

Arrogance

Author(s): Valerie Tiberius and John D. Walker

Source: *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (Oct., 1998), pp. 379-390

Published by: [University of Illinois Press](#) on behalf of the [North American Philosophical Publications](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20009945>

Accessed: 24-11-2015 01:54 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



North American Philosophical Publications and University of Illinois Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Philosophical Quarterly*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

ARROGANCE

Valerie Tiberius and John D. Walker

“People say I’m arrogant, but I know better.”
— John Sununu

I. INTRODUCTION

What does Sununu know that the people who say he’s arrogant don’t? That he *acts* arrogant, but isn’t really? That his behavior does not reflect arrogance, but merely self-confidence? That he has a high opinion of himself, but is nevertheless not arrogant? What sort of evidence could we have for or against any of these ideas? Like many of the concepts that designate virtues and vices, we are able to apply the concept of arrogance easily to central cases. Saying what is essential to arrogance and what is accidental is more difficult, however, as is saying what is wrong with arrogance.

This paper has three main parts. First, we will examine and reject several initially attractive ways of understanding the concept of arrogance. These accounts fail either because they do not distinguish arrogance from related but different concepts, such as vanity and self-confidence, or because they do not permit us to understand why arrogance might reasonably be thought to be a vice. Second, we will propose and defend our own positive account of what arrogance is. We will argue that the Sununu quote is more revealing about the nature

of arrogance than Sununu himself was probably aware, for it points to the essentially interpersonal character of arrogance. Third, we will defend our account of arrogance by showing how it illuminates the conceptual and empirical connections between arrogance and related concepts, and also how it yields a plausible explanation of the reasons why arrogance is a vice. Ultimately, we will argue, the viciousness of arrogance is best understood in terms of Aristotelian views of friendship and self-knowledge.

II. BELIEF ACCOUNTS OF ARROGANCE

Arrogant people are full of themselves. They are, furthermore, necessarily full of themselves, for it does not seem possible to imagine an arrogant person who has a low-to-moderate opinion of his talents and abilities. But arrogance cannot just be a matter of having a high opinion of one’s talents, for that would not distinguish arrogance from the warranted self-confidence of a person who does indeed have considerable abilities and is aware of that fact. It would also not enable us to explain why arrogance is considered a vice, because it is hard to see what could be wrong with a candid awareness of one’s own talents.

Perhaps what distinguishes arrogance from self-confidence, then, is that the former is characterized by *false* beliefs

about one's skills and talents. On this view, arrogance just consists in having too high an opinion of one's talents, skills, or accomplishments. If we focus on people of moderate abilities who are nonetheless arrogant, this account seems convincing.

But this cannot be right, because many arrogant people (in fact some of the most annoying ones) actually *are* very talented. If a professional athlete like Carl Lewis can be arrogant,¹ this is not because Lewis thinks he is a greater athlete than he is. He actually is a very great athlete, and there is not much room for his self-concept to overshoot the mark in this respect. Garry Kasparov appears to be arrogant as well,² and he is in fact the best (human) chessplayer in the world. Having an accurate awareness of one's level of ability is not in itself a vice at all, and it is not arrogance in particular.

A third try is this: perhaps arrogance is not a matter of having an inflated opinion of one's *abilities*, but rather of *oneself*. The idea would be that arrogance consists in making an unwarranted leap from the fact that one has certain (perhaps considerable) talents and skills to the incorrect conclusion that one is superior *as a person*. Even if Kasparov is very good at chess, this does not warrant his thinking that he is in general superior to others.

There is something right about this approach. Few things are clearer about arrogant people than that they are convinced of their own superiority. It is not immediately obvious, however, just what sense of superiority is at work here. There is no evidence that arrogant people regard themselves as exempt from the usual constraints of action-theoretic morality. They do not believe, for example, that others are subject to duties not to kill or harm, but that they are not.

What is true of the arrogant person, we believe, is that he regards himself as supe-

rior to others in a more virtue-theoretic sense. Arrogant people begin with a belief, which may be more or less accurate, in their considerable talents and abilities. They then infer that they are superior to most other people insofar as they manifest the excellences appropriate to human beings to an above-average degree. They take themselves to be more perfect instances of humanity.

