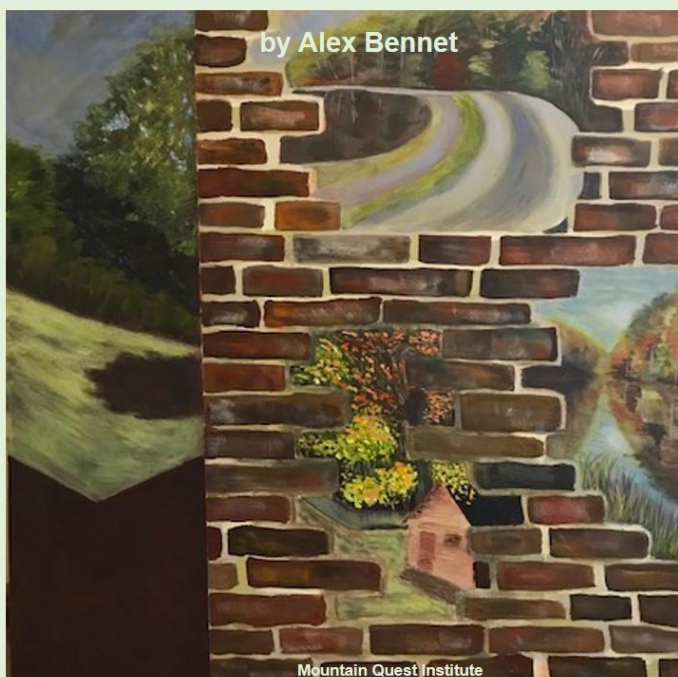


Possibilities that are YOU!

Volume 20: The Humanness of Humility



Mountain Quest Institute

This is the 20th in a series of 22 short books, what we call Conscious Look Books, that are conversational in nature, taking full advantage of the reader's lived experience to share what can sometimes be difficult concepts. We live in a world that is tearing itself apart, where people are out of control and wanting to control others, rebelling from years of real and perceived abuse and suppression of thought. Yet, this chaos offers us as a humanity the opportunity to make a giant leap forward. By opening ourselves to ourselves, we are able to fully explore who we are and who we can become. With that exploration comes a glimmer of hope as we begin to reclaim the power of each and every mind developed by the lived human experience!

These 22 concepts are part of the learning journey of which we are all a part, the Intelligent Social Change Journey (ISCJ). This is a developmental journey of the body, mind and heart, moving from the heaviness of cause-and-effect linear extrapolations, to the fluidity of co-evolving with our environment, to the lightness of breathing our thought and feelings into reality. Grounded in development of our mental faculties, these are phase changes, each building on and expanding previous learning in our movement toward intelligent activity.

These little books share 22 large concepts from the Profundity and Bifurcation of Change (which is written from an academic viewpoint). Each book is independent and includes seven ideas offered for the student of life to help us become the co-creators that we are. These books, available in soft cover from Amazon, support idea exploration, class discussion, other discussion groups or can be used as special occasion gifts.

Possibilities

that are **YOU!**

Volume 20: The Humanness of Humility

by
Alex Bennet



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Frost, West Virginia

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*Freedom from needful esteem, arrogance and pride
Comes from weeding the praise dependency inside
Enlightened demureness, awakened cognition,
Outward expression of an inward condition.*

*Restraint from vanity and earthly obsessions
Losing dependence on worldly possessions.
Opening up to self-vulnerability
Journey the Earthbound road to humility.*

,

-Cindy Lee Scott

Preface

This book is for YOU. Regardless of economic success or educational prowess, beyond cultural influences and habitual routines, YOU have been and continue to be a student of life. And since our time in this learning sphere is precious, the challenges and opportunities are both rapid and continuous, always offering new insights. YOU are a verb, not a noun. Forget what you were taught in grammar school!

Now, we live in a world of demanding challenges, where people and systems are rebounding from control, rebelling from eras of real and perceived suppression of thought. With the acceleration of mental development over the past century has come increased awareness of human capacity, with economic success in small bites for many and large bites for the few, and for some coming with an arrogance that says, “Look at me. I’m right, you’re wrong, and I’m not listening.”

Because of our Economy’s focus on the material, economic success begets economic success and the separation of wealth grows larger, flaming the difficulties of surviving in a CUCA world, that is, a world of accelerating change, rising uncertainty, increasing complexity, and the anxiety that comes with these phenomena.

Yet all of this **offers us, as a humanity the opportunity to make a giant leap forward.** By opening ourselves to ourselves, we are able to fully explore who we are. With that exploration comes glimmers of hope as we contemplate the power of each and every mind developed by the lived human experience!

As YOU move through your life of thoughts, feelings and actions—even when you have to repeat things over and over again as part of the experience—YOU are advancing toward the next level of consciousness.

Here's the bottom line. Everything that has been learned and continues to be learned is out there ... and as a student of life, YOU have access to it all. So often it is expressed in ways that don't make sense because of the language and media being used. It just isn't presented conversationally, and you don't have a chance to ask questions from your unique point of view.

So, these little books—which we refer to as Conscious Look Books—are specifically focused on sharing key concepts from *The Profundity and Bifurcation of Change* series and **looking at what those concepts mean to YOU.**

These books are conversational in nature, and further conversations are welcome. We invite your thoughts and questions, not guaranteeing answers because there is still so much to learn, but happy to

join in the conversation. Visit Mountain Quest Inn and Retreat Center www.mountainquestinn.com located in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia or email alex@mountainquestinstitute.com

As my partner David reminds us: *Run with the future!*

Our gratitude to all those who take this journey with us, and a special thanks to the colleagues, partners, friends, family and visitors who touch our hearts and Mountain Quest in so many ways.

With Love and Light, Alex and David

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Introduction

YOU are an amazing individual that is one of a kind! Scientific fact: No two people have ever been—or ever will be—identical. Even monozygotic twins who are identical have at least minimally differentiated by birth due to variations in their in-utero development, and exact clones would have different learning experiences, even if raised in the same environment! So right up front, let's understand that each and every person is unique. And, if you will allow, forget what you learned in early grammar classes, *people are verbs not nouns*, forever shifting in response to internal processes and the external environment.

This remarkable quality of what it is to be human is exactly what enables us to adapt to a changing, uncertain and complex environment. And hand-in-hand with that ability to learn and adapt is the *choice of humility*. In Idea 1 we explore the current environment and its connection with learning.

So, what is humility? There are many answers to that question, dependent on your belief set, cultural expectations, and personal preferences. Psychologist Joshua Hook—who professes a passion for healing, growth and learning—uses two characteristics to define humility. The first is focused

on the individual level, “humility involves having an accurate view of yourself—not too high and not too low.”² This would include knowing your strengths and abilities as well as your weaknesses and limitations, and being honest about them to yourself and others. The second is focused on the interpersonal level, “being other-oriented rather than self-focused.”³ This would include development of empathy, knowing the needs and wants of others and taking those into consideration in your decisions and actions. Although we will explore various aspects of humility in human history in this little book, we take these as good working definitions.

Through the latter half of 2018 and continuing into 2019, at the Inn at Mountain Quest we have collected survey data on some pretty deep questions having to do with the current state of the world. Several of these had to do with humility. As of the end of 2019, there were 176 responders, 12.5% of whom were born outside the country, specifically, in Brazil, Canada, China, Ecuador, Germany, India, Ireland, Mexico, Poland, Romania, Thailand, the UK and Wales. Further, when asked about their heritage, responders largely offered combinations of the following: African, American Indian, Arabic, Asian, Austrian, Belgian, Black Hawk, British Isles, Cherokee, Czechoslovakian, Dutch, English, Finish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Jewish, Latvian, Nordic, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Scandinavian, Scottish, Sicilian,

Slovakian, Spanish, Swedish, Ukrainian, and Welsh. Only two answered “American” and one of those put “mixed” in parentheses as part of their response. Three answered “white”; and one each answered European, Latino and Hispanic. Two humorous, but telling, responses were “Pink” and “Wonder Bread.”

Age groups of the responders were:

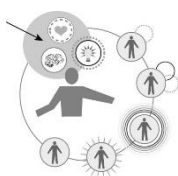
- 17% over 65;
- 21.2% age 51-65;
- 25.9% age 36-50;
- 15.9% age 22-35;
- 8.2% age 17-21; and
- 11.8% under 17.

Of the 176 responders, 58% were female, and 42% were male. Professions ran the gamut from blue collar workers (such as carpenter, school bus driver, electrician, pipeliner, waiter, truck driver, logger, hair dresser) to white collar (such as doctor, dentist, manager, professor, lawyer, realtor, investor, tax advisor, astronomer), with lots of wonderful diversity (such as artist, coach, speaker, stage manager, and author); multiple technology roles, various other service roles (such as nurse, psychologist, counselor, physical trainer, security, and elderly care); and more generic categories (such as student, business owner and retired).

Since a majority of responders (over 90%) are those flowing through the Mountain Quest Inn, what they have in common is a comfort level with the

country (the Inn is located on a 450-acre farm) and enough discretionary income to drive out to the country for a night or two stay. The human insights from this survey—which we will refer to as the SOW2018 research study—will be provided in the conversations supporting the various ideas in this little book.

