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Anxiety, Guilt, and Pride in Parenthood: A Review of *The Moral Psychology of Guilt*, *The Moral Psychology of Pride*, and *The Moral Psychology of Anxiety*

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Abstract

Parenthood is filled with emotions. In this review, I evaluate three edited collections – one on anxiety, one on guilt, and one on parenthood – from the perspective of a parent. I discuss themes raised in the three books to illuminate real-life experiences, while using these experiences to evaluate positions and arguments presented in these articles.

Keywords: anxiety, guilt, pride, parenthood, emotions, ethics

Whether it's something you're greatly anticipating, something you're fearing, something you don't get any fulfilment from, something you regret, or something you find the most fulfilling and joyful experience of your entire existence, it's clear that becoming a parent is wrought with emotions. If you're capable of feeling emotions at all, then you'll feel some mix of emotions on learning you're going to become a parent, on actually becoming a parent, and then throughout being a parent.

There's no one single way of being a parent and no one single way of emotionally experiencing parenthood. Some people will have dread, fear, regret, sadness, and others will have anxiety, joy, guilt, shame, and pride. And others will have a mix of these two, or even an entirely different combination of emotions. So, it's clear that the emotional *reality* of parenthood is diverse—that is, how people emotionally experience parenthood is often very different. There may be some unifying features to what people actually experience, but we shouldn't assume there's anything that unifies these experiences before we've investigated them. And even if there are some unifying features to the emotional reality of parenthood—for example, perhaps all or most parents feel joy when they see their child walk for the first time—this doesn't alone tell us about the emotional *oughts* of parenthood. That is, a mere description of what emotions people feel, or typically feel, with respect to parenthood isn't going to tell us what they ought to feel. It might even be that there isn't any one way that people ought to feel about parenthood. Of course, that's not to say that there isn't some way people ought (or ought not) to feel about parenthood. We just shouldn't assume we can discover an emotional ought from an emotional is.

Where can we look for the answers? Our everyday experiences and the empirical sciences are natural places to look for answers about the emotional reality of parenthood. But the empirical sciences, at least, don't answer the normative question of the emotional oughts, including whether there are any, of parenthood. Philosophy, on the other hand, deals in precisely these normative questions (along with a range of other questions). Even more useful is a subdomain of philosophy that intersects and overlaps with at least empirical approaches to understanding emotions—namely, moral psychology.

It's here that I want to turn my attention to three excellent collections of essays in moral psychology—one on anxiety, one on guilt, and one on pride—published by Roman & Littlefield, and their overall series, edited by Mark Alfano. While the essays in these collections are all academic, scholarly essays, my way of reading and evaluating them will be much more focused on how they capture the emotional reality and normativity of parenthood. My focus will be on my own experiences as a parent, and here I again want to emphasise that I do not want to assume my experiences are universal, typical, or even idiosyncratic or atypical. They are mine, and I make no claim otherwise. I do hope that these experiences are relatable, and if not, at least minimally understandable. To be clear, my intention is to discuss themes raised in the three books to illuminate real-life experiences, while using these experiences to evaluate positions and arguments presented in these articles, much more than evaluating each article on its own merits.

Let's start with anxiety, an emotion I take to be predominant for many parents. *The Moral Psychological of Anxiety* (2024; edited by David Rondel and Samir Chopra) explores a range of themes about and related to anxiety. My starting point is when I first found out I was going to be a parent.

I was excited. I'd always wanted to have children. That excitement was soon overshadowed when all the details of actually parenting started to permeate my initial excitement: "What does she need to eat?" "What if she doesn't eat?" "How do you get a baby to eat if they don't want to eat?" "What clothes does she need?" "How will I know if she's too hot or too cold?" "How do you clean a baby?" "Will she be a good sleeper?" "What if she's not a good sleeper?" "Will I be able to cope with sleepless nights?" "...with constant crying?" "Will I be able to be calm and provide the comfort that she'll need?" "Maybe giving her milk will help calm her, but what if it doesn't?" And so on.

