

Arrogance, Anger and Debate

Alessandra Tanesini

Abstract: Arrogance has widespread negative consequences for epistemic practices. Arrogant people tend to intimidate and humiliate other agents, and to ignore or dismiss their views. They have a propensity to mansplain. They are also angry. In this paper I explain why anger is a common manifestation of arrogance in order to understand the effects of arrogance on debate. I argue that *superbia* (which is the kind of arrogance that is my concern here) is a vice of superiority characterised by an overwhelming desire to diminish other people in order to excel and by a tendency to arrogate special entitlements for oneself, including the privilege of not having to justify one's claims.

Keywords: arrogance, anger, debate, epistemic virtues, epistemic vices.

Arrogance, including intellectual arrogance, can take different forms. One kind of arrogance finds its expression in hubristic forms of hyper-autonomy. It is characterised by aloofness, and feelings of invulnerability which lead to irresponsible attitudes to risk. The behaviour of some investment managers prior to the 2008 financial crisis illustrates this form of hubristic arrogance. There is, however, a different cluster of attitudes and dispositions which are usually perceived as arrogant. These include smugness, self-importance, self-satisfaction and a thin skin. Individuals exhibiting these features tend to put other people down; they are bullies who shout, intimidate and humiliate others. They may also condescend and belittle. A paradigmatic example of this kind of person is the powerful individual who dominates discussions, reacts angrily when criticised, and rudely interrupts other people when they are speaking. He (and it is most often a "he") also adopts a variety of intimidating and humiliating postures to induce others to self-silence and to become excessively deferential.

We have all come across individuals of this kind. They are arrogant, domineering and always a small step away from anger.¹ Cultural norms discouraging public displays of anger may serve to inhibit some of these behaviours. In these contexts they are often substituted by expressions of condescension or contempt. In the United Kingdom in particular, where expressions of anger or rage are especially disapproved because they indicate a lack of self-control, the dominant elite often responds to challenges with a condescending laugh which may hide suppressed anger. For example both the previous foreign secretary Boris Johnson and an earlier minister for Brexit David

¹ For some evidence of a positive correlation between arrogance, dominance (as trying to outdo others) and anger in the workplace see Johnson et al. (2010).

Davis often laugh in response to questions from the media before answering in a jokey manner.

Given the existence of this positive correlation between some forms of arrogance and anger, it is natural to wonder why this may be the case. One aim of this paper is to answer this question which has not, to my knowledge, been addressed in the philosophical literature. One reason for the neglect is that philosophical accounts of anger are often based on the analysis of this emotion offered by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* (Aristotle 2007), while interpreting the latter as suggesting that narcissism is the primary cause of excessive anger. Narcissism and arrogance are, of course, closely related since people who suffer from one trait may also possess the other. Nevertheless, narcissism and arrogance are distinct. It is my contention here that anger is properly understood as a manifestation of the kind of arrogance I call *superbia*, whilst narcissism is more closely associated with envy. It is possible for envy to slide into anger. Nevertheless, these are distinct emotions.

Exploring the connection of anger to *superbia* throws light on the complex nature of this vice of superiority. It is expressed by an overwhelming desire to diminish or humiliate other people in order to be better than they are, and thus excel in one's own eyes.² It is also characterised by a propensity to arrogate entitlements to special treatment of the kind that one denies to other people. I argue that this form of arrogance is ultimately borne of insecurity. Given that anger is the response to an act that is perceived as a wrong threatening what one cares about, and includes a wish to diminish the other in return (Nussbaum 2016), it is no surprise that *superbia*, which presupposes an hyper-vigilance to alleged threats to one's superiority, often manifests itself through anger.

Further, the account of *superbia*, which emerges by exploring its connections to anger, provides an illuminating lens through which to understand arrogant behaviours in debate. Arrogant speakers interrupt others, and react angrily when challenged. We can make sense of their anger, if we think that those who suffer from *superbia* arrogate for themselves a dispensation from the answerability commitment that governs the speech act of assertion. Arrogant individuals interpret any challenge as an affront because they think of it as a violation of their special entitlements.

