Intellectual Pride

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Several unrelated factors have conspired to make intellectual humility a hot topic – or at least to make "intellectual humility" a buzzword – in contemporary epistemology. First, testimony is a hot topic in contemporary epistemology, and there is something natural-sounding about the idea that deferring to the testimony of another person is a manifestation of humility. Second, the John Templeton Foundation has been generous in its support for research on intellectual humility (or at least for research that is articulated by using the expression "intellectual humility"), with the result that research on intellectual humility is relatively well-funded by contrast with research on many other epistemological topics (e.g. intellectual autonomy). Third, we are at present regularly exposed by our media to vulgar and offensive instances of intellectual arrogance and immodesty – politicians and celebrities are the usual suspects – and it sounds natural to say that humility is an antidote to these vices. Given these three factors, it is understandable why contemporary epistemologists are interested in intellectual humility.

Here I shall argue that, just as there is a virtue of intellectual humility, there is a virtue of intellectual pride, or, alternatively, intellectual magnanimity. How this is possible, given that humility and pride are (in some sense) opposites, will emerge below. If I am right, we should not let the fashionableness of intellectual humility obscure the fact that there is a virtue of intellectual pride. Indeed, an additional diagnosis of the appeal of intellectual humility will emerge: the virtue of intellectual humility is more important for those who are intellectually privileged, while the virtue intellectual pride is more important for those who are intellectually disadvantaged.

1 The virtue of intellectual pride

I assume an account of virtue on which virtues are excellences, such that the schematic form of a virtue is <excellence in φing>, which we can cash out with an Aristotelian formulation: excellence in φing is the character trait comprising the disposition to φ at

the right time and in the right way.[1,2] Thus every virtue (excellence in φing) is associated with a characteristic activity (φing).

I assume an account of intellectual humility on which the *virtue of intellectual humility* is excellence in acknowledging your intellectual limitations. The idea is that *the virtue of humility* is excellence in acknowledging your limitations, and the virtue of intellectual humility is just the virtue of humility as it applies to intellectual matters. Under the heading of your "intellectual limitations" I mean such things as what you do not know or what you do not understand, your prejudices and biases, and your intellectual vices more broadly. Thus manifestations of intellectual humility will include things like the acknowledgement of your ignorance about some question or the acknowledgement of your bias in some domain.

The present account of intellectual humility is a variant on accounts that I offer elsewhere (2012, 2016a) and on an account offered by Dennis Whitcomb and his colleagues (forthcoming). On their account, intellectual humility requires, in addition to excellence in acknowledging your intellectual limitations, excellence in "owning" your intellectual limitations. Given their account of "owning" something (ibid.), this additional requirement is not implausible, although whether it is included will not make a difference here.

However, I think there is an important reason to avoid the implication that the intellectually humble person will typically take responsibility for her intellectual limitations, if "taking responsibility" for something implies assuming oneself to have been causally responsible for it. For we are too often not causally responsible for our intellectual limitations – these often owe much more to nature and nurture than to our own agency. Consider someone whose ignorance of biology is down to the poor quality of the textbooks provided by their public school, or someone whose bias in favor of interpretations of events consistent with their prior self-conception is down to an innate disposition for such bias. I want to say: the virtue of intellectual humility might be manifested by acknowledgement of these limitations, but it would not be manifested by "owning them," in the sense of taking responsibility for them, because, the relevant person was not causally responsible for them.

So much for the account of the virtue of intellectual humility. My account of the virtue

[1] It seems to me that both excellence and individual excellences come in degrees. Given the present assumption, this entails that both virtue and individual virtues come in degrees. This seems right – people are more or less virtuous, more or less courageous, more or less openminded, and so on. This as yet says nothing about the threshold for the attribution of virtue and for the attribution of individual virtues – i.e. about how virtuous a person must be to count as "virtuous," about how courageous a person must be to count as "courageous," about how openminded a person must be to count as "openminded," and so on.

[2] Allow the variable letter "φ" to range over anything that can be done, in the broadest sense of "done," where this includes anything that can be denoted with a gerund, including e.g. believing.

of intellectual pride is modeled on this account, and premised on the idea that humility is to limitation as pride is to strength. The *virtue of intellectual pride*, then, is excellence in acknowledging your intellectual strengths.[3] The *virtue of pride* is excellence in acknowledging your strengths, and the virtue of intellectual pride is the virtue of pride as it applies to intellectual matters.[4] Under the heading of "intellectual strengths" I mean such things as what you know or understand, your cognitive abilities and intellectual powers, and your intellectual virtues more broadly.[5] Thus manifestations of intellectual pride will include things like the acknowledgement of your understanding of some issue or the acknowledgement of your expertise in some domain.

Might pride also comprise excellence in acknowledging the intellectual strengths of others, such as your children or your colleagues, with whom you are connected in some relevant way? I have no objection to this amendment; the trick will be in giving an account of the connection or connections that are "relevant." We should not say that intellectual pride is simply excellence in acknowledge intellectual strengths; it is those intellectual strengths that are associated with you, in some way that requires articulation, that are relevant here. As well, we should take care to distinguish genuinely acknowledging someone else's strengths and acknowledging your own strengths as they are manifested or evidenced in someone else's strengths: this is the difference between being proud of someone else for some property of theirs and being proud of yourself for your role in bringing it about that they have that property.

