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# **A Feminist Liberation View of Pride: An Islamic Ethics Case Study**

*By Irema Halilovic*

*Written for Judith Kay's class  
Disgust, Lust, Shame, and Blame: A Religious-Ethical Study of Emotion, fall 2015*

## **Introduction**

To be Muslim is to submit to God. A “Muslim” is someone who surrenders herself to God completely. Everything that is and that happens is the will of Allah. You must love God and thank him for all of His gifts. However, Allah did not say that Muslims should surrender in this way to anyone else. In the Holy Qur’an, Allah dictates that oppressors shall be punished and that it is a Muslim’s duty to help those who are oppressed. Therefore, to aid those Muslims who are oppressed, Muslims have an ethical duty to have pride in their faith and a collective pride of their people.

The pride that the Qur’an discusses most is the personal pride of the person who is ignorant, a disbeliever, or does not submit in humility to Allah. This pride is not the same emotion that psychiatrist Donald Nathanson examines, which is pride in opposition to shame.<sup>1</sup> Nathanson’s pride-shame axis places pride and shame in opposition with each other; healthy and natural pride is the feeling of pleasure in our own competence, and shame is an impediment to positive affects that always exists in terms of other negative affects.<sup>2</sup> Pride as deserved self-respect is notably absent from the Qur’an. In modern times, this type of pride is very important to oppressed peoples. In many societies around the world, Muslims are being oppressed. In

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<sup>1</sup> Donald L. Nathanson, *Shame and Pride : Affect, Sex, and the Birth of the Self* (New York: Norton, 1994), 83.

<sup>2</sup> Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*, 83, 136-7.

looking at the Qur'anic verses and the ahadith (plural of one hadith<sup>3</sup>) on pride in conjunction with the verses and ahadith on oppressed peoples, I believe that the Qur'an does not prohibit pride in one's identity as a Muslim or in any other identity as a member of a marginalized group. This paper argues that pride in one's identity can promote self-preservation as well as social and political resistance. Both of these goals are supported by the Qur'an as well by theorists of the shame-pride axis. I propose that a pro-resistance and anti-oppression reading of the Qur'an permits pride in the oppressed aspects of one's identity. I will further argue using feminist theology and liberation theology that pride is an ethical necessity for marginalized and oppressed peoples.

In instances where Muslims have oppressor identities (i.e. identities such as men, adults, upper-class, member of ruling elites in predominantly Muslim countries, etc), pride can be easily manipulated for domination and therefore, must be approached carefully. A key idea from feminist theology is that men are taken as the default and the norm in most things, including religious doctrine and attitudes about who can and who cannot feel pride. These rules of emotion were written down by men, and many of these rules and dictations about pride that we see in ahadith are androcentric. I argue that when one has a privileged identity, humility becomes a necessary and positive attribute. It is unethical to use pride to bolster one's non-marginalized identity; pride, to be used ethically, must be used as a tool to fight oppression, including personal and communal adversity.

### **How Do Islamic Texts Deal With the Issue Of Pride?**

The Islamic texts that will be referenced in this section are passages from the Qur'an and ahadith, the sayings and deeds of the Prophet. Both the Qur'an and ahadith condemn pride as an

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<sup>3</sup> A hadith is a saying, deed, or tacit approval of the Prophet Muhammad that has been passed down through generations

evil vice in Islam. To be prideful is to not be a true adherent to Allah. However, I will show that the various types of pride talked about in these Islamic texts are vastly different than deserved self-pride in one's identity. Overall, the types of pride to follow are contrasted with humility towards God and therefore must be fully condemned. The following is a hadith talking about pride in Islam.