The paper consists of three sections. In the first I focus on anger as a negative emotion in response to a perceived wrong which includes a wish for a pay-back. In the second I argue that there is a kind of arrogance that is characterised by an inflated but fragile self-esteem.³ Individuals who suffer from

² Arrogant individuals want to be superior to other people. They are not as interested in having their superiority acknowledged by others, although they would welcome such acknowledgment as evidence that they are correct in their evaluations of their qualities as impressive.

³ This insecurity about self-esteem is a cause of the self-deception at the root of arrogance. Those who suffer from *superbia* lay claim to privileges and special treatment as a way of

it are very defensive; they attempt to protect their superiority by engaging in behaviour designed to diminish others. In the third section I describe the effects of superbia on debate. Speakers, who are arrogant in this way, behave as they do because they arrogate for themselves the privilege not to be answerable for their claims to their listeners. That is, arrogant individuals behave as if they did not need to justify their claims. That is why they experience any challenge as a personal insult. They react in anger by intimidating and humiliating other people. Audiences can also be arrogant. They manifest their arrogance by exhibiting a propensity to dismiss speakers or to mansplain to them their own views.

On Anger

Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* defines anger as a “desire, accompanied by [mental and physical] distress, for apparent retaliation because of an apparent slight that was directed, without justification, against oneself or those near to one” (Aristotle 2007, 116, 1378a 30-33). In what follows I flesh out this definition before briefly defending a qualified version of Aristotle’s account. Finally, I argue, contrary to Stocker and Hegeman (1996), that anger should not be thought as an especially narcissistic emotion or reactive attitude.

Anger is a negative emotion directed at a person or persons for something that they are perceived to have done. This action is thought by the angry person to be intentional and to constitute a wrong. In particular, the act is a wrong because it is both unjust, or otherwise illegitimate, and harmful to a person’s interest in goods which he takes to be central to his self-conception. The belief or judgment that one has been wronged in a way that harms what is closest to the self is the basis for the desire, also constitutive of anger, to get even. So anger involves a desire for revenge, retaliation or pay-back.

Aristotle focuses almost exclusively on one kind of anger provoking wrong, namely a slight or insult. This is an action which if intentional is designed to diminish its target, to lower him or her in status. This focus on slights is, as Nussbaum (2016) observes, too narrow. People feel angry in response to wrongs other than slights. For example, we may be angry when someone has wrongfully harmed a friend. It would seem a mistake to think of this wrong as a slight. Yet, as Nussbaum also notes, there appear to be people who treat all anger provoking wrongs as insults directed at the self. We can easily imagine someone reacting angrily to a wrongful action that harms a friend whilst thinking: ‘How dare you harm my friend!’. The person whose anger is motivated by this thought is conceiving of the wrong as a personal insult. His concern is not for the wrong inflicted on the friend, but for the diminishing effect that the action has on him.

securing the high rank they seek, whilst believing that their high rank entitles them to the privileges they claim. In short, they act so as to bring it about that they have higher status, whilst thinking that their actions are warranted by their pre-existing high status. Thanks to Scott Aikin for forcing me to be clearer on this point.

In his view, by harming his friends the offender is implicitly treating *him* as someone who can be messed with. In other words, the offender is not showing him the respect that would befit a person of high status or rank.

Nussbaum refers to the anger manifested by these self-centred individuals as “status anger” because it is exclusively focused on actions experienced as personal affronts. Status anger would then be a wish for payback based on the belief that the offender’s actions were intentional and illegitimate attempts to lower one’s social status. Nussbaum’s identification of this kind of anger with an obsessive concern for social status is in my view too quick. The person who is angry because he perceives the harm inflicted on a friend as a personal affront is clearly extremely self-centred. He would also seem to value the wrong things, or at least value some things disproportionately compared to their true worth. For instance, he values having positional goods, such as being the boss or the winner, more than he cares for the well-being of his friends. Social status, however, is only one such positional good; but there are others. An arrogant person may value being the best at some activity without caring about whether his alleged excellence is widely acknowledged.

