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**Can Contempt Serve as a Morally Appropriate Form of Self-Defense
Against the Damage Wrought by Superbia?**

A Critical Analysis of Macalester Bell's Account of Contempt

MA Thesis

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction..... | 3 |
| 2. Macalester Bell on contempt as a particularly apt response to superbia | 13 |
| 2.1. What is superbia? | 13 |
| 2.2. What is contempt?..... | 17 |
| 2.3. Why is contempt an apt response to superbia? | 19 |
| 3. On the exact definition and the moral wrong in superbia | 24 |
| 3.1. An analysis of Bell’s characterisation of superbia | 24 |
| Condition 1: the beliefs of the superbiuous | 24 |
| Condition 2: the desires of the superbiuous..... | 28 |
| Condition 3: ill will embedded in the beliefs and desires of the superbiuous | 30 |
| Condition 4: behavioural manifestation | 32 |
| 3.2. My criticism and developments of Bell’s characterisation of superbia | 34 |
| Superbia as not just a denial of appraisal respect | 34 |
| The double-insult theory of superbia..... | 36 |
| Desire-based ill will as sufficient for superbia | 41 |
| Belief-based ill will as sufficient for superbia..... | 44 |
| 4. Contempt as a response to the damage wrought by superbia | 46 |
| 4.1. Is immunity from being shamed by inapt contempt a desirable goal at all?..... | 47 |
| 4.2. How is contempt supposed to protect people from shame? | 57 |
| On why cultivating pride might not always be enough..... | 58 |
| On how contempt might do a better job than pride | 62 |
| 5. Conclusion | 72 |
| References..... | 75 |

1. Introduction

This thesis is focused on whether contempt could serve as a morally appropriate form of self-defense against superbia. My analysis is largely built on and developed in critical dialogue with a thesis put forward by Macalester Bell in her monograph “Hard feelings: the moral psychology of contempt” (2013). Bell is one of the few modern moral philosophers who have defended contempt as an emotion that has an important role to play in our moral lives. Even though contempt has often been rejected as a nasty and immoral emotion and it is not particularly difficult to come up with cases where contempt would indeed be unjustified, I find it hard to deny that there is a grain of truth in saying that the virtuous agent will love the good and hate the evil¹. If we are to be consistent and wholeheartedly value morality, and we agree that emotions are important mediums through which we value things (as it is assumed by the current mainstream theories of emotion), then there seems to be a *prima facie* case for at least some hard feelings—understood as emotions that help us hold other people accountable for their wrongdoing, or, in case of superbia (which is more to do with character rather than some isolated acts of wrongdoing), their “badbeing” (Bell 2013: 39).

So, a more general question on the background of my specific inquiry is that of how we should respond to vice and evil. This is a very down-to-earth question that concerns how a virtuous person ought to act in an imperfect world where others do not always care about the demands of morality. Whereas a lot of moral philosophy just deals with the question of which actions are morally permissible and which not, here we are focusing on how to respond to wrongdoing, and not just wrongdoing in general but the immoral behaviour that has been directed *towards us*. As it is well pointed out by Jeffrey Murphy: “If I count morally as much as anyone else (as surely I do), a failure to resent moral injuries done to me is a failure to care about the moral value incarnate in my own person” (Murphy & Hampton 1990: 18). Even though Murphy speaks of resentment here, the point he makes is more general and applies to other hard feelings as well: if one valued morality, then it would indeed be a failure of self-

¹ See also Bell 2013: 160-1, Adams 2006, Hurka 2004.

respect if we did not regard it as objectionable if we ourselves were the ones in the receiving end of injustices.

Dealing with how we should respond to evil brings into focus not just actions but the attitudes and reactions of people directly involved in transactions with each other, which is something that attach a great importance in our daily moral lives. This is precisely what Peter Strawson, in his classic article “Freedom and Resentment” (1993), cautions us not to lose sight of—of “what it is actually like to be involved in ordinary inter-personal relationships” (Strawson 1993: 50).