These thoughts arise from, or perhaps even constitute, anxiety. They are clearly *about* something, and so at least a kind of anxiety seems to cross (what for most philosophers of emotions is—but see below for an exception) a basic threshold for an affective state being an emotion—namely, having intentionality (being about something). But in another way, my pre-parental anxiety may not seem like an emotion. It is not particularly short-lived or episodic, and rather lingers, occasionally being a mere background whimper, before arising again and enclosing me in a whirlpool of unanswerable questions, or questions that lead to other questions, eventually leading to an unanswerable question, or an unsatisfactory answer (to put it mildly).

We might then be prompted to think that anxiety is rather a *mood* than an emotion (Rossi and Tappolet 2024). While there are different ways of characterising moods, a common one is that moods are not about anything. Moods can lead to emotions that are about something, but a mood itself is not about anything. This would seem to rule out the idea that my above-described feelings were anxiety, since they seem to be about something. Here, though, we could say that my anxiety—a mood—leads to an emotion closely related to it. On this suggestion, my anxiety has produced *fear*. My thoughts, then, arise from anxiety, but are all fearful thoughts. But this seems like it doesn't quite characterise my thoughts as they are. Fear is thought to lead to evasion—namely, fight, flight, or freeze. Basically, I either try to fight what's making me feel fear, run away

from it, or freeze and be unable to do anything. I certainly *also* felt fear at times while my pre-parental anxiety was drumming through almost every waking moment before becoming a parent, but it seems to me that I felt more than just fear; I also felt anxiety, and my anxiety also seemed to be about something—namely, various aspects of becoming a parent.

In their discussion of anguish, Mauro Rossi and Christine Tappolet (2024) provide a suggestion that I think helps to make sense of my pre-parental anxiety. They propose that anguish involves an *epistemically undetermined object*—that is, that anguish is about something that isn't, at least initially, obvious to the subject of anguish. Consider the case they discuss from *The Brother's Karamazov*—namely, Ivan Karamazov's feelings when he returns to his father's home just prior to his father's murder. Ivan Karamazov feels that something isn't right following his conversation with his stepbrother Smerdyakov, the person who will, it turns out, murder the Karamazov patriarch. Ivan can't quite pinpoint *about what* he feels anguish (Rossi and Tappolet's chosen term for the Russian concept of *toska*). This makes his anguish different from many emotions that have an epistemically determined object—that is, an object that is apparent to its subject, such as being anxious about becoming a parent.

Given that my anxiety has a clear object to me, it may not be clear how Rossi and Tappolet's analysis of anguish can illuminate my pre-parental anxiety. While my anxiety has a *general* object (becoming a parent), it seems to shift around to more *specific* objects (specific aspects of parenting). Rossi and Tappolet's analysis of anguish can potentially be adapted to explain how anxiety's object can move around, while still being the same experience of anxiety, rather than new experiences of anxiety. In this way, we could understand my anxiety as deepening rather than me simply getting anxious about more things. While Ivan Karamazov mentally searches for the object of his anguish, he is consciously feeling anguish. On the other hand, my anxiety has an object, but not one that "satisfies" me such that I keep searching for more specific objects. So, similar to but not exactly like Ivan's anguish, my pre-parental anxiety led me to search for *other* objects—that is, for other things to be anxious about.

There's another way that my pre-parental anxiety may be more directly similar to Ivan's anguish. There were times when I felt anxiety, but it wasn't clear what I was anxious about. As someone who has felt seemingly objectless anxiety—that is, a *general* anxiety—this was sometimes easily categorised as that. But there were times when I realised that I was really anxious about becoming a parent, and this just wasn't clear to me when I initially started to feel anxious. Here I started with an epistemically undetermined object but then found the object (becoming a parent), and sometimes then also found more specific objects (specific aspects of being a parent). Rossi and Tappolet's analysis potentially provides a fruitful suggestion about how we can understand different kinds of emotional experiences that involve a search for, or a change of, objects, yet are still the same emotional experiences.