There is some unclarity over how to translate Aristotle’s definition of anger which may have motivated commentators to read his account of it as a desire for retaliation following a threat to social status.⁴ Be that as it may, because the payback is intended as revenge, it matters, as Aristotle observes (Aristotle 2007, 123, 1380b 20-29), that the target of the action perceives it as retribution for his initial alleged offense. However, an individual may respond angrily to an action that is perceived as wrongfully threatening one’s ranking, wishing to put the opponent in his place, without also desiring that the put down is public so that the offender will also be lowered in others’ eyes. For example, an individual may think that a colleague is slighting him by showing insufficient recognition of his high level of achievement. This colleague may be a peer who is perceived as acting superior. One may respond angrily to these alleged put downs by responding in kind. It seems entirely possible that the angry and vengeful individual finds satisfaction in pointing out to the offending colleague some failures in her performance, knowing that this will hurt her. He may not particularly care that the whole office notices the put down. Of course, there might people to whom it matters that the humiliation is public; but this need not be so. In other cases the desire for payback is fully satisfied by the response in kind. If this is true, anger in response to an act that is perceived as lowering one in rank, need not be exclusively concerned with social status.

When anger is driven by a desire to get even or do others down in response to actions whose effects have been some loss or diminution with regard to a positional good, it may prove effective. By lowering or diminishing

⁴ The debate concerns whether the slight is apparent in the subjective sense of appearing to one that one has been slighted or in the objective sense of the slight being manifest to all. I follow Leighton (2002, 27) in setting this issue aside.

the offender in return, it is possible to succeed in re-establishing one's prior rank. Hence, retaliation to restore one's share of a positional good is not irrational. For example, if a child is invested in being the student that always raises her hand first whenever the teacher asks a question, she may perceive a quick raising of hand by another student as a slight. She thinks of this action as designed to lower her rank. In response she feels that it is within her right to kick the other student under the table or to snigger if he gets the answer wrong. In the long term these behaviours may be effective in making one's classmates think twice before raising their hands again.⁵ Thus, this kind of anger can succeed in undoing the loss that motivated it. In this regard it is unlike anger of a different kind since harming the person who assaulted us will not undo the assault.

Aristotle perceptively observes that anger is an implicit acknowledgement of vulnerability to threats (Aristotle 2007, 119, 1379a 49- 1379b). He claims that those who respond angrily to claims dismissive of their qualities are insecure about their excellence, since those who are genuinely self-confident will show indifference for the attempted insults. In my view this observation gets to the heart of the psychology of anger over ranking or status. This kind of anger is a defensive mechanism to protect one's own self-esteem from alleged threats. In other words, the person who has a tendency to anger quickly is the person who often perceives others' actions as a threat to the self. They perceive actions which are not threatening as threats. They also take these threats as consisting in failing to acknowledge one's alleged status or one's possession of positional goods such as being the best student in the class. In sum, these individuals perceive these behaviours as slights or insults because their self-esteem depends on thinking of themselves as superior to others in a number of domains.

Note, however, a person's self-esteem can be so dependent on rankings whilst thinking that the only opinion about ranking that matters to one is one's own. As a matter of fact, this attitude would seem most consonant with arrogance. Why would one care if other people, whom one thinks are inferior to oneself, fail to recognise one's superiority? The reason why an arrogant person responds angrily to put downs is because they threaten his ranking in his own eyes. Firstly, perceived put downs raise the spectre that one's own estimate of one's superior abilities may be a mistake. It is this insecurity in one's own eyes that drives the angry response aiming to intimidate the opponent into silence so that he will not make salient again the possibility that one's own self-assessment is erroneous. Secondly, put downs are at least in some domains actually effective in lowering somebody's rank. For instance, one would not belong anymore to the category of people with whom others do not mess. The angry response might restore the previous state of affairs.

⁵ Of course, the student who raises the hand quickly has not wronged anyone. Nevertheless, she may be perceived as having done so by her classmate.

I am now in a position to substantiate the claim I made at the start of this section that even self-centred anger is not always a manifestation of narcissism. There is no agreed definition of narcissism in the social psychological literature which would clearly demarcate it from arrogance and superbia. Rather, psychologists often think of narcissism as a kind of arrogant and defensive pride (McGregor et al. 2005). I suspect that the same conflation mars some philosophical accounts explaining status anger as a manifestation of narcissism. There are undoubtedly close ties between superbia and narcissism since they both involve self-centredness and an inflated sense of one's own specialness. But there are also important differences between the two which tend to be ignored. Narcissism is a deep kind of vanity when one turns onto oneself the infatuated and admiring gaze that one seeks from other people. So unlike individuals driven by superbia who primarily want to be superior to other people, individuals who are vain and narcissistic want to be loved by them. Individuals who suffer from superbia would be delighted to strike fear in the hearts of others around them. In this regard, superbia and arrogance on the one hand, and vanity and narcissism on the other, are polar opposites. Although more would need to be said to substantiate these claims, nevertheless they receive some support from the folk conception of narcissism as a kind of self-infatuation which, being closely related to vanity, seeks to down play one's visible defects in order to be the object of admiration.