Whitcomb and his colleagues (forthcoming) use "proper pride" as the name for the virtue of pride. I think this is unnecessary, and potentially misleading. For all virtues are excellences in φing, and thus dispositions to φ properly. If we are talking about the *virtue* of pride, then there is no need to qualify it by calling it "proper." (Our temptation to call the virtue of pride "proper pride" derives, I think, from the fact that Christian ethics uses "pride" as the name for a sinful vice.)

However, perhaps the word "pride" in the expression "proper pride" does not refer to the virtue of pride. Perhaps it refers to pride's characteristic activity: acknowledging your strengths. There is such a thing as the proper acknowledgement of your strengths, but also such a thing as the improper acknowledgement of your strengths; only the former is associated with the virtue of pride. But this is no reason to use "proper pride"

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[3] Cf. Whitcomb et al. forthcoming, §5.2.

[4] There is a sense in which all pride and humility, as understood here, are intellectual, since they essentially involve acknowledgement, which is, in some sense, an intellectual matter. Compare e.g. generosity, which essentially involves something practical, namely, giving or helping. (For a more practical conception of pride and humility, consider Alan Wilson's (2016) account of modesty.) The "intellectual" in "intellectual pride," in the sense that I am employing here, refers to what we might call the *content* of a particular kind of pride, namely, pride about intellectual matters.

[5] To quality as enjoying an intellectual strength, you need not be exceptional or satisfy some particularly demanding standard – a "strength," in the present sense, is any *positive* intellectual property, as determined by salient norms, including a property we might describe in context as merely "adequate" or "satisfactory."

as the name for that virtue, for the same applies to all the virtues. Just as there is such a thing as the proper acknowledgement of your limitations, there is also such a thing as the improper acknowledgement of your limitations; but this does not mean we should use "proper humility" as the name of the virtue of humility. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, when it comes to other putative virtues, such as courage, honesty, and self-reliance.

"Pride" is thus ambiguous; indeed, it is multiply ambiguous, for "pride" is most commonly used to refer neither to the virtue of pride nor to its characteristic activity, but to an emotional attitude – exemplified by e.g. self-satisfaction about some achievement of yours. (The emotional attitude of pride can be proper and improper, which might explain the temptation to use "proper pride" as the name for the virtue of pride, but so too can other emotional attitudes that share a name with a putative virtue, e.g. humility, benevolence, hope, etc.) Although there are obviously important connections between the virtue of pride and the emotional attitude of pride, I will not pursue discussion of those connections here. But it is important to note that the virtue of pride is a character trait, and not an emotional attitude.

My account does not imply that the intellectually proud person will typically take responsibility for their intellectual strengths. It is sometimes argued that you can coherently be proud about something only if you were primarily causally responsible for it; it is thus argued that it is incoherent to be proud of your children for their achievements or proud to be of a particular nationality. I think this is a mistake: there is nothing incoherent about being proud to be gay or being proud to be black, even though people are not primarily causally responsible for being gay or being black. If we are offended by people who are proud of their children or proud to their nationality, we need to look elsewhere for an explanation of what is problematic about their pride. But this probably does not matter: my account of the virtue of intellectual pride does not entail anything about the emotional attitude of pride, e.g. that you can coherently be proud of your intellectual strengths even when you were not primarily causally responsible for them.

We can now see how it is possible that there is a virtue of intellectual humility and a virtue of intellectual pride, even though pride and humility are (in some sense) opposites. The sense in which pride and humility are opposites is that their characteristic activities – acknowledging your limitations and acknowledging your strengths – are (in some sense) opposites. But there is no incoherence is supposing that both are virtues, i.e. excellences. Nor would there be any difficultly in someone's enjoying both of these character traits. Compare excellence in gift giving, which we might call the virtue of generosity, and excellence in gift-receiving, which we might call the virtue of gratitude. Indeed, whenever we can make sense of φing as having an opposite, ψing, excellence in φing with have an "opposite virtue," excellence in ψing.

I say that there is a virtue of pride. Do I deny that pride is vicious or sinful? It seems to me that what people mean when they say that pride is vicious or sinful probably does not contradict what I mean when I say that there is a virtue of pride. All I mean when I say that is that there is such a thing as excellence in acknowledging your strengths.

Those who say that pride is vicious or sinful probably do not deny that. Their use of "pride" does not pick out the virtue of pride, surely, because it would be absurd to claim that a virtue was vicious or sinful.