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub (al-Kulayni) from 'Ali ibn Ibrahim, from Muhammad ibn 'Isa, from Yunus, from Aban, from Hakim; who says: I asked Abu 'Abd Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (A)<sup>4</sup> as to the lowest degree of ilhad (apostasy). He answered, "Verily kibr (pride) is its lowest degree."<sup>5</sup>

This hadith clearly shows that the greatest weakness of a Muslim is pride, or "kibr." Kibr is "the name of a psychic state in which a person feels a sense of superiority and behaves high-handedly with others."<sup>6</sup> It is when someone is being high and mighty, self-serving, and self-complementary that someone is succumbing to kibr. There are various types of kibr:

1. Kibr on account of possessing true faith and belief.
2. As opposed to it is the pride in invalid faith and false belief.
3. Pride on account of good qualities and praiseworthy attributes.
4. Pride in moral vices and undesirable qualities.
5. Pride in one's righteous deeds and devotional exercises.
6. Pride in sinful and wicked deeds.<sup>7</sup>

The first type of kibr is about feeling superior to others on account of your true faith, as if your faith is better than another's due to your religious background or the extent of your faith. The second type of kibr deals with ignorance. Most Qur'anic passages about pride are related to the idea of false belief and the type of pride that stems from false belief. The Qur'an says, "Nay,

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<sup>4</sup> This is the lineage of people that this saying was passed down through since the time of Mohammad

<sup>5</sup> Ayatullah Sayyid Imam Ruhallah al-Musawi al-Khomeini, *Forty Hadith: An Exposition*. Second Revised Edition, trans. Ali Quli Qara'i and Mahliqa Qara'i (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform: 2014), Fourth Hadith (Kibr).

<sup>6</sup> al-Musawi, *Forty Hadith*, Fourth Hadith (Kibr), no page numbers provided.

<sup>7</sup> al-Musawi, *Forty Hadith*, Fourth Hadith (Kibr).

those who disbelieve are in false pride and opposition.”<sup>8</sup> Being ignorant of the true mightiness and power of God is impermissible. Another pertinent passage reads, “Indeed, those who dispute concerning the signs of Allah without [any] authority having come to them—there is not within their breasts except pride, [the extent of] which they cannot reach. So seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing the Seeing.”<sup>9</sup> As these passages demonstrate, false belief is a grievous sin according to the Qur’an.

Being proud to be a Muslim by owning one’s marginalized-identity-based pride, could be argued to fall under the first type of *kibr*. However, pride in one’s collective faith does not denounce anyone else for having a different faith. This type of pride is not about one’s personal faith, but about one’s identity as a member of the Muslim faith; those are two very different concepts. One can be proud of being a Muslim without judging other Muslims for their faith or judging people of any other faith for having a different faith.

The third type of *kibr* is the pride in the superiority of your own virtuous qualities. The Qur’an looks down upon this type of *kibr* because this type of pride demonstrates an obvious lack of humility. The Qur’an says, “Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward people, nor walk with pertness on the earth. Verily, God liveth not any braggart boaster.”<sup>10</sup> Bragging or extolling your excellence for societal validation and the simultaneous devaluation of others is highly improper for Muslims. Some might say that pride in being a Muslim is pride of good qualities or praiseworthy attributes, but I argue that this type of pride is not about whether or not being a Muslim is good. Instead, this type of pride is resistance to the shame that society has determined you ought to feel. It is the pride that allows you to love yourself and your beliefs when no one

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<sup>8</sup>Ahmed Ali, *Al-Qur’ān : A Contemporary Translation*, rev. ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 38:2.

<sup>9</sup> Ali, *Al-Qur’ān*, 40:56.

<sup>10</sup> Ali, *Al-Qur’ān*, 31:18.

else does and your humility is not respected. You are taking ownership of your identity and your membership in a specific group. You are staking your claim in said group and being proud of that, and being proud of being a part of a community. The Qur'an extolls those people who take care of and cherish their communities.

The fourth type of kibr, pride in undesirable qualities, is not pertinent in this case unless your belief is that being Muslim is an undesirable quality to have and therefore no one should be proud of being part of that community. The sixth type of kibr, pride in wicked deeds, is similar to the fourth type in that it does not relate to the identity-based pride of being Muslim. Therefore, these types of kibr are both irrelevant to my argument.