As already mentioned, the hard feeling at the central stage of this thesis is contempt. Contempt is a demoting emotion that views another person as falling below a certain baseline. Of course, there are many kinds of contempt and not all of them morally appropriate. One reason why contempt might be inappropriate is that one relies on the wrong standards. For example, the colour of skin, physical deformities, and other characteristics that do not depend on their bearer’s will are not morally appropriate grounds for contempt. Second reason why contempt might be inappropriate is that it might be too intense—for example, when it amounts to viewing its object as utterly worthless. It should, however, be borne in mind that whenever I speak of contempt that might serve as a morally appropriate response to superbia, I am speaking of contempt in a very restricted sense. I am speaking of contempt that measures the status of its object according to the standards of morality, and which does not lapse into excessive extremes, so that it would forgo moral recognition respect—the minimal respect that is owed to all people simply in virtue of their humanity.

One of the reasons that makes contempt more attractive than some other hard feelings (for instance, anger or hate) is that it is not a strong *passion* that takes hold of the person, so that one would be likely to lose his capacity for rational judgement. The term ‘passion’ is usually reserved to those emotions that take us into their grip; they are something that we are supposed to *passively* endure. Contempt, however, is less liable to epistemic distortions. This contrast has also been pointed out by Schopenhauer: “*Hatred* is a thing of the heart, *contempt* a thing of the head” (*op cit* Bell 2013: 55). Related to the same point, it can also be said that contempt is psychologically less demanding than anger (Bell 2009; Bell 2013: 205), and assuming that we do not wish to commit a virtuous agent into madness in extreme circumstances where he would have to suffer and see other people suffer radical evil²,

² This is an issue that Bell takes up in her 2009 book chapter “Anger, Virtue and Oppression”, where she notes that “hitting the target of appropriate anger under conditions of oppression may well require those who manifest

contempt seems to be a more attractive emotion worth cultivating. It does the job of disvaluing immorality, and it seems to do it by less costly means than anger, without compromising the psychological well-being of the moral agent, and his capacity for rational judgment to an unreasonable extent.

this virtue to be in near constant state of rage” because the injustices that they have to bear and witness are so great (*ibid.* 171). This is why the virtue of appropriate anger has also been labelled under what Lisa Tessman has called “burdened virtues”. These are virtues that “have the unusual feature of being disjoined from their bearer’s own flourishing” (Tessman 2005: 5). For Tessman’s discussion on how in certain conditions the right level of anger is a “tremendous level, the level of fury and rage”, see *ibid.* 123.

While neither of the above-mentioned authors takes this as a reason to necessarily reject anger, Seneca, in his letter “On Anger”, which has probably become one of the most well-known pieces against anger, points it out as one of the reasons against this passion. He puts it rhetorically: “But if the wise man is to be angered by base deeds, if he is to be perturbed and saddened by crimes, surely nothing is more woeful than the wise man’s lot; his whole life will be passed in anger and in grief. For what moment will there be when he will not see something to disapprove of?” (Seneca 1928: 179; II.vi.2-vii.2)

For a modern defense of why anger is not necessary for the virtuous, see Pettigrove 2012, who points out that many widely admired moral exemplars such as Socrates, Buddha, Jesus, Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and Dalai Lama, are known to manifest the virtue of meekness which involves being slow to anger (Pettigrove 2012: 349). Many of these moral exemplars, too, lived in the circumstances of great injustices and it can be argued that their meekness helped them to work in the name of justice in more constructive ways than anger would have. On Gandhi and meekness, see also Sorabji 2012.

