J Value Inquiry (2012) 46:209–222
DOI 10.1007/s10790-012-9337-x

Being Proud and Feeling Proud: Character, Emotion, and the Moral Psychology of Personal Ideals

Jeremy Fischer

Published online: 12 July 2012
© Springer Science+Business Media B.V. 2012

1 Two Puzzles

Moralists have long held ambivalent views about pride. On the one hand, pride is commonly considered an appropriate response to achievements, to family, and to country.[1] We sometimes link pride with self-respect in campaigns for social justice, and some philosophers have even asked whether our lives have meaning in terms of "whether one's life can be seen as a proper source of pride."[2] On the other hand, pride is known in some quarters as the deadliest sin and the root of much that is vicious in the human personality.[3] Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and its cast of apparently vicious proud people provide a familiar expression of this view.[4] John Stuart Mill articulates the puzzling nature of these divergent normative assessments in stark terms when he writes that "pride" is "a name which is given indiscriminately

[1] See Robert Solomon, *The Passions* (New York: Doubleday Press, 1976), pp. 344–347; see also Nancy Sherman, "Aristotle on Friendship and the Shared Life," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 47, no. 4, 1987, and Richard Rorty, *Achieving Our Country* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), pp. 1–38.

[2] Susan Wolf, *Meaning in Life and Why It Matters* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 104; also see W.E.B. Du Bois, "On Being Ashamed of Oneself: An Essay on Race Pride," in David L. Lewis, ed., *W.E.B. Du Bois: A Reader*, (New York: Holt Press, 1995), pp. 76–80; Bernard Boxill, *Blacks and Social Justice*, rev. ed. (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992), pp. 176–179; Jerome Neu, "Pride and Identity," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 22, 1998; and Tommie Shelby, *We Who Are Dark: The Philosophical Foundations of Black Solidarity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005).

[3] See Robert Roberts, "The Vice of Pride," *Faith and Philosophy*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2009; and Gabriele Taylor, *Deadly Vices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[4] See Theodore M. Benditt, "The Virtue of Pride: Jane Austen as Moralist," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2003.

J. Fischer (✉)
Department of Philosophy, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive NW, Calgary, AB T2N 1N4, Canada
e-mail: fischer3@uw.edu

to some of the most and to some of the least estimable feelings of which mankind are capable."[5] That pride is subject to diametrically opposed moral assessments is remarkable and not easily accounted for.

But there is another puzzle about pride that is less widely discussed than this normative puzzle, a descriptive puzzle of how the emotion of pride is related to the character trait of pride. The descriptive puzzle is obscured from plain view, because in English a single name refers to the two sorts of pride. However, once a distinction between the two sorts is acknowledged, a puzzle emerges about how the two are related to each other and why they are called by the same name. Solving the descriptive puzzle is crucial to solving the normative puzzle, since we cannot fully determine the conditions under which pride is praiseworthy or blameworthy prior to determining what pride is.

2 Distinguishing Between the Emotion and the Trait

Let us consider the type of proud, hubristic character that is often portrayed in Greek tragedy. Sophocles begins *Ajax* with Athena tricking the title character into disgracing himself. She induces in him a hallucination that he is exacting revenge on Odysseus when he is, in fact, killing livestock. Athena enjoys this practical joke, but Ajax is so humiliated that he takes his own life. Ajax rarely feels pleased in the play; in fact, he experiences acute shame throughout it. However, it is clear that he feels shame because he is a proud person.

Ajax sparks the anger of Athena by proudly spurning her help. A messenger recounts the story, beginning with what Ajax told his father before departing to fight the Trojans: "'Father, together with the gods even one who amounts to nothing may win victory; but I am confident that I can grasp this glory even without them.' Such a boast as that he uttered; and a second time, when divine Athena urged him on and told him to direct his bloody hand against the enemy, he made answer with these dreadful and unspeakable words, 'Queen, stand by the other Argives; where I am the enemy shall never break through.' By such words as these he brought on himself the unappeasable anger of the goddess, through his more than mortal pride."[6] It is not at all clear whether Ajax feels proud of his military skill. Perhaps he takes it, arrogantly, merely as a matter of course that no enemy will break through his line. But whether or not he feels the emotion, it is clear that Ajax is a proud person, someone who is concerned about his worth to such a degree that he consistently refuses the help of others. The refusal by Ajax of help is principled and runs deep. He believes that the help of someone else would undermine any claim to worth he might have. His concern for self-sufficiency in turn helps to explain his deeply felt shame over the trickery of Athena. Only someone who bases his sense of self-worth

[5] John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in John Gray, ed., *On Liberty and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 140.