[Your Thoughts]



Idea 1: Learning is essential in an environment that is changing, uncertain and complex.

Humans need to learn to keep up with their ever-changing environment. As Howard Gardner, developer of the body of work on multiple intelligences, says, “The future belongs to those organizations, as well as those individuals, that have made an active lifelong commitment to learning.”⁴

Let’s take a moment to talk about our changing environment. By now we, as individuals and organizations, recognize the massive rise of complexity in every aspect of our lives, whether related to the painful intrigue of manipulative politics, self-serving economic choices at the expense of the environment, or access to educational opportunities and medical care for citizens around the world. Close your eyes for a few minutes and reflect on other changes in the world ... and the changes that are happening right now in your life. This age can be characterized as CUCA—accelerating Change, rising Uncertainty and increasing Complexity, combined with the human response of Anxiety. This personal anxiety is an internal response, a level of stress largely emerging from loss of security, a lack of trust, and the

undermining of one's personal identity related to the environment within which we live.

The rise of CUCA is directly related to the accelerated mental development of the human that has been underway for well over a hundred years. Take a look at your parents and the lives they lived as children. A friend who is in the medical profession recently recalled his professor telling him that while they would be tested on 100% of the material presented in class, that only 50% of it would be viable 20 years into the future. The problem, of course, is that he didn't know *which* 50%, so it was necessary to learn it all. Imagine the ramifications of having 50% of everything you know changing every *two* years or every *two* months! That is the case in today's environment. Achieving success in this CUCA world *demands* that we be continuous learners!

Whether we look at this accelerated mental development from the viewpoint of the need to learn to survive and achieve success in a CUCA environment, or from the viewpoint of the innate human hunger for "more" (which we all can admit to at some level), *it's a good thing*. Unfortunately, as is wont to happen with good things, it is easy to push ourselves out of balance. For example, as we become more proficient in a domain of knowledge, building confidence in our knowledge and thinking of ourselves as an "expert," it is quite easy for the ego

to expand and to identify our self with the knowledge. When this happens—when we allow ourselves to *become* our knowledge—we tie ourselves to a moment in time, limiting the continuous learning and growth necessary to co-evolve in a CUCA environment.

The sharp edge of win-lose competition combined with this accelerated mental development has pushed individuals and organizations through ego into arrogance. While egotism says, “I am right”, arrogance says, “I am right. You are wrong. And I’m not listening.”⁵ Egotism closes the door to learning, and arrogance builds forces that can lock that door.

The surge of arrogance displayed in today’s world builds on the modern focus on humanism, that is, faith in our own omnipotence. In the expansion of our mental capabilities, we seem to have forgotten the nobler parts of humanism, individually and collectively seeking the potential value and goodness of humanity through rational thought. As biologist David Ehrenfeld describes, we have “chosen to transform our original faith in a higher authority to faith in the power of reason and human capabilities” and this has proven a misplaced trust.⁶

The American Humanist Association views humanism as a progressive life stance that “without theism or other supernatural beliefs, confirms our ability and responsibility to lead meaningful, ethical lives capable of adding to the greater good of

humanity.”⁷ However, “goodness” is a condition related to morality, virtue, and ethics, all built on an *awareness* of good and bad, right and wrong. Development of this perceptive lens goes beyond rational thought, beyond those things that are physical, requiring an understanding of “self” and “other” and the intertwined relationship of the two. This is the realm of the spiritual.

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INSIGHT: In the expansion of our mental capabilities, we seem to have forgotten the nobler parts of humanism, individually and collectively seeking the potential value and goodness of humanity through rational thought.

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It would be useful to develop a common understanding of spiritual. Spirituality does not relate directly to deism (the existence of God) or theism (the existence of God or gods with divine intervention), or the way people choose to express their beliefs through religion, but rather to the larger concept of Oneness, or *the connectedness of all things*. As a working definition, spiritual is taken to mean pertaining to the soul, or “*standing in relationship to another* based on matters of the soul”.⁸ Soul represents the animating principle of human life in terms of thought and action, specifically focused on the *moral aspects, the emotional part of human nature, and higher*

development of the mental faculties. This is philosophically the vital, sensitive or rational principle in human beings. Of importance to note is that an alternative definition is *of or pertaining to the intellect* (the capacity or knowledge and understanding, the ability to think abstractly or profoundly)⁹ *and of the mind* (in terms of highly refined, sensitive, and not concerned with material things).¹⁰ Note the consistency of these descriptions with the positive aspects of humanism, that is, a relationship with thought and action based on higher development of the mental faculties, and a direct relationship to the intellect and the mind.¹¹ Yet it is something more as well, something beyond the limited definition of rational, which is that based on reason or logic. In addition to the idea of standing in relationship to another, the concepts of morality, sensitivity and emotion are brought into play as well as the idea of thinking profoundly, insinuating thinking that is intense, heartfelt and sincere.

What becomes abundantly clear is that people are holistic—physical, mental, emotional and spiritual—and all of these aspects work together as we make choices and interact in and with the world.

The U.S. Navy came up with a graphical way of expressing this relationship between the individual and the environment. The description of this relationship goes as follows: Both organizations and individuals open and close in response to the

environment. While increased learning brings with it the potential for increased vulnerability, over time the absence of learning diminishes the value of the organization or individual. See Figure 1.

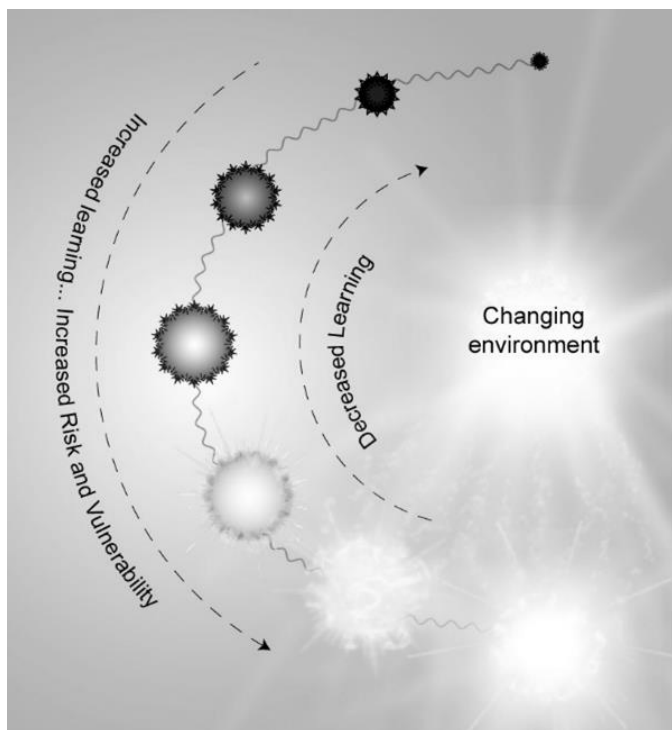


Figure 1. *The relationship of learning and the environment. (Used with permission)*

The learning continuum expressed in the figure above can also be used to consider the value of

balance. The explosion of light at the lower right represents new ideas exploding into reality. However, they are not bounded, so they cannot be easily shared. In beginning economics studies, it is clearly pointed out that while the value of knowledge is now recognized as directly relating to the bottom line of an organization, it is what we *do* with knowledge—the decisions we make and actions we take driven by that knowledge, and how we combine it with our creativity to innovate—that determines our future success. Intuitive leaps follow along the path of mental development. As innovator Tim Brown says, “The myth of innovation is that brilliant ideas leap fully formed from the minds of geniuses. In reality, most innovations are borne from rigor and discipline.”¹²

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INSIGHT: It is what we *do* with knowledge—the decisions we make and actions we take driven by that knowledge, and how we combine it with our creativity to innovate—that determines our future success.

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In terms of this graphic, it is important to realize that ideas need to be bounded to be brought to market; yet, continuous learning in response to the environment is necessary to stay viable in that market as competitors pick up on your idea and expand it with their own learning. If a product is in a

state of stasis, value diminishes over time as the desires and needs of consumers change with the environment. In organizational terms, an important aspect of understanding the learning continuum is the need to move in and out of learning cycles to periodically develop and produce new versions of a product or process. And so it is with individuals as well, who learn and act on that learning, and learn and act on *that* learning, and so forth as we engage life. Continuous learning is analogous with continuous success in life.

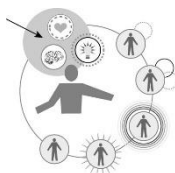
Now, let's add smart machines to the mix. Business executive and educator Edward Hess and lawyer and educator Katherine Ludwig push beyond CUCA to specifically focus on smart machines, artificial intelligence that moves far beyond that which we could conceive a few years ago. In this new age, knowledge workers are no longer sacred, which is difficult for a professional in the Knowledge Management arena to say! Yet today, there are so many advanced technologies enabling natural language capacities and voice and facial recognition engaging in pattern recognition and deductive reasoning. The authors' bottom line is that in most fields of endeavor, humans will no longer be necessary for value creation!

Consistent with our findings, Edward and Katherine forward that there is a need to overcome our nature and nurture limitations coming out of this

came the recognition that *knowledge is at the very core of what it is to be human*, and the management focus in our organizations shifted back to people.