The fifth type of kibr involves pride in your own righteous deeds and devotional practices. This is a similar case to the first type of kibr, which is pride in the extent of your personal religious adherence. To emphasize that devotional practices only have true meaning without this fifth type of kibr, the Qur'an says, "Only those believe in Our Signs, who, when they are recited to them, fall down in prostration, and celebrate the praises of their Lord, nor are they (ever) puffed up with pride."<sup>11</sup> The same logic of the first type of kibr can be used here to explain why this is not relevant to community-based pride.

The worst kind of kibr is kibr against God, contesting God's authority or claiming divinity of any sort.<sup>12</sup> This type of kibr is not referenced specifically within the list of the six types of kibr, but it is important to mention for the argument of this paper. This kibr displays extreme ignorance about one's personal limits and the unlimited God.<sup>13</sup> The definition of kibr is superiority: the idea of one person or object being better than another person or object. The idea

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<sup>11</sup> Ali, *Al-Qur'an*, 32:15.

<sup>12</sup> al-Musawi, *Forty Hadith*, Fourth Hadith (Kibr).

<sup>13</sup> al-Musawi, *Forty Hadith*, Fourth Hadith (Kibr).

of collective pride in one's shared identity is not about being superior to others who do not share that identity or who might look down upon you for that identity; it is simply the statement and recognition of the oppressed that they are not inherently worse than their oppressors. Oppressors rationalize their thinking by saying that the people they are oppressing are inferior in some way (not as civilized, subhuman, barbaric, etc.). Therefore, the sin of pride rests in the oppressors' hands. This is the type of *kibr* that makes people not accept words of truth when they come from someone who has a societally-inferior identity. The oppressed must reclaim and re-engineer pride in themselves as oppressed people, knowing that their oppression is not natural; it is just the will of the oppressors. Oppression is a grave offense towards God, and therefore, true believers of Allah must fight against oppression forcefully and unrelentingly. One of the best ways to fight oppression is to cultivate and maintain pride in one's marginalized identity. In this section, I have shown that the traditional view of pride in Islam is a negative one of sin and vice, primarily of arrogance and superiority and lack of submission to Allah. I will go on to argue how pride can be used ethically and unselfishly in order to further the cause of fighting oppression.

### **Polythetic Concepts in Ethics**

In the above section, I have shown a contrast between the sin of pride that conflicts with humility with the pride that opposes shame. In his article on humility, James Kellenberger, Professor of Philosophy at California State University, Northridge, explains the idea of a polythetic concept. Unlike a monothetic concept that is seen identically in all situations, a polythetic concept can be seen similarly but not identically in different situations. A polythetic concept can have many characteristics that occur commonly, but none of the characteristics are necessary.<sup>14</sup> Humility is a polythetic concept in that it can be expressed in slightly different ways

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<sup>14</sup> James Kellenberger, "Humility," *American Philosophy Quarterly* 47: 4 (October 2010), 324.

and therefore cannot be said to have one specific meaning in every situation.<sup>15</sup> Most concepts in ethics can have many meanings and iterations. Pride is another polythetic concept. Pride is often defined as the expression of a lack of humility. In other situations, pride is a more nuanced expression of a lack of shame or a direct opposition to shame. The latter kind of pride is what I wish to unpack and review in the context of Islamic texts and beliefs.

### **Pride, Humility, and Shame**

Many theorists, including Thomas Aquinas and David Hume, argue that pride is directly contradictory to and should be contrasted to the virtue of humility.<sup>1617</sup> Kellenberger points out that the key contrast between pride and humility is that humility is a religious virtue and pride (as opposed to humility) is a vice.<sup>18</sup> Humility before God is prized in many faiths, including Islam. Kellenberger remarks on the broadly accepted idea that pride is the most grievous of sins against God. This hubris is exactly the issue. Religious texts like the Qur'an are so focused on pride as a deadly, and in some cases, the deadliest of sins because they identify pride before God as the opposite of humble submission. However, this dichotomy of pride and humility is not the only axis on which these concepts can be placed. As I have said before, this contrast is not the contrast that this paper discusses. Both pride and humility are polythetic terms and therefore can be used in many different contexts. In the context of identity-based pride, the situation is not one's posture before God, but one's posture before an oppressor. It is an unethical decision to submit to an oppressor. The Qur'an states that Muslims should fight oppression. Pride in one's marginalized identity is an inherent rebellion against the false judgements of one's oppressors.