[6] Sophocles, *Ajax*, trans. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, *Sophocles, Volume I.: Ajax, Electra, Oedipus Tyrannus* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), ll. 770–784, p. 101.

upon a commitment to complete self-sufficiency would feel ashamed of having been tricked by a god. Ajax kept no human measure.

Ajax is a proud person, even when he does not feel proud of anything and is, to the contrary, in suicidal despair. If an individual is a proud person and a total failure then, it seems, he might never feel the emotion of pride. Thus, feeling proud is not a necessary condition for being a proud person.[7] Feeling proud is also not a sufficient condition for being a proud person. A humble and servile person might feel proud of his ability to anticipate the needs of those who exploit him. Let us consider an example by Thomas Hill, Jr., of a deferential wife, who believes that the proper role of a woman is to be a servant to her family.[8] She defers to the whims of her husband and tends not to form interests of her own. Hill presents her, plausibly, as a paradigm of servility, and the servile are not proud people. But, as Hill notes, people who are servile may feel proud: "No one is trampling on her rights, she says; for she is quite glad, and proud, to serve her husband as she does."[9]

These examples establish that the emotion of pride and the trait of pride are independent in the sense that a person can have the emotion without the trait and the trait without the emotion. They support the conclusion that the emotion of pride is distinct from the character trait of pride. However, the emotion and the trait are conceptually related, and not merely referents of a homonymous term. It is not coincidental that we use the term "pride" to denote two things, in the way that the dual denotation is coincidental in the case of a term like "bark." The group of all proud people overlaps considerably with the group of all people who feel pride. In particular, both sorts of people seem to be concerned with acting well, honorably, and in a superior manner.

3 Dispositional and Normative-Connection Accounts

Perhaps the trait of pride is merely a disposition to feel the emotion of pride. This solution to the descriptive puzzle gains intuitive support from similar examples of emotion-trait pairs: an angry person is someone who is prone to feeling anger, and a sad person is someone who is prone to feeling sadness. What leads us to regard Ajax as a proud person, on this view, is his disposition to feel proud. A proponent of this account of the trait rightly looks to the emotion for guidance and thus avoids the conclusion that the trait and the emotion of pride are conceptually unrelated. However, the example of the deferential wife makes clear that being disposed to feel pride is not sufficient for being a proud person. This account is also incomplete, since proud people are proud partly in virtue of being disposed to feel shame on certain occasions, as when Ajax expresses his pride in the form of his shame-fueled suicide. A proud person is also disposed to be angry with people who insult him and

[7] See David Sachs, "How to Distinguish Self-Respect from Self-Esteem," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 4, 1981.

[8] Thomas E. Hill, Jr., "Servility and Self-Respect," in Hill, *Autonomy and Self-Respect* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[9] Ibid., p. 6.

contemptuous of people whom he regards as contemptible. The shame, anger, and contempt of Ajax flow directly from his proud character. Indeed, in order to discern that Ajax is a proud person we need not know anything of his disposition to feel pride. The shame, contempt, and anger of Ajax are compelling evidence that he is a proud person. This epistemic consideration provides a *prima facie* reason for believing that being disposed to feel shame, anger, and contempt are central to being a proud person. The dispositional account of pride, according to which the trait is merely a disposition to feel the emotion of pride, lacks the resources needed to explain the emotional and behavioral complexity of the trait of pride.

Hume advances a broader dispositional account of the character trait of pride, which he calls "greatness of mind."[10] A great-minded person, Hume notes, feels pride and humility whenever these sentiments are appropriate. Since there is no reason, in principle, why we could not extend the account offered by Hume to include dispositions to experience other emotions in addition to pride and humility, it is worth considering whether such a broader dispositional account provides a satisfactory solution to the descriptive puzzle.

If the account offered by Hume makes sense of the emotional variety of a proud person, it nonetheless does not allow us to make sense of why the emotional dispositions are united under a single trait of character. A truly explanatory account of the trait of pride must allow us to explain why the emotional dispositions hang together as they do, and not merely offer assertions that they do. The emotions share in common some feature such that a person who is disposed to experience them in certain situations is characterized as having the trait of pride. Thus, it is unsatisfying to note merely that the trait of pride is related to the emotion of pride insofar as the trait involves a disposition to experience several emotions, one of which is named pride, because there is reason to believe that the emotion stands in more than a nominal relation to the trait. The broad dispositional account fails to account for the special relation that holds between the trait of pride and the emotion of pride.