This sense of superiority is part, but not all, of the story about arrogance. The problem is that there seem to be people who count as arrogant and who *correctly* believe that they surpass others in meeting the standards that they take to measure a good life. Consider that the sort of abilities some arrogant people possess are accorded central importance in most accounts of human excellence. Henry Kissinger, for instance, is by all accounts a highly arrogant person, but his intellectual talents are considerable, and all philosophical accounts of the good life for human beings assign such talents an important role.

To take another example, Mr. Darcy in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* is thought arrogant by all the residents of Longbourn, although he has many of the qualities regarded by these same people as necessary for a good human life: he is intelligent, handsome, educated and wealthy. He is judged arrogant, proud, and conceited because of his reactions to village life and people. At a ball, when the host is encouraging him to dance with Eliza Bennett, he says, "She is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt *me*; and I am in no humour at present to give consequence to young ladies who are slighted by other men." Later, after Miss Bennett has rejected Darcy's insulting proposal of marriage, Darcy justifies the contempt that was evident in his proposal: "Nor am I ashamed of the feelings I related. They were natural

and just. Could you expect me to rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations whose condition in life is so decidedly beneath my own?"³

Darcy's arrogance cannot consist in incorrectly evaluating himself as superior to others on broad standards. He *is* superior to others according to the standards of the good life that were accepted at the time, standards accepted by the same people who judge him arrogant. So if Darcy and Kissinger believe that they are doing pretty well by the standards of human excellence, it is not obvious that they are wrong, and their arrogance must therefore consist in something other than a false belief.⁴

III. AN INTERPERSONAL ACCOUNT OF ARROGANCE

Our provisional conclusion is that arrogance does include a high opinion of one's talents and abilities, and it typically also includes, as an inference from this, a high opinion of one's excellence as a human being. But simply having these beliefs, whether they are true or false, is not sufficient for arrogance. The difficulty at the root of belief accounts of arrogance is that they focus only on one individual, namely the arrogant person himself. This is the wrong approach, because arrogance is essentially an interpersonal matter. It consists in a particular way of regarding and engaging in relations with others. In order to see this, we must focus on the arrogant person's interactions with others, because these interactions reveal the arrogant person's attitudes toward the relationships she stands in with those others. They also reveal his view of the norms that govern, or should govern, those relationships.

Consider Henry Kissinger. While a young professor at Harvard, Kissinger "had

a manner of carrying himself as if he were a senior faculty member," and seemed to cultivate an air of always being busy with something of great importance. Students were made to call weeks in advance for a fifteen-minute appointment, and then were kept waiting for hours. In his lecture classes, Kissinger rambled on at length about whatever struck him as interesting or important, making no particular attempt to teach well, or even to make his lectures relevant to the announced course material.

A recent biography describes a revealing scenario: Kissinger has misplaced some piece of paper he wants to find. He stomps from his office into the main departmental office and begins yelling at the office staff, demanding that they find his document. The staff, who are accustomed to this sort of behavior, ignore him. Frustrated, he yells, "I am angry. I am very angry. Isn't anyone going to pay attention?" To which his longtime secretary responds that they will help him when he quiets down and behaves politely.⁵

What do these examples indicate about the way that Kissinger sees the other people with whom he interacts? In general, they show that Kissinger sees his relations with others as hierarchical, consisting of relationships between superiors and inferiors, rather than as relations among people who have different abilities, talents, and knowledge, but who are nevertheless in some sense equals.⁶ Kissinger's behavior with students indicates that it is an act of magnanimity and grace on his part to stoop to meet with them, and to address himself to their petty concerns. They certainly have no *right* that he should do so; for a student to demand that he attend to them would be an affront, an act of the greatest impertinence. He has nothing to learn from them, and they should consider themselves for-

tunate to have the opportunity to bask in his brilliance.

The office scene paints the picture of a person who regards his own concerns as paramount. Others should be attentive to his needs, and should stand ready to drop whatever they are doing and assist him, because his goals are extremely important. Others are to assist him—they are not to work *with* him, but instead *for* him, at his behest.

In summary, the arrogant person has a high opinion of himself. He differs from the self-confident person in drawing certain *conclusions* from that belief, conclusions about his normative status in relation to others. What he concludes about his normative status is not (necessarily) that he has more intrinsic moral worth, or more numerous or stronger moral rights, but rather that he is a better person according to the general standards governing what counts as a successful human specimen.

