived as someone who has significant intellectual influence".<sup>41</sup> In conjunction with honesty, humility leads to increased levels of integrity, sincerity, and loyalty, to collaborative and responsive behaviour, and reduces the level of vindictiveness and manipulation.

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<sup>37</sup> Joshua N Hook et al. "Intellectual Humility and Religious Tolerance," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 12, no. 1 (2017).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Hansong Zhang et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Conflict," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 43, no. 4 (2015); Joshua N. Hook et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Leaders," *The Journal of Positive Psychology* 10, no. 6 (2015).

<sup>40</sup> Zhang et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Conflict".

<sup>41</sup> Hook et al., "Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Leaders," 504.

Humility is also related to (social and civic) responsibility, gratitude, compassion, benevolence and mindfulness, openness to the other, and hope.<sup>42</sup> That is why it is important to cultivate intellectual humility, especially in the context of interreligious dialogue.<sup>43</sup> There are also findings that demonstrate how secure attachment in the context of our relations to God is positively correlated with dispositional humility.<sup>44</sup>

### Conclusion

All these are only a few of the mosaic stones that, together with others, lay the foundation for highlighting the importance of humility, both moral and intellectual, for interreligious dialogue and intercultural dialogue. The key is to direct our attention to the potential of religions, religious traditions, and religious communities to foster and exhibit humility (instead of e.g. absolutism, exclusivism, or fundamentalism), both in terms of understanding as well as practice. We can return to Gaita and his thought that “[i]t is part of the very idea of religion, at least within the Judeo-Christian tradition I think, that someone who professes a religion, who bears witness to it, must believe that it deepens rather than cheapens what human beings care for, whether they are religious or not or whether they care a fig for religion”.<sup>45</sup> And there are attempts to base such dialogue processes on humility and attitudes for religions in this regard.<sup>46</sup> The lesson learned is the following: “There can truly be no peace among humanity until and unless there is peace among the religions of humanity. That peace cannot emerge without profound dialogue, exchange, humility, and learning from one another”.<sup>47</sup> This responsibility is then allocated also to the level of indi-

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<sup>42</sup> Cole Wright et al., “The Psychological Significance of Humility,” 5–6.

<sup>43</sup> Zhang et al., “Intellectual Humility and Forgiveness of Religious Conflict,” 260.

<sup>44</sup> Peter J. Jankowski and Steven J. Sandage, “Attachment to God and Humility. Indirect Effect and Conditional Effects Model,” *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 42, no. 1 (2014), 80.

<sup>45</sup> Gaita, “Morality, Metaphysics, and Religion,” 14.

<sup>46</sup> James L. Heft, Reuven Firestone, and Omid Safi, *Learned Ignorance. Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>47</sup> Omid Safi, “Epilogue: The Purpose of Interreligious Dialogue,” In *Learned Ignorance. Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, ed. James L. Heft, Reuven Firestone and Omid Safi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 305.

viduals. “Being a believer and yet truly and honestly open to the possibility of another’s truth claims is the essence of humility and, to my mind, theological maturity. History has proven how religion has been an effective means for motivating large numbers of people to engage in extraordinary behaviors, sometimes good, sometimes evil. We must assume responsibility today to move the equation of religious history to the balance of the good”.<sup>48</sup>

Religious communities and religions, in general, are important agents of global justice. Religions thus have a vital role in establishing justice and in the process of overcoming new religious intolerance by creating a context of sympathetic imagination, humility, and respect. This also represents our willingness to step out of our ego and enter into the world of the other. This allows us to avoid the phenomenon of “invisible other” or “invisible others”.<sup>49</sup> A special challenge for such a sympathetic imagination is that the other is often different or distant, which means we must first make the other real for us. Inclusive imagination and sympathy represent only one aspect of compassion and care, but they are crucial because they move us in the opposite direction as fear, that is in the direction of the other. Narcissism misleads us when it persuades us that we can go through our life with other people but without making any efforts in the domain of imagination, sympathy, and care. This is one of the main forms of moral error (Nussbaum 2012, p. 169).<sup>50</sup> Compassionate empathy and imagination can overcome such tunnel vision or blind spots, and do so in a way that mere arguments cannot, because they include experiential participation (solidarity) on/with the other, but also go beyond it in that they evaluate, criticize, and explore the values that are embedded in the situation, and dismantle hierarchies, stigmatization, and undeserved suffering. Humility, both intellectual and moral, plays an important part as a virtue here. It ori-

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<sup>48</sup> Reuven Firestone, “Epilogue: The Purpose of Interreligious Dialogue,” in *Learned Ignorance. Intellectual Humility among Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, ed. James L. Heft, Reuven Firestone and Omid Safi (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 310.

<sup>49</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2012), 139–140.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.



ents us towards the other, fosters positive other-oriented emotions, and helps us overcome egoism, arrogance, and feelings of superiority.

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