Advocates of dispositional accounts face a dilemma. Either the relevant disposition is narrowly limited to feeling pride or, as in the Humean version, it is not so limited. If the disposition is narrowly limited, then the account is susceptible to the example of the deferential wife and omits the fact that proud people are characteristically disposed to feel other emotions in addition to pride. If the disposition is not so limited, then the account fails to provide an explanation of the unity of the character trait and, in particular, why the emotion of pride lies at the core of the trait. In either case the dispositional account is unsatisfactory.

Unlike dispositional accounts, which make dispositions to feel emotions central to the trait of pride, normative-connection accounts focus our attention on particular norms and on the nature of the commitments an individual has to them. On normative-connection accounts, the emotion and the character trait of pride are different ways that a person may be committed to norms that he accepts. A person who feels pride takes himself to fare well with respect to some norm that he accepts; a person who has the character trait of pride is someone who is firmly committed to

[10] See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 378–384.

living in accordance with such norms. Such firm commitment involves, among other things, the dispositions of a person to experience various emotions depending on how he fares with respect to the relevant norm. Normative-connection accounts of pride differ along three axes: first, according to what type of norm is taken to be relevant; second, according to the relevant notion of faring well with respect to a norm; and third, according to the relevant notion of commitment to a norm.

Gabriele Taylor offers a normative-connection account of pride. She argues that the emotion and the trait can both be explained in terms of what a person "for some reason or another thinks she is, or others are, entitled to expect."[11] Taylor calls such expectations norms of expectation, and provides three kinds of examples of such norms: norms given by what an agent expects of his external circumstances, norms given by what an agent expects that he can or cannot do, and norms given by the understanding of the agent of the expectations of others in some area of life.[12] An aristocrat, for example, might expect that she will receive at least one dinner invitation each week, that she will be able to afford a fashionable chauffeured car, and that her social inferiors will defer to her. They are expectations in the epistemic sense of what a person believes will happen, and not in the ethical sense of what a person believes should happen. People might expect, in an ethical sense of expectation, that their children not tell lies while also consistently expecting, in the epistemic sense, that the children will inevitably do so. The expectation-based normative-connection account offered by Taylor employs the latter sort of expectation.

According to Taylor, the difference between the two sorts of pride lies in the sort of relation a person has to her norm of expectation. For an individual to feel proud is for the individual to see himself as an achiever in the sense of having exceeded his norm of expectation. While an aristocrat, on this analysis, would feel proud of receiving three dinner invitations in one week insofar as this would exceed her expectation threefold, a proud person need not think that he exceeds his norms of expectation. Instead, being a proud person typically requires the person to "pitch his expectations high and take it for granted that it is at this level he operates."[13] He takes his superiority for granted and therefore does not typically feel proud of that in virtue of which he is proud. A proud aristocrat does not regard his status as an achievement. Instead, he is proud because he regards aristocratic expectations as superior and takes their fulfillment as a matter of course. In contrast, a person who feels proud of his aristocratic status must have non-aristocratic norms of expectation against which being an aristocrat counts as an achievement. Indeed, for a person to feel proud of his aristocratic status would betray his common stock. According to the expectation-based normative-connection account, the difference between the proud character of an aristocrat and the emotion of pride of a *nouveau riche* aristocrat lies in different relations to different norms of expectation.

[11] Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, Shame and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 41.

[12] Ibid., p. 40.

[13] Ibid., pp. 43–44.

But this cannot be right. Epistemic norms of expectation cannot play the requisite role in an account of pride. Instead, such an account must be based upon ethical norms. The basic charge against the expectation-based account is that it does not allow us to explain the fact that being and feeling proud both involve caring about what makes us proud. The objection constitutes a *prima facie* case for a personal ideals-based normative-connection account. With respect to the trait of pride, let us suppose that Hilary took it for granted that no plumbing disaster was too difficult for him to fix, until he met his match in the form of a broken shower pipe. Hilary pitched his expectations high in several ways. He believed that he was an excellent plumber, that plumbing is an important field of knowledge, and that individuals who, like himself before disaster struck, take for granted their high plumbing aptitude are superior people. In the event, it might be that Hilary is too ashamed of his failure as a handyman to call for a professional plumber. Alternatively, it might be that Hilary calls for a plumber without shame or hesitation and is relieved of the burden to serve as an apprentice for such a grueling career by his newfound self-knowledge. He is just not cut out for that kind of admirable life, he concludes, and that is fine with him. Hilary feels no shame, disappointment, or humiliation upon discovering his ineptitude, and he continues to admire the craft of plumbing.