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<sup>15</sup> Kellenberger, "Humility," 324.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), II-II Q. 162, a. 5.

<sup>17</sup> David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Oxford Philosophical Texts. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Kellenberger, "Humility," 325.

Therefore, pride in one's religion is right. Gabriele Taylor aptly says that it is more "plausible that shame (and not as Hume claims, 'humility') is the polar opposite of emotional pride."<sup>19</sup> Although she is describing a liberation context, not a religious situation, I believe her definition is correct. Nathanson takes this position as well in his book *Shame and Pride*. He argues that pride-shame form an axis. He describes pride as "competence pleasure" and notes that there can be types of "healthy pride."<sup>20</sup> "Competence pleasure" is when one feels the affect enjoyment-joy because of one's personal competence in an atmosphere of excitement.<sup>21</sup> It need not, and does not involve arrogance and superiority. This is an example of healthy pride that focuses on positive feelings without negative comparisons. Pride can be an infectious feeling to those experiencing efficacy and for those watching.<sup>22</sup> The "complex emotionality of pride" is an important concept for Nathanson.<sup>23</sup> This complex emotionality stems from our history and past experiences that influence how we feel about our current successes. Previous experiences of competence pleasure increase the pleasure of current competence pleasures. In his book, Nathanson is concerned with the affect of shame in relation to pride. Shame can be very debilitating for certain people, and chronic shaming of the self is common.<sup>24</sup> Because shame is so isolating, it can become a downward spiral that is hard for many individuals to escape. Shame makes us isolate ourselves from others, while, in contrast, pride urges us to affiliate with others.<sup>25</sup> Pride can support the affect enjoyment-joy; people naturally want to share that feeling with other people and be around other people who feel that same affect. Nathanson opposes

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<sup>19</sup> Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, Shame, and Guilt : Emotions of Self-Assessment* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1985), 53.

<sup>20</sup> Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*, 84.

<sup>21</sup> Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*, 83.

<sup>22</sup> Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*, 84.

<sup>23</sup> Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*, 85.

<sup>24</sup> Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*, 86.

<sup>25</sup> Nathanson, *Shame and Pride*, 86.

many religious ethicists such as Hume and Aquinas by offering the view that pride does not always have a negative affect and can bring people together or foster positive, collective experiences. In addition, religious ethicists do not normally recognize the power of shame in tearing down spirits of people. Oppression creates a culture of shame for both oppressed peoples and oppressors. Pride is the antidote to this situation.

If we alter the opposite of pride, we change the meaning of pride. The pride that the Qur'an describes is a vice because it is a lack of humility towards others and towards God. This pride represents a lack of recognition that one's gifts are not of one's own making as well as a lack of awareness of God and of one's relation to God.<sup>26</sup> The pride that is opposed to shame is more of a reaction towards one's life and self. It is this pride that is the opposite of shame under which collective identity-based pride falls. Collective identity-based pride is a constructive pride that can be used to combat systemic oppression that uses shame as a weapon to keep people submissive.

### **Humility As It Relates To The Pride - Shame Axis**

As discussed in the previous section, there are multiple ways to analyze humility. Kellenberger provides a strong analogy comparing humility to a moral rejection of war that reveals a complication to the humility-pride paradigm:

In contradistinction to shame, humility, as a state free from self-concern in one of its deeper expressions, if not its deepest expression, is in that expression opposed to both self-concerned reactions and to the axis of self-concern itself. As an analogy, consider winning at war being the polar opposite of losing at war. A moral rejection of all war is also opposed to losing at war; however, a moral rejection of war is as well opposed to winning at war, for it is at a deeper level moral opposed to engaging in war at all. Humility is opposed to pride, but it is more deeply opposed to engaging life in terms of the self-concerned states of pride and shame at all.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Kellenberger, "Humility," 332.

<sup>27</sup> Kellenberger, "Humility," 329.