If this is right, those who are vain and narcissistic do not seek payback; they do not wish to do others down.⁶ On the contrary since they wish to be admired, they may even flatter and charm other people so that to get their love in return. Both those who suffer from superbia and those who are vain and narcissistic seek elevation and self-enhancement. But they seek different kinds of self-enhancement and pursue them in different ways. Individuals who have superbia want to be superior to others; whilst those who are vain and narcissistic only care that others think that they are superior. Further, vain and narcissistic individuals because they want to be admired can only gain their superior status when others like them. Thus, although they may be envious and even spiteful, they are unlikely to seek pay back since doing so would be an obstacle to being admired. In this regard, those who suffer from superbia are different, since they do not seek to be loved, they have no scruples to do others down in order to triumph. To summarise, anger is a manifestation not of narcissism but of superbia.

On Intellectual Arrogance

Intellectual arrogance is generally regarded as a vice of superiority because arrogant people presume that they are better than other people. It might be tempting to conclude that arrogance consists in the belief that one is superior or

⁶They may, out of envy, wish misfortune upon them.

more excellent than others. This conclusion, however, is a mistake. Belief in one's alleged superiority is not sufficient for arrogance. It is possible for a person to think of herself as better in some domain than others in her circle without being arrogant. This person may be self-confident but she would not act superior, or be dismissive of those around her (Tiberius and Walker 1998). Even if this person's confidence in her superior abilities is misplaced because her beliefs about her capacities are false, it is perfectly possible that such a person has made an honest mistake. If so, she may not display the attitudes and dispositions characteristic of arrogance such as smugness, self-satisfaction, presumptuousness, aloofness, and a propensity to treat others with contempt and to dismiss their views without due consideration (Tanesini 2016a, 2016b).

Contra Tiberius and Walker (1998) full belief in one's superiority is not even necessary for arrogance. It seems possible that a person may act in superior ways, and take great pains to make it manifest to all that she thinks she is better than they are, precisely as a way of building up her self-confidence against nagging doubts about her own superiority. If this is right, at least some arrogant individuals are very insecure about their self-worth. They appear to be full of themselves because they continually engage in the process of "bigging" themselves up. But, the smugness and self-satisfaction of the arrogant individual is a defensive reaction to cover up for a deep sense that one's self-esteem is fragile and under threat.

These considerations suggest that arrogance, including intellectual arrogance, does not consist in beliefs about one's alleged superiority, although it may be accompanied by them. Rather, arrogant individuals need to feel superior to other people in order to preserve a sense of self-worth. That is, their own self-esteem is predicated on feeling that they are better than others. Thus, they construe others' abilities and achievement as a threat to their self-esteem. They react defensively to these alleged threats by trying to boost their self-confidence. Arrogance, therefore, is a manifestation of what social psychologists have labelled defensive high self-esteem (Haddock and Gebauer 2011).

Individuals who have high self-esteem as explicitly measured through questionnaires appear to be very confident in their abilities. Some of these people, however, have low self-esteem when this is measured indirectly. For example, these people dislike things which are associated with the self, such as their own name or its first letter. They may also associate the self with negative or unpleasant things. These associations can be measured in IATs (implicit association tests). These people whose self-esteem seems high in explicit measures and low in indirect ones are said to have defensive high self-esteem (Haddock and Gebauer 2011). They are very sensitive to threats; they are alert to respond to them and tend to misclassify some unthreatening situations as threats. Their apparent confidence, which is recorded in the explicit measures of

self-esteem, is a defensive response that belies their deeper insecurities which are revealed when self-esteem is measured indirectly.⁷

There is empirical evidence that individuals whose high self-esteem is defensive display all the behaviours usually associated with arrogance. For example, they have a propensity for self-enhancement (Bosson et al. 2003); they are prone to boasting (Olson et al. 2007); they react to threats in seemingly arrogant ways (McGregor et al. 2005); they suffer from heightened defensiveness (Haddock and Gebauer 2011); they have higher levels of prejudice toward members of other ethnic groups (Jordan et al. 2005); they display higher levels of self-deception in general than those whose high self-esteem is congruent (Jordan et al. 2003); they have a tendency to overestimate the extent to which other people agree with their views (McGregor et al. 2005) and to react badly to negative feedback by derogating the views of out-group members (Jordan et al. 2005); finally, they are prone to anger (Schröder-Abé et al. 2007).