We would be justified in believing that Hilary is a proud plumber where he is too ashamed to call. Where he does call without shame or hesitation, an attribution of pride in plumbing would be groundless. We would think that Hilary was never a proud plumber, even when he was still confident in his abilities. However, the expectation-based normative-connection account implies that once Hilary discovers his ineptitude, he is humbled and no longer proud, because he no longer takes high plumbing expectations for granted. This is doubly wrong. Where he calls without shame or hesitation, Hilary discovers that he was never a proud plumber insofar as he never cared about being a good plumber. One criterion for determining whether an individual cares about something that he takes for granted is that he would be bothered by the loss of it.[14] As much as Hilary appraised plumbers as superior people, he evidently did not care to measure his life or his character against the ideal of being a good plumber. It appears, then, that an individual is not a proud person in virtue of some fact, unless he cares about it in a way that affects his self-regard. The expectation-based normative-connection account of the trait therefore fails to provide sufficient conditions for being proud. It also fails to provide necessary conditions for being a proud person. In the case where he is too ashamed to call, there is no sign whatsoever that Hilary has been humbled. A genuinely proud person does not cease to be proud upon learning that he can no longer operate at a high level. Upon discovering that the goddess whose help he spurned has tricked him, Ajax loses faith in his heroic self-sufficiency. But it would be incorrect to conclude that Ajax thereby ceases to be proud. Indeed, we would not be able to explain the shame of Ajax if not for the fact that he remains a proud person. Therefore, that a person takes it for granted that he operates at a high level is not necessary for a person to possess the trait of pride.

[14] See Harry Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," in Frankfurt, *The Importance of What We Care About* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

Similarly, with respect to the emotion of pride, exceeding our epistemic expectations is neither necessary nor sufficient for experiencing pride. Let us consider a novice pianist who feels proud of having performed her favorite fugue without committing any major errors. Her feeling of pride might co-exist with a long-held expectation that practice would make perfect. She expected to be able to perform the fugue weeks later and, after weeks of diligent practice, feels proud of having reached her goal. She feels proud despite not exceeding, but only approximating, her epistemic norm of expectation. Exceeding our epistemic expectations is also insufficient for feeling pride. A person who does not care about receiving dinner party invitations or ascending into the aristocracy will not feel pride when the events come to pass, even if they do exceed her expectations. The emotion of pride and the trait of pride have to do with what a person cares about and, in particular with what sort of person the person cares about being.

4 The Personal Ideals-Based Normative-Connection Account

Personal ideals are norms about what sort of character, commitments, concerns, attitudes, and relationships a person should have.[15] Such ideals figure into ethical experience in two ways. Personal ideals influence the deliberation and related pracitical activities of an agent, and personal ideals are used as standards of evaluation. A proud person is characterized in terms of the nature of the practical influence of his ideals; in particular, such a person is firmly committed to living in accordance with his personal ideals. In contrast, feeling proud is a result of an evaluative use of personal ideals that depends on the evaluation being positive and the object of evaluation being the self. This distinction between the practical influence and the evaluative use of personal ideals lays the groundwork for a solution to the descriptive puzzle about pride. The two sorts of pride are bound together by their ties to personal ideals, and they are differentiated from each other by being tied to the ideals in different ways. That the two roles of personal ideals map onto the corresponding two sorts of pride provides further reason to accept the personal ideals-based account of pride.

Having some minimal concern for living in accordance with an ideal is necessary for having an ideal. If we do not care at all about living in accordance with an ideal, then it is not our ideal. Anyone who feels pride cares to some degree about living in accordance with some ideal, even if the person is not committed firmly enough to living in accordance with his ideals to qualify as a proud person. The feeling of pride of a deferential wife would be inexplicable, if she did not care about living in accordance with some ideal. However, though a deferential wife cares about at least one ideal, her activity is objectionable to the extent that she is willing to compromise on and even abandon her non-domestic ideals at the whim of her husband. To the extent that she allows another person to dictate her ends, there is a

[15] See Elizabeth Anderson, *Value in Ethics and Economics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 6.

clear sense in which she is not in general firmly enough committed to her ideals to warrant being described as a proud person.[16]

Being a proud person is having a firm commitment to living in accordance with personal ideals that may take any of several forms such as obsession, loyalty, care, dependency, obedience, fanaticism, idolization, and love. The pride of Ajax consists in an obsession with living in accordance with his heroic ideals to the point of being indifferent to other considerations of importance, such as the devastating impact of his suicide on his wife and child. One aspect that is central to each of these varieties of firm commitment is the principled shaping of the practical reasoning of a person.