Their analysis can also potentially explain why anxiety can seem like a mood—namely, because it has shifting objects and so may seem to be an affective state, such as a mood, that lacks an intentional object (that is, it may seem to be a feeling that isn't about something). Because anxiety's object can sometimes shift, it can sometimes seem like it hasn't got an object at all. Whether this can explain generalised anxiety that seems to lack an object entirely is another question, but it is at least something that merits investigation.

I didn't just feel anxiety about becoming a parent before becoming one, I also felt anxiety upon becoming a parent. Some of that anxiety persists, of course, and indeed is helpful for anticipating and avoiding dangers that my children may face. The risk, though, is that I'll be too anxious and make my children too anxious, and then make them too afraid to face the dangers and risks they may have to face and overcome in life. Trying to

get this balance is tricky, and I really don't think I do this very well a lot of the time, but it's something I try to keep in mind (and sometimes it will involve suppressing outward reactions of anxiety so that I don't alarm my children). This suggests that anxiety serves an important function, but it can also be maladaptive if left uncontrolled. This suggests to me that anxiety is a useful, but dangerous, tool, and that it is not particularly alluring beyond its potential benefits.

Michael Brady (2024), on the other hand, makes the case for anxiety's allure. His focus is on contexts in which anxiety is part of a build-up that ends with a kind of relief or sadness. For instance, football fans may feel anxiety while watching their team. This anxiety will end in relief if they win, or sadness if they lose. This kind of anxiety may be alluring, but it doesn't obviously translate to parental anxiety. While my pre-parental anxiety did heighten my "awareness of valuable or significant objects or events" (201), such as my children and events involving them, it's not clear that my pre-parental anxiety was valuable for such heightening. It rather seems valuable to the extent that it is a useful tool, and loses value to the extent that it stops being a useful tool. So, my anxiety wouldn't be valuable in cases where it stops being useful and makes me more anxious than needed, or anxious in an overall counter-productive way (e.g. by making my children anxious). Brady's cases focus on anxiety that builds tension that can either be relieved or frustrated. But I think it's not anxiety that's alluring in Brady's cases, but rather *relief*. Relief feels good, and we sometimes seek out experiences that can lead us to feeling relief, even if we had the opportunity to avoid things getting too bad earlier. For instance, we might decide to wait before drinking a cold drink on a hot day because we know that it'll feel nicer—more relieving—if we wait until we are really desperate for a drink.

Brady might then say that anxiety is necessary for relief, but not in all cases (we can get relief without anxiety, such as when we wait to drink a cold drink on a hot day; there's no anxiety here if we know we've got easy access to a cold drink). And while we need anxiety for relief in some cases, the fact that anxiety is valuable, often because it gives us extra awareness, suggests that it is not so much alluring *in itself* but a risky tool that helps us focus attention where it's needed. Again, I don't think we should take anxiety to be alluring *in itself* because, for me at least, while anxiety has often been helpful, it can easily spread beyond its useful remit. As with any emotion, it is neither entirely good nor entirely bad. But it can be good and it can be bad depending on the context. And sometimes when we "indulge" in anxiety a bit too much, we can end up feeling out of control, trapped, and at the whims of our anxiety. So, while anxiety is sometimes useful, we should also try to rein it in so that it avoids losing its usefulness, and thus its value.

It's safe to say that anxiety is an emotion that has persisted throughout my time as a parent. It's been hard to have a precise idea of when anxiety *ought* to be felt and to what extent. When we talk about emotional oughts, we can distinguish between emotional fittingness and all-things-considered emotional appropriateness. The former tells us when our emotion evaluates its object properly. For instance, fitting anxiety tells us that the object of our anxiety merits anxiety. The latter tells us whether we have, or lack, overriding reason against feeling anxiety. There are so many dangers and risks associated with being a parent that there's ample fitting anxiety available for a parent. So much so, it seems hardly worth discussing whether anxiety is fitting or not. What's more relevant is whether anxiety is all-things-considered appropriate in a particular context, and that seems to depend on whether anxiety is more helpful to your child's safety or flourishing than a hindrance to it. So, even though it's hard to know precisely when to feel anxiety, and to what extent, I have still been guided by the thought that anxiety is worth harnessing to the extent that it can help my children flourish, but is better suppressed to the extent that it hinders them. It's important to make clear that controlling my anxiety is often easier said than done, and sometimes it may just be by luck that I'm able to hold things together at a particular time.

