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“We Must Speak”: Humility and Social Activism

Abstract:

Humility is enjoying an upsurge of interest among contemporary virtue theorists. Unfortunately, many of these discussions have cast humility as inconsistent with social activism. Humility is assumed to consist of quiet and unobtrusive traits which seem inconsistent with the assertiveness and outspokenness required for social activism. Paul Bloomfield argues that this aspect of humility – being inconsistent with social activism – prevents it from counting as a virtue at all as a virtue must be the kind of thing that is always appropriate to possess and display. Here I attempt to present an account of humility that is not inconsistent with social activism and that can, and should, be considered a virtue where virtue is loosely understood to mean a generally desirable trait of character.

Keywords:

humility, Martin Luther King, Jr., social activism, transcendence, virtue

Introduction

Humility is enjoying an upsurge of interest among contemporary virtue theorists.¹ Many important insights about the nature and value of humility have surfaced due to this research. Unfortunately, however, many of

1) Snow, “Theories of Humility,” 9.

these discussions have implicitly² and explicitly³ cast humility as inconsistent with social activism. I will refer to this as the inconsistent claim. The inconsistent claim can be stated as follows:

IC: Humility is comprised of modes of behavior that are inconsistent with social activism and social activism requires modes of behavior that are inconsistent with humility.

Such modes of behavior include quietness, avoiding bringing attention to oneself, deference to others, especially if they are in a position of authority over us. Conversely, social activism requires one to be outspoken, attention-getting, and assertive. Moreover, a willingness to challenge authority seems essential to engaging in social activism as it is typically people and systems of authority that are imposing social injustices. Thus, the very nature of humility is incompatible with social activism according to the IC.

Paul Bloomfield, in a recent anthology on philosophical humility (HNV) demonstrates how the logical conclusion of assuming that humility is a quiet and unobtrusive virtue leads to its inconsistency with social activism. Bloomfield further argues that this aspect of humility – being inconsistent with social activism – prevents it from counting as a virtue. Here I attempt to present an account of humility that is not inconsistent with social activism and that can, and should, be considered a virtue where virtue is loosely understood to mean a generally desirable trait of character.

My argument proceeds as follows. First, I show that Bloomfield’s argument is based on a problematic notion of humility. Once a non-problematic account of humility is introduced, the IC fails. Then, I introduce the transcendent account of humility⁴ and show that the behavior of social activists discussed by Bloomfield are consistent with the transcendent account of humility. Finally, I argue that social activist Martin Luther King, Jr. demonstrated the virtue of humility, further undermining the claim that humility and social activism are inconsistent.

1. Bloomfield’s Critique of Humility

Paul Bloomfield has recently defended what might be called the classical self-abasement account of humility. The standard⁵ though disputed⁶ account of humility is that it was a trait of disrepute in the West until the rise of Christianity. Bloomfield accepts this account, and draws much of his notion of humility from pre-Christian conceptualizations, noting that the Latin *humilitas* translates from the Greek word for groveling or lowly (HNV, 37). In the ancient world humility was understood as a proper attitude for the lower echelons of society to hold toward the nobility, but an improper attitude for the nobility to return. Even in the Jewish heritage from which Christianity developed, Bloomfield sees only humility between people and God as being commendable; humility before other people was eschewed by the Hebrews. Bloomfield cites the Hebrew self-understanding as God’s chosen people as

2) Some prominent examples of this include Joseph Kupfer’s claim that “Nothing seems comparable to the rewards found in rectifying injustices or relieving suffering ... [and] ... since humility makes itself unobtrusive by directing attention away from ourselves, we are naturally less aware of the good consequences it does enjoin.” Kupfer, “The Moral Perspective of Humility,” 266; Everett L. Worthington’s characterization of humility as the “the quiet virtue,” Worthington, *Humility: The Quiet Virtue*; and Michael Lynch’s (2021) caveat that historically marginalized individuals need not show intellectual humility in all situations. Lynch, “Conviction and Humility,” 145.

3) Bloomfield, “Humility is Not a Virtue.” Hereafter referred to parenthetically as HNV in text along with page numbers.

4) Wargin, “Humility as Transcendence.”

5) See for example Arnhart, “Statesmanship and Magnanimity”; Horner, “What It Takes to be Great”; Holloway, “Christianity, Magnanimity, and Statesmanship”; Keys, “Aquinas and the Challenge of Aristotelian Magnanimity”; and Kellenberger, “Humility.”