A firm commitment to personal ideals shapes the practical reasoning of a person in several general ways implicitly and explicitly. Implicit aspects of the practical influence of ideals include the shaping of the moral perception of a person.[17] Influenced by his firm commitment to his ideals, a proud person sees certain considerations as reasons for action. This influence is implicit in that a proud person need not be thinking about his ideal when he recognizes the considerations as reasons. He will, typically, simply see the considerations as reasons for action. A proud social reformer will tend to see obstacles to his living in accordance with his goals as challenges to be overcome rather than as reasons to give up. A proud gardener will tend to see the wilted condition of his shrubs as a reason to tend to them immediately and not as a reason to find a new hobby. Likewise, a proud person tends to notice certain things in her environment that people who lack pride might neglect. A proud gardener will tend to notice features of his garden that the rest of us may not notice and would not, in general, explicitly consult his ideals in order to determine what he should notice. This conclusion is especially apparent in the negative case: a proud aristocrat does not consult his ideals in order to determine whom he should fail to notice as being beneath him. Finally, the implicit practical influence of an ideal also shapes the affective reactions of an agent to her surroundings. For example, a proud person will be pleased and pained by certain things. She will feel the pang of an insult, and she will be pleased to be recognized for what she accomplished.[18]

The practical influence of an ideal also may be explicit in the practical reasoning of an agent. An explicit appeal to personal ideals in the deliberations of an individual often occurs in deliberation about practical dilemmas. A proud plumber might decide that he cannot throw in the towel because, appealing though it might be to call in the experts, that would signify defeat and a betrayal of his plumbing ideals. Similarly, Ajax explicitly invokes his heroic ideals in deciding what to do: he would measure up badly with respect to them if he were to accept help, appealing though it might be to survive the war unscathed. This thought leads us to the evaluative use of ideals, which is not unrelated to their practical influence. The customary evaluative use of personal ideals is one aspect of a firm commitment to

[16] See Marilyn Friedman, "Moral Integrity and the Deferential Wife," *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 47, no. 1, 1985; see also Marcia Baron "Critical Deference and the Deferential Wife," *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 48, no. 3, 1985.

[17] See Angela Smith, "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," *Ethics*, vol. 115, no. 2, 2005.

[18] See Kristján Kristjánsson, "Pridefulness," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2001.

personal ideals. A proud person is strongly disposed toward taking up this point of view, though even people who are minimally committed to their ideals will sometimes use them evaluatively.

As there are many aspects of living in accordance with an ideal, there are many possible features of a person that we might evaluate with reference to an ideal. For instance, acting in accordance with what an ideal requires and acting for the reasons for which the ideal requires that a person act may provide grounds for the belief of an individual that he is living in accordance with it to at least some degree. Let us consider two people who share the ideal of being a great chef, and who both suppose that becoming a great chef requires gaining entry into a prestigious academy like Le Cordon Bleu. Both students feel proud upon gaining acceptance, but one student wants to attend Le Cordon Bleu for the snobbish reason that all great chefs have attended the school, while the other wants to attend because the school provides the best culinary instruction. The student who wants to attend for the snobbish reason, aware of the fact that her motives are not pure, may nonetheless take pride in having acted in accordance with the ideal of being a great chef, while the student who wants to attend for the quality of the instruction may take pride in having acted for the reason for which the ideal in this case requires that a person act. Both students feel pride based upon their living in accordance with their culinary ideals, but the grounds of their pride are importantly distinct. The practical influence of an ideal may extend beyond the act itself to the reasons for which a person should act.

Living in accordance with a personal ideal may require more than just individual good actions. An ideal may require that a person engage in certain long-term activities, that a person love or care about particular things, or that a person experience certain thoughts and emotions on particular occasions. Inasmuch as being a good parent requires having attentive care for a child over an extended period of time, a primary object of assessment in such cases will be the commitment of a person to the child rather than any single action. A parent who feels proud of his parenting on the basis of the great birthday present that he once delivered is mistaken in thinking that the quality of the parenting of an individual can be assessed from a single act. The many different grounds of feeling proud map onto different aspects of living in accordance with an ideal.[19] A person can feel proud of, among other things, an action, an emotional reaction, a commitment to another person, and having noticed something. Thus, ideals are plainly linked to the emotion as well as to the trait of pride in inextricable ways.