It may be useful here to note that the names of virtues are typically ambiguous, having two distinct uses. Consider "courage." You might use "courage" as a *virtue term*, such that it means (roughly) excellence in exposing yourself to personal risk. "Courage," in this sense, is synonymous with "the virtue of courage." And in this sense, it is a trivial conceptual truth that courage is a virtue, and so attributions of courage are essentially evaluative (prescriptive, normative). Alternatively, you might use "courage" as a *trait term*, such that it means (roughly) a disposition to expose yourself to personal risk. In this sense, that courage is a virtue is a substantial and controversial claim, and attributions of courage are not essentially evaluative (descriptive, non-normative). So while no one would deny that courage is a virtue, when "courage" is used as a virtue term, it would be perfectly sensible to deny that courage is a virtue, when "courage" is used as a trait term. And, in general, we need trait terms to coherently articulate evaluative questions about traits whose goodness or badness is controversial, e.g. chastity, modesty, and indeed humility and pride. In any event, perhaps the claim that pride is vicious or sinful is best understood as using "pride" as a trait term.

There is another possibility. I say that intellectual pride is excellence in acknowledging your intellectual strengths, but you might think that there is no such thing as excellence in acknowledging your intellectual strengths, in the following sense: there is no right time or right way to acknowledge your intellectual strengths, since it is always wrong to do so. That, you might think, is what it means to say that pride is vicious or sinful. "Excellence in acknowledging your intellectual strengths," on the present proposal, is like "excellence in torturing people for fun." In an awkward sense, there is such an excellence, namely, being disposed to never torture for fun under any circumstances. But in a more natural sense, there is no such excellence. And, so the argument goes, there is likewise no such excellence as "excellence in acknowledging your intellectual strengths." This is a serious challenge, and I aim to meet it in the next section (§2) by defending the utility of acknowledging your intellectual strengths.

It is worth noting here that pride is sometimes also known as magnanimity; consider Hume's illuminating discussion of "greatness of mind," i.e. magnanimity or *megalopsukia*, which he treats as synonymous with "pride."[6] This sense of "magnanimity" is older and, I think, relatively unfamiliar in contemporary English; we would not now say that magnanimity is the opposite of humility, for example. But if the idea of a virtue of intellectual *pride* is too hard to stomach, you may substitute "intellectual magnanimity" for "intellectual pride."

2 The utility of acknowledging your intellectual strengths

There are two reasons to be dissatisfied with the account presented so far (§1).

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[6] *Treatise of Human Nature*, Book III, Part iii, Section 2.

First, to say that there is a virtue of X is, in one sense, trivial. For to say that there is a virtue of X is just to say of some φ that there is such a thing as excellence in φing, and there is a sense in which that is true for any φ whatsoever.

I think what our discussion so far as missed is something like a presupposition of the claim that there is a virtue of X, i.e. that there is such a thing as excellence in φing (for the relevant φ), namely, that excellence in φing is useful for creatures like us. If the claim that there is a virtue of X presupposes that excellence in φing (for the relevant φ) is useful for creatures like us, then the claim is non-trivial – and if it cannot be shown that excellence in φing is useful for creatures like us, then we should not say that there is a virtue of X – even if there is, in some trivial sense.

Let's say that X is a *genuine virtue* only if excellence in φing (for the relevant φ) is useful for creatures like us. One way of thinking about which excellences are useful for creatures like us is to think of every genuine virtue as corresponding to a distinctive human problem – some problem that human beings normally encounter in their lives – or to a distinctive set of human problems, i.e. a sphere or domain of human life, with which the virtue enables its possessor to cope. This way of thinking about excellences is characteristic of Aristotle's taxonomy of the virtues. For example, in defense of the status of "seemliness" as a virtue, he writes:

> Since relaxation is a part of life, and one element of this is amusing diversion, here too it seems that there is a form of tasteful social conduct, namely, saying, and similarly listening to, the right thing in the right way. (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1128a; trans. R. Crisp)

Excellence in saying and listening to amusing things is a genuine virtue, because relaxation is a part of life – and so humans normally encounter the problem of what to say and what to listen to in the context of relaxation, with which problem the virtue of seemliness enables its possessor to cope. To put this another way, genuine virtues are those excellences that enable us to deal with the various aspects of the human condition.[7] There are certain situations, activities, and temptations that are characteristic of human life; the genuine virtues are those excellences that enable us to get through those situations, perform well at those activities, and resist or overcome those temptations.

Thus, our account of the virtue of intellectual pride (§1) seems incomplete, until we can show that intellectual pride enables its possessor to cope with some distinctive human problem, or to otherwise show that intellectual pride is useful for creatures like us.

Second, you might think an account of some individual virtue would help us make some progress towards answering that fundamental philosophical question, "How should I

[7] Note that this is compatible with the idea that one aspect of the human condition is encountering other people who are themselves attempting to deal with the human condition, and thus with the idea that there are "other-directed" virtues, such as compassion.

live?" But our account of the virtue of intellectual pride (§1) does not seem capable of providing any such help. If we seek guidance or advice about how to live, the best our account has to offer would seem to be the injunction to be intellectually proud, in the sense of possessing or manifesting the virtue of intellectual pride, i.e. excellence in acknowledging your intellectual strengths. But this could hardly guide someone in making a decision about what to do, think, or feel, whether in general or in some particular situation. The advice "Be excellent" is like Larry Page and Sergey Brin's preposterous motto "Don't be evil," the triviality of which underwrites Google's amoralism. Be excellent; do things at the right time and in the right way – these imperatives are platitudinous and without substance. (There was a reason the Ten Commandments were more specific.)[8]

Following Aristotle, it is sometimes useful to think of virtues as means between two vicious extremes, one a vice of excess and the other a vice of deficiency. In the case of intellectual pride, we can situate the virtue of intellectual pride as a mean between a vice of excess disposing a person to improper over-acknowledgement of her intellectual strengths – which we could call *intellectual arrogance* – and a vice of deficiency disposing a person to improper under-acknowledgement of her intellectual strengths – which we could call *intellectual timidity*.[9] But this "doctrine of the mean" does not provide practical guidance: knowing that the virtue of intellectual pride is the mean between the vice of intellectual arrogance and the vice of intellectual timidity does not tell us where that mean lies.