6) Chappell, “Humility Among the Ancient Greeks.”

evidence of this. Bloomfield argues that Christ's Sermon on the Mount is the first instance where humility – still understood as a "kind of self-abasement" it seems (HNV, 39) – was reimagined as something all people should show toward each other. Thus, with the rise of Christendom came the rise of humility as a virtue, at least until the Enlightenment and modern thinkers such as Hume and Nietzsche questioned its value (HNV, 38).

From this account of humility, there are at least two pessimistic conclusions about humility. First, stated explicitly by Bloomfield, is that humility ought not to be considered a virtue. Bloomfield argues that genuine virtues, such as justice and courage, are appropriate in all situations. Thus, if humility is a virtue, it must be the case that it is appropriate in all situations. However, Bloomfield argues that humility is not appropriate in all situations. Bloomfield does not see humility has a vice, but he does think its value is context-sensitive. Specifically, humility has value merely as a corrective to arrogance (HNV, 36).

For example, imagine two co-workers, Patrick and Quin. If it is the case, and Bloomfield wants to argue it is, that it is good for tends-to-be-full-of-himself Patrick to show humility when he is receiving praise from his boss yet bad for Quin (who is habitually marginalized at work because she is a woman) to show humility when she is unfairly passed over for promotion, then it is not the case that humility is a virtue. This is because humility is only appropriate in Patrick's case, but not in Quin's. Thus, from Bloomfield's self-abasement account of humility, humility cannot properly be considered a virtue.

Implied in this discussion, is that humility is inconsistent with social activism – a major element in its not being appropriate at all times. Just as humility is not appropriate in the case of Quin who is facing unfair sexual discrimination at work, humility is not appropriate where social activism is needed. "Humility" writes Bloomfield, "is always politically conservative. Rebellion, however well-justified, is almost impossible in a climate too rich in humility" (HNV, 36).

The problem with Bloomfield's conclusion is that it is premised on a self-abasement account of humility that is highly controversial.⁷ Bloomfield does attempt to work with a contemporary account of humility, the limitations-owning account, but he (1) fails to fully grasp the distinction between this account and his own classical self-abasement account, and (2) fails to consider alternative accounts that may not be subject to the shortcomings of the limitations-owning account. Below I discuss the limitations-owning account, Bloomfield's treatment of it, and why Bloomfield thinks said account is still inconsistent with social activism.

2. Bloomfield's Critique of The Limitations-Owning Account of Humility

Several accounts of humility have been proffered recently,⁸ however Dennis Whitcomb, Heather Battaly, Jason Baehr, and Dennis Howard-Snyder's limitations-owning account of intellectual humility⁹ seems to have garnered the most traction.¹⁰ Bloomfield considers the limitations-owning account as an alternative theory of humility but

7) See, for example, Jaskolla, "The Puzzle of Self-Abasement"; and Robinson, "Paradoxes of Humility."

8) Three important volumes that have recently been published are Alfano, Lynch, and Tanesini, *Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Humility*; Wright, *Humility*; and Worthington, Davis, and Hook, *Handbook of Humility*. I have also found the following pieces compelling: Richards, "Is Humility a Virtue?"; Snow, "Humility"; Garcia, "Being Unimpressed with Ourselves"; Jaskolla, "The Puzzle of Self-Abasement"; Peterson, "Humility in the Deficient"; Kellenberger, "Humility." It should also be mentioned that there is a lively correlating debate on the nature of modesty. For example, see Driver, "The Virtues of Ignorance"; Driver, "Modesty and Ignorance"; Schueler, "Why Modesty is a Virtue"; Flanagan, "Virtue and Ignorance"; Maes, "Modesty, Asymmetry, and Hypocrisy"; and Bommarito, "Modesty as a Virtue of Attention."

9) Whitcomb, Battaly, Baehr, and Howard-Snyder, "Intellectual Humility."

10) My own field of study, humility and politics, has been enormously influenced by the limitations-owning account. For example, see Lynch, "Conviction and Humility," 141; and Johnson, "Humility and the Toleration of Diverse Ideas," 149.

rejects it as internally inconsistent. In this section I argue that Bloomfield is correct that the limitations-owning view is not a tenable account of humility. However, I also argue that at most, Bloomfield shows that social activism is not a relevant situation for one to exercise humility; he does not show that the humble person is incapable of participating in social activism.