The personal ideals-based account of pride explains how the emotion and the trait of pride merit the same name without obscuring their distinctness. Both sorts of pride are tied to personal ideals. Yet, the practical influence of an ideal is importantly distinct from its evaluative use, since caring about an ideal is compatible with any sort of evaluative use of it. Thus a proud person might feel pride, shame, contempt, anger, or nothing at all. Likewise, someone who only minimally cares about living in accordance with her ideals might nonetheless evaluate herself and others by reference to them.

[19] See Bennett Helm, *Love, Friendship, and the Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Dispositional accounts do not allow us to explain why the trait of pride involves, on the one hand, a disposition to experience several emotions and, on the other hand, a closer conceptual relation to the emotion of pride than to any other of the emotions. The ideals-based account makes plain that proud people are disposed to experience the emotions because they are all responses to matters having to do with the personal ideals of an individual. Shame is a response to a perceived failure of the self relative to her personal ideals.[20] Contempt is a response to an indifference to or gross violation of the personal ideals of a person.[21] Anger is a response to people who interfere with the pursuit of the personal ideals of a person. A proud person will be disposed to feel these emotions when warranted, because he cares about living in accordance with his ideals. What ties the trait more closely to the emotion of pride than to, say, contempt is that when a proud person feels pride, she judges that she achieves what she cares about insofar as she is a proud person. Possessing the trait is being firmly committed to living in accordance with personal ideals, and the emotion involves the self-regarding appraisal of a person as succeeding in living in accordance with the ideals. In this light, it makes good sense that the trait shares the name of the emotion of pride rather than the name of any other emotion, and *vice versa*.

Someone might object that the personal ideals-based account is ill-suited for an explanation of the characteristic sense of superiority over others of a proud person. If the trait of pride did consist of a firm commitment to living in accordance with personal ideals, then we should expect proud people to be concerned with their status relative to their personal ideals rather than concerned with their status relative to other persons. Someone might object further that this tendency toward interpersonal comparison is essential to the trait of pride, that an individual who lacked it would not be a proud person even if she were committed to living in accordance with her personal ideals. Such a person might be idealistic but not proud. The personal ideals-based account appears to leave out a central feature of the character trait of pride.

This objection raises several important issues about the social nature of pride. Personal ideals typically admit of indefinite approximation, which raises the question of where to place the threshold for living in accordance with them. It may be that ideals typically require impossibly high standards such that individuals never succeed in living in accordance with them.[22] Alternatively, the relevant standards of success may be informed by what our peers have been able to achieve. If this is so, then a person who is concerned with living in accordance with her ideals might understandably, if unjustifiably, direct her attention toward living in superiority to others. As well, whether proud people are in fact concerned with interpersonal superiority depends upon which personal ideals are in play. Some personal ideals consist of individualisitc standards of success that resemble zero-sum games.

[20] See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 440–446; see also Cheshire Calhoun, "An Apology for Moral Shame," *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2004.

[21] See Michelle Mason, "Contempt as a Moral Attitude," *Ethics*, vol. 113, no. 2, 2003.

[22] See Nicholas Rescher, *Ethical Idealism: An Inquiry into the Nature and Function of Ideals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

The more that some people succeed, the less others succeed. The individualistic heroic ideals of Ajax leads him to spurn the help of Athena, since the more she helps him, the less he lives in accordance with his ideals. Opposed to such individualistic personal ideals are collective personal ideals, which consist of standards of success that do not reward individualistic pursuit of excellence. Such collective ideals are nonetheless personal ideals insofar as they consist of norms about what sort of character, commitments, concerns, attitudes, and relationships a person should have. One example of a collective personal ideal is the ideal of being a good teammate, according to which personal excellence consists partly in accepting the help of others whenever it would be in the best interest of the team to do so. A proud person who is concerned most of all with individualistic personal ideals may strive for interpersonal superiority where a proud person who is concerned with collective personal ideals would not. Ajax is concerned with being superior to a purportedly worthless man, whereas a proud Achaean who cares most of all about the victory of the Argives over the Trojans would allow Athena to help him, and all Argives, to succeed. The character trait of pride, therefore, is not essentially linked with the concern for superiority. The ideals-based account makes clear the limited conditions under which the link exists.

5 The Normative Puzzle

The personal ideals-based solution to the descriptive puzzle about pride provides a framework that helps us understand and solve the normative puzzle about pride. On the descriptive account, the trait of pride is a firm commitment to living in accordance with personal ideals. This suggests the hypothesis that the normative status of the trait of pride is a function of the normative status of the two elements of the trait, the personal ideals of the proud person and her commitment to living in accordance with those ideals. It is worth considering three types of examples that support this solution to the normative puzzle: examples in which the trait of pride is vicious because of its basis in unworthy ideals, examples in which the trait of pride is vicious because of an inappropriate commitment to personal ideals, and a plausible example of virtuous pride, which exhibits an appropriate commitment to living in accordance with worthy personal ideals. The examples emphasize the relation between being a proud person and feeling contempt for others, because the image of a contemptuous proud person vividly raises normative questions about the trait of pride. The descriptive account of the trait of pride properly focuses our normative evaluation of the character trait upon the commitment of a proud person to the personal ideals undergirding the trait.