Overall, I find it a very fascinating question to what morality might commit a virtuous agent in extreme circumstances. A related topic has also been discussed in George W. Harris’ book “Dignity and Vulnerability: Strength and Quality of Character” (1997), which is centred around the idea that “[s]ometimes character breaks down, not because of some shortcoming in it, but because of what is good about it, because of its quality, because of the features of character that give us our dignity” (Harris 1997: 2). While Harris argues against the Stoic-Christian-Kantian tradition, I am nevertheless sympathetic to the idea that in extreme circumstances it would be desirable to opt for a more Stoic kind of morality that would enable him to work towards a better world in more constructive ways, rather than simply being broken down by unfortunate circumstances (though I do not think that people should be blamed for lacking strength and breaking down). And I believe that Stoicism is not totally incompatible with contempt because their project of extirpating emotions is more focused on the extirpation of strong passions (like anger) but the contempt considered in this thesis, as already said, is a relatively cool passion, and could perhaps, due to its forward-looking dimension and orientation towards self-protection, be argued to approximate caution, which is one of the good emotions (*eupatheia*) that the Stoics regard as acceptable (see more about *eupatheia* from Cooper 2005). Though Bell makes no mention of Stoicism, some of her ideas concerning the psychological costs of anger (and resentment) in extreme circumstances (Bell 2009; Bell 2013: 153f, 205), and the proposal that contempt might be a better alternative, may be interpreted to have a somewhat Stoic ring to them.

These are just some reasons in favour of contempt but my intention is not just to explore the moral value of contempt in response to all possible forms of immorality. More specifically, I will be analysing contempt's moral aptness in response to a very specific type of moral failure—superbia. This focus is largely inspired by Macalester Bell, who claims that contempt seems especially apt in response to, what she calls, the vices of superiority. At the heart of such vices lies superbia which involves thinking highly of oneself while looking down on others with ill will. Bell suggests that the reason why morally restrained contempt is an especially appropriate response to superbia lies in the fact that contempt's downward-looking stance helps to put in place the misplaced sense of superiority of the person who evinces superbia. While the person evincing superbia will see himself as comparatively high, contempt will in turn view him as relatively low.

The idea that contempt might be an apt response to people who think too highly of themselves is not itself a new one. It has recently been argued by Krista K. Thomason (2013) that even Kant might have been more favourable to certain forms of contempt than it has usually been thought of. Even though Kant is reserved about the outward display of contempt, he nevertheless admits that “[a]t times one cannot [---] help inwardly *looking down* on some in comparison with others” (*MS* 6: 463). But he also indicates that sometimes an outward expression of contempt might be due: if the vice is indeed “a scandal”, then “one must break off the association that existed or avoid it as much as possible” (*MS* 6: 474). Looking down on the vicious, thereby psychologically distancing oneself from them, and often withdrawing in real life as well, are some of the main features of the morally restricted contempt that will be discussed in the current thesis. But more specifically, Thomason suggests that in the framework of Kantian ethics, contempt has an important role striking helping the moral law strike down people's self-conceit, which is understood as “an unwarranted form of self-regard, which causes agents to believe that they ought to be respected not simply as fellow moral persons, but because of some talent or trait” (Thomason 2013: 222). She says: “when others take an attitude of contempt towards the self-conceived agent, they attempt to inspire in her the same shame that she feels before the moral law” (*ibid.* 233). So, there is at least one interpretation of Kant³ that gives a morally restricted form

³ One might also look for less elaborate interpretation demanding evidence from his lecture “Of Haughtiness”, where he mentions that haughty folk “become an object of contempt, since they merely seek to display their superiority” (*LE* 27:457). Bell also refers back to this passage herself, noting that “much of what Kant says here fits nicely with my own account of the vices of superiority” (Bell 2013: 173n61). Of course, it should be noted that Kant tends to interpret contempt in a special way there, focusing on the fact that the haughty person just

of contempt an important role in our moral lives, especially in response to self-conceit, which is roughly the same thing as what Bell discusses under the name of superbia.