According to Whitcomb et al., general humility consists in a “right stance” toward one’s limitations.¹¹ Intellectual humility, which is what Whitcomb et al. focus on, consists in a right stance toward one’s intellectual limitations. There are two criteria necessary for one to have a right stance toward their limitations. First, one must be appropriately attentive to one’s intellectual limitations; second, one must “own” one’s limitations.

Appropriate attention consists of a mean between being under-attentive to one’s limitations (intellectual arrogance) and being over-attentive to one’s limitations (intellectual servility). That is, one ought to be aware of one’s limitations such that they come to mind at appropriate times (for example, when asked to fulfill a task that is beyond one’s limits) and to the appropriate degree (for example, neither dismissing nor obsessing over said limitation). But being appropriately attentive to one’s limitations is not enough; one must “own” one’s limitations.¹² “Owning an intellectual limitation consists in a dispositional profile that includes cognitive, behavioral, motivational, and affective responses to an awareness of one’s limitations.”¹³ These requirements preclude the following as counting as humble:

1. Those who refuse to acknowledge their limitations either to themselves or to others,
2. Those who do not appropriately modify their behavior in light of acknowledged limitations, and
3. Those who acknowledge their limitations but are not affectively challenged by them nor motivated to improve them where possible.

Humble people know their limitations and take them seriously – but not too seriously.

Despite its popularity, Bloomfield is not the first scholar to accuse the limitations-owning account of being internally inconsistent.¹⁴ The limitations-owning account postulates that to be humble is to “own,” or acknowledge and take responsibility for, one’s limitations or weaknesses. The problem with this conceptualization is that it only focuses on one’s orientation to their weaknesses without discussing one’s orientation to their strengths. According to Whitcomb et al., “proper pride” is the virtue that governs how one responds to their strengths.¹⁵ This is problematic because with “such a distinction, intellectual humility *qua* intellectual humility is blind to intellectual strengths.”¹⁶ This blindness leaves open theoretical space for someone to be both arrogant and humble at the same time and in the same respect.

For example, suppose Jordan is a good, but not exceptional, reader in terms of speed. Let us further suppose that Jordan is appropriately attentive to his limitations in reading speed; he is aware that he is not, for example, in the top 10% of speed readers. Jordan is humble about his reading speed. However, Jordan being appropriately attentive to his limitations in reading speed does not necessitate (at least theoretically) him being appropriately attentive to his strengths in reading speed. Suppose Jordan is overly attentive to his strength in reading speed such that he considers himself to be in the top 10% of speed readers. Jordan, it seems, is simultaneously holding two contradictory beliefs – that he *is* in the top 10% of speed readers and that he is *not* in the top 10% of speed readers. This bizarre possibility is the result of disconnecting the

11) Whitcomb, “Intellectual Humility,” 516.

12) Ibid., 517.

13) Ibid., 518.

14) See Church, “The Limitations of the Limitations-Owning Account.”

15) Whitcomb, “Intellectual Humility,” 516.

16) Church, “The Limitations of the Limitations-Owning Account,” 1078.

virtue that governs one's attitude toward one's strengths and the virtue that governs one's attitude toward one's weaknesses.

Whitcomb et al. consider this worry unproblematic because it is only a theoretical possibility. They argue that to be properly attentive to one's limitations and over-attentive to one's strengths in the same domain at the same time would require someone to be irrational.¹⁷ Ian Church argues that human beings are often irrational, so this does not show that it is not an actual possibility.¹⁸

Bloomfield rejects that account as a plausible alternative to his own self-abasement account due to this theoretical worry, but moreover argues that even if we accept the limitations-owning account of humility, the objection from social activism is still relevant. He demonstrates this claim by drawing on the man who bodily blocked a tank sent to disperse protesters in Tiananmen Square on June 5, 1989. Bloomfield dubs this man "Tank Man" and argues, *reductio ad absurdum*, that his actions, which were justifiable social activism, are not consistent with owning one's limitations. His argument is as follows:

- 1) Humility is a virtue.
- 2) For something to be a virtue is for it to have a designated domain in which it operates.