Thus, our account of the virtue of intellectual pride (§1) seems incomplete, until we can provide something more by way of guidance for deciding what to do, think, and feel. We want to know something, either in general or in particular cases, about the right time and the right way to acknowledge your intellectual strengths.

These two problems, I submit, have a common solution. To explain the distinctive human problem with which the virtue of intellectual pride enables its possessor to cope, it will suffice to explain when and how manifesting the virtue of intellectual pride is useful for human beings, i.e. to explain when and how acknowledging your intellectual strengths is useful for human beings. (I assume, non-trivially, that individual virtues are useful because their manifestations are useful.) But if we come to know when and how acknowledging your intellectual strengths is useful for creatures like us, we will at least make significant progress towards our goal of knowing the right time and the right way to acknowledge your intellectual strengths.

Our task here is no different from the task facing the defender of any other virtue, e.g. intellectual humility. The defender of the virtue of intellectual humility owes us an

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[8] Granted, the injunction to be intellectual proud does have at least this much content: it implies that there is a right time and a right way to acknowledge your intellectual strengths. The injunction might thus serve as a reminder of this point, as against the idea that e.g. acknowledging your strengths is always wrong.

[9] Intellectual arrogance and intellectual timidity are also naturally understood as the vices of deficiency and excess, respectively, corresponding to the virtue of intellectual humility (cf. Hazlett 2012, p. 220, Whitcomb et al. forthcoming, §5.2).

account of the distinctive human problem with which the virtue of intellectual humility enables its possessor to cope, along with insight into the right time and the right way to acknowledge your intellectual weaknesses. And the same, *mutatis mutandis*, for defenders of other virtues.

I shall argue that acknowledging your intellectual strengths is useful in at least three types of situations.

First, consider learners in *educational contexts*. Most teachers are familiar with students who are over-confident about their intellectual achievements and abilities, but most are equally familiar with students who are under-confident about their intellectual achievements and abilities. Students sometimes do not know what they know, or that that what they know is relevant or significant, and they sometimes underestimate their capacities, or fail to recognize that their capacities are relevant or significant.

In one kind of case, students suffer from we might call low intellectual self-esteem – a negative evaluative attitude towards their own intellectual achievements and abilities. Imagine a student, Kevin, who is inclined to drop his introductory-level American history course because, as he puts it, he "knows nothing about American history." He is basing this conclusion on the fact that he has struggled with the assigned readings for the course and that he got a bad grade on the first exam. Actually, it turns out, he knows a fair bit about American history: he knew a thing or two coming into the course, and managed to get something out of the readings, despite finding them difficult. Kevin's negative experiences have caused him, in effect, to "forget" how much he knows about American history.[10] Depending on the further details of the case, what may be needed here is for Kevin to acknowledge an intellectual strength of his, namely, his (admittedly limited and incomplete) knowledge of American history. It is possible that Kevin can do well in and get a lot of out of the course, if he redoubles his efforts, but to get to that point, he needs to know that additional effort will be worthwhile, and to know that, he needs to know that he already knows quite a bit about American history.

In another kind of case, students suffer from having an overly narrow conception of what is relevant or significant in a particular educational context. Imagine a student, Seimone, who is assigned to write an essay for a sociology course on elitism in popular culture. The suggested readings associated with the paper are dense, full of academic jargon that she does not understand, and employ mostly examples from film and television, with which she is relatively uninterested. However, what she is forgetting is her years of experience working as a barista at the local Starbucks, which has provided her with observational knowledge of customers' behavior and inside knowledge of how the company sells its products. Starbucks is part of popular culture – she may not realize this – and her personal experience working there puts her in an ideal position to think and write an insightful essay about elitism in popular culture. Unaware of this, however, she feels like she will be unable to do the assignment well. Depending on the further details of the case, what may be needed here is for Seimone to acknowledge an intellectual strength of hers, namely, her experience working at Starbucks. It is possible for Seimone to write a good essay for her sociology assignment, but to do that, she needs

[10] Cf. Radford 1966.

to choose her topic and approach well, but to do that, she needs to know the academic relevance of her non-academic work experience.