This focus continues to expand as at the turn of the century our technologies enabled measurement of the mind/brain activity from the inside out, and through neuroscience research our understanding of the workings of the mind/brain exploded. This is the starting point for a deeper discussion of humility.

[Your Thoughts]



Idea 2: Humility has a long history with humanity

While undoubtedly humility has existed since the early times of homo sapiens—and possibly earlier—we discover a large body of work in the Old Testament related to *humility* and its antithesis *pride*. For example, in Proverbs 16:5 it is said, “Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; assuredly, he will not be unpunished.” And in Proverbs 26:12 it is said, “Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.” In the Greek language there are two different words for pride, one that is similar to being haughty or magnifying one’s self; the other referring to being blind. These can certainly work together. For example, when an individual is “haughty” that individual is certainly blind to others.

Counselor and minister Stuart Scott defines pride as a mindset of self from the viewpoint of a master rather than a servant and, as he continues, “a focus on self and the service of self, a pursuit of self-recognition and self-exaltation and a desire to control and use all things for self.”¹³ By definition, then, with the interpersonal focus of humility meaning being other-focused rather than self-focused, pride

and humility are opposites. However, there are various other states or characteristics that are considered as counter to humility. To help us get a grasp on these perceived differences, I took the time to go through a few dozen texts—primarily in the areas of philosophy, religion, psychology and leadership—to look at the contrasts of opposites in terms of humility.

Table 1: *Characteristics compatible with and counter to humility.*

	Characteristics compatible with humility	Characteristics counter to humility
1	Willing to listen; Good listener; Honor and seek truth; Unnecessary to receive rewards for right actions	On broadcast; Talking too much; Voicing/pushing preferences or opinions when not asked; Bragging; Boasting; Using attention-getting tactics; Ostentatious
2	Receptive to difference and new ways of thinking; Having a teachable spirit	Arrogant; “What I have to say is more important”; Inflated view of importance, gifts and abilities; “I’m better than others”; Unteachable.
3	Honor others; Serve others; Focus on others in service; Others over self	Selfishly ambitious; Greedy; Lack of service; Serve me; Meet my needs

4	Seek input and perspectives of others; Seek and follow good counsel; Thankful to others for criticism and reproof; Quickness in admitting you are wrong; Repenting wrong actions	Defensive of criticism; Devastated or angered by criticism; Dismiss instruction or correction
5	Honest/open about who you are and areas you need growth; Awareness of faults; Openly address faults; No need to elevate self; Seeing yourself and others as equals; Seeking to build others up; Minimizing other's wrong doings/ shortcomings	Perfectionism; Hide faults; Minimizing own short-comings; Lack of admitting when you are wrong; Defensive; Blame-shifting; Being deceitful by covering up faults and mistakes
6	Gladly submissive and obedient to those in authority	Resisting authority or being disrespectful; Leveling of those in authority; Demeaning; Being sarcastic, hurtful or degrading
7	Gentle and patient; Gratitude; Thankful and grateful to Life; Genuinely glad for others	Scornful; Angry; Contemptuous; Impatient or irritable; Jealous or envious; Lack of compassion
8	Accurate view of your gifts and abilities	Victim complex; Poor me; Focus on lack of gifts and abilities; Complaining; Consumed by what others think of you
9	Possessing close relationships; Recognize value in others; Willingness	Not having close relationships; Passing judgment; Using

	to ask forgiveness; Talking about others only good or for their good	others; Ignoring others; Talking negative about others; Gossiping; Lack of forgiveness
10	Strong, yet flexible	Willful; Stubborn
11	Theocentric; Recognition of being part of larger ecosystem; Realizing higher power	Anthropocentric; Exalts self; or “He is here for me”
12		
13		

As a graduate student of life, I bet there are additional characteristics you could fill in. There are a couple of blank boxes so you can add those.

In biblical terms, pride itself is viewed as a sin, and thus humility is “often identified with repentance and remorse.”¹⁴ This is the context directly voiced or alluded to throughout the Old Testament, where the lessons that are forwarded are related to power, and sometimes fear itself. For example, at the end of Isaiah 66:1-2, which begins with, “Thus says the Lord,” it is said, “but this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.” Note the direct link to

repentance and remorse, and the relation to “trembling,” which connotes an element of power whether perceived as an element of fear or as profound respect.¹⁵ Yet Stuart Scott reminds us that there are several terms that were translated as “humility” or “humble” in the Old Testament, which primarily allude to “bowing low” or “crouching down.” And as Stuart adds, “This is what we should do in our hearts.”¹⁶

In the early Greco-Roman world, humility was considered a sign of weakness.¹⁷ Yet, the works of Socrates and Plato and, for the Hebrews, the Biblical scriptures that were the foundation of the Old Testament, were very much a part of this world, and these ancient texts and the emergent books that were to become the New Testament, were filled with the *virtue of humility*. Note that similar to the Old Testament, there are several meanings of “humility” emerging from the translation of the New Testament. Two words were used, with one meaning “*servile, base or groveling*” and the other meaning “*gentle, meek or yielding*.”¹⁸ As Stuart points out, “These attitudes were very negative concepts in the Greek culture, but Christ revealed them to be virtues.”¹⁹

There are quite literally hundreds of texts, and most likely thousands of articles, that frame humility as a virtue. For example, St. Francis de Sales said

that humility is the highest of all human virtues. As philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand explains, “humility is the precondition and basic presupposition for the genuineness, the beauty, and the truth of all virtue.”²⁰ Similarly, our resource Stuart Scott says that, “Just as pride is the root of every evil, humility is the root of every virtue.”²¹

Augustine of Hippo, a philosopher and theologian that lived from 354-430, felt that a life of greatness could be compared to constructing a great building. “Thou wishest to be great, begin from the least. Thou art thinking to construct some mighty fabric in height; first think of the foundation of humility. And how great soever a mass of building one may wish and design to place above it, the greater the building is to be, the deeper does he dig the foundation.”²² Clearly, Augustine recognized strength in humility.

An example of this combination of strength and humility is Mother Teresa, a very small woman with a huge heart, who dedicated herself to serving the suffering children, lepers and destitute ill in the midst of India, her adopted country. She demonstrated that strength in her persistence, faith, and assertiveness! There are all sorts of stories that convey this strength. For example, on one occasion she went into a grocery store with no money,

concept of holiness, a filling with God that displaces self, and as a concept is second only to love in the lessons emerging throughout the New Testament. For example, in a parable related in Luke 14:7-11, Jesus talks about the dangers of exalting oneself when invited to a wedding feast, ending with “for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Similarly, we are reminded in Proverbs 27:2, “Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.”

But it is not in words alone that humility was exalted; but in the actions that demonstrated this behavior. For example, a well-known biblical story is that of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet at the Last Supper (John 13:1-11). Similarly, Jerry Bridges, a well-known Christian writer and speaker, said that the behavior characteristics related in the Beatitudes are all expressions of what he calls humility in action.²⁴ It is in the New Testament, then, that the focus is on humility, this softer trait of one’s character. For example, in Philippians 2:3, Paul says, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” and in Colossians 3:12, it is said, “Put on ... humility.” Similarly, in 1 Peter 5:5, Peter says to “Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another.”

In the SOW2018 research study, 12 of the 176 responders tied their belief that humility is a valuable characteristic when engaging others specifically to faith, Christ, spirituality or Oneness. For example, one responder, who referred to herself as a student of Christ, said, “He humbled Himself to communicate with us. If I am to communicate with those around me, I must humble myself and remember that we are all just people.” A second said, “Christianity is all about humility. Caring for others, loving your neighbor, forgiveness. How can you do these things if you don’t have humility?” A third said, “Humility should be the basis of all human interaction. It is the highest calling.”

From an intellectual viewpoint, Socrates is credited with saying, “I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance.” This is similar to the quote credited to Confucius, “Real knowledge is to know the extent of one’s ignorance.” Both of these quotes exhibit *intellectual humility*. In a 2016 review of two current studies, psychologist and educator Don Davis and colleagues found evidence for distinguishing general humility and intellectual humility. According to Don, general humility involves “(a) an accurate view of self and (b) the ability to regulate egotism and cultivate an other-oriented stance.” Conversely, intellectual humility, which the authors see as a subset of general humility, involves “(a) having an

accurate view of one's intellectual strengths and limitations and (b) the ability to *negotiate ideas* in a fair and inoffensive manner.”²⁵ This distinction takes on a level of increased importance in the age of today. In Idea 3 we explore this further.

[Your Thoughts]

The rapid development of the human intellect has forever changed the focus of work and play. From one frame of reference, we are out of balance. Accelerated mental development and a focus on hard competition and economic wealth as an indicator of success has led to expansion of the ego into arrogance, plaguing both individuals and the organizations from which we operate. Today, we recognize that a balancing of our outer and inner worlds is necessary. See the Conscious Look Book on *All Things in Balance*.

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***INSIGHT:* Accelerated mental development and a focus on hard competition and economic wealth led to expansion of the ego into arrogance.**

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From another frame of reference, the very technologies that have resulted from this mental development are becoming autonomous, that is, they are able to achieve non-routine cognitive tasks that were previously performed by people, and they can do many of these more efficiently and more

effectively! There are high-functioning robots on hospital floors and in hotels, restaurants, museums and shopping malls.