It is not my contention that all forms of arrogance are indicative of defensive responses to insecurities about the worth of the self. Rather, my view is that there is a distinctive form of arrogance that displays these features. I call this brand of arrogance haughtiness or superbia because it is characterised by an inordinate desire to diminish or humiliate other people so that one is able to excel.⁸ Individuals who possess this vice are consumed by an overwhelming desire for positional goods such as winning races or being the first to make a discovery. They crave to secure these achievements as a way of boosting their self-esteem and are prepared to diminish other people to achieve their aims.

There are at least two reasons why people who suffer from superbia behave in these ways. Firstly, by humiliating and abasing others, they are likely to succeed in eroding these people's confidence in their own abilities and thus lower their standard of achievement. In this way, individuals suffering from superbia can bring it about that they outperform others. Secondly, also by diminishing others, they succeed in quietening them, or at least portraying them as not being worth listening to. Either way they minimise the risk of situations emerging that may force those whose self-esteem depends on feeling superior to revise downward their own sense of self-importance.

I have argued so far that superbia is the kind of arrogance which is manifested in a desire for superiority combined with a propensity to do other people down in order to excel. These tendencies are rooted in insecurity about the worth of the self. Since one has low self-esteem one tries to enhance it by feeling that one is better than others. But since one's sense of self-worth is dependent on these favourable comparisons, it is also fragile because others'

⁷ There is an unresolved debate within social psychology whether these two kinds of measurement tap into the same construct or whether they track different psychological states. Here, I set this issue aside.

⁸ This is Dante's characterisation of superbia in his *Divine Comedy* (1994) at Purg., XVII vv 115-17.

successes would unravel it. Hence, one experiences one's self-esteem as especially vulnerable to threats and one adopts defensive attitudes to protect it. Importantly, one also experiences others' achievements as being threats to one's self-esteem and thus acts to neutralise these threats by diminishing other people. Hence, one does others down to protect one's self-esteem, because one's own sense of self-worth is dependent on feeling superior to other people.

Individuals who are arrogant in these ways, because they need to feel superior to other people, also attempt to gain confidence in their superiority by claiming special entitlements (Roberts and Wood 2007, 77). If they are granted these privileges, they can tell themselves that the special treatment is warranted by their excellence when compared to other members of the group. These thoughts then offer support for the feelings of superiority which are so crucial to their self-esteem.

Further, arrogant expectations of entitlement to special and preferential treatment cause these individuals to perceive perfectly legitimate behaviour on the part of other people as insulting. They expected to be treated as VIPs, and thus experience common treatment as a slight. Because these individuals are protective of their self-esteem, which in their case can only be protected by feeling superior, they react to the perceived slights by attempting to do other people down in response.

It is now clear why those who suffer from superbia are especially prone to anger. They experience quite innocent and common behaviour as an insult and a personal affront. These experiences are born out of their sense of entitlement. Whenever these individuals do not receive the preferential treatment which they arrogate for themselves, they feel that their rights (in the form of privileges) have been violated. Thus, they think that they have been wronged because they have been denied the respect which is due to them. For this reason, these individuals are prone to perceive a broad range of actions as insults directed at them. Further, they respond to experiences of slights by seeking to get even. This desire for revenge is the desire to do others down which is characteristic of superbia.

To summarise, we should expect some forms of arrogance to be manifested in a propensity to anger often and quickly. Since this kind of arrogance is underpinned by a need to protect a fragile self-esteem by feeling superior, individuals who suffer from this feature are likely to construe a broad range of occasions as threats to one's sense of self-worth. In particular, they interpret ordinary treatment as a slight because it violates their alleged privileges. Therefore, arrogant individuals are likely to experience an unusually broad range of situations as warranting an angry reaction. Moreover, because they are inclined to attempt to establish their superiority, they are disposed to act on their perceptions and react angrily. Getting even in response to what they experience as slights is for them a perfect way to try to achieve their goal of feeling superior whilst thinking that they occupy the moral high ground.