Let's now turn to *The Moral Psychology of Guilt* (2019; edited by Bradford Cokelet and Corey J. Maley). The essays in this collection explore a range of themes, but I will again focus on themes related to parenting.

When it comes to *parental guilt*, talk of emotional fittingness is more relevant. There's lots of guilt associated with being a parent, and at least one kind of guilt seems to share a lot in common with anxiety; indeed, this kind of guilt may even arise from feelings of anxiety. This is *future-orientated guilt*—that is, guilt that is felt *before* a particular action has been performed (Kerr 2019; Meriste 2019).

Some might be sceptical about whether there is such a thing as future-orientated guilt. One reason to think there's no such thing as anticipatory guilt is conceptual: perhaps it is just part of the concept of guilt that it is backwards-looking—that is, guilt necessarily involves looking back at something we've done, and (most minimally) feeling bad for having done what we're looking back upon. However, there is good reason to think there are kinds of guilt that aren't past-orientated, but rather future-orientated. Consider first how we might feel guilty about either outcome of a tragic dilemma: we might know we have to choose between two terrible options in the future, and we feel guilty because however we choose we will be doing something terrible. Consider also how we might have to do something that will cause great pain to someone we love, even though we feel overall justified in doing it—for instance, breaking up with a long-term romantic partner. In both cases, we feel guilty for something we haven't done yet. In both cases, our guilt is future-orientated.

There might be some questions about whether all future-orientated guilt is the same. Some might rather arise from imagining ourselves in the future, after having chosen which option of the tragic dilemma to take, or after we've broken up with our romantic partner. We might want, as Meriste (2019) does, to distinguish such merely *simulated* guilt (guilt that arises from simulating—that is, vividly imagining—the future), and genuinely future-orientated guilt that arises without (or remains following) simulated guilt. This is fine from a conceptual perspective, but from the perspective of a parent, it isn't really that important. What is clear from at least my parental experience is that both simulated guilt and purely future-orientated guilt are not only possible but common. For instance, while it isn't a tragic dilemma, a continued source of guilt for me arises from how much time and attention I divide between my two children. This guilt can arise from feeling like I haven't got the balance right, but it also arises from worrying that I won't ever get (or keep getting) the balance right.

But are these future-orientated feelings really guilty feelings, or are they just a type of anxiety? To assess the difference, we would need accounts of both anxiety and future-orientated guilt. We can, for the sake of argument, take guilt to involve a bad feeling that evaluates its object as being (morally, socially) substandard, that motivates us to repair our failure. Anxiety, on the other hand, we can take to involve a bad feeling about dangers or risks that have not yet come to pass, or whose outcomes are not yet known, which motivates us to evade or mitigate the dangers or risks we are focused on.

One difference we might see between guilt and anxiety is that guilt is about things that have happened (i.e., it's past-orientated), while anxiety is about things that are happening or will happen in the future (i.e., it's present- or future-orientated). But if we accept the arguments for present- and future-orientated forms of guilt (I've focused on the latter here), this isn't a difference between guilt and anxiety after all. We can feel guilty about things that haven't happened yet, just as we can be anxious about them.

Another difference may be that anxiety is wider than guilt—that is, we may be anxious about things that are not moral or social in any way, but rather merely personal. Guilt, on the other hand, is concerned with either actions (omissions, traits) that have moral content (Meriste 2019) or ones that have social importance (Kerr 2019). However, guilty feelings are arguably both possible and fitting for merely personal failures—for example a failure to stick to an exercise program (Sars 2019). So, it's not obvious that anxiety and guilt differ in their scope either.

Guilt and anxiety also seem to share something in common when it comes to their action tendencies. Anxiety seems to motivate us to avoid or mitigate dangers or risks, while guilt is thought to motivate repair. Of course, if we are feeling guilty *before* something has come to pass, it seems strange to say that we're motivated to repair. Rather, we seem motivated to *prevent* the wrongs from coming about. It may well be that we know we cannot prevent them—just as we often know that we cannot prevent the things we are anxious about from coming about. The person who is waiting to choose between two tragic outcomes is not likely to wait around doing nothing, but will rather ruminate and desperately try to find a way to avoid having to choose between two tragic outcomes. This might all be for nothing, but that's sometimes how these things go.