But moving on with examples of modern authors who have highlighted the role of contempt as a response to high status claims like those involved in superbia, attention could be brought to William Ian Miller's monograph "The Anatomy of Disgust" (1997), which is in most part focused on contempt's close relative, disgust, but also includes a chapter on contempt. Miller argues that both are "key emotions in maintaining rank and hierarchy" (Miller 1997: 220). He distinguishes a special type of contempt, "upward contempt", which is felt by the low towards the high, and involves the denial of the status claims of the high. Since one way to do so is by maintaining that the high are just mere knaves who do not live up to their values (*ibid.* 222), Miller's account highlights hypocrisy as one of the especially contemptible (and disgusting) vices. Since Bell regards hypocrisy as one of the two examples of vices of superiority, her account is very much in line with that of Miller. Her second example involves arrogance, which Miller makes no explicit mention, but since Miller's account regards contempt as a response to overly high pretensions in general, it tends to cover arrogance as well. In a slightly different context the link between contempt and hierarchy violations has also been highlighted by psychologist Paul Rozin and his colleagues (1999).

So, even though I will be focusing on how one particular author has established the connection between contempt and superbia, the idea as such is not a new one and can be found from the works of other authors as well. The reason why I have decided to focus on

makes himself a fool, and is therefore laughed at for his pretensions. One might also be reluctant to draw conclusions from this passage in isolation from his other ideas because the language that Kant uses there is descriptive rather than normative. He does not say that we *should* laugh at the haughty person, or that he *should* become an object of contempt. All he says is: he "will rather be laughed at for his pretensions", and that haughty folk "become an object of contempt". But, of course, there will be a normative tone to these lines if we read them in conjunction with his ideas on ridicule, that are proposed in "The Doctrine of Virtue", where he maintains that even though in general people's faults should not be held up to ridicule, "a jocular, even if derisive, brushing aside with contempt an insult attack of an adversary (*retorsio iocosa*), by which the mocker (or, in general, a malicious but ineffectual adversary) is himself made the laughing stock" might nevertheless be justified (*MS 6:467*). I myself prefer not to rely on these passages because they are followed by a reservation, the meaning of which remains somewhat unclear to me: "But when the object of his mockery is really no object for wit but one in which reason necessarily takes a moral interest, then no matter how much ridicule the adversary may have uttered and thereby left himself open to laughter it is more befitting the dignity of the object and respect for humanity either to put up no defense against the attack or to conduct it with dignity and seriousness" (*ibid.*).

Macalester Bell is that she is the one who turns this connection into one of the central topics of her monograph (2013), and provides a very detailed account which is explicitly meant to single superbia out as an especially contemptible attitude, and to show the benefits that contempt as a response might have for both, the contemnor and the one contemned as well.

Before I move on with a more detailed outline of the chapters to come, I would like to add a few words in defense of focusing on contempt *in reponse to* superbia. In the beginning of this chapter I only drew attention to why contempt might be an attractive emotion to opt for. Here, I would further like to emphasise that analysing it in connection to superbia, has some special benefits. First, superbia is an important moral problem. As vicious pride it has been regarded as one of the deadliest of all the vices. Pride has often been designated “the first sin and even as the root of all others” (Lyman 1989: 135). In one of the most popular and well-known list of seven deadly sins proposed by Gregory the Great, *superbia*⁴—understood by him as an arrogance wherein man “favours himself in his thought” (*op cit* Lyman 1989: 136)—was originally set aside the list as the root of all evil (*ibid*). It might be said that the remnants of this Christian view can also be found from Kant. According to Thomason’s interpretation, for Kant self-conceit is “the culprit behind many of our moral failings” (Thomason 2013: 230). The idea is also shared by another interpreter, Kate Moran (2014). Since the self-conceited person tends to rationalise her behaviour as perfectly acceptable, and is likely to find no error on her behalf, Moran considers self-conceit as a particularly “intractable and insidious” problem (*ibid*. 422, 441). So, if contempt is indeed a morally appropriate response to superbia, then it is not just an apt response to some random or relatively insignificant vice, but to what has been considered as one of the deadliest vices.