From this quote, it is clear that Kellenberger accepts and understands how theorists contrast humility and pride, but he does not accept this contrast as complete. A moral rejection of war opposes both winning a war and losing a war. In the same way, humility is both opposed to pride and opposed to shame. Humility is a moral rejection of both shame and pride because they are self-centered emotions. The more helpful dichotomy is that of *shame* and pride (in the metaphor, winning a war and losing a war).

In all Abrahamic faiths, including Islam, humility is “deeply rooted as a part of the proper relationship with God.”<sup>28</sup> Kellenberger states that humility is a “state free of self-concern.”<sup>29</sup> It is important to note that from this definition, humility is *not* only the opposite of pride but also the opposite of shame because you are moving away from affects about the self in all ways. Shame and pride are both based in assessments of one’s self and related to the self.<sup>30</sup> If humility is free of self-concern, then it must be contrasted with both positive (pride) and negative (shame) concerns of the self. In the next section, I will further expand on the way in which collective pride does not presuppose a lack of humility.

### **How Collective Identity-Based Pride Can Be Compatible With Humility**

Vance G. Morgan has his own definition of humility, stating, “humility is directed *away* from oneself and is a virtue that arises from a recognition of and attainment to a reality that is other and greater than oneself.”<sup>31</sup> This idea connects very well to pride in one’s collective identity. Selflessness is a part of the pride of collective identity because said pride is not so much in oneself as it is for one’s community. Pride in the face of oppression could potentially be

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<sup>28</sup> Kellenberger, “Humility,” 331.

<sup>29</sup> Kellenberger, “Humility,” 330.

<sup>30</sup> Kellenberger, “Humility,” 329.

<sup>31</sup> Kellenberger, “Humility,” 331.

harmful to the self (i.e. arrests, physical harm, etc.), but this pride is expressed in the service of justice and freedom from subjugation for your people.

Nancy Snow contributes to our understanding of humility as well, saying, “to be a humble person is to recognize your limitations, to take them seriously, and thereby foster a realism in attitudes and behavior regarding the self and others.”<sup>32</sup> Snow’s definition of a humble person is by no means antithetical to identity-based pride. In fact, the two can be seen as compatible with each other. To recognize the oppression of yourself and others is to foster realism in your life. Recognizing that internal pride in your marginalized self is the first step in fighting that reality of oppression. This is an important step because it allows you to take your limitations seriously and understand your avenues of agency and your lack of agency as well. If humility is a change from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness, then identity-based pride is rooted in a type of humility.<sup>33</sup> This pride, centered in social reality, is pivotal to resisting oppression, and resisting oppression is a prime directive in the Qur’an. In the next section I will go into further detail on the many passages devoted to the subject.

### **How Do Islamic Texts View Oppression?**

The Qur’an is very clear about the evils of oppression. Oppression is universally deemed a bad social arrangement and is never condoned in the Qur’an. Even during war, the Qur’an says prisoners of war and townspeople of conquered areas are to be respected and not violated. The Qur’an also emphasizes universal respect and protection of oppressed peoples. Those people who oppress others are not right with Allah and will be punished. The Qur’an says, “We will reserve the houses of the hereafter exclusively for those who do not seek self-glory in this life and do not cause oppression and corruption to spread. The final outcome belongs to those who

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<sup>32</sup> Kellenberger, “Humility,” 332.

<sup>33</sup> Kellenberger, “Humility,” 329.

fear (Allah).”<sup>34</sup> Muslims also have a duty to fight against oppression and help oppressed people where they can. The ahadith greatly urge this support as well. One hadith narrated by Anas (R.A) says:

Allah’s Apostle (pbuh) said, ‘Help your brother, whether he is an oppressor or he is an oppressed one. People asked, ‘O Allah’s Apostle! It is all right to help him if he is oppressed, but how should we help him if he is an oppressor?’ The Prophet said, ‘By preventing him from oppressing others.’<sup>35</sup>

Other ahadith support this view as well. Abu Huraira (R.A) narrated the following hadith:

Allah’s Apostle (pbuh) said, ‘Whoever has oppressed another person concerning his reputation or anything else, he should beg him to forgive him before the Day of Resurrection when there will be no money (to compensate for wrong deeds), but if he has good deeds, those good deeds will be taken from him according to his oppression which he has done, and if he has no good deeds, the sins of the oppressed person will be loaded on him.’<sup>36</sup>

Truly, Islam opposes oppression. All people, men and women, are encouraged to get an education and have a strong influence in the workforce. Fair and proper government with checks and balances is a necessary part of a true Islamic state. Islamic society is based on the moral values of justice, compassion, and protection of all people. Consequences of oppression are very steep; Jabir b. ‘Abdullah reported that the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) said:

Beware of oppression, because it will lead to darkness on the Day of Resurrection. Avoid avarice, because it destroyed your predecessors. It led them to shed the blood of their own people and to regard prohibited matters as lawful.<sup>37</sup>

There are many more passages just like the ones shared above about the evils of oppression.

Subjugation of peoples goes against the will of Allah; this has been made clear. Deserved pride in one’s marginalized identity is an imperative step in resisting oppression because oppression

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<sup>34</sup>Ali, *Al-Qur‘ān*, 28:83.

<sup>35</sup> Ghazālāh Hāmid, *Shurūḥ-i Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*. (Lāhaur: Idārah-yi Saqāfat-i Islāmiyyah, 1991), Volume 3, Book 43, Number 624.

<sup>36</sup> Hāmid, *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī*, Volume 3, Book 43, Number 629.

<sup>37</sup> Muḥammad Ibn Ismā‘īl al-Bukhārī, *Moral Teachings of Islam : Prophetic Traditions from Al-Adab Al-mufrad*, trans. Hāmid, ‘Abd Al-‘Alī ‘Abd Al-Ḥamīd (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 2003), 63.

truly gains its power from marginalized peoples internally oppressing themselves. With collective pride of identity, these people can combat this from the ground up and fulfill God's command to resist oppression.

### **How Feminist Theology Can Help Support A Liberation Theology of Pride**

Feminist theology can provide background and insight to this paper because it too concerns itself with the lack of perspectives within scripture. Feminist theology focuses specifically on the missing feminist perspective and accredits this androcentrism of scripture to the fact that men are at the center of society and the most important voices within it. I argue that for people with marginalized identities, pride needs to be renegotiated through their perspective. Dr. Jodie Lyon, Professor of Religion at UGA, discusses the idea of female sin, which is definitively different than normative sin. Normative sin can be equated with male sin, as men are often aligned with normativity. Men set moral norms based on men's experiences. Therefore, gendered sin is very important as a concept because it is vital in understanding and interpreting gendered experiences.<sup>38</sup> Individuals of different genders experience the same situation in vastly different ways, and therefore Lyon concludes that those individuals also sin in vastly different ways. Lyon asserts a key point in saying, "[if] women suffer from a lack of self rather than an excess of self, then the Christian directive of self-sacrifice is not only not helpful to women but potentially harmful as well."<sup>39</sup> In Islam, the idea of self-sacrifice manifests itself slightly differently than in Christianity, but the main point is still valid: if women are told to be humble and eschew pride by both their religion and their patriarchal society, this environment can be very harmful to women. In contrast, a Muslim man being told to be humble and not boastful is at

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<sup>38</sup> Jodie L. Lyon, "Pride and the Symptoms of Sin." *Journal of Feminist Studies In Religion* 28: 1 (2012): 97.

<sup>39</sup> Lyon, "Pride and the Symptoms of Sin," 99.

the same time being told that he is naturally superior to women and other marginalized groups. In this case, a healthy dose of religiously-supported humility can be very beneficial to the Muslim man because it can help him analyze his place in the world, and understand that some of his identities are unfairly privileged above other peoples' identities, and therefore he must be fair and humble in his life and not abuse his privileged power.