Superbia and Anger in Debate

In this section I highlight some of the negative effects of superbia, and of the anger that accompanies it, on debating behaviour. My focus is on one privilege arrogated by those who suffer from this vice. This is their tendency to think that they do not need to offer justifications for their views and to think that they are better placed than speakers themselves to justify the speakers' own views.

Superbia in debate can take many forms. These include domineering conduct such as taking up more than one's allocated speaking time, rudely interrupting other people or speaking over them. It comprises linguistic and paralinguistic behaviours intended to dismiss or belittle the views expressed by other participants. These range from eye rolling, expressions of feigned disbelief as well as verbal insults. Such conduct is disrespectful because it violates the norms governing debating behaviour.

Speakers and listeners that engage in discussion and vigorous debate have obligations toward each other. These obligations have an ethical-epistemic character since they relate to what epistemic agents owe to each other when engaged in an epistemic practice such as debate. Whilst often people enter in discussions with the sole aim of winning and defeating their adversary, in many situations the proper aim of debate should be to clarify contrasting views, to test them against a number of possible challenges, to highlight what evidence exists in their support, and at least in some cases to resolve the disagreement in favour of the view that is more likely to be true and that satisfies other epistemic desiderata such as explanatory power. So understood, debate is part of enquiry whose purpose is the production and distribution of knowledge and responsibly held belief.

The norms governing debate facilitate the achievement of the proper aims of this practice. In this paper I focus primarily on norms that concern the conduct of individuals with regard to making assertions. In particular, I discuss some responsibilities that speakers have toward their addressees and that listeners have toward speakers. These are responsibilities that flow from the commitment undertaken by speakers to be answerable to their audience for their claims.

When using assertions to tell something to an audience a speaker undertakes at least two commitments.⁹ She commits herself to having the right epistemic standing with regard to the content of her assertion. That is, she shoulders accountability for its correctness. She also commits to answering proper queries and challenges to her claims. That is, she takes herself to be answerable to others for supplying them with reasons to believe her assertions if they have well-founded reservations. I have elsewhere labelled these commitments as, respectively, the accountability and answerability commitment (Tanesini 2016a). Here I restrict my discussion to the second.

⁹ There is a third commitment to sincerity which I bracket for the purposes of this paper.

When making an assertion, a speaker, in addition to vouchsafing for its correctness, accepts the responsibility to answer challenges when these are legitimate. A speaker, that is, typically accepts an obligation to justify her assertions, when her addressee raises genuine concerns.¹⁰ A speaker is within her own right to treat some challenges as disingenuous. For example, there are contexts in which an intervention from a member of an audience feigning that he does not understand what the speaker is saying should not be taken as a genuine request for clarification.¹¹ It is best read as an indirect way of insinuating that the speaker was insufficiently clear because her position is indefensible. In these circumstances the speaker has no obligation to justify and clarify her claim, because no proper challenge to it has been issued.

Whilst speakers are usually answerable to their audiences and thus have responsibilities toward them to present reasons and evidence in support of their assertions, there may be special cases where speakers are exempt from this responsibility because of their authority. For instance, the Pope as representative of Christ on earth is meant to have special epistemic authority when speaking *ex-cathedra*. We can interpret the doctrine of papal infallibility as stating that on these occasions, the Pope although accountable for the correctness of his pronouncements is not answerable for them to ordinary members of the church. In these circumstances, there would be no legitimate challenges to his views; thus, there are no queries he ought to answer, or reasons he must offer. The Pope would have the special epistemic privilege not to have to justify his position to other people in a debate. Personally, I am sceptical about papal authority; therefore, I do not believe that he has the privilege not to be challenged even when speaking *ex-cathedra*. Nevertheless, the example suffices to show that there could be an authoritative kind of assertion that does not impose on speakers the requirement to be answerable for their claims. This kind of assertion is akin to a verdict since it is intended as responsive to the facts without being open to challenges.¹²

One of the characteristic behaviours of those who suffer from superbia is their angry reactions to any challenge when engaged in a discussion. They treat disagreements as personal insults. The account offered here provides an explanation for this otherwise inexplicable behaviour. Arrogant individuals claim for themselves the privilege not to be challenged. They think that they do not need to justify their views to others because they feel that their superiority bestows upon them the kind of authority that insulates them from queries. Since, as it goes without saying, the arrogation of this privilege is illegitimate the

¹⁰ This obligation can be overridden by weightier responsibilities.