Let us consider, as an instance of the first type of example, the proud character of a white supremacist, who believes that members of the white race alone are capable of living up to certain ideals of racial and cultural dominance. Non-white individuals are, according to the bigot, so far removed from living in accordance with the supposed ideals that they deserve nothing but the contempt of the bigot.[23]

[23] See Mason, op. cit., p. 248.

Insofar as the white supremacist endorses a hierarchical conception of race that legitimates the oppression of non-white individuals, his contempt is unwarranted and the white pride from which it emanates is vicious. The source of the vice can be none other than the immoral personal ideals to which the proud racist is devoted. Racial and cultural dominance are not worthy goals and do not provide worthy standards against which we should evaluate people. What makes the bigot a viciously proud person is not merely that he lacks basic respect for certain people, but that his lack of respect is founded upon his firm commitment to immoral ideals. The example of white pride illustrates that the normative status of pride is a function, in part, of the normative status of the personal ideals of the proud person. People who, like Ajax, see their ideals in excessively individualistic terms underscore the point. A dependent person might as well be worthless in the eyes of Ajax, simply because he fails to live in accordance with an individualistic heroic ideal. To reject assistance on account of wanting to stand out from people who are said to be worthless is to express contempt for others based upon an unsound ideal.

The second focus for normative inquiry about the trait of pride is the normative status of the commitment a person makes to living in accordance with his personal ideals. Let us consider, as an instance of the second type of example, an aesthetic snob, who identifies himself as a person with refined aesthetic taste, and an educated snob, who identifies himself as a highly educated person. Neither of these two sorts of snobbery is based upon an unworthy personal ideal; having good aesthetic taste and being highly educated are both reasonable ideals towards which a person might strive. The commitment of a snob to his ideals is vicious, however, insofar as he holds in contempt people who fail to care about such ideals, as well as people who fail to meet them in even a minimal way. The snob would refuse to respect or spend time with his colleagues, his friends, or even his family, if they proved deficient relative to his own ideals. The snob is viciously proud, not because he cares about living in accordance with unworthy ideals but because his commitment to the ideals is fanatical. It is the fanatical nature of the commitment of the snob to his ideals that we condemn, and not his ideals in themselves.[24] This confirms that whether a given trait of pride is virtuous is a function, in part, of whether the commitment of a proud person to living in accordance with his personal ideals is reasonable. In the case of the snob, his commitment unreasonably skews, among other things, his view of who merits contempt. The reasonableness of the commitment of an individual to his personal ideals also depends upon a willingness to compromise his pursuit of an ideal when refusal to do so would be unreasonable. A person is viciously proud if he dogmatically pursues his ideals and refuses to consider compromise under any circumstances. Ajax recklessly spurns the help of someone else and risks the success of the joint enterprise in which he is engaged, because he refuses to compromise his standing relative to his heroic ideals. For similar reasons, Ajax refuses to consider the harmful consequences of his proud actions upon his family members and friends. It is evident from the refusal by Ajax to compromise with others in his

[24] See Thomas E. Hill, Jr., "Social Snobbery and Human Dignity," in Hill, op. cit; see also Nicholas Dixon, "Modesty, Snobbery, and Pride," *Journal of Value Inquiry*, vol. 39, nos. 3–4, 2005.

pursuit of his heroic ideals that he cares too much, relative to other important goods, about living in accordance with his ideals.