For example, consider the virtue of courage. Courage operates in the domain of dangerous situations. The right thing to do in a dangerous situation is the courageous thing. Analogously, if humility is a virtue, then it must operate in a specific domain. Specifically, if owning one's limitations is the correct account of humility, then humility operates in the domain where "owning one's limitations becomes salient" (HNV, 40). In said domain the right thing to do is to own one's limitations.

- 3) Humility means one is "well-aware of his limitations and weaknesses, he defers when apt, tempers his beliefs, etc." (HNV, *Ibid.*).
- 4) The Chinese government is sending tanks to confront protesters to teach them humility and obedience: "Let's assume that the Chinese government intended to instill humility and obedience in the protesters by sending tanks to confront them" (HNV, *Ibid.*).
- 5) Tank Man is uniquely placed to confront the injustice by standing in front of the tanks.
- 6) (5) is the virtuous thing to do.
- 7) (5) is not showing humility: "Whatever else was true of his action, there is simply no way to consider Tank Man's stepping in front of the tanks as an action motivated by humility" (HNV, *Ibid.*).

Bloomfield argues these claims lead to an absurdity:

- 8) Humility is the virtue which ranges over all circumstances involving the owning of one's limitations (Call these "L-situations").
- 9) So, in any L-situation, the humble thing to do is the right thing to do.
- 10) When Chinese tanks confronted the protesters, it was an L-situation for the protesters.
- 11) The right thing to do in this L-situation was to block the tanks with one's body.
- 12) Blocking the path of a tank with one's body is not being humble.
- 13) So, when tanks were in Tiananmen Square, the humble thing for Tank Man to have done was to not be humble.

The first thing to notice about Bloomfield's argument is that he is not actually discussing the limitations-owning account, but a Greco-Roman-Whitcomb et al. hybrid account that tacks owning one's limitations on to a classical account of humility as deference to (political) authority. For example, "apt deference" is not an aspect of the limitations-owning account as discussed by Whitcomb et al. One could argue that entailed in the notion of

17) Whitcomb, "Intellectual History," 530.

18) Church, "The Limitations of the Limitations Owning Account," 1079.

owning one's limitations is the notion of deferring to others when appropriate. For example, if there is a question about how long it will take to get to the airport, deferring to the estimation of your friend who drives a taxi cab for a living seems wise since they are likely to give a more accurate estimate. That is, one should recognize their knowledge in this area is more limited in comparison to their taxi cab-driving friend. However, I see no evidence from Whitcomb et al.'s work that the limitations-owning view entails giving deference to oppressive government policies. The limitations-owning view locates humility in a balanced recognition of one's personal weaknesses; submission to oppression is simply not related, either positively or negatively, to this view.

Further, Bloomfield sees the government's aim, in part, to teach the protesters humility. Are we expected to believe he means to say that the government's aim in sending in a tank was to teach the protesters to take ownership of their limitations? Given that part of taking ownership of one's limitations is, according to Whitcomb et al.'s account, to work to overcome said limitations where possible¹⁹ I find this an unlikely motivation for sending in a tank to disperse protesters.

Since Bloomfield is not actually working with the limitations owning view, he has not shown that humility understood as the limitations owning view fails to be a virtue – that is, a trait that is desirable in all situations – or that the limitations owning view is inconsistent with social activism. For example, Bloomfield asserts that Tank Man cannot be said to be humble here. By this I assume Bloomfield means that defying authority is not humble as humility “defers when apt.” But if we take only the limitations-owning account without the self-abasement add-ons, (7) fails and with it the alleged inconsistency with social activism.

Bloomfield's argument does not demonstrate that humility, even if understood as owning one's limitations, is inappropriate in some situations. The most that can be said here is that humility, understood as owning one's limitations, is not relevant to this situation. That is, it might be said that Tank Man was not exercising the virtue of humility when choosing to stand in front of the government tank in so far as such an action was not an acknowledgement of his limitations. But for a character trait to be irrelevant in a given situation is not the same as being inconsistent with a given situation. For a trait to be inconsistent with a given situation the possessor of said trait is incapable of participating in situation due to their possessing said trait. The trait of honesty is inconsistent with the act of lying and so the honest person cannot participate in a situation where lying is required. But there are situations in which honesty is irrelevant and the honest person is free to participate in said situations. The situation with Tank Man seems to be just such a situation. It seems that Tank Man was not exercising the virtue of honesty when he stepped in front of the tank – honesty was irrelevant to the situation. But we need to presume Tank Man lacked honesty because possessing the virtue of honesty is not inconsistent with his act of protest. Similarly, even if we assume that humility, understood as owning one's limitations, was irrelevant to the situation of protesting the Chinese government, it does not follow that being humble is inconsistent with Tank Man's actions. For example, it does not seem to be the case that Tank Man was exercising vices that we generally take to be in opposition to humility, such as arrogance or vanity.