His perceived status as a more excellent human being shapes his relations with others. Since he is superior to others, he does not regard others as having anything to offer him, nor does he believe they have the ability to enrich his life. The views and opinions of others are not of interest to him, and he treats them with disdain. Others owe him, in virtue of his excellence, a special sort of deference. He therefore establishes hierarchical and nonreciprocal relationships with his fellow human beings.⁷ These relationships are marked by a lack of the mutual enrichment that is, as we will explain below, an essential component of true friendship.

We have been describing arrogance thought of as a character trait, but arrogance typically has a behavioral component as well. The arrogant person is disposed to act on the beliefs and attitudes we have described. The lack of reciprocity in his relations with others is manifested in the disdain he displays toward, and the defer-

ence he expects from, his fellow human beings. His conviction that others have nothing to offer him is shown in his haughty and dismissive behavior.

Our analysis of arrogance dovetails with ordinary language use of the word. There are, however, two additional sources of support for our view. First, it illuminates the conceptual and empirical connections between arrogance and related notions such as vanity, self-confidence, and insecurity. Second, it yields a plausible explanation of why arrogance is considered a vice, an explanation with roots in Aristotle's moral theory. In the sections that follow we will elaborate these claims.

IV. IMPLICATIONS OF THE INTERPERSONAL ACCOUNT

The quote from John Sununu, with which we began this paper, is amusing because Sununu betrays his arrogance even as he denies it. With our analysis of the concept at hand, we can now also see why Sununu's statement is revealing about the nature of arrogance. It displays the dismissive attitude toward the views and perspectives of others that we have claimed is at the heart of arrogance. The Sununu quote also reveals a peculiar feature of arrogance which, we argue below, in part explains why arrogance is a vice. This feature is the way in which arrogance functions as a barrier to the arrogant person's acquiring information from others. In the quote, we see that as long as Sununu *is* arrogant, the nature of arrogance itself will make it very difficult for other people to convince him that he is. Other vices do not function in this way. Stinginess, for instance, does not have an internal dynamic that prevents a person from knowing that he is stingy.

Our analysis allows us to distinguish self-confidence and arrogance. As we mentioned above, self-confident people have an at

least moderately high opinion of their talents and abilities. But they do not typically believe themselves superior to others in the sense that arrogant people do, and they do not regard and shape their relations with others in the way that is characteristic of arrogance. For this reason arrogant people have a more difficult time making and keeping friends than do self-confident people. Consider these observations, made by tennis star Martina Hingis: "I'm very happy about my whole tennis game, I've had a great year. And you know, what can I improve, sometimes I ask myself that; it's a little scary."⁸ "Some of my shots were just amazing."⁹ One might reasonably conclude that Hingis is arrogant from these statements; she certainly does not lack self-esteem. But might she be merely self-confident?

Our analysis permits at least a tentative conclusion on the basis of the following information. The players on the professional tennis tour see each other frequently and have many opportunities to interact—in the locker room during tournaments, etc. It is well known that Hingis has been able, through these interactions, to form friendships with many other women players on the tour. Becoming friends with the people whom she regularly thrashes on the tennis court is no mean feat; it is an achievement that has eluded several other top players such as Steffi Graf and Monica Seles. This is some evidence that Hingis neither thinks of others as her inferiors in the way that characterizes arrogance nor behaves dismissively toward them, treating them as if they have nothing to offer her. Hingis may be self-confident, even annoyingly so, but on this evidence she does not appear to be arrogant.

Vanity is a concept that appears to be closely related to arrogance, inasmuch as the two words are frequently used in the same breath, to refer to the same person.

Vanity, however, seems to consist almost entirely in a person's having an excessively high self-estimation; it differs from self-confidence because the self-confident person esteems herself appropriately, though highly. Arrogance differs from both of these insofar as the arrogant person derives further beliefs from his high self-estimation, beliefs about the normative structure of his relations with others, and is disposed to put these beliefs into action by structuring his relationships in hierarchical, nonreciprocal ways.¹⁰

The arrogant person may also be vain, if he has an overly high opinion of himself, but it does not seem possible for someone to be both self-confident and arrogant. This is something of a puzzle, because on our analysis the belief that is central to self-confidence (high estimation of one's talents and abilities) is itself a component of arrogance. We believe the explanation is that self-confidence is not *simply* a matter of having an appropriately high estimation of oneself. It includes further beliefs about one's proper relations with others, and possibly behavioral dispositions as well, which are incompatible with arrogance. These beliefs and dispositions make self-confidence a desirable trait and distinguish it from arrogance.