Pride, in the *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, concisely sums up why pride is important for women and by extension all oppressed peoples. In reference to women, the definition states that “pride has a positive meaning that corresponds to self-esteem and which should be encouraged to the point where it achieves the full recognition of their rights as persons and as women.”<sup>40</sup> The authors equate self-esteem with pride, arguing that after years and years of imposed marginalization and self-negation, self-esteem is necessary in order to bring women back to themselves and free them from the false and derogatory images that patriarchal society has worked so hard to press upon them.<sup>41</sup> Self-esteem is also a critically-reflective response to the male self who sees himself as lord over all, including women. The authors assert that pride should not be seen as an arrogance or conceited exertion; this pride in womanhood is based upon interior beauties and riches that conflict with the “frivolity and fickleness” of the female gender that is so often promoted in society.<sup>42</sup> The final comment of the definition summarizes the difference between pride in feminist theology and the normative definition of pride in religious ethics:

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<sup>40</sup> Letty M. Russell, and J. Shannon Clarkson, eds. *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), “Pride” by Margarita Pintos, trans. Sharon H. Ringe, 227.

<sup>41</sup> Russell, *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, 227.

<sup>42</sup> Russell, *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, 227.

Pride in women is not understood as self-satisfaction. It must be characterized by self-critical judgment and by the tension between what is and what ought to be, overcoming the dichotomy between superior and inferior and finding one's own personal unity.<sup>43</sup>

This explanation of pride shows a clear understanding of pride as a polythetic concept. This pride is a deserved self-respect that is reached after honest self-reflection of oneself and one's identity, including one's character and actions. Pride for women is not as simple as seeing good in yourself and reveling in the feelings of satisfaction and superiority. Because women are placed in a lower position in society compared to men, their pride is complicated with the tensions of that placement. This dichotomy of superior-inferior informs every woman's understanding of herself and what pride she is able to have in herself. This concept of people needing pride while being in an inferior position can be applied to other situations of oppression where the dichotomy of superior-inferior exists.

Deserved pride cultivated in marginalized people is not about boasting or displaying excellent qualities to others to display superiority. Pride ought not be looked at in the same way among all people, because that would assume that all people stand on equal footing from the beginning. This inconsistency of human situation must necessarily be addressed. If we want equity and not equality of opportunity and status, then we must give oppressed peoples room to feel pride in order to regain their humanity. Through pride in an identity that you have been socialized to understand is naturally inferior, marginalized people can begin to reclaim their marginalized identity. It is an ethical duty to allow people to define themselves and have agency over their own identities without the harmful and sometimes violent impositions from outside forces they currently have to face.

## **Conclusion**

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<sup>43</sup> Russell, *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, 227.

Communal pride is not the pride of preoccupation with the self. It stems from the self, but its scope is much farther, and its purpose much greater. In the context of religion, a believer should endeavor to reach their fullest potential because it is God's will, and through that action she will set an example and precedent for future subjugated peoples. Hope brought on by this example of agency will permeate marginalized communities. This is how pride can be a tool to fight oppression. Loving yourself and loving your god when everyone tells you that that love is worthless is one of the most powerful acts of defiance possible. Self-love can easily turn into prideful boasting, but moderated self-love in the face of oppressors is strength and resilience.

Personal shame about one's marginalized identity is not an ideal situation. Through shame, one could lose the ability to defend oneself against internalized oppression as well as external oppression. White, ruling class men do not have this potential problem because of patriarchy. Women do. In some situations, such as in the societal climate of the United States today, all Muslims have to battle oppression, internally and externally. Internalized oppression, such as internalized anti-Muslim sentiment, is extremely harmful to the psyche of this marginalized group. It is not morally desirable to remain passive in the face of internalized oppression instead of actively fighting against it. If an individual is not fighting oppression, that individual is passively contributing to it and supporting it. An oppressed person not actively fighting against oppression is participating in her own erasure in order to squash her identity-based pride from perhaps fear, shame, or a desperate need to assimilate. According to the Qur'an and Islamic ethics, failing to fight oppression is ethically wrong. Everyone has the opportunity to claim pride in their identity in order to subvert oppression. It is a moral duty to take pride in one's identity, especially one's Muslim identity, even when, and especially when, society tells one to be ashamed.



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