In relation to the first point it is perhaps worth noting that not only does Bell regard superbia as a problem of personal morality, she also takes it to have political significance. According to her, superbia is the attitude that underlies oppressive practices such as racism and sexism. Her defense of contempt grows out from a feminist approach to reactive

⁴ Whenever I refer to *superbia* in italics, what I have in mind is the original Latin word, so I refer back to the Christian tradition. Bell, however, does not use the word in italics, so whenever I speak of superbia without using italics, I have in mind the Bellian notion of superbia. One way how these two notions can be argued to differ is that Bell seeks to fit hypocrisy as an instance of superbia as well, while the Latin word *superbia* is perhaps more narrowly connected to arrogance. Also, Bell only speaks of superbia insofar as it is an interpersonal matter. So, forms of self-overestimation that do not rely on a comparison with other people (see, for example, what Dillon discusses under “unwarrantable claims arrogance”, Dillon 2007: 106ff) do not count.

attitudes⁵. Since questions related to reactive attitudes become especially pressing in the context of social oppression, it should not come as a surprise that emotions such as anger and resentment have gained a lot of attention by feminist authors. I will nevertheless remain reserved about to what extent her conclusions about the appropriateness of contempt in response to superbia can be applied in the context of combatting racism and sexism in general rather than just in dealing with some particularly vicious cases of racists or sexists because the problem with widespread oppressive practices is that not all the individuals who play along seem to evince a morally flawed character (Calhoun 1989: 389). According to my account, superbia will need to involve gaining a sense of superiority and self-worth from viewing the other as inferior, and I doubt whether every ordinary man in a society where women have a disadvantaged position will actually satisfy this condition⁶. But this does not mean that some of them might not do so, especially in societies where sexism and racism are not that widespread any more.

Secondly, analysing contempt in connection to superbia is especially interesting because there is a certain kind of symmetry between the two, between the morally objectionable superbia at the heart of vices of superiority and the morally restricted form of contempt as a response. In fact, Bell seems to consider this as one of the reasons why contempt is especially well-equipped to address superbia in the first place. Robert C. Roberts summarizes this point in his review of Bell with the following words: “The other emotions can’t compete with contempt for the poetic justice of combatting illicit contempt with apt contempt” (Roberts 2013). While this symmetry is interesting in its own right, I believe that analysing both in connection provides an especially great opportunity to clarify the bounds in which contempt can be considered as a moral attitude, and when it is that the morally restrained contempt

⁵ For some reason, in her monograph, Bell does not make much mention of feminism, and this is why I simply confine myself to saying that her account *grows out* of a feminist approach, rather than identifying it as feminist *per se*. However, in one of her earlier articles, she does explicitly identify her approach as such. The title should speak for itself: “A Woman’s Scorn: Toward a Feminist Defense of Contempt as a Moral Emotion” (2005). Perhaps the reason why she does not identify her approach as feminist is that the first-hand claim that she wants to make concerns contempt and superbia in more general, not only in the context of political oppression.

⁶ Though I do not mind allowing that perhaps a similar emotion of smaller intensity (without regarding the other as below falling a minimal baseline of morality) might be appropriate. This response might also involve certain elements of contempt. For example, one might nevertheless psychologically distance oneself from the other to a certain extent.

might itself take a superbiuous⁷ twist. As such, the conclusions of my thesis will be relevant for understanding the dangers of taking the moral high ground in general—the dangers of deeming other people immoral and of taking pride in one’s own virtue. Since morality encourages us to strive towards virtue, it is worth paying special attention to when exactly it is that innocent pride in one’s virtue turns into a vicious form of moral snobbery.

Now that I have outlined some of the additional reasons why contempt might be analysed in relation to superbia, I will move on to a more detailed outline of the chapters to come. In chapter 2, I briefly outline what Bell understands as superbia and contempt, and why it is the case that the latter might serve as an especially apt response to the former. The purpose of this chapter is to give a general outline of why contempt might be considered as an especially appropriate response to superbia. What concerns arguing for the basic moral permissibility of contempt, then this is something that I do not spend much time on. Of course, it could be made into a thesis-length topic on its own but I take this work as already done by Bell in a sufficiently convincing way, so I will only confine myself with going over some of her main arguments. As I have already said, morally defensible contempt is a very limited form of contempt that does not involve a denial a recognition respect to its target. It is also important to note that not just any contempt that happens to fit this criterion will automatically be moral. Morally appropriate contempt will also have to be based on the right reasons, and be rooted in the agents sincere devaluing of morally objectionable behaviour which also manifests in her self-evaluation.