With respect to the third type of example, we may wonder whether there are examples of contemptuous, but virtuous, pride. The description by Plato of Socrates in the *Apology* may be a description of such a proud person. Socrates proudly refuses to beg for his life in part because it would constitute a shameful retreat from his reputation as a person committed to philosophical personal ideals. Socrates says: "with regard to my reputation and yours and that of the whole city, it does not seem right to me to do these things, especially at my age and with my reputation."[25] Socrates follows this remark with a clear expression of contempt for people who have begged for their lives: "if those of you who are considered superior, be it in wisdom or courage or whatever other virtue makes them so, are seen behaving like that, it would be a disgrace. . . . I think these men bring shame upon the city so that a stranger, too, would assume that those who are outstanding in virtue among the Athenians . . . are in no way better than women. . . . You should make it very clear that you will more readily convict a man who performs these pitiful dramatics in court and so makes the city a laughingstock, than a man who keeps quiet."[26] According to Socrates, such men demean themselves with shameful conduct that disgraces the state by making it look ridiculous and contemptible. Athenians should condemn and contemn the men, who are "in no way better than women."[27] Socrates has contempt for popular opinion and the force of unjustly exercised power, as well as contempt for women. Finally, Socrates also bears contempt, in an extended sense, for death itself when he identifies himself with Achilles, who "despised death and danger."[28] Such contempt is an expression of the firm commitment on the part of Socrates to live in accordance with his personal ideals and, as such, is an expression of the character trait of pride. Thus, these are the attitudes of a contemptuous proud person.

In order to determine whether Socrates is a virtuously proud person, let us consider whether the personal ideals of Socrates are worthy and whether his commitment to the ideals is reasonable. The personal ideals upon which he draws in the course of his trial are at once intellectual and moral. The commitment of Socrates to ideals of intellectual integrity and moral virtue leads him to resist the authority of common opinion by trusting in the process of reasoning with his jury rather than by, so to speak, appealing to their emotions. The personal ideals are, plausibly, worthy ideals. However, some of his other ideals, beginning with the ideals that undergird his apparent hatred of women, are clearly unworthy and resemble the personal ideals of the white supremacist more than his admirers might like to admit. That the men who beg for their lives seem to Socrates as being no better than women is as powerful a demonstration of his contempt for women as it is of his contempt for those who fear death. Although his historical situation may

[25] Plato, *Apology*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, in John Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 34e2-4, p. 31.

[26] Ibid., 35a-b, p. 31.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 28c8, p. 26.

provide grounds for exculpation, it is plausible that the apparent misogyny of Socrates threatens to compromise the normative status of his proud character. This judgment accords with the personal ideals-based account of pride, since it suggests that the normative status of pride is a function, in part, of the normative status of the personal ideals of the proud person. Only if it is plausible to hold that the praiseworthy intellectual and moral ideals of Socrates can largely be disentangled from his blameworthy ideals, or that the rampant misogyny of ancient Athens somehow exculpates him, can we justify the judgment that his pride is virtuous.

Socrates adheres zealously to his ideals, choosing death rather than several alternatives that demand that he compromise his commitment to his ideals. He appears to hold that his commitment to living in accordance with his ideals ought to be absolute: "wherever a man has taken a position that he believes to be best, or has been placed by his commander, there he must I think remain and face danger, without a thought for death or anything else, rather than disgrace."[29] If "disgrace" means the failure to live in accordance with personal ideals, then this is a claim that in deliberation, nothing is relevant except the standing of a person relative to his personal ideals. Moral praise of the proud character of Socrates is justified if and only if his uncompromising commitment to his worthy personal ideals is morally praiseworthy. Aristotle praises the commitment of a great-souled man to his ideals, saying: "He does not risk himself for small things, or often, because there are few things he values, but for great things he does, and when he does he is unsparing of his life, as one to whom there are some conditions under which it is not worth living."[30] Only if this is justified can we be justified in judging Socrates to be virtuously proud.

The personal ideals-based normative-connection account is explanatorily potent with respect to making sense of pride, both normatively and descriptively. This account makes clear the substantive normative judgments that underlie our normative assessment of pride. The substantive normative judgments concern two matters, the worthiness of the personal ideals of a proud person and the normative status of the commitment of a proud person to his or her personal ideals. This account also helps us to make sense of the conceptual relation between the emotion of pride and the character trait of pride. An individual experiences the emotion of pride only when the individual evaluates herself as living in accordance with her personal ideals; for an individual to possess the trait of pride is for her to be firmly committed to living in accordance with her personal ideals. Thus, when a proud person feels pride, she judges that she achieves what she cares about insofar as she is a proud person. The solution to the descriptive puzzle brings to light the significant fact that the moral psychology of personal ideals involves both the practical influence of ideals and the employment of ideals as evaluative standards.[31]

[29] Ibid., 28d5-e1, p. 27.

[30] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Christopher Rowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1124b7-10, p. 149.

[31] For their helpful comments on earlier versions of this article I would like to thank Angela Smith, William Talbott, David Keyt, Rachel Fredericks, Andrea Woody, Lars Enden, Elizabeth Scarbrough, Ty Mears, Jon Rosenberg, three anonymous referees, and Thomas Magnell, Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Value Inquiry*.