¹¹ This move is only effective when the questioner is widely thought as intellectually superior to the speaker. In these cases other members of the audience are invited to infer from the questioner's claim that he could not understand that the presentation was unclear, given their firm background belief that the questioner is smarter than the speaker.

¹² See Tanesini (2016a) for further discussion of these points.

arrogant individual's dismissal of criticisms violates the norms of debate and is disrespectful to others.

Arrogant individuals do not merely dismiss challenges by ignoring them. They often go further and positively attempt to intimidate and humiliate those who disagree with them. They seem to think that they are entitled to behave in these ways because their actions would be retribution for the violation of their alleged privilege not to be questioned or disagreed with. Both intimidation and humiliation are effective strategies to defend the kind of self-confidence which is based on the need to feel superior. Intimidation and humiliation are also what we would expect, if these reactions are angry attempts to get even following a perceived slight.

Intellectually arrogant individuals intimidate by shouting people down, and by engaging in other activities which will make their opponent fearful of voicing their challenges in future. Intimidation works to minimise the risk of further threats to self-esteem since if others are rendered timid they are unlikely to speak up. Arrogant people also humiliate their opponents by engaging in behaviour that belittles them and their views. Humiliation succeeds by making others feel ashamed. It undermines their self-confidence while promoting deferential and servile behaviour.

In short, those who are arrogant defend their illegitimate privilege not to be challenged in two ways which are effective in minimising the occurrence of future challenges. Intimidation succeeds by creating the conditions in which one's opponents will self-silence or self-smother (Dotson 2011). They choose silence out of fear to be subjected to the bullying and harassing behaviour characteristic of arrogant shouting and domineering. Humiliation succeeds by creating the conditions in which one's opponents lose confidence in their own opinions (Tanesini 2018). Having been the target of condescension and dismissal people can become deferential and servile in the hope of putting an end to the abasing treatment.

Superbia affects the behaviour of addressees as well as that of speakers. Whilst, contra Anscombe (1979, 150), audiences are not ordinarily disrespectful if they do not believe what a speaker says, listeners are under an obligation to at least recognise that the speaker has made a contribution to the debate (Tanesini 2016a).¹³ That is, listeners must acknowledge, for example, that the speaker has committed to justifying her claims if challenged. Hence, it would be disrespectful if addressees ignored this commitment and asked a third party whether one should believe the original assertion. In my view, an addressee is under no obligation to ask the speaker for a justification whenever he is doubtful or even sceptical about her claim since the addressee is within his right to change the topic of debate or end the conversation. He is not however entitled to ignore the

¹³ That said, there are cases when not to be believed is an insult. For instance, if one's assertion is in response to a query, one is entitled to expect that the questioner believes the response in the absence of independent evidence casting doubt over the truth of the answer.

commitment made by the speaker or dismiss what she said. By making an assertion a speaker has taken upon herself the burden to defend her claim and be blameworthy if it turns out to have been incorrect. The audience owes it to the speaker to acknowledge that she has willingly undertaken these special responsibilities.

Arrogant audiences are often not willing to acknowledge that the speaker has acquired these obligations. They deny their acknowledgment to speakers, because to accept it is to recognise that the speaker has a privileged status with regard to the asserted content. Defending it, in the given context, is primarily her responsibility. Arrogant individuals see even this behaviour as a challenge to their superiority. Hence, the prevalence of a phenomenon known as mansplaining. When it occurs, an addressee takes upon himself the responsibility to explain and defend to a speaker, the true meaning of her own claims. This condescending attitude is a way of asserting one's superiority by denying that the speaker has any authority over her own claims, and thus acting *in loco parentis* on her behalf. It is this presumption that the speaker is unable to shoulder her responsibility toward her own claims, that makes mansplaining condescending and offensive rather than helpful. It is the fact that it is an attempt to diminish others so that one can excel in one's own eyes that makes mansplaining an example of how an addressee may fail to give a speaker the respect he owes her.¹⁴