So, we have introduced three forces operating in our world: (1) the necessity of learning for our survival; (2) the expansion of ego and arrogance due to mental acceleration; and (3) the emergence of autonomous robots who are replacing people in the workplace. All three of these forces are directly related to the need for, and significance of, choosing humility.

Idea 1 addresses the relationship between learning and humility. As one responder in the SOW2018 study stated, *being humble equals being teachable*. Similarly, another said *humility is the key to learning and growth*, and another noted that each of us walks a unique path in what we call life; hence, “we should exercise humility and accept the fact that we always have something to learn from one another.” The quite impressive response from a 13-year-old was, “I think that humility is amazing to have. If you didn’t have humility, then you would never learn or know how to correct what you just did.”

The greatest barriers to learning and change are egotism and arrogance, which are fundamental difficulties in a rapidly-developing, mentally-focused business environment. As introduced earlier, egotism says, “I am right.” When egotism advances to

arrogance, it says, “I am right. You are wrong. And I don’t care what you think or say.” As can be seen, egotism shuts the door to learning, and arrogance ceases to listen to or consider others at all, which is necessary for growth and expansion of an individual and organizations. Since others are non-existent, an arrogant individual does not care what harm is inflicted on others.

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INSIGHT: “Each of us walks a unique path in what we call life; hence, we should exercise humility and accept the fact that we always have something to learn from one another.”

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Both egotism and arrogance increase the forces being produced. Nearly 10% of the total responders to the SOW2018 survey specifically pointed out ego and arrogance as barriers to communication. For example, as one responder said, “Ego can be self-limiting and potentially offensive to others, thereby building barriers to human connectedness.” Another said, “Arrogance only drives people away.” And a third quite bluntly said, “I am tired of dealing with and watching egotistical maniacs!”

Humility is the choice of letting things be new in each moment. See Figure 2.

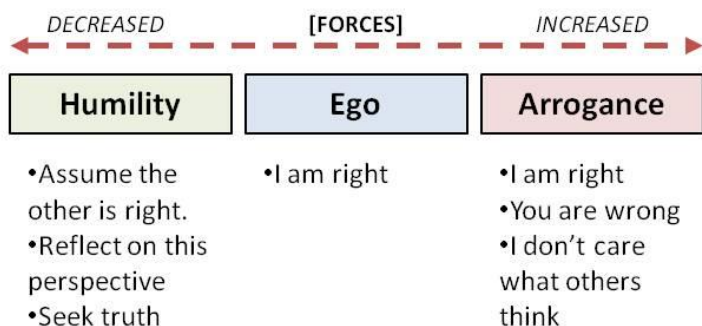


Figure 2. *Relationship of Humility, Ego and Arrogance.*

Humility opens the self to others' thoughts and ideas, and provides an opportunity for listening, reflecting, learning and expanding. In the SOW2018 study, 27% of responders agreed with this. One said quite simply, "I believe humility is an essential characteristic for communication and idea-sharing." Specifically focusing on listening, one responder stated that, "One has to set aside what one is thinking in order to truly listen and engage with others." This is the idea of moving beyond self. For example, one responder said, "Humility allows for a deeper connection and understanding between individuals, for it allows only selfless conversation to follow. It is very valuable." Another noted that, "If one is to truly engage with another, being humble is crucial to forming a true connection." Nine (5%) of the responders focused on this connection in various ways, many tied directly to open and free

communication. Interestingly, 15 (8.5%) of the responders answered from the viewpoint of “evening the playing field.” This was spoken about in terms of humility helping others feel more comfortable; allowing others to open up; providing a non-threatening environment; engaging as equals, leaving social ranks and status aside; and eliminating judgment.

One responder said that humility comes with respect. This person believes that, “the human being is equipped with a very powerful organ, the brain, which has the capability of creating wonder. The least one can do is respect it!” Twelve (6.8%) of the responders agreed with this strong connection between humility and respect. This respect was for the individual’s brain, experiences, lifestyles, nationality, culture, beliefs, and knowledge. One responder went beyond respect to embracing other’s thoughts, saying, “Respect and embracing others beliefs and valued knowledge expands our own contextual understanding and can better the whole of humanity. Love and kindness are more easily embraced by others if we walk on the same level.” Humility was also looked at as “honoring others.”

When you remedy egotism, the self grows. Since the self is now listening to and considering others’ ideas, there is larger opportunity for the bisociation of ideas, and creativity expands. Even a small amount of change can have a large impact on

an individual, or humanity at large! Here's an exercise we borrowed from the Conscious Look Book entitled *All Things in Balance*.

Exercise: Choosing HUMILITY

This tool was developed from the teachings of physicist Niles MacFlouer.²⁶

STEP (1): To develop humility, first *open your mind* to accept that, by nature, at this point of development human beings have egos and desires, both of which can have strong emotional tags connected to them. It can be quite difficult for an individual to recognize egotism and arrogance in themselves. Remember, the personality, not the self, is often in control, so the individual may or may not be aware of their projection or position. This is potentially true of the individual with whom you are interacting, as well as yourself.

STEP (2): Second, *assume the other is right*. Set aside personal opinions and beliefs for the moment, accept what is being said, this idea or concept, and reflect on this new perspective in the search for truth. While this may prove quite difficult for an individual who is highly dependent on ego and arrogance to survive in what can be a challenging world, almost every individual has someone or something they love more than themselves. Try

imagining that this new idea is coming from that someone or emerging from that something that you love. This simple trick will help increase your ability to engage humility.

STEP (3): Adopting this new idea or concept, *try to prove it is right*, pulling up as many examples as you can and testing the logic of it. If all the examples you can pull up fit this new perspective, then you have discovered some level of truth. If the examples contradict the concept, then bring in your ideas and test the logic of those. Again, if the examples do not all fit, continue your search for a bigger concept that conveys a higher level of truth. The critical element in this learning approach is giving up your way of thinking so that you can understand thoughts different than your own. You can compare the various concepts, asking which is more complete.

One issue that may emerge is the inclination for people to think how they feel first, then think about the logical part to determine truth. The “feeling” has already colored their higher conceptual thinking, which may result in it being untrue. It is necessary for us to develop a new sense of self that does not require us to be right in order to feel good about our thinking.

STEP (4) Once we come to a conclusion, we need to take action. It is time to affirm our incorrectness to those with whom we have

potentially lacked humility, and to show gratitude for them sharing their thoughts with us. Note that the expression of appreciation and gratitude reduces forces. It is not enough to say that you were wrong, nor is that an important issue. What *is* important is to acknowledge that someone else is right, and that you are appreciative of learning from them.

STEP (5) Finally, *ensure that your motive for adopting humility is your search for truth*. Motive eventually comes out, and the wrong motive will defeat the purpose in hand. In this search for truth, you are using mental discipline to develop greater wisdom. It is difficult to overcome the urge to “look good” and to be more right than others. When we are “full” there is no room for new thought. When choosing humility as part of our learning journey, we discover that it is not about being right, rather it is about the continuous search for a higher truth.

The third force introduced at the beginning of this idea was that of an offshoot of **our accelerated intellect**, which is the creation of **smart machines that are becoming autonomous**, taking over tasks previously considered as handled exclusively by people. This is the focus of an excellent book entitled *Humility is the New Smart: Rethinking Human Excellence in the Smart Machine Age*, which I recommend strongly to all still engaged in a working environment. Edward Hess and Katherine

Ludwig see humility as a mindset that “results in not being so self-centered, ego defensive, self-enhancing, self-promotional, and closed-minded—all of which the science of learning and cognition shows inhibit excellence at higher-order thinking and emotionally engaging with others.”²⁷

The authors point out that today’s understanding of “smart” is quantity-based, and, of course, it would be impossible for any human to outdo a smart machine if the knowledge standard is in terms of quantity. Thus, it is not *how* much you know but the *quality* of what you know, and that quality has to do with thinking, learning and how you emotionally engage with others. The authors refer to this quality as “NewSmart,” which leads them to what they call the SMA (Smart Machine Age) skills of critical thinking, innovative thinking, creativity and high emotional engagement with others.²⁸ The authors argue that in today’s environment most adults have not had formal training in “how to think, how to listen, how to learn and experiment through inquiry, how to emotionally engage, how to manage emotions, how to collaborate, or how to embrace mistakes as learning opportunities.”²⁹ The educational standard based on grades over mastery and a business culture of aggression and competitiveness—with avoidance of failure at all costs—have prevented this focus on quality.

Edward and Katherine identify four key behaviors to excel at these SMA skills. These are “Quieting Ego; Managing Self (one’s thinking and emotions); Reflective Listening; and Otherness (emotionally connecting and relating to others).”³⁰ These behaviors require shifting our current mental models focused on ego and self to a model which emerges from the choice of humility, acknowledging our limitations and becoming outwardly focused, honoring the experiences and learning of others. Thus, humility becomes, indeed, the New Smart in the age of smart machines.

[Your Thoughts]



Idea 4: The combining of positive characteristics can lead to an upward spiral.