Our view also provides a way of understanding the interaction between arrogance and personal insecurity. People often come to the defense of an acquaintance who is accused of arrogance by observing that although he appears arrogant, he is actually deeply insecure. His arrogant behavior, which conveys the impression that he believes himself superior to those around him, is really just a mechanism which compensates for profound feelings of inferiority.

It is not clear in cases like this whether the point is to say that the arrogant person is not arrogant at all, or that he is arrogant but should not be blamed for being so. Our

analysis permits either interpretation; which is true of a given person depends on further facts about his belief structure. Some arrogant-seeming but insecure people will not have the beliefs that we have claimed are essential to arrogance. They do not regard others as their inferiors or think they deserve special deference. Their arrogant behavior is a way of hiding, and compensating for, their true convictions of inferiority. Despite appearances, these people are not arrogant.

In other cases, long-standing feelings of inferiority in combination with compensatory behavior will have brought it about that the person now actually *does* believe himself superior to others, and believes his relations with others should reflect that fact. Here insecurity does not compete with genuine arrogance, but rather provides the causal explanation of how the person has become arrogant.

Finally, there will be cases in which it is very difficult to say whether the seemingly arrogant person truly believes himself superior to others in the way that genuine arrogance requires. His beliefs in this regard, and the conviction with which he holds them, may wax and wane. Such a person may be episodically arrogant, or there just may be no fact of the matter at all about whether he is arrogant. We do not believe this result represents a problem for our analysis of arrogance. Instead, it simply reflects the messiness of human psychology.

Notice, too, that our characterization of arrogant behavior allows us to see why such behavior is particularly well suited to provide compensation for insecurity, and why it serves this function whether or not the person ultimately bootstraps himself into the beliefs that are components of genuine arrogance. Treating others as though their opinions do not matter can in-

sulate a person from others' criticisms of him, and acting as the superior in a relationship of unequals can provide a counterweight to his tendency to judge himself negatively in comparison with others.

V. ARROGANCE AS VICE

Any analysis of arrogance should yield a plausible explanation of what is *wrong* with this trait. In this section we provide such an explanation, arguing that arrogance is vicious both for other-regarding and for self-regarding reasons. Arrogance is frequently bad for the people with whom an arrogant person associates, and this badness can be understood in Kantian or consequentialist terms, depending on just how the arrogant person behaves. But this does not exhaust the reasons why arrogance is morally undesirable, because arrogance is a vicious character trait even considered in isolation from the actions which it typically engenders. As we will show, Aristotelian ideas about self-knowledge and the value of friendship can help us to understand the way in which arrogance is bad for the arrogant person himself.

A. *Why arrogance is bad for others*

As we noted above, arrogant people are disposed to mistreat other people, often greeting others' expression of their views with disdain and brusque dismissal. In at least some cases Kantian moral theory can explain why this sort of behavior is wrong. Here is an example from the world of chess, where a rich vein of arrogance is to be found. Postgame analysis is common in practice rooms at tournaments and at meetings of local chess clubs. A number of players gather around a board in a loose group, and one player seeks the advice of others about one of his recent games. The arrogant player (frequently there is more than one) then steps in, makes a declara-

tion as to what should have been done, and peremptorily grabs and moves the pieces to illustrate his point. Suggestions from others are dealt with summarily, often with a sneer and an air of dismissiveness that discourages further input.

One approach to saying what is wrong with this way of treating one's fellow chessplayers draws on the second formulation of Kant's categorical imperative.¹¹ The key notion here, we believe, is that of treating rational beings as ends in themselves, which we understand to be a matter of appropriately recognizing and acknowledging in one's actions and attitudes the absolute value which Kant attributes to rational nature.¹²

One might say, then, that the derision which the arrogant chessplayer heaps upon others' suggestions is inconsistent with appropriately valuing their rational nature. This is because rational nature is a capacity, namely the capacity rationally to set and pursue ends, and one cannot consistently claim to value a capacity while failing to value the exercise of that capacity. The weaker chessplayers are utilizing their rational capacities when they attempt to take part in analyzing the game, and even if their suggestions are ill-informed or misguided, to treat them with disdain and contempt insults the honest effort they are making and discourages future use of their capacities.