Second, consider people who are *intellectually marginalized* in virtue of their membership of some intellectually marginalized group. Intellectual marginalization" can include such things as lack of access to information or educational resources, stereotypes of inferior intelligence or of low intellectual potential, underrepresentation in public discourse, and lack of credibility. One possible negative consequence of intellectual marginalization is a loss of confidence about your intellectual achievements and abilities. Consider a case described by Jeremy Wanderer (2012, §II; cf. Jones 2002, Fricker 2007, Chapters 1 and 2): on account of implicit racial bias, a swimmer ignores a lifeguard's warning that there are sharks in the water. There are several ways in which "testimonial injustice" of this kind is problematic, including the insult or disrespect directed at the speaker and the exclusion of the speaker from public discourse, but my focus here will be on one particular kind of harm that can be done to the speaker in cases of testimonial injustice, namely, a loss of confidence about their intellectual achievements and abilities. If you have told someone that p, their failure to believe that p can often be interpreted as evidence that you do not know whether p, and repeated ignorance or rejection of what you say can often be interpreted as evidence that you are unreliable. It is easy to imagine a version of the lifeguard case in which he interprets the swimmer's ignorance of his warning as evidence that he may have been wrong about whether there are sharks in the water. (In Wanderer's real-life version, there is no threat of this, as the swimmer is swiftly gobbled up by the sharks.)

One reason it is easy to interpret someone's ignorance or rejection of what you tell them as evidence that you may have been wrong has to do with the interpersonal nature of telling. To tell someone that p is to invite them to believe that p on the basis of your having told them that p. We are familiar with the extent to which accepting such an invitation involves trust and a commitment to or assumption of the trustworthiness of the speaker, but offering such an invitation involves something analogous: we tell things only to those whom we think competent to reasonably accept what we say. As Wanderer (2012) notes, "The lifeguard's testimony strives to rationally motivate acceptance of the claim made, to provide reasons which would both explain and justify the swimmer's coming to form the belief." (p. 151) This is one way in which telling is distinguished from mere saying. We do not tell things to creatures incapable of understanding what we are saying, even if we sometimes do say things to them, and we do not tell things to people whose prejudice, bias, or obstinacy reveals their incompetence at evaluating what other people tell them, even if we do sometimes say things to them. To tell someone something is to manifest some degree of intellectual respect for them. This is why their not believing what you tell them is often plausibly interpreted as evidence against your intellectual achievements and abilities. If you ignore or reject what I have told you, someone I thought competent to reasonably accept what I said has ignored or rejected what I said – and that is naturally taken as evidence that I do not know what I am talking about.

However, whether the target of testimonial injustice loses their confidence about their intellectual achievements and abilities will depend on their antecedent disposition to

acknowledge their intellectual achievements and abilities. It may be possible to avoid the harms described here by maintaining your confidence that e.g. you know what you are talking about. We can imagine two versions of the lifeguard, depending on the whether he is disposed to doubt, on the basis of the fact that the swimmer ignored his warning, that there are sharks in the water. Given the presence of racist swimmers on his beach, the more confident disposition has something going for it.

Third, consider *interlocutors who disagree*. You might think that acknowledging your intellectual strengths would be bad *vis-à-vis* engagement with disagreement, on the grounds that interlocutors can engage in civil and productive dialogue only when they acknowledge their intellectual limitations. But that premise is consistent with the view that acknowledging your intellectual strengths can be good *vis-à-vis* engagement with disagreement. Disagreement, especially disagreement with a rhetorically-skilled or masterful interlocutor, can put pressure on you – I mean psychological, rather than rational or evidential pressure – to abandon your position. There are at least three kinds of situation in which such capitulation is problematic.

Consider, first, cases of mutually recognized reasonable disagreement. The possibility of such cases is controversial in contemporary epistemology; I have defended this possibility elsewhere, on the grounds that what it is reasonable for an individual to believe often depends on their inherited worldview, perspective, or frame of reference.[11] When Teodoro and Maribel contemplate the Lower Falls at Yellowstone, they respond differently: Teodoro, a devout Catholic, thinks that the majesty of the falls is a mark of their divine creation; Maribel, a committed humanist, thinks that it isn't. On my view, with relevant details filled in, both Teodoro and Maribel have reasonable beliefs about the falls, even after discussion and argument, and even after explaining the origins of their disagreement. Because both of their beliefs are reasonable, neither should change their mind about the majesty of the falls. But both may feel pressure to do so. An obvious means of resisting such pressure is for each to recognize and bear in mind the reasonableness of their belief.

Consider, second, cases of polarization or entrenchment, and in particular such cases in which a reasonable compromise position lies between two extreme positions, each of which has something going for it, which are adopted by the disagreeing parties. Consider an unrealistically simple and more-or-less schematic example: Senator Eslami proposes increasing the minimum wage to $15 per hour as a means of combatting income inequality; Senator Feng proposes decreasing the minimum wage to $5 per hour as a means of driving down unemployment. Let's assume that both have a point – a high minimum wage will narrow the gap between hourly employees and the wealthy, a low minimum wage will result in more hiring – and that the best policy lies in the middle: a $10 minimum wage. If all goes well – a big "if" – debate will lead the two Senators to that compromise position. What has any of this to do with acknowledgement of intellectual strengths? It seems to me that both Senators need to keep in mind the fact that their position has something going for it, that it is motivated by considerations that ought to be taken into account. Compromise requires both the

[11] Hazlett 2014.

willingness to moderate one's position *and* the resolve not to capitulate. If neither party will budge, then compromise is impossible, but if either party gives too much ground, the important insight of their position will be lost, and the *reasonable* compromise position will not be reached.