References:

- Alighieri, Dante. 1994. *La Commedia Secondo L'antica Vulgata*, edited by Giorgio Petrocchi, 2nd ed. Firenze: Casa editrice Le lettere.
- Anscombe, G. E. M. 1979. "What Is It to Believe Someone?" In *Rationality and Religious Belief*, edited by C. F. Delaney, 141-151. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
- Aristotle. 2007. *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*. Translated by G. A. Kennedy, 2nd edition. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bosson, Jennifer K., Ryan P. Brown, Virgil Zeigler-Hill, and William B. Swann Jr. 2003. "Self-Enhancement Tendencies among People with High Explicit Self-Esteem: The Moderating Role of Implicit Self-Esteem." *Self and Identity* 2(3): 169-187. doi:10.1080/15298860309029
- Dotson, Kristie. 2011. "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing." *Hypatia* 26(2): 36-57. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01177.x

¹⁴ Thanks to Scott Aikin for his helpful comments. Research leading to this paper was partially funded by a Leverhulme Fellowship and by a subaward agreement from the University of Connecticut with funds provided by Grant No. 58942 from John Templeton Foundation. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official views of The Leverhulme Trust, UConn or John Templeton Foundation.

- Haddock, Geoffrey and Jochen E. Gebauer. 2011. "Defensive Self-esteem Impacts Attention, Attitude Strength, and Self-affirmation Processes." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 47(6): 1276-1284. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2011.05.020
- Johnson, Russell E., Stanley B. Silverman, Aarti Shyamsunder, Hsien Yao Swee, O Burcu Rodopman, Eunae Cho, and Jeremy Bauer. 2010. "Acting Superior but Actually Inferior?: Correlates and Consequences of Workplace Arrogance." *Human Performance* 23(5): 403-427. doi:10.1080/08959285.2010.515279
- Jordan, Christian H., Steven J. Spencer, and Mark P. Zanna. 2005. "Types of High Self-esteem and Prejudice: How Implicit Self-esteem Relates to Ethnic Discrimination among High Explicit Self-esteem Individuals." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 31: 693-702.
- Jordan, Christian H., Steven J. Spencer, Mark P. Zanna, Etsuko Hoshino-Browne, and Joshua Correll. 2003. "Secure and Defensive High Self-esteem." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 85(5): 969-978. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.85.5.969
- Leighton, Stephen. 2002. "Aristotle's Account of Anger: Narcissism and Self-Sufficiency." *Ratio* 15: 23-45.
- McGregor, Ian, Paul R. Nail, Denise C. Marigold, and So-Jin Kang. 2005. "Defensive Pride and Consensus: Strength in Imaginary Numbers." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 89(6): 978-996. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.89.6.978
- Nussbaum, Martha C. 2016. *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Forgiveness, Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Olson, Michael A., Russell H. Fazio, and Anthony D. Hermann. 2007. "Reporting Tendencies Underlie Discrepancies Between Implicit and Explicit Measures of Self-Esteem." *Psychological Science* 18(4): 287-291.
- Roberts, Robert C. and W. Jay Wood. 2007. *Intellectual virtues: an essay in regulative epistemology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Schröder-Abé, Michela, Almut Rudolph, and Astrid Schütz. 2007. "High Implicit Self-esteem Is Not Necessarily Advantageous: Discrepancies between Explicit and Implicit Self-esteem and their Relationship with Anger Expression and Psychological Health." *European Journal of Personality* 21(3): 319-339. doi:10.1002/per.626
- Stocker, Michael and Elizabeth Hegeman. 1996. *Valuing Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tanesini, Alessandra. 2016a. "I - 'Calm Down, Dear': Intellectual Arrogance, Silencing and Ignorance." *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 90(1): 71-92. doi:10.1093/arisup/akw011
- Tanesini, Alessandra. 2016b. "Teaching Virtue: Changing Attitudes." *Logos & Episteme. An International Journal of Epistemology* 7(4): 503-527.

- Tanesini, Alessandra. 2018. "Intellectual Servility and Timidity." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 43: 21-41. doi:10.5840/jpr201872120
- Tiberius, Valerie and John D. C. Walker. 1998. "Arrogance." *American Philosophical Quarterly* 35(4): 379-390.