The moral undesirability of arrogance cannot always be captured by this Kantian approach, however, because not all arrogant behavior is analogous to that of the arrogant chessplayer. Recall the case of Mr. Darcy from *Pride and Prejudice*, which we described above. Darcy is arrogant, but his arrogance does not manifest itself in the way that the chessplayer's does. He does not trample on others' use of their rational faculties, nor does he openly demean or

belittle other people. Instead, he is simply aloof. Of course, Darcy does see himself as a more excellent human being than those around him, but he need not think he is therefore *morally* more important, nor that he is entitled to run roughshod over others' rational nature. He may well realize that others have rational nature, that they set ends for themselves, and that they therefore have certain moral claims that must be respected. Darcy does believe that others' opinions are less worthy than his own and therefore deserve little of his attention. But recognizing the value of rational nature in people is compatible with having little interest in their views and opinions.

The possibility of cases like this one indicates that the Kantian approach cannot fully capture the moral undesirability of arrogance. A different approach is consequentialist. We have noted that arrogant people typically substitute haughtiness and disdain for friendly reciprocity in their relations with their fellow human beings. Darcy's behavior, even if it does not manifest a failure properly to value rational nature, certainly offends and insults many of those around him. The fact that arrogant behavior frequently results in people's being hurt, insulted, and offended provides a simple consequentialist explanation of the other-regarding moral undesirability of arrogance.

This consequentialist account also fails to explain everything that is bad about arrogance, however. Imagine a person who has the attitudes and beliefs which we have claimed are constitutive of arrogance: he considers others to be his inferiors, believes he is owed a special sort of deference, and does not take the input or opinions of others seriously. Imagine further that this person does not permit these attitudes to be displayed in his interactions with others (perhaps he has been paid to do so).

There is still a flaw in his character, even if it does not manifest itself in the usual ways and therefore has no bad consequences for others.

To take another example, consider a relatively small professional community composed of people who have known and interacted with each other for a number of years, and which contains a single conspicuously arrogant individual. It sometimes happens in such communities that the arrogant person's behavior lacks any hurtful effects, since the people to whom it is directed know the arrogant person well and are prepared for his haughtiness and bluster. This may have been the case with Kissinger's longtime secretary in the example cited above; one can easily imagine her saying to herself, "Oh, there goes Dr. Kissinger again!" But, again, there still seems to be something undesirable about the character of the arrogant person—we still do not consider him admirable—even if his arrogance happens to lack its usual effects.

B. Why arrogance is bad for the arrogant person

For these reasons, we believe that while the moral undesirability of arrogance does have an other-regarding dimension, arrogance is a bad thing for self-regarding reasons as well: arrogant people are themselves morally worse off because they are arrogant. To understand this point, we must focus on the way arrogant people conceive of and approach their relations with others. Their arrogance is an obstacle to establishing the sorts of relationships with others that are, for reasons we will describe in this section, valuable ones.

We can distinguish two reasons why arrogance is bad for the arrogant person. First, it is an impediment to establishing true friendships with others, because the attitudes that are the essence of arrogance

are inimical to the creation of relationships characterized by reciprocity and mutual enrichment. Many of the valuable things about friendships—caring about another, having someone who cares about us, having someone with whom to share our projects and our lives—are the kinds of things one is unlikely to achieve with people whom one regards as inferior. Darcy was isolated from the villagers of Longbourn precisely because of his arrogance: no one could stand being around his disdainful and superior manner. Other people do not like being condescended to or treated as though they have nothing to offer, and they are therefore not inclined to develop deep concern for or shared commitments with the arrogant person.

The point here is that the kinds of friendships that we think add value to our lives are ones in which people care about each other for their own sake, help each other pursue their projects, and share in some of those pursuits. These features of friendship are not impossible for the arrogant person to achieve; arrogant people are not entirely cut off from true friendship. They are sometimes able to form friendships with those whom they consider their equals. We do not wish to deny this. Our only point is that arrogance makes finding and retaining friends much more difficult than it would otherwise be. This is a problem because true friends do not grow on trees; they are both valuable and rare. The proportion of the population with whom a given person can even potentially form the close bond that is true friendship is rather small, and arrogance narrows this field even further. Arrogance is a significant hindrance to establishing and maintaining close, reciprocally enriching relations with others, and it is therefore an obstacle to a significant constituent of the good life.