In Idea 2, we explored the relationship of pride and humility, particularly in the context of religion, and took a look at various characteristics that were compatible with and counter to humility. However, there are positive characteristics that are not part of humility but often related to humility. The combining of positive characteristics can lead to an upward spiral, with the emergence of benefits that are beyond the sum of the two characteristics themselves.³¹ These characteristics include confidence, curiosity, empathy, gratitude, optimism and, even, the positive aspect of perfection. In this Idea, we briefly explore these concepts and their relationship with humility.

Confidence

We've known for years that self-confidence is a large contributing factor to success. Self-confidence has to do with your thoughts about yourself; which can be differentiated from self-esteem, which is what you think others think about you. While we might perceive self-confidence and humility as opposites, they actually work quite well together. Jack Zenger, who writes about leadership development, sees six things as elements of self-

confidence: mindset, dress and grooming, posture, overall manner, speech and communication practices.³² For example, he relates mindset to optimism and general happiness, and having a warm interaction with others. Overall manner would relate to behaviors such as walking briskly to laughing with others to interacting with many people in large gatherings. Communication practices would include asking questions, showing intense interest in what others have to say, expressing ideas respectfully, that is, avoiding confrontation, and using metaphors and stories.

Last year Gary Vaynerchuk wrote a fascinating blog on confidence and humility. Gary calls himself an investor and serial entrepreneur. He's the CEO of a full-service advertising agency that services Fortune 100 clients AND the chairman of a modern-day media and communications holding company, so it sure sounds like his self-description fits!

Gary says he tries to get himself into a place where he simultaneously knows he's great and knows he's insignificant. This, of course, is the actual case for each of us! From a neuroscience viewpoint, our mind/brain is magnificent and where all the action in the world begins, yet when we perceive ourselves as a separate entity it is easy to feel insignificant. This is such an important conversation for each of us to have. Each of us is one neuronal firing in a Universal brain, yet if there were

no neurons firing, there would be no action in the brain, no patterns forming, no learning or expansion happening. As small as we are, as important we are!

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INSIGHT: We are simultaneously great and insignificant; small yet important.

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Similarly, a respondent in the SOW2018 survey acknowledged that while humility is essential in positive socializing, it should be balanced with self-confidence. “Too much of one or the other leads to pride and arrogance or low self-esteem, lack of direction, or to unquestioningly following others.”

Regarding confidence and humility, Gary says “it’s incredibly important to know when to turn on your confidence especially when people push against you, and when people are razzing you, trolling you or doubting you and I think it’s equally important to know when to deploy your humility when people say that ‘you’re the best’ or you are a marketing genius or the best business person or anything of that nature.”³³

The idea that humility is context-sensitive and situation-dependent came up in the SOW2018 survey. One responder says bluntly that his choice of humility depends on the people and the topic. A second says humility is a good idea when others act accordingly and, if that fails, then adopt “whatever

attitude is needed.” A third responder said it is good to adapt to each situation. “If someone is very shy or has little self-confidence, it wouldn’t be kind or respectful to overwhelm them with one’s fantastic accomplishments. If one meets someone with similar experiences, I’m not hesitant to share, and I like to learn from others. I don’t like bragging, but I like sharing.” Unfortunately, sometimes it may be difficult to tell the difference between the two!

What’s really impressive about Gary’s blog is that he’s writing this blog because he feels he has a lot to give, and a responsibility to give it, while simultaneously admitting that he’s just figuring out how to do this. He notes that there are billions of people out there who are “unbelievably talented, incredible, noble, special people,” many of whom have praised him, then responds, “But I’m unable to really accept it.” Hmmm. Doesn’t that attitude demonstrate his point? I think so; either that or he’s really an effective writer!

Gary credits all this praise to his parents—and I think it’s worth us taking a listen to his exact words, because they echo the story of so many immigrants, including my own father. In his words, Gary says, “I just think it’s a bigger indicator on my parents and the unbelievable childhood I had growing up in this amazing country and having capitalism, and being an immigrant and having a chip on my shoulder and coming from the Soviet Union and coming from

humility and never being taught to ever complain and never expecting anything from anyone else, and always taking responsibility on my shoulders ... So, I'm amazing because of America, and my parents ..." This is all about being 100% accounting and owning who you are (although Gary uses a rougher vocabulary than I'm comfortable using!) It's also about passing on the praise when you are winning. THAT's when you become "fundamentally unbeatable."³⁴

My dad came over from Greece when he was 12 years old, the last ship to make it to the New York harbor before World War I. He had no skills other than having worked in the family wine fields, and did not speak English, so today he wouldn't have been allowed in the country, and if he did enter would have been thrown in jail. What he did bring with him is a mission and a focus, and a sense of responsibility and accountability. His father had died and he had seven sisters, each of whom required a dowry in order to marry. Dad shouldered that responsibility, and over the next ten years of his life provided a dowry for six of those sisters. (The seventh married for love without a dowry, and it was she who came to visit my dad 50 years later!)

Now, it would have been easy for dad to blame the world for everything and do nothing. After all, he was just a kid; the economy had failed; his dad had died; the vineyard was no longer functional; the

world was in turmoil; he wasn't given a chance for education past the seventh grade; and so forth. He did not. With a strong faith, confidence in his potential, and belief in the opportunity offered in this new country, he began as a busboy, quickly learning English, and slowly he advanced, eventually to own a restaurant, purchase a house, and, after his sisters were married, to marry an American from Louisiana, before adopting and raising two children. He was a self-made success in all areas of life, with, no doubt, the trials and tribulations that come along with life; a man of wisdom, who was always there for his family, friends, community and country (he was proud to pay taxes). Yet, he was a man of humility, honoring all people and the diversity among people, always open to listening to others' ideas, whether those ideas came from a seasoned adult or an inexperienced child.

Curiosity

Psychologist Cynthia Hardwick says that humble curiosity is a pathway to meaningful connection.³⁵ Humble curiosity means not only being nonjudgmental and letting go of preconceived notions, but also letting things unfold naturally. Thus, the impact of humility is expanded by adding curiosity, and there is a greater potential for deeper connections when humility is combined with curiosity. In short, humility and curiosity, when used together, strengthen each other.

Cynthia says that humble curiosity comes from a place of love, which is a place where connections are built among people. As she says, “Curiosity creates space for an innocent journey of meaningful connection and possibility. Whether you are asking powerful questions, encouraging new learning, or soothing frayed tensions, an attitude of humble curiosity lays the groundwork for creating deeper connections and more willing engagement.”³⁶

Empathy

In the working definition of humility forwarded by psychologist Joshua Hook,³⁷ the first characteristic was having an accurate view of yourself; and the second was being other-oriented. By definition, the other-oriented part of humility includes development of empathy, knowing the needs and wants of others and taking those into consideration in our decisions and actions.

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INSIGHT: By definition, the other-oriented part of humility includes development of empathy, knowing the needs and wants of others and taking those into consideration in our decisions and actions.

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Much like sympathy, empathy has its Greek roots in the term *pathos*, which means feeling or suffering. Empathy is the entanglement of intuition,

resonance and sympathy, simultaneously processed through physical, mental and emotional channels. This combination is an objective attempt to try and live the inner life of another person.

A good starting point to developing empathy is to develop a good understanding of your *self*, including your physical and mental capabilities and your emotional guidance system. Without this understanding, the boundaries between self and others can easily blur, such that the inner states of others are assumed to be identical with your inner states. This fusion prevents an objective perspective and leads to confusion in relationships and difficulties in co-evolving. People are not the same.

Empathy can be thought of in three different ways. First, as *perspective-taking*, seeing the world through someone else's eyes. Second, some people can literally feel another person's emotions, which causes a *personal distress*. Third, the ability to recognize another's emotional state and tune into it, developing an *empathic concern*.³⁸ All three of these types of empathy provide a direct understanding of another individual, a heightened awareness of the context of their lives, as well as awareness of their desires and needs in the moment at hand.

Interestingly, the physiological basis for empathy is so inherent in brain function that it has been extensively documented in other primates. For example, in a study of rhesus monkeys, when one

monkey pulled a chain for food a shock was given to that monkey's companion. The monkey who pulled the chain refused to pull it again for 12 days, that is, the primates would literally choose to starve themselves rather than inflict pain on their companions!³⁹ As Dutch primatologist Frans de Waal observed: *Empathy is nature's lesson for a kinder society.*⁴⁰

Nine of the responders in the SOW2018 study used some form of the word empathy in agreeing that humility is a valuable characteristic when engaging others. One responder said that humility is a throughway to empathy. Another was quite explicit, "Humility is essential to empathizing with others. Communication without empathy may be useful for transmitting data, but not reaching minds."

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INSIGHT: Humility is essential to empathizing with others. Communication without empathy may be useful for transmitting data, but not reaching minds.

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A key component of empathy is feeling, and there are findings from neuroscience that suggest that through feelings there is an active link between *our own* bodies and minds, and the bodies and minds of *those around us*. What happens is that the insula cortex and anterior cingulate in the brain actually

become activated either *when we experience pain, or when a loved one experiences pain!* And the degree of activation of these two structures has been shown to correlate with measures of empathy.⁴¹

I bet if you think back a bit, you'll remember a time when you felt another person's pain, or when you were fully engaged in another person's joy. That's empathy. In the Intelligent Social Change Journey of which we are all a part, empathy builds on sympathy and is the path we take as we move toward compassion. There is a Conscious Look Book entitled *Conscious Compassion*.