The key difference between guilt and anxiety is rather the following: guilt seems to be more about what we have done, while we are anxious about things that people (including ourselves) will do to us or those we love. We might be anxious about threats that negligent doctors or malicious strangers pose our children. But we don't feel guilty about what they have done. At least, not as such. As a parent, in my experience at least, it's easy to feel guilty about *what you could have done to stop others who might harm your children*. So, while there does seem to be a difference between guilt and anxiety here, it is not that significant a difference.

Should we just think that future-orientated guilt is really just a kind of anxiety? I'm not so sure, even if there isn't that significant a difference between these two emotions after all. What I want to highlight is that often there is too much attempted policing of the boundaries between emotions. While I gather that that's what a lot of philosophers of emotion want to take a position on—e.g. this is my theory of emotions, this is how I individuate emotions, these ones are basic or natural, and these other ones are forms of the more basic and natural ones, and so on—when we turn to more practical ways of doing philosophy of emotions, it is not so clear how much it really illuminates our emotional lives to split so many hairs about whether an emotion is future-orientated guilt or a kind of anxiety, for instance. It seems more important to me to focus on the content, rather than the label attached to that content. And from that perspective, I think we could lose something by considering future-orientated guilt just to be a kind of anxiety. Likewise, I think we would lose something interesting about anxiety if we had to understand it as either an emotion or a mood. Perhaps it's something in-between. Maybe we don't need to worry so much about its precise affective classification, but should rather focus on what it is in both its simple and more complex variants.

A similar tendency with guilt is to focus on its simple variants; for instance, to focus on giving an analysis such as the one I gave in terms of its evaluation, phenomenological feel, and action tendencies. These are certainly important when theorising about emotions, but there is also a risk that our focus on these features will lead us to discount other aspects of feeling guilty. These aspects may not be common to all cases of feeling guilty, but they may still be important. Perhaps there's guilt without anxiety, but perhaps anxiety is an important part of our guilt, one that we would need to include to properly understand a particular instance of guilt.

Here I want to turn to a compelling idea about guilt proposed by Corey Maley and Gilbert Harman (2019). They propose that guilt is not an emotion *per se*, but rather a *feeling*—that is, “conscious emotion plus a belief about the typical cause of the emotion” (31). Let’s get into the details.

First consider what they take an emotion to be—namely, an occurrent, episodic experience with a beginning and an end, but which need not have an intentional object (e.g. we can be sad without feeling sad about anything in particular; this is a non-standard view, but if we follow my above advice, maybe we shouldn’t worry so much about labels, and more about content).

Next note that their notion of “feeling” refers not to simple sensations, such as feeling hungry, but rather to complex sets of emotions. So, they are using “feeling” in a technical way to pick out a particular phenomenon. We might still refer to sensations or the phenomenological feel of individual emotions as feelings, but this is not what their technical notion refers to.

What does it refer to, then? Let’s now consider an example they give. They note that we can *feel betrayed* in a range of ways: we might feel angry, with might feel sad, we might even feel grief (if the betrayal led to the end of a relationship), or even through a combination of some or even all of these emotions. What unites all these emotions as being forms of feeling betrayed is that they arise from the belief that one has been betrayed.

Likewise, Maley and Harman propose that what unites experiences of guilty feelings is that they arise from the belief that one is guilty for something. This allows that guilty feelings can include a range of emotions, such as remorse, regret, shame, sadness, and anxiety, without identifying guilt with any particular emotion from this set of emotions. Importantly, a person can feel guilty about something even if she takes herself to not be guilty (such as in cases of survivor’s guilt, where a person feels guilty for surviving a tragedy that took other people’s lives but not theirs). It only matters that people take their feeling to be *typically* caused by taking oneself to be guilty (e.g. the way the person who feels survivor’s guilt is feeling is typically caused by taking oneself to be guilty, even if the person accepts that they are not in fact guilty for the tragedy they survived, or the fact that they survived).