In addition to being a component of the good life themselves, true friendships have another sort of value. According to Nancy Sherman, Aristotle holds that true friendships are valuable because they provide a unique kind of pleasure:

Aristotle argues that a fundamental reason for including friendship within the happy life is that it enhances one's own awareness and understanding of one's agency and activities. . . . the good life requires excellent activity (1098a8), but since perception or understanding is a defining characteristic of human life (1170a16), to live that life in the fullest sense requires self-perception of that activity (1170a17–19). Moreover, the pleasure that is intrinsic to that excellent activity (and essential for the good life) is enhanced through the pleasure and good of an awareness of it (1170b1–3). Friends are part of such a life in so far as through an awareness of their activities we see, in the striking words of the *Magna Moralia*, “another me” reflected, as it were, through “a mirror” (1213a22–4).¹³

Friends provide a “mirror to our soul” and so can intensify the pleasure we take in our own excellent activity. This is important because it provides us with motivation to engage in such activity and so supports our aspirations to excellence.

The second reason why arrogance is a vice is that it blocks a crucial source of self-knowledge, which is morally important because self-knowledge is needed for the successful pursuit of virtue. The arrogant person, we have suggested, thinks that he has much to offer others due to his own greatness, but that others have very little to offer him in return. He does not regard the reactions, feelings, and thoughts of the people with whom he interacts as having any significance or value for him. One of the things our friends and acquaintances do for us is provide an outsider's perspective on our character which helps us learn what we are like and in what ways we

should try to improve ourselves.¹⁴ The arrogant person is denied this perspective because he refuses to regard the perspectives of other people as valuable.

When we want to improve our character, we must know where we are starting from in order to see what kind of improvements are required. One way to discover this is to introspect and see what we find, but given the many ways in which our perceptions of ourselves can be distorted (e.g., through self-deception), introspection is less than fully reliable. Much of what we know about the strengths and frailties of our own character is learned from other people. If one person condemns the fashion choices of a stranger in front of his friend and the friend exclaims, “Don't be such a snob,” the first person learns that others whose opinions she trusts perceive her judgments as snobbish. If we discover that we have hurt someone's feelings we may learn that we are insensitive in certain ways. We sometimes learn about features of our character which stand in need of improvement by observing the virtuous actions of others. If we have a friend who is very generous, we may notice that we do not behave in the same generous manner, and this may cause us to think that we ought to emulate our friend.

In order to learn about our own character in these ways, we must value the information others provide about our character in order to judge that this information bears on how we ought to be, or we must admire some quality of the other and notice that this quality is lacking in ourselves. The arrogant person's dismissive attitude toward the views and opinions of others cuts him off from both of these methods of acquiring self-understanding.

Furthermore, it is not only our friends who teach us about our character and the ways in which it is amenable to improvement.

Kissinger, for example, could have learned from his secretary that he was childish and too easily angered. An arrogant doctor could learn about the condescension and callousness of his bedside manner from his patients. Professors can learn about their impatience and intolerance from their students.¹⁵ The arrogant person is cut off from most other people as a source of information about himself because he thinks others could not possibly have anything important to contribute to him. Someone might object that we are surely not required to think that we have something to learn from everyone, because this will simply not be true of certain people. This is correct, but one can only apply this judgment to a particular person after acquiring a good bit of evidence about him or her. Arrogance is a sort of prejudice because the arrogant person brings this judgment *with him* to his interactions with others and thereby prevents himself from discovering which people could be important sources of knowledge and understanding for him. What about the fact that arrogance is consistent with regarding some people as one's superiors? Wouldn't the superiors then provide this kind of information? There are several problems with this suggestion. First of all, the alleged superiors will not be in a position to provide the kinds of information

that patients, students and such could provide. Secondly, the arrogant person is likely to take an inappropriately uncritical stance toward the information he receives from those he perceives as superior. Finally, if the arrogant person behaves differently with those he regards as superior (see note 6) then what the superior person sees of the arrogant person will not be indicative of his entire character. If we are right, arrogance is a concept which is intimately related to other key concepts of human moral psychology, such as vanity, self-confidence, and insecurity, but which is importantly different from them. The main source of difference is the essentially interpersonal nature of arrogance, and this interpersonal component is the key to understanding what is wrong with arrogance. The arrogant person's way of conceiving and constructing his relationships with others is skewed and morally unhealthy. This results in his behaving toward other people in ways that are both hurtful and disrespectful, and it is an impediment to forming and maintaining valuable friendships and to attaining the knowledge needed to reform the arrogant person's character for the better.