Gratitude

Humility and gratitude mutually reinforce each other. Similar to humility, gratitude is an “opening” concept, which impacts our thoughts, feelings and our physical body! As Edward Hess and Katherine Ludwig forward, “Studies of gratitude have discovered wide-ranging physical and psychological benefits associated with it, including immune system improvement, lower blood pressure, increased and longer-lasting positivity, and decreased stress, anxiety, and depression.”⁴² If we reflect on this, it is not surprising. By being grateful to others, you are focusing positively on them and the value they are bringing into the conversation, or into your life.

As an example, Athlos Academies recognizes the relationship between humility and gratitude. They feel that humility is crucial to the success of

students in terms of their social-emotional development. The effects they see from humility include “the cultivation of meaningful relationships, a willingness to be vulnerable, and the ability to practice gratitude. Humility makes each of these possible.”⁴³

Three studies performed by Elliott Kruse and his colleagues, show that gratitude, which inhibits internal focus while promoting external focus, can increase humility. Further, these researchers discovered that the state of humility actually “facilitates greater sensitivity to gratitude.” As they explain, “Because humility involves less self-orientation and more other-orientation, humble individuals have an enhanced capacity to notice others’ needs and offer assistance.”⁴⁴

Optimism

Optimism is a balancing concept with humility, ensuring that the concept of being humble does not fall into a low valuing of self or “poor me” attitude. In a Yale psychology course, educator Paul Bloom ended the course with humility. He pointed out that humanity doesn’t yet fully understanding what sorts of experiences make us what and who we are, and then he fully moved into optimism, which focused on the joy of discovery of the unknown elements that the future offers.⁴⁵

Optimism links the power of positive thinking to the future. The benefits of positive thought are

immeasurable. “The more good-feeling thoughts you focus upon, the more you allow the cells of your body to thrive. You will notice a marked improvement in clarity, agility, stamina, and vigor, for you are literally breathing your way to well-Being.”⁴⁶

There are several important organizational processes where successful collaboration requires a combination of humility and optimism. For example, a group visioning process is most successful when participants are outward focused and optimistic about the possible future.

The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) approach combines humility and appreciation with optimism regarding the future. AI locates and tries to understand that which is working, learning from it and amplifying it to improve the future.⁴⁷ AI is based on the simple premise that organizations (teams, communities, countries) grow in the direction or what they are repeatedly asked questions about and therefore focus their attention upon.

Perfection

On the surface it would appear that perfection and humility are polar opposites. And, indeed, that does occur, depending on the definition you give to perfection and the personality attitudes that can come along with the idea of perfection. For example, someone who perceives themselves as “perfect” would have no need to listen to anything anyone else

has to say, sliding fully into the mode of arrogance. (See Idea 3.) This is where a good balance with humility comes into play.

We also know in our world of mental acceleration that striving for perfection in specific things or areas of our lives—which is an impossible goal to sustain in a changing, uncertain and complex world—can lead to mental, emotional and/or physical breakdown! Simultaneously, striving for perfection can be a motivator to become the best we can be in the areas where we focus our attention.

From its Greek origins, the idea of being perfect is “complete” or “whole.” This does not mean being “best” at something, but rather “whole,” a full system. Similarly, the Christian concept of perfection is not as a state of being, but rather as a capacity, trying to be better with negative issues rather than an ability to achieve great things. Mathew 5:48 reads “You are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” This is achieving “wholeness,” the perfection of the soul.

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INSIGHT: From its Greek origins, the idea of being perfect is “complete” or “whole.”

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Knowing your own limits in terms of the physical, mental and emotional is part of this perfection. There are always limits. For example, if

you abide by ethics, you are choosing to be limited. So, in a large sense, limits are a way of exercising humility.

Limits are powerful tools for growth and change. When referring to ideas, each of us lives in a field of possibilities. The limits imposed by defining ideas within a framework encourages deeper understanding and spurs the emergence of new ideas, with the potential for those ideas to go far beyond the defining framework of their birth. In other words, setting limits (humility) provides focus that can lead to new thought, which offers a possible new way of defining “perfection.”

Closing Thought

While humility is clearly situated in the group of positive states which bring value to individuals and organizations (in terms of confidence, curiosity, empathy, gratitude, optimism and the “wholeness” of perfection), it has also been found that humility may actually “build social resources through externally focused emotions such as gratitude”⁴⁸ which provide long-term benefits.



Idea 5: Humility requires a grounding of self rather than a grounding *in* self.

A foundational concept that emerges again and again throughout these Conscious Look Books is that we are energy and patterns of energy, with continuous flows of energy between us and our environment, whether through our breathing, our eating, the continuous exchange of fluids, the flaking of our skin, the interaction of sound waves, the movement of light or the exchange of thought. Similarly, the Earth herself is a giant, living organism that is part of a larger geomagnetic field. With all that energy pulsing around us, it's little wonder that grounding is so important in the course of living!

In the Conscious Look Book on *Grounding*, we looked at three different interpretations of the concept of grounding. **First**, to ground is to give someone a foundation, to teach someone the basics. **Second**, to ground is to fix something on or in something else for a foundation. **Third**, to ground is to connect to the Earth, the ground on which we live. As you can see, each of these interpretations carries with it the idea of attachment, connecting to someone, or something, other than yourself.

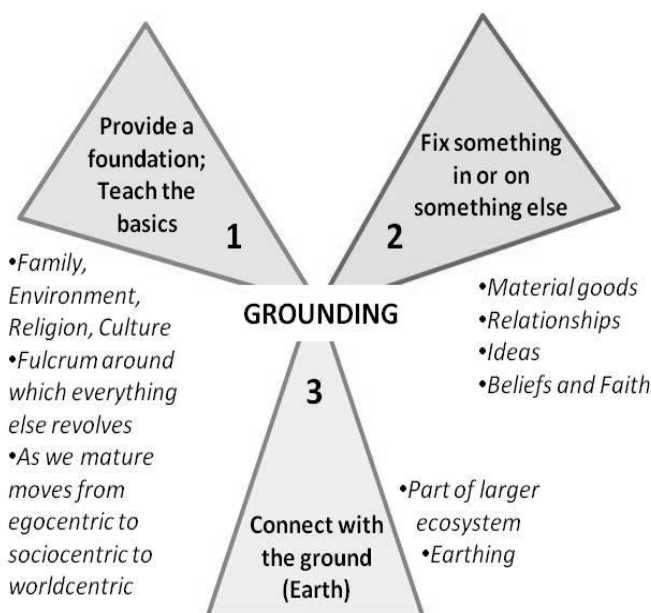


Figure 2. *Three interpretations of the concept of grounding*

When humans are young, the inborn personality is charged with ensuring survival, avoiding pain, and seeking pleasure. As the self emerges through life experiences, it develops preferences and begins to move into a conscious role of decision-making. The world has become larger, with people, and events, beyond the family and everyday patterns catching attention. From the viewpoint of our self, we begin to differentiate, identifying our unique capabilities and developing skills, often comparing ourselves with others. We

achieve something special, and it feels good, and we identify with that achievement. We own things and it feels good, and we identify with those things, and want to own more. Ego is emerging and expanding. It is in this entanglement of internal desires and feelings and external events and influences that the self makes both conscious and unconscious choices of what is most important and what provides stability, safety and comfort in a changing, uncertain and complex world. Here is where we continue our journey inward focused, a grounding *in* self, or outward focused, the grounding *of* self.

Grounding in Self

Grounding in Self includes all those aspects that come along with self-focus and an expanded view of self, being Anthropocentric. Table 1 in Idea 1 provides a pretty good picture of what those are. For example, it is quite likely that most of us have special material goods that help ground us, providing feelings of comfort, safety and continuity. This might include an heirloom ring that's been passed down for generations, or a musical instrument that you periodically play, serving to release tension and bring you into a place of peace. This is materialism that is grounding of self. However, in advanced materialism where desire has become compulsive and obsessive, perhaps the **ONLY** thing that is important, this is a grounding in self. And with advanced materialism comes the characteristics of

superficiality, exclusion, covetousness, fear, consumption and entitlement.

As a second example of grounding in self is where an individual is focused on their physical looks, valuing themselves based on their appearance. Looks, of course, are finite in time, and, unless there is a shift of grounding as an individual matures, the individual's survival may be threatened by age!

Another example of grounding in self is when an individual identifies with their ideas, often accompanied by expanded ego and movement into arrogance. This was discussed in some depth in Idea 3.

Humility is impossible when an individual is grounded *in* self.

Grounding of Self

In contrast, grounding of self is an important and necessary part of life, and there are many ways to achieve this. For example, nature is a structured hierarchical system that can serve as both an external and internal grounding mechanism. We know that we are part of a larger ecosystem that is Earth, whose energies—water, air, light, sound—surge through our physical bodies. When we physically walk through the grass, lean against a tree, or splash in a running stream, we are energetically connecting to these natural energy sources, which promote balance and well-being in our energetic system.