3. The Transcendent Account of Humility and Social Activism

In the previous section I showed that Bloomfield fails to tenably demonstrate that humility is inconsistent with social activism. Only when one assumes a self-abasement account of humility does it follow that humility is inconsistent with social activism. In this section I will make the stronger argument that humility is not only consistent with social activism, but complimentary to it. I will do this by discussing the recently published transcendent account of humility and evaluating the actions of Tank Man through said account.

19) Whitcomb, “Intellectual Humility,” 518.

The transcendent account of humility locates the virtue of humility in a transcendent orientation to the self and others such that the humble person is someone who has a proper perspective of their value in relation to others.²⁰ According to the transcendent account of humility, the virtue of humility is in opposition to the vice of self-centeredness, a vice that can manifest as either excessively high views of the self or excessively low views of the self. Given this opposing orientation to self-centeredness, being humble does not necessitate that one has a low view of their own value; rather, those who view themselves as having low value necessarily lack humility due to the self-focus required to make such a judgement.

Conceptualizing humility in this way has important implications for the question of whether a humble person can participate in social activism. As was stated earlier, social activism requires one to be assertive and outspoken. If humility is conceptualized such that it is inconsistent with being assertive and outspoken, then it follows that humility is inconsistent with social activism. Fortunately, assertiveness and outspokenness are consistent with humility conceptualized as having a transcendent orientation to the self and others, so long as one's motives for being assertive and outspoken are for transcendent, that is selfless, reasons.

Let us return to Patrick and Quin. For Patrick and Quin to be humble is for them each to take a perspective that transcends themselves and others. Thus, humility for Patrick requires he is not full of himself. It also means that praise from his boss be of little import to Patrick. For Quin, to be humble will mean that she also has a proper perspective of her own value and the value of the people she works with. This means that Quin will see her company's failure to promote her not merely as a personal hardship, but as a systemic injustice that is harmful to, at minimum, all other women within the company. As such, there is no reason to think that Quin behaving humbly will lead Quin to accept said injustice quietly. Indeed, Quin's humility may push her to fight against the injustice when she would otherwise be uncomfortable doing so or when she may run a risk of retaliation because she sees that such actions are important for achieving a good beyond herself.

Now let us consider the case of Tank Man. Recall that according to Bloomfield: "Whatever else was true of his action, there is simply no way to consider Tank Man's stepping in front of the tanks as an action motivated by humility" (HNV, 40). I want to suggest that Tank Man's actions can be explained by humility. His actions suggest a concern that transcends himself – he could have been crushed to death – in an effort to fight injustice for a good beyond himself. Humility understood as having a transcendent orientation to the self and others, does not render one incapable of engaging in justified rebellion. On the contrary, it arguably renders one incapable of allowing one's concern for one's own comfort and security to stop one from pursuing justice.

Thus, we can see that if one conceptualizes humility according to the transcendent account humility is not only consistent with social activism, but may even necessitate it. In the final section of this paper, I give one more example of a humble social activist intended to undermine the claim the humility is inconsistent with social activism: Martin Luther King, Jr.

4. Humility and Martin Luther King Jr.

In his 1967 work *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* Martin Luther King Jr. relays a disagreement that took place between himself and fellow civil rights activists Stokely Carmichael and Floyd McKissick. The occasion for the disagreement was the 1966 Freedom March in Mississippi, jointly sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (McKissick), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Carmichael) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (King). While conducting a mass meeting in Greenwood Mississippi, Stokely

20) Wargin, "Humility as Transcendence."

Carmichael mounted the platform and after arousing the audience with a powerful attack on Mississippi justice, he proclaimed: "What we need is Black Power."²¹ Immediately following this, one of Carmichael's colleagues took to the stage and shouted to the crowd: "What do you want?" to which they shouted in reply: "Black Power."