Consider, finally, cases of collective inquiry based on the aggregation of independent inquiries on the part of the individual members of the group (or on the part of separate groups of individual members of the group). Such cases range from the mundane – e.g. ensuring a correct arithmetic calculation by having several people do the calculation separately – to the significant – e.g. the classical liberal idea that a vigorous and earnest contest of opinions (to borrow a phrase that Mill used to make a related point) is the best way for a group of people to inquire about important moral, political, and social questions. Collective inquiry of this kind requires independence on the part of individuals, premised on the idea that such independence will benefit the group overall.[12] But independent individual inquiry requires a particular kind of engagement with disagreement, where there is disagreement between individual members of the relevant group. In such circumstances, individuals cannot treat disagreement per se as a reason to abandon or amend their positions; to make their proper contribution to the collective inquiry, they must remain independent. But this can be difficult, especially in those cases in which you are aware that you defend a minority position, as when you come to reject some orthodoxy or conventional wisdom. Consider the position of the 100 signatories of the Declaration of Sentiments at Seneca Falls in 1848, which asserted the moral, legal, and political equality of women and men, launched the women's rights movement, and included the memorable observation that "the history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpation on the part of man toward woman."[13] Among many other properties, one impressive feature of the Declaration of Sentiments is the extent to which its assertions were controversial, unpopular, unorthodox, and indeed offensive – the *Oneida Whig* (August 1st, 1848) called the Seneca Falls Convention "the most shocking and unnatural incident ever recorded in the history of womanity." Signing the Declaration of Sentiments took (I imagine) a fair amount courage and guts, and *believing* in what the Declaration of Sentiments said took (it seems to me) a great deal of confidence, just to believe something so much at odds with what nearly everyone else around you believed. How then does this connect up with our issue of acknowledgement of intellectual strengths? Consider the signatories of the Declaration of Sentiments as individuals engaged in the kind of collective inquiry described above. Their confidence, we can easily imagine, was not merely a matter (if it was even a matter) of their degree of belief, of knowing that they were right, or of knowing that they knew that they were right, but a matter of knowing that they were capable of arriving at reasonable conclusions, that they had arrived at their conclusions sincerely and carefully, that their Declaration was a legitimate contestant in the liberal contest of opinions.

I have argued so far that acknowledging your intellectual strengths is useful for people in (at least) three types of situation: for people in educational contexts, for people who

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[12] See Hazlett 2016b.
[13] http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html

are intellectually marginalized, and for interlocutors who disagree. In all three of these kinds of situations, the failure to acknowledge your intellectual strengths is problematic.

This idea is further supported by the consideration of certain cases that are instances of all three of these types of situation – I have in mind the situations of intellectually marginalized college students who encounter the expression of offensive opinions by other members of their academic community. On American university campuses, student protests targeting offensive speech have attracted relatively unusual media scrutiny in recent years, with many commentators lamenting the state of higher education and criticizing student protesters as "crybullies,"[14] as "coddled" children[15], or as representatives of a new "victimhood culture."[16] My aim here is to explain the utility, in these situations, of students acknowledging their intellectual strengths.

Before proceeding, however, it's worth noting that intellectually marginalized college students encounter and protest many things that are not instances of offensive opinion or speech – non-diverse faculties, for example. My discussion here concerns students' engagement with offensive disagreement – i.e. disagreement over offensive opinions – and not students' engagement with other manifestations of institutional racism and sexism.

What you think is or would be useful in the relevant cases of offensive disagreement will depend on what, if anything, you find problematic about them. You might think that the only problem in the relevant cases is that the student protesters are wrong – wrong that Calhoun College ought to be renamed, for example. This roughly "right wing" view, which jibes more or less with the criticisms mentioned above, would prefer it if the protests simply stopped and things returned to "normal." Alternatively, you might think that the only problem in the relevant cases is that university administrators have not agreed with the protesters – about renaming Calhoun College, for example. This roughly "left wing" view sees institutional reform as the "solution" to the "problem." My argument here is premised on a different kind of worry, which has to do not with whether students' views in the relevant cases are right or wrong, but with the form that their articulation of those views takes. Here I think it is worth thinking about what, if anything, seems novel about the current climate of protest. It is not that students disagree with their teachers and administrators, nor that they object to university policies, nor that they are easily and frequently offended. It is rather something like this: in the relevant cases, rather than merely engaging critically with those with whom they disagree, students are demanding a kind of validation or endorsement from some third party. Think, paradigmatically, of the demand that those guilty of offense be institutionally sanctioned in some way, e.g. that a professor expressing or manifesting in speech racist stereotypes be fired. As a university teacher, it is the disposition to seek third-party confirmation that is most troubling about the relevant cases. It is the idea

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[14] http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-rise-of-the-college-crybullies-1447458587
[15] http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/
[16] http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/the-rise-of-victimhood-culture/404794/

that, when I say something wrong or foolish or offensive to my students, they might not jump at the chance to correct me, to argue with me, that they might not relish that opportunity to prove me wrong, but might prefer merely to object to others, perhaps to ask that I be censured in some way. The appeal to a third party seems to replace the heart and soul of intellectual life – debate, dialogue, conversation – with a legalistic and bureaucratic proxy of intellectual life – the judgment of an impartial mediator.