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INSIGHT: Grounding of self is an important and necessary part of life, and there are many ways to achieve this.

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There is a recent movement called Earthing that is rapidly expanding based on the discovery that grounding to the Earth promotes vibrant health. It's the same idea as having an energetic, electrical connection to the Earth and, generally, being comfortable in our physical body.

Let's borrow an exercise from the Conscious Look Book on *Grounding*.

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EXERCISE: *Grounding through Nature*

STEP 1: Find a comfortable place outside to stand quietly in the grass with bare feet. Empty your head (using your creative imagination to do so). Closing your eyes, gently wiggle your toes in the grass. Feel the energy of the Earth rising up through your feet, your legs, your torso, then simultaneously flowing down your arms and up your neck into your head, where it mixes with the white light streaming into your head from above, and then moves back down your body and into the Earth. This cycle repeats. Take deep breaths in rhythm with the energy

rising and returning, rising and returning. Continue until you are ready to move.

STEP 2: Open your eyes and walk to a nearby tree, feeling a surge of Earth energy into your being with every footstep. When you reach the tree, spread your palms against the outer bark, close your eyes, and ever so slowly use your creative imagination to move your consciousness into the middle of the tree. There is a pinkness there, and a pulsing. Feel this life pulse of the tree and let your heart beat at the same rhythm. Become one with the tree. When you are ready to move on, thank the tree, slowly bringing your awareness back into your body and opening your eyes.

STEP 3: Walk to some nearby bushes. Sit on the ground or in a chair in front of them, facing them. Feel the solidity of the ground beneath your feet. You are connected. Pick a specific leaf or small clump of leaves on the bush and focus on those. Note that they are alive. Reflect on their size, color, how they are attached to the stem and one another, their beauty. If there is a breeze, watch their movement. Reach out your hand and gently touch the leaves, closing your eyes and pulling their energy into your hand. There is a warmth in their feel, almost a kiss. When you are ready, send loving thoughts to this plant, open your eyes, and gently bring yourself back into a standing position.

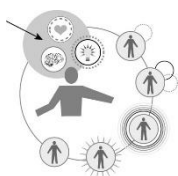
STEP 4: Turning your face upwards, feel the light of the sun (day) or the gentle echo of the moon (night) against your face. Invite the light to enter through the pores of your skin. Feel it caressing you, filling you and gently rolling over your skin, and, like the gentle dripping of a soft shower, moving into the earth below you. When you are complete, thank the light and slowly bring yourself back into your reality.

REFLECT: Which energy of nature did you identify with closely? Why?

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Now, let's draw an analogy to humility. In this exercise, we have felt the connections of our energy with the energies around us, and even invited the energy around us into our body. We recognize that we require these energies (sunlight, water, air, food) to survive and thrive. It is the same with our connections with others. We are social beings, unable to exist without others, unable to survive and thrive without others. When we are fully open to these connections, honoring them and recognizing their value, we learn and expand.

[Your Thoughts]



Idea 6: In today's environment it is necessary to find a balance when choosing humility.

In the Conscious Look Book entitled *All Things in Balance*, we begin the first Idea with, “Every structure we see in the Universe is a result of the balancing between opposing forces of Nature.” And as part of Nature, so it is with us. Yet, as Arthur Shelley, an Australian educator and businessman, says, “The natural balance that exists in Nature is something rarely achieved in human systems.”⁴⁹ Arthur then asks if we could learn from nature how to better balance ourselves. Can we?

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INSIGHT: “The natural balance that exists in Nature is something rarely achieved in human systems.”

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In the SOW2018 study, six (3.4%) of the “yes” responders and nearly all of the responders in the “no” category (5%) showed a concern with unhealthy extremes. One responder said “meekness” was unhealthy; another noted that being able to put others ahead of yourself is important “but not to the point of being a doormat.” A third said, “Humility is okay to a certain extent, but you have to be willing to defend what and who you love. And also, be willing

to speak your mind openly and honestly. If not, you are betraying your life.” A fourth agreed “Humility demonstrates an openness to others and willingness to listen and grow your understanding of others,” then added, “It is also a double-edged sword which others may take advantage of if you are not careful!”

A fifth responder noted specifically that humility should be balanced with self-confidence. “Too much of one or the other leads to pride and arrogance OR low self-esteem, lack of direction, or to unquestionably following others. Taking an aside for a moment, surprisingly, seven (3.9%) of yes responders made remarks that were concerned with what others would think of them. For example, one responder said, “Yes, because arrogance can give people the wrong idea or cause them to draw bad conclusions.” Another said, “I try to be humble most of the time so I am likable.” A third said, “This quality makes your character more appealing to others.” And a fourth said, “It’s easier to get things under control when you are calm.” This last has levels of meaning. Clearly, the responder feels the need to “control” interactions with others. What do you think the need to control by one party does to a conversation? Here is another negative aspect that could do with a bit of humility!

Finally, another “yes” responder clearly summed up this idea of balance. “I think balance is important. We all possess unique abilities and can do

so much for the world. But we should never consider ourselves better than others.”

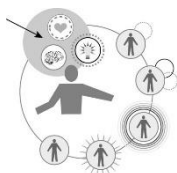
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INSIGHT: “I think balance is important. We all possess unique abilities and can do so much for the world. But we should never consider ourselves better than others.”

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Several of the responders in the “no” group (5%) were quite clear that the idea of humility tilted the scale too far. For example, as one said, “Pride in work and personal accomplishment contribute a lot to conversations and allow people to get to know another and share interests. It also demonstrates passion, which gives human connection. Bragging and hubris are different than a well-deserved feeling of accomplishment, and by toning that down you belittle yourself as well.” Another shared, “I regret having been too humble. Most people might not be able to relate to that, but if you never let people know your abilities/knowledge/ accomplishments, you miss opportunities not only to use those, but to build relationships based on respect.” Taking a very negative stance on the meaning of humility, another “no” responder said, “I do think being humiliated every once-in-a-while is good for you because it allows you to learn from previous mistakes.” How do *you* feel about these responses? What is your opinion regarding this balance?

[Your Thoughts]



Idea 7: Humility is a part of our expanded nature.

In the culture of today, one which promotes self-esteem, at least in the Western world, it is not surprising that we often perceive ourselves as better than we actually are. Noting that few people would describe themselves as humble, Julian Stodd, a researcher and Captain at Sea Salt Learning, a global partner for change, blogs that, “The property of humility may be one that is bestowed.”⁴ This perspective would mean that the state or conditions of humility is not one to be sought after or attained, but rather it is perhaps “a light that is shown upon our actions.”⁵ This new frame of reference may help us make sense of the conundrum of humility, that is, when humility is perceived as a highly desirable state—whether culturally expected or desirable in terms of leadership, virtue or faith—the act of professing humility of self is contradictory to what humility represents! *The condition of humility is demonstrated, not professed.*

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INSIGHT: The condition of humility is demonstrated, not professed.

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From this frame of reference, it is also clear that humility is a perceived social phenomenon,

something that is observed in a social setting. Observing someone demonstrating humility, there is a compliment in the saying. Yet saying that you are humble does not convey humility, even though an honest (not over-valued or devalued) understanding of your self is necessary to successful living. Here we have a conundrum.

That which is observed as humility may also be a conditioned response in context. We each wear many hats, and have lived through many experiences, which means we have conditioned responses in certain situations. For example, if we are continuously belittled when we are young, perhaps being told over and over again that we are stupid, we would have developed a defense mechanism such that anything said by another perceived as in that same context would produce an immediate forceful defensive response. This, of course, results in poor communication, with a reduction of listening capability and perhaps even an escalation of forces. There are Conscious Look Books on *The Emoting Guidance System* and *Engaging Forces*.

Humility may also be context-sensitive and situation-dependent. For example, the will of self may be more open and receptive in a work situation than in a home environment, or vice versa. In the first instance, I've learned that if I listen closely to a colleague's ideas there's a greater opportunity to solve a problem, improve a process, or expand into

new markets! Conversely, the pressures of work may be such while at home that I've not yet realized how important it is to stop and listen to my five-year-old's thoughts.

The really good news is that a majority of people from around the world *do* believe that humility is a valuable characteristic when engaging others. Recall that 12.5% of the responders in the SOW2018 study are people who were born outside the United States, specifically, in Brazil, Canada, China, Ecuador, Germany, India, Ireland, Mexico, Poland, Romania, Thailand, the UK and Wales. Further, responders largely described their heritage as follows: African, American Indian, Arabic, Asian, Austrian, Belgian, Black Hawk, British Isles, Cherokee, Czechoslovakian, Dutch, English, Finish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Jewish, Latvian, Nordic, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Scandinavian, Scottish, Sicilian, Slovakian, Spanish, Swedish, Ukrainian, and Welsh. Only two answered "American" and one of those put "mixed" in parentheses as part of that response.