I think that understanding guilt as a feeling (in the Maley and Harman sense) can help us to understand the breadth of experiences when it comes to guilt, and more specifically when it comes to parental guilt. I’ve felt guilty for feeling unable to function, for causing or not stopping accidents that have led to my children being hurt, for snapping or being grumpy, for simply not being good enough of a parent, or for not being around because I’ve had to travel for work. While these examples involve different objects (some are moral failures but some are not), the emotions I’ve felt during these guilt experiences have been different. Sometimes it has been more regretful—such as when I hadn’t screwed a soft cover onto a wooden chair and my eldest daughter (who had just turned one at the time) came to hug me while sitting on the chair; the soft cover moved, she slipped, and was left with a dent (which thankfully just turned out to be her skin being pressed into her head by the corner of the chair that was gone by the time we got to the hospital, and she wasn’t seriously hurt). Sometimes it has been more remorseful—such as when I’ve snapped or been grumpy, sometimes due to a combination of sleep deprivation and being emotionally drained. I guess the sleep deprivation and being emotionally drained might seem like excuses, but they don’t really seem like excuses to me: part of being a parent is having to combat these things, so even if I don’t judge myself to have morally failed as such, I have still failed as a parent if snap at my children unjustifiably. And sometimes even if I have good reason to tell off my children, I can feel guilty in a way that is more wrought with shame: maybe if I had been a better parent, I wouldn’t have needed to tell them off because they wouldn’t have misbehaved.

But unlike Maley and Harman, I wouldn't limit feelings to just emotions: I think they may also include attitudes, such as blame, which may simply involve holding an action against a person.¹ Some instances of guilt arguably just involve blaming oneself, with no other felt emotions; the only affect involved being that of holding an action against oneself, which is (to put it vaguely) at least a minimally negative affect. Basically, blaming oneself feels at least a bit bad. If that's caused by taking yourself to be guilty for something, it should also count as a way of feeling guilty, even if not the most robust way.

It's also not clear that guilty feelings need to be conscious, as Maley and Harman claim. It seems plausible that we might not realise we feel guilty, and that this is something that becomes clearer. As with anxiety and anguish, it might not always be clear to someone that they are feeling guilty. I think this is often the case with parental guilt: it becomes so commonly felt that it's easy to forget what exactly one is feeling. Parents are often so deep in the role of being a parent that there isn't much time for them to step back and consider consciously what they are feeling. When your attention is taken up by looking after your children, there isn't much time for yourself. Add to that long- and short-term bouts of sleep deprivation and being emotionally drained, and it's easy to see how a person might feel guilty even if they aren't even really feeling anything at all (that is, in the sense of not experiencing any affect). In my experience of parenting, there's a mix of emotions and feelings that are not always as "active" as they might otherwise be, but there are still emotions and feelings being felt. However, a problem with allowing that guilt can be unconscious is that it removes what, for Maley and Harman, serves as a unifying condition for what counts as instances of guilty feelings. So, accepting that guilty feelings can be unconscious either requires finding something else that unifies experiences of various emotions or attitudes as instances of guilty feelings, or it pushes us back towards understanding guilt as an emotion.

While parenting does involve its fair share of negative emotions, it also involves many positive emotions. It's hard to say which is most representative of parenting, even in my own case. But it's clear to me that the value and meaningfulness of parenting doesn't depend on feeling more positive emotions than negative ones. There's likely no one-size-fits all analysis of what makes parenting valuable and meaningful, but it's clear to me that such value and meaningfulness arise in part because of the emotions—both positive and negative—that are felt. But even if parenting isn't valuable or meaningful purely in light of the positive emotions that parents feel, there are still, in my experience, a lot of positive emotions to be felt.