"So Greenwood turned out to be the arena for the birth of the Black Power slogan in the civil rights movement," writes King.²²

King recalls his concern over the use of the slogan, eventually leading him to call a meeting with Carmichael and McKissick as there appeared to be division among participants over whether the march should be using the slogan "Black Power" or "Freedom Now." The men met for "five long hours" while King "pleaded with the group to abandon the Black Power slogan."²³ It was King's position that, while Black Power was denotatively correct, it carried connotations of violence that were unproductive.

Carmichael and McKissick were unpersuaded. The slogan was not about violence, it was about political power. Moreover, they wanted a slogan that would incite pride in being black and "refute the notion that black is evil and ugly."²⁴ In response, King suggested they use "black consciousness" or "black equality" but these were rejected as they lacked "the ready appeal and persuasive force of Black Power."²⁵

In the end, the three failed to come to agreement. They compromised by agreeing not to use either slogan to ensure the march appeared unified to the press. King recounts the close of the meeting as follows: "Stokely concluded by saying, with candor, 'Martin, I deliberately decided to raise this issue on the march in order to ... force you to take a stand for Black Power.' I laughed. 'I have been used before.' I said to Stokely. 'One more time won't hurt.'"²⁶ In the following pages of the text, King gives a stirring defense of the motivations of those using the Black Power slogan before explaining his reasons for continued dismay over its implementation.

I have drawn on this story and King's treatment of it as an example of his humility for the following reasons. At no point do we see King attempt to dominate or coerce his will, though he felt deeply committed to his position. Rather, King relied on persuasion and sought compromises. Further, King is good-natured about his colleague's attempt to pressure him into taking a stand for the Black Power slogan and, despite his disagreement with their choice, defends the character of those who adopted the Black Power slogan. These behaviors show that King's disposition was the opposite of being self-centered. King was not the kind of person or leader who thought merely of himself and his desires. He worked with other people to achieve goals that were beyond himself. I suggest this demonstrates that King was humble and if King was humble, it cannot be the case that the humble are unable to fight injustice.

King was not afraid to call out injustice on any front. In addition to King's courage in nonviolently accepting unjust beatings by the police, King often called out sympathetic whites for their silence. In his famed letter from Birmingham jail, King chided the "white moderate" who was willing to let injustice continue rather than bother himself with stopping it.²⁷ In *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* King chastises "White America" for being willing to end the brutality against Black Americans, but having "never been truly committed to helping him out of poverty, exploitation, or all forms of discrimination."²⁸

21) King, *Where Do We Go*, 29.

22) *Ibid.*, 29–30.

23) *Ibid.*, 30.

24) *Ibid.*, 31.

25) *Ibid.*, 32.

26) *Ibid.*

27) King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

28) King, *Where Do We Go*, 3.

King's own discussion of humility suggests he saw no contradiction between being humble and actively opposing injustice. In a speech opposing the Vietnam War, King stated the following: "Some of us who have already begun to break the silence of the night have found that the calling to speak is often a vocation of agony, but we must speak. We must speak with all the humility that is appropriate to our limited vision, but we must speak."²⁹ Here King appears to see humility as an important check on a temptation to assume one can grasp more than one in truth is able to grasp. Yet, this check on one's ego does not inhibit one from speaking out against injustice as one sees it; humility is not a weak character trait that inhibits one from engaging in justified social activism.

In *Strength to Love*, King advocates for being both self-assertive and humble, although he acknowledges such traits are rarely paired together.³⁰ He encourages those suffering from racial oppression to be both tough minded and tenderhearted. Tough mindedness is "characterized by incisive thinking, realistic appraisal, and decisive judgment ... a strong, austere quality that makes for firmness of purpose and solidness of commitment."³¹ King goes on to state that "soft-minded individuals among us feel that the only way to deal with oppression is by adjusting to it... . But this is no way out. Soft-minded acquiescence is cowardly."³² Here King paints a stark picture of the character needed to resist social injustice; it is a tough, resilient, and decisive person. Yet this austerity is not inconsistent with humility. Indeed, for King, "life at its best is a creative synthesis of opposites in fruitful harmony."³³

Thus, we can see from the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. that humility is not inconsistent with social activism. The humble person is fully capable of being assertive and outspoken against social injustice. Moreover, the humble person might be best poised for social activism because they do not view their own worth and comfort improperly.

29) King "Beyond Vietnam."

30) King, *Strength to Love*, 1-2.

31) *Ibid.*, 2.

32) *Ibid.*, 7.

33) *Ibid.*, 1.

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