University of Minnesota

Franklin and Marshall College

Received January 2, 1998

NOTES

The authors would like to thank the following people for helpful comments and discussion: Leon Ualis, Merike Lugus, Joyce Slingerland, Paula Tiberius, Richard Tiberius, and an anonymous referee from the *American Philosophical Quarterly*.

1. Lewis, who has described himself as "invincible," was widely characterized after the 1984 Olympic Games as cold, aloof, abrasive, arrogant, and having "a prodigious ego." More recently, many commentators held that Lewis manifested a high-handed willingness to sacrifice the needs and aspirations of others to satisfy his own when he attempted to leverage his way onto the 1996 U.S. 4x100 meter relay team, for which he had not attended required practices and was of dubious qualifications, in order to gain a 10th gold medal. See, for example, Joe Posnanski, "Lewis—Sadly—Is not Ready to Leave," *Raleigh News and Observer*, August 2, 1996.

2. See, for example, the numerous interviews with Kasparov following his victory over Deep Blue in February 1996.
3. Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (New York: The New American Library, 1964), pp. 12 and 164.
4. Of course, Kissinger and Darcy would be wrong if there were no correct standards of human excellence at all. We will not pursue this thought because it seems possible to believe both that some people are arrogant and that in some sense certain types of human life are really more excellent than others. A related idea is this: perhaps no one should believe that he is doing well by the correct standards for a good life, even if he actually is. But again, it is difficult to see what is wrong, in and of itself, with candid self-awareness.
5. These examples and descriptions are drawn from Walter Isaacson's *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); see pp. 80, 101, and 193.
6. A colleague described Kissinger as "devious with peers, domineering with subordinates, and obsequious to superiors" (Isaacson, p. 100). If true this points not only to a hierarchical way of looking at human relationships, but also to the fact that one need not consider oneself superior to everyone in order to be arrogant.
7. Thus we would say that the virtue which is the counterpart to arrogance is the kind of friendly reciprocity that is manifested in traits such as kindness, sensitivity, and congeniality.
8. Reported in *The New York Times*, September 8, 1997.
9. Regarding her victory over Venus Williams in the U.S. Open final. Reported in *Sports Illustrated*, September 8, 1997.
10. We do not intend the foregoing remarks on vanity as anything approaching a complete analysis of the concept. There is a significant history of philosophical writing on this vice to which a paper of this length cannot do justice. Our only point is that arrogance differs from vanity insofar as it contains an interpersonal dimension which vanity seems to lack. For the same reason, arrogance seems to be different from pride, another vice about which much has been written.
11. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 95–98. Our reading of Kant is deeply indebted to the work of Thomas E. Hill, Jr., though of course that is not to say that he would agree with everything we say here. See especially "Humanity as an End in Itself," *Ethics* 91 (October 1980), and "Social Snobbery and Human Dignity" in his *Autonomy and Self-Respect* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
12. The Kantian idea that arrogance involves treating others as a mere means is at the center of Marilyn Frye's analysis of the arrogance that men have in virtue of their role in sexist society. According to Frye, men see the world with an arrogant eye; they see the world in terms of their own needs and interests, and other people in terms of how they can serve those needs and interests. See "In and Out of Harm's Way: Arrogance and Love," in Frye's *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1983).
13. Nancy Sherman, "Aristotle on the Shared Life," in Neera Kapur Badhwar, ed., *Friendship: A Philosophical Reader* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 106. We are not concerned here with the question whether this is indeed Aristotle's view. We draw on Sherman's account of Aristotle to demonstrate that there are compelling reasons to think that the arrogant person misses out on something important.
14. Sherman, following Aristotle, has argued that friendships between virtuous people are needed in order to have self-knowledge, which is in turn needed to improve one's character. "We learn about ourselves by having another self before us whose similar actions and traits we can study

from a more detached and objective point of view. . . . For in our own case, passions or favor at times blind our judgement. . . . Through another just like us, yet numerically distinct, we can see ourselves from a point of view outside ourselves, and so at a distance.” Sherman, p. 106.

15. Of course we also learn good things about ourselves from friends and acquaintances. But since this knowledge does not seem as essential to the project of self-improvement, we have focused on examples in which one learns about one’s failings.