I want to end this discussion by considering just one positive emotion: pride. I will consider pride that parents feel for two things: (i) their parenting and (ii) their children's achievements. It is through considering these two objects of parental pride that I want to assess a frequently made distinction between *authentic* and *hubristic* pride, with a particular focus on how this distinction is made by Antti Kauppinen (2017) in *The Moral Psychology of Pride* (2017; edited by J. Adam Carter and Emma C. Gordon).

As many of the contributions to *The Moral Psychology of Pride* agree, it is often fitting to feel proud of other people's achievements. As long as we are suitably connected to someone, their achievements are ones that we can feel proud of. Our loved ones are the clearest and least controversial cases: we are often proud of what they do, and it seems incumbent on an account of pride to make sense of how this kind of pride is fitting.

¹. See Matheson 2025.

This is at least indirectly broached by many proposed accounts of pride in *The Moral Psychology of Pride*: pride is fitting in cases where the achievements of others belong to us in some sense. Again, the clearest cases are those involving loved ones, such as children. While it is uncontroversial that we can fittingly feel pride about our own achievements in raising our children, we need to appeal to a wider sense of belonging than just those achievements that result from our agency to make sense of pride for the achievements of our children. So far, this all seems uncontroversial to me. Again, it's clear to me that we must make sense of both kinds of parental pride, and so we need to find some explanation for how parents can fittingly feel proud of their children's achievements.

The story about fitting parental pride is just one part. We also need to know about the ethics of parental pride. Here's my view: it's often all-things-considered *inappropriate* to be proud of your own parenting, but it's usually all-things-considered *appropriate* to be proud of your children's achievements. Basically, from an ethical perspective, we should favour being proud of our children's achievements over being proud of our parenting. This is because being proud of our parenting *takes attention away* from our children's achievements. Consider a conversation you might have with a friend about your child's achievements. You could focus on the following kind of point: "Oh, my parenting is so good: look at what my child has done as a result." Or you could just focus on the following kind of point: "I'm so proud of my children for what they have done." The latter keeps sole focus on the child. It might well be that you have reason to be proud of your parenting. Maybe it really was exemplary and essential to your children achieving what they did. But even if this were true, you would still be taking attention away from what should really be in focus here: what your child has done (and how that has resulted from *their* efforts, talents, skills, which they may also have spent time honing, rather than on *your* achievements, efforts, talents, and skills).

What does all this tell us about authentic and hubristic pride? There seems to be agreement that hubristic pride is largely, if not entirely, a bad thing—indeed, calling it "hubristic" suggests it's a bad kind of pride—and that authentic pride is generally a positive emotion. Should we think that parental pride that focuses on the parent (type i) is hubristic, while parental pride that focuses on the child (type ii) is authentic? No—at least the division between authentic and hubristic pride is not drawn along these lines. It is not drawn along ethical lines, but rather along fittingness lines. While accounts of pride are more detailed than this, the gist of the distinction is that, while authentic pride focuses on achievements, hubristic pride focuses on the self (Kauppinen 2017). So, hubristic pride takes the person to be what is worthy of pride more than any achievements—e.g., "I am so great!"—whereas authentic pride involves thoughts like "I have done something so great," and so takes achievements to be more worthy of pride. A benefit of this distinction is that it makes sense of the different types of pride experiences: some instances focus on achievements, while others focus on our selves. By appealing to the distinction between authentic and hubristic pride, we can accommodate these two types of pride.

This, though, cuts against the distinction with the two kinds of parental pride I've discussed. At least as I've construed them, they are both kinds of authentic pride: they are both focused on achievements. The problem is that type i parental pride is focused on a parent's achievements, while type ii parental pride is focused on one's child's achievements. It seems to me to be a problem that "hubristic pride" is pride that focuses on the self because type i parental pride seems hubristic to me.

Moreover, the term “hubristic” is an unfair label for self-focused pride. Not only does some action-focused pride, such as type i parental pride, seem excessive—that is, hubristic—but a lot of self-focused pride seems entirely fine. It is not just that it is fitting, as many agree it is. But it is also that it is often implied by action-focused pride. This is because our actions arise, in part, from our abilities, talents, and traits. And so even if we put more emphasis on our achievements, we are still at least implicitly highlighting our selves. The thoughts about the self might not be uttered, but they linger under the surface, offering at least part of the explanation for why we achieved what we achieved.