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***INSIGHT:* The really good news is that a majority of people from around the world *do* believe that humility is a valuable characteristic when engaging others.**

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In this participant group as described in the Introduction, **MORE THAN 95% said they believed that humility is valuable when engaging others.** Yet, this is clearly not an easy thing to accomplish. When asked to rate how often they engaged humility when interacting with others on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 10 (all the time), these same responders averaged 7.85, with a median of 8.0. Many of them wrote comments with their response: Sadly, only about ...; Aspiring to 10; I wish it were 10; And should be higher; Want to be a 10 all the time; etc.





These results bode well for humanity, demonstrating a willingness and desire to listen and learn from others in our day-to-day lives, even in this real and perceived mix of ethnicities that still is America.

As one responder in the SOW2018 study concluded, “Being humble is an awareness of the greatness in which we are existing and that Life is One.”

What does this mean to me?

We've looked at the experience of humility from many different directions. I'd like to think that I choose humility, yet does the very saying of that to you, my reader, mean that I'm *not* humble? I don't know; I have some confusion around this. What I *do* know is that choosing humility in interactions with others enables a lot more learning, and helps build a deeper relationship with those others.

Let's bullet a few highlights and perhaps reflect on how these ideas might affect our behaviors.

-  In the expansion of our mental capabilities, we seem to have forgotten the nobler parts of humanism, individually and collectively seeking the potential value and goodness of humanity through rational thought.
-  There is a need to overcome our nature and nurture limitations coming out of this era that led to expansion of egos and arrogance.
-  There are literally hundreds of texts, and most likely thousands of articles, that frame humility as a virtue.
-  Humility requires a grounding *of* self rather than a grounding *in* self.



Each of us walks a unique path in what we call life; hence, we should exercise humility and accept the fact that we always have something to learn from one another.



Humility is essential to empathizing with others. Communication without empathy may be useful for transmitting data, but not for reaching minds.



The condition of humility is demonstrated, not professed.

Remember:

**We are simultaneously great and insignificant;
small yet important.**

What we ALL think and share counts!

This volume of **Conscious Look Books** builds conversationally on the ideas presented in *The Profundity and Bifurcation of Change Part I: Laying the Groundwork*, largely presented in Chapter 4: “The Ever-Expanding Self,” and *Part II: Learning from the Past*, largely presented in Chapter 10: “Grounding Change.” Co-authors of the original text include David Bennet, Arthur Shelley, Theresa Bullard, John Lewis and Donna Panucci. Full references are available in the original text, which is published by MQIPress, Frost, WV (2017), and available as an eBook on www.amazon.com

Endnotes

¹ Verb ... Bennet et al., 2017

² Quoted from Joshua Hook blog. Downloaded December 5, 2018, from <https://www.joshuanhook.com/what-is-humility/>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Quoted from Gardner, H. (2006). *Five Minds for the Future*. Boston: Harvard Business Press.

⁵ PBC Part 1 p. 68

⁶ Ehrenfeld points out that the modern world has chosen humanism as the guiding philosophy of life, and that with that choice we become “responsible for all the consequences that flow from that choice”. See Ehrenfeld, D. (1981). *The Arrogance of Humanism*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. viii.

⁷ American Humanist Association: “Good without a God. The AHA advocates progressive values and equality for humanists, atheists and freethinkers.” Downloaded May 2018 from <https://americanhumanist.org/what-is-humanism/>

⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary* (2002). *Oxford Dictionary of the English Language* 5th ed., Vols. 1 and 2, Oxford, p. 2928.

⁹ *American Heritage Dictionary* (2000). *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 4th ed. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin. p. 910.

¹⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary* (2002), 2963.

¹¹ It is noted that an alternative definition of spiritual is *of or pertaining to the intellect and of the mind*. This research is detailed in Bennet, A. & Bennet, D. (2008). “The knowledge and knowing of spiritual learning” in *VINE: The Journal of Information and Knowledge Management Systems* Vol. 37 No. 2, pp. 150-168.

¹² Tim Brown is the CEO and President of IDEO, ranked independently as one of the ten most innovative companies and designer of such innovations as the first mouse for Apple

and Palm V. See Brown, T. (2009). *Change by Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation*. New York: HarperCollins,

¹³ Quoted from Scott, S. (2000). *From Pride to Humility: A Biblical Perspective*. Focus Publishing, Inc., 6.

¹⁴ Quoted from Murray, A. (2016). *Humility: The Beauty of Holiness*. Abbotsford, WI: Aneko Press, 45.

¹⁵ See Bridges, J. (2016). *The Blessing of Humility*. Colorado Springs: NavPress. Bridges sees “trembling” in this passage as an expression of profound respect.

¹⁶ Scott, 17.

¹⁷ Bridges.

¹⁸ Murray.

¹⁹ Scott, 17.

²⁰ Quoted from von Hildebrand, D. (1997). *Humility: Wellspring of Virtue*. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 5.

²¹ Scott, 17.

²² Quoted from Collins, O. (Ed.) (1998). *Speeches that Changed the World*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 32.

²³ Conversation reported in Williams, P. and Denney, J. (2016). *Humility: The Secret Ingredient of Success*. Uhrichsville, OH: Shiloh Run Press, 191-192.

²⁴ Bridges, 3.

²⁵ Quoted from Davis, D.E. et al. (2016). “Distinguishing intellectual humility and general humility” in the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, Vol 11, Issue 3, Abstract.

²⁶ See MacFlouer, Niles (2004-16). *Why Life Is...* Weekly radio shows: BBSRadio.com (#1-#480) and KXAM (#1-#143). Retrieved from

http://www.agelesswisdom.com/archives_of_radio_shows.htm

²⁷ Quoted from Hess, E.D. and Ludwig, K. (2017). *Humility is the New Smart: rethinking Human Excellence in the Smart Machine Age*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 8.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid., 23.

³⁰ Ibid, 5.

³¹ See Fredrickson, B.L. and Joiner, T. (2002). “Positive emotions trigger upward spirals toward emotional well-being” in *Psychological Science*, 13, 172-175.

³² See Forbes. Downloaded December 7, 2018, from www.forbes.com/sites/jackzenger/2018/04/08/the-confidence-gap-in-men-and-women-why-it-matters-and-how-to-overcome-it/#7b03e9663bfa

³³ Quoted from Garry Vaynerchuk’s blog. Downloaded December 7, 2018, from www.garyvaynerchuk.com/confidence-humility/

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ See Hardwick, C.J. Blog. Downloaded December 2018 from <https://cynthiahardwick.com/humble-curiosity/>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Hook.

³⁸ See Riggio, R.E. (2015). “Are You Empathic? 3 Types of Empathy and What They Mean.” Retrieved 09/14/15 from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/cutting-edge-leadership/201108/are-you-empathic-3-types-empathy-and-what-they-mean>

³⁹ See Masserman, J., Wechkin, M.S. and Terris, W. (1964). “Altruistic Behavior in Rhesus Monkeys” in *Am. J. Psychiatry* 121, 584-85.

⁴⁰ See de Waal, F. (2009). *The Age of Empathy: Nature’s Lessons for a Kinder Society*. New York: Harmony Books.

⁴¹ See Cozolino, L.J. (2006). *The Neuroscience of Human Relationships: Attachment and the Developing Social Brain*. New York: W.W. Norton.

⁴² Hess and Ludwig, 92.

⁴³ Quoted from Athlos Academies (2017). “Reinforcing Performance character Growth at Home: Humility.” Downloaded December 2018 from

<https://athlosacademies.org/humility-performance-character-growth/>

⁴⁴ Quoted from Kruss, E., Chancellor, J., Ruberton, P.M. and Lyubomirsky, S. (2014). “An Upward Spiral Between Gratitude and Humility” in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 1-10, 1.

⁴⁵ See Bloom, Paul. Psychology Course: Humility and Optimism. Viewed December 2018 from <https://www.coursera.org/lecture/introduction-psychology/humility-and-optimism-8t96r>

⁴⁶ The daily quote from Abraham-Hicks Publications (January 06, 2017).

⁴⁷ See Srivastva, S. and Cooperrider, D.L. (Eds.) (1990). *Appreciative Management and Leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁴⁸ Kruss et al., 8.

⁴⁹ Quoted from Shelley, A. (2007). *Organizational Zoo: A Survival Guide to Work Place Behavior*. Fairfield, CT: Aslan Publishing, xiii.

The Volumes in ***Possibilities that are YOU!***

All Things in Balance

The Art of Thought Adjusting

Associative Patterning and Attracting

Beyond Action

The Bifurcation

Connections as Patterns

Conscious Compassion

The Creative Leap

The Emerging Self

The Emoting Guidance System

Engaging Forces

The ERC's of Intuition

Grounding

The Humanness of Humility

Intention and Attention

Knowing

Living Virtues for Today

ME as Co-Creator

Seeking Wisdom

Staying on the Path

Transcendent Beauty

Truth in Context

The remarkable quality of what it is to be human is exactly what enables us to adapt to a changing, uncertain and complex environment. And hand-in-hand with the ability to learn and adapt is the *choice of humility*. In the early Greco-Roman world, humility was considered a sign of weakness, and for some that continues today. Yet, humility is very much a virtue that facilitates learning, expansion and connection to others. It is essential for empathizing with others; communication without empathy may be useful for transmitting data, but not for reaching minds. This little book explores the value of humility in terms of the past, and as an essential quality to move us into the future.