In any event, I want to say that this disposition to seek third-party confirmation, when it is present, can be mitigated by acknowledgement of your intellectual strengths. What may be missing in at least some of the relevant cases is a firm and sincere belief in your ability to participate in debate, dialogue, and conversation – or (for short) the ability to participate in intellectual life. When you are confident of that ability, critically engaging with a disagreeing interlocutor is appealing than winning the endorsement of any third party. In as much as such critical engagement is valuable, intellectual pride will be manifested by an acknowledgement of your ability to participate in intellectual life.

This could just as well be put by saying that intellectual pride can ground or partially constitute intellectual self-trust or intellectual self-respect, understood as involving a positive evaluation of yourself as a thinker, an inquirer, and as a member of a community of thinkers and inquirers.[17] Without a disposition to acknowledge your intellectual strengths, you can lose your sense of yourself as a capable thinker, a good inquirer, and a valuable member of your intellectual community.

Is the ability to participate in intellectual life really an "intellectual strength"? We should not deny this ability the status of an "intellectual strength" on the grounds that it is widespread or even universal among the members of some relevant population – achievements can be common, abilities can be ubiquitous, strength can be equally distributed.[18] Nor should we deny this ability the status of an "intellectual strength" on the grounds that we are not typically responsible for possessing it (cf. §1) – an innate strength is a strength nonetheless. Vicious timidity is sometimes manifested by a failure to acknowledge your relatively unexceptional intellectual powers; we often notice a symptom of this: someone who is overly deferential or intellectually subservient.

I have suggested that intellectually marginalized students' abilities to participate in intellectual life sometimes go unacknowledged, and that intellectual pride is a promising remedy for that problem. But this should not be taken to mean that intellectually

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[17] Cf. Foley 2001, Jones 2002, pp. 163-5.

[18] In some cases, however, an ability to participate does not deserve to be called a "strength" in the first place: consider a singing contest in which participants must simply pay an entry fee, even if they fail to make a sound; the ability to participate in such a contest is, at least, not a *musical* strength. But intellectual life is unlike such a singing contest: mere participation is a kind of achievement, requiring active engagement, interpersonal interaction, mutual comprehension and understanding, etc. In this respect, intellectual life, if it is similar to a competition, is more like a competitive game: to even participate in a game of basketball (as opposed to, say, entering a basketball tournament) requires the exercise of both general athletic ability and skills specific to basketball.

marginalized students' abilities to participate in intellectual life are not often undermined or rendered ineffectual by the institutions and practices that constitute their marginalization, nor that intellectually marginalized students' intellectual abilities are often compromised, whether through neglect or through erosion, by the institutions and practices that constitute their marginalization. Students' acknowledgement of their intellectual strengths is not going to diminish their teachers' implicit biases or their administrators' unconscious employment of stereotypes. My speculation is relatively modest: it is that intellectual pride can ground critical engagement with offensive disagreement.[19] (And it's worth mentioning that such critical engagement would mean a continuation, not an end, to the unrest seen in recent years.)

That "pride" is sometimes understood as synonymous with "magnanimity" (cf. §1) is illuminating here. For we commonly think of the magnanimous person as calm, unperturbed, or level-headed. The magnanimous person is not overly disturbed by insults, slights, harms, and wrongs again her – which is not to say that she is not disturbed by these things. This picture of magnanimity has informed my sketch of the application of the concept of the virtue of intellectual pride to the case of engagement with offensive disagreement.

Note well that the virtue of intellectual humility is not what is needed in these cases. What is needed is not an acknowledgement of limitations, but of strengths. Indeed, there is a sense in which an excess of intellectual humility is part of what is problematic in these cases, if "intellectual humility" is understood as a trait term (§1) meaning (roughly) a disposition to downplay or de-emphasize your intellectual strengths. Intellectual humility, in that sense, is appropriate in some situations, but not, it seems to me, in the situation of intellectually marginalized college students. And, in that context, the advice to "be humble" seems at least problematic, if not harmful.

A final point in defense of the utility of acknowledging your intellectual strengths comes from a familiar phenomenon of political discourse: pretended intellectual humility. I have in mind insincere implications of ignorance made for political purposes, such as the suggestion of so-called "climate change skeptics" that we do not yet know the causes of global warming, or Donald Trump's call for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on." It is tempting to reply that, even if we are unsure what is causing global warming, we ought to play it safe and reduce our carbon emissions, or that, even if we do not know "what is going on" when it comes to Muslims seeking entry into the United States, a religious test for entry into the United States would be immoral. But those concessions, it seems to me, are unnecessary and potentially dangerous. A much better reply is that we know full well what is causing global warming – namely, carbon emissions -- and that we know full well "what is going on" when it comes to Muslims

[19] It is beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss other apparent conditions for successful critical engagement, including a reasonable confidence that interlocutors will hear your voice, take your opinions seriously, and not sanction you for expressing them – we could call this intellectual safety, which seems to require something like trust in or civic friendship with your interlocutors.

seeking entry into the United States – namely, nothing of consequence – and that the aforementioned implications of ignorance are utterly false. But this is just to acknowledge what we know, i.e. one of our intellectual strengths.