Kauppinen (174–75) does acknowledge this, but takes self-focused pride to be generally all-things-considered inappropriate. His idea being that it is generally better for people to feel pride about what they have done rather than about themselves, even if both kinds of pride can sometimes be fitting. But this is a problem insofar as action-focused pride implies some self-focused pride.

Kauppinen also takes a particular view of self-focused pride that I think is mistaken. On his view, self-focused pride centres on “lasting traits” and other aspects of self (175). Moreover, these aspects of self are “fixed now and for the future” (180). It’s this view that gets us the verdict that self-focused pride can be fitting but generally not all-things-considered appropriate, because it means cutting a person off from “the importance and possibility of choosing anew” by taking oneself to be fixed now and for the future (180).

However, that we take our traits and the self they constitute to be fixed and unchangeable seems unnecessary for self-focused pride: we can feel (fittingly) proud of traits we don’t perceive as lasting and fixed, now and for the future. We might feel proud about our ability to run really fast, even if we know that we’ll soon be getting our legs amputated. Just because we have traits for a particular period of time (e.g. while we are young), it doesn’t mean we’ll have those traits forever. People change, and so can their traits (and usually for more mundane reasons than limb amputation). The hubris that Kauppinen focuses on seems to me more about one’s view of oneself, or even just parts of oneself, as being always and forever excellent, rather than about pride that focuses on the self.²

Consider a child’s pride for her achievements. She might be proud to have solved a jigsaw puzzle, or having learned to read some letters, or being able to do simple sums. She might feel proud because of these achievements. But it also seems fitting and often all-things-considered appropriate for her to be proud of *herself* because of her achievements, and not just to be proud of *her achievements*. It would be bad, of course, for the child to think that her achievements come easy to her, that she doesn’t need to try, that she is inherently super-smart, a genius even, and so she will just naturally do great things. Even if there is a lot of truth in those thoughts, it can often be counter-productive to have such a view of oneself because it can lead to people forgetting that they also need to put effort in. And while one might coast for a long time on natural talents, eventually a lack of effort will lead to an inability to put in effort when the time comes. This is because being able to exert oneself is also something we need to develop and hone over time. But here again we see that the problem isn’t self-focused pride, but a particular view of the self. Again, even at times where it might be true that a person has truly excellent traits, abilities, and talents, considering these to be something they will have forever will likely lead to those traits, abilities, and talents no longer being excellent, as the person fails to develop and hone them. In short, such a view of the self is either immediately mistaken or will eventually be mistaken. Either way, it’s counter-productive to think of oneself this way. Again, this doesn’t tell us anything

^{2.} A similar problem affects critiques of shame that claim that it is maladaptive. In short, shame may be maladaptive when it is paired with a static view of the self, but when it is paired with a more view of the self that permits changes, it is more likely to lead to attempts to reform. See Archer and Matheson (forthcoming) for a brief overview of empirical support for this point.

about self-focused pride, but rather just about particular views of the self. There is hubris in these background views of the self, and not in self-focused pride as such.

The emotional reality of parenthood is filled with anxiety, guilt, and pride. Through my examination of *The Moral Psychology of Anxiety*, *The Moral Psychology of Guilt*, and *The Moral Psychological of Pride*, I've considered that emotional reality in light of the contributions to those collections. I've also assessed those contributions with respect to my own tentative views about the emotional oughts of parenthood—that is, when parents ought and ought not feel or outwardly express a particular emotion. As I said at the beginning, I've taken my own experience as my starting point, so there's a potential idiosyncrasy in my experiences that I should acknowledge. As should be clear, this is not a traditional philosophy book review. My aim has been to try to do something different by taking these three books and evaluating them not on their own merits, but rather on how they can illuminate my experiences, as well as using my experiences to offer ways to evaluate aspects of the themes raised by the books. While I haven't covered all of the many themes and ideas raised in these three collections of essays, I'll end by noting that the contributions to these collections are insightful and suggestive, paving the way for deeper and more fruitful investigations into each of these emotions.³

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