3 Intellectual pride and intellectual disadvantage

I turn now to two objections, each of which suggests a disparity between intellectual humility and intellectual pride, which might undermine the idea that there is a virtue of intellectual pride "just as" there is a virtue of intellectual humility (§1). This discussion will lead us to a diagnosis of the relative appeal of intellectual humility (by contrast with intellectual pride).

First, you might object that human beings are more responsible for our limitations, including our intellectual limitations, than we are for our strengths, including our intellectual strengths. Our strengths, so the argument might go, we owe to others – to our families, to our communities, to God – whereas our limitations are our own fault. Intellectual humility is therefore appropriate, but intellectual pride is not.

I reply, first, that my account does not imply that we are as responsible for our strengths as for our limitations, since acknowledgement of your strengths does not imply causal responsibility for them (§1). But I also reply, second, that we are not more responsible for our limitations than we are for our strengths. In the case of intellectual strengths and limitations, we owe our intellectual limitations as much to others as we do our intellectual strengths. I think the reason it seems otherwise is that we are implicitly adopting a perspective of *intellectual privilege* – we imagine someone raised in a safe and loving environment, provided with nutritious food, internet access, books, high-quality education from an early age, time for study and reflection, etc., and it seems plausible that *that person* would be responsible for their intellectual limitations. But imagine instead someone raised amid violence, separated from their family, hungry, without access to information, without access to education, etc., and that conclusion no longer seems plausible. The apparent disparity between strength and limitation is not a necessary and absolute truth of human nature, but a contingent and relative truth of intellectual privilege.

Second, you might object that human beings are naturally proud creatures, and not naturally humble creatures. We are, you might argue, both naturally disposed to acknowledge our strengths, including our intellectual strengths, and naturally disposed not to acknowledge our limitations, including our intellectual limitations. Given our human nature, the failure to acknowledge your intellectual limitations is more of a threat, more of a temptation, and thus more of a worry, than the failure to be proud. In light of this, so the argument goes, there is more of an urgent need for the virtue of intellectual humility than there is for the virtue of intellectual pride.

I reply, first, that the present objection wrongly focuses on vicious deficiency in acknowledge your intellectual limitations, at the expense of vicious express in acknowledging your intellectual strengths. The virtue of intellectual humility is needed to avoid the former, but the virtue of intellectual pride is needed to avoid the latter (cf. §1). But I also reply, second, that this apparent disparity between intellectual pride and

intellectual humility is, again, an artifact of implicitly adopting a perspective of intellectual privilege. The disposition to acknowledge your intellectual strengths and to not acknowledge your limitations may be typical for those who are intellectually privileged, but the disposition to acknowledge your intellectual limitations and to not acknowledge your intellectual strengths is typical for those who are intellectually disadvantaged. Humans are naturally proud – perhaps humans are naturally disposed to pride when exposed to conditions of privilege, but such exposure is not the state of humans per se. As above, this all depends on what we imagine when we imagine "a human being." In academic epistemology I think there is a temptation to imagine someone relatively rich and well-educated, a reflective and intelligent person, perhaps a university professor. Indeed, *that person* will be more tempted to not acknowledge their intellectual limitations than to not acknowledge their intellectual strengths. But if we imagine not an intellectually privileged person but an intellectually disadvantaged person, that no longer seems clear.

The implicit adoption of a perspective of privilege is what makes the critique of student protesters as coddled crybullies (§2) seem plausible at first glance. The ability to critically engage with offensive disagreement is not an innate talent that only pernicious "coddling" could subvert, but rather an acquired skill, the development and exercise of which are conditioned by access to education, physical and financial security, acculturation and training, and (so I have been arguing here) a sense of intellectual self-confidence. Intellectual virtue is not the state of nature for human beings; it has to be acquired, taught, constructed, encouraged, and fostered. Those who are lucky enough to enjoy a modicum of intellectual virtue should not begrudge those whom bad luck has left them with less.

Recall a familiar charge made by social epistemologists against Descartes' *Meditations*: when we begin by imagining ourselves alone, by the fire, we ensure epistemological reflections that downplay or ignore our intellectual reliance on other people. My argument here has the same structure: when we begin by imagining an intellectually privileged person, we ensure epistemological reflections that downplay or ignore the situations and needs of the intellectually disadvantaged. Against that imaginative background, it sounds right that intellectual humility is an important, perhaps a cardinal, virtue. But if we change that starting point, imagining instead an intellectually disadvantaged person, intellectual pride emerges as a virtue that is (at least) equally important.

4 Conclusion

I have argued that, just as there is a virtue of intellectual humility, there is a virtue of intellectual pride (§1), defended the utility of acknowledging your intellectual strengths (§2), and sketched a diagnosis of the relative appeal of intellectual humility (by contrast with intellectual pride) (§3).[20]

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