What interests me the most, however, is the greatness of the special value that such a limited form of contempt might have for its bearer. More precisely, the question lies in how exactly is contempt supposed to serve as a protective shield when dealing with people who harbour superbia against him. In order to provide an answer to this question, I will first, in chapter 3, take up a detailed analysis of superbia, and then, in chapter 4, move on to discuss how a morally restricted form of contempt might protect one from being shamed by other people’s superbiuous attitude.

Chapter 3 involves a detailed analysis of the necessary conditions of superbia. Since Bell does not explicitly comment on each condition, I will be analysing her conditions by comparing them with a very similar set of conditions proposed by Robin S. Dillon (2007).

⁷ Since this is a word that I will be using a lot, I would like to add a point of clarification. Namely, Bell herself whose views I will be analysing does not use such word form, but rather speaks of people evincing superbia or people evincing the vices of superiority. Since I find these phrases rather long, I prefer to use ‘superbiuous’ as shorthand for them.

Relying on Stephen Darwall's distinction between moral recognition respect and appraisal respect, I will be arguing, much in the spirit of Dillon and other interpreters of Kant (and, of course, Kant himself as well), that Bell is mistaken to say that superbia involves only a denial of appropriate appraisal respect to other people. The problem with the superbius is that in addition to their accomplishments and talents they often take themselves to be having a higher normative status as well, or at least act as if this was the case. And this is why, more importantly, it is appropriate moral recognition respect that they will be denying to other people. These insights will be the basis of what I will be proposing as 'a double-insult theory'. According to this theory, the superbia involves viewing or treating other people as low in a double sense. On one hand, the superbius lower them by using them as means, but one can use other people as means in many different ways, and some of these might involve exploiting their talents or virtues. What is special about the way how the superbius uses other people as means is that for them other people can only serve as "good" tools insofar as they are inferior. The superbius person uses other people as touchstones of inferiority against which her superiority could shine bright. And this is why such attitude is doubly humiliating.

Having identified the moral wrong in superbia, I will go on to analyse how contempt can help to address the double insult inherent in the attitude of the superbius. Since contempt is at its core a reaction to the denial of moral recognition respect, I will consider contempt as an intrinsically valuable response that serves as a protest against the misplaced superiority claims of the superbius. More specifically, however, I will focus on contempt's instrumental value as a protective shield, and analyse Bell's claim that contempt will help the contemnor to avoid being shamed and having her self-esteem brought low. To begin with, I go over Cheshire Calhoun's intriguing idea that we should not seek to steel subordinated groups against shame at all, but establishing this is nevertheless a goal worth pursuing (of course, in the bounds of morality), I will go on to analyse how contempt might be of use here. If before I established that superbia involves a double insult, then in this section I will be arguing that this double-insult can elicit a kind of double-shame—shame in J. David Velleman's sense of having one's autonomy violated and shame along the specific dimension that is supposed to make one inferior—, and analyse how contempt might protect one against shame in this double sense. In the course of this analysis I will also compare contempt with alternative shame-avoidance strategies, like cultivating pride, and highlight in what sense contempt might be more effective, and in which sense not. Finally, I will consider the prospects of deriving a special sense of superiority from viewing another person as low in virtue of his

vicious character, and argue that there is only a small step from morally apt contempt to moral snobbery, which is itself a form of superbia.

2. Macalester Bell on contempt as a particularly apt response to superbia

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief overview of Bell's understanding of two concepts, superbia and contempt, and of the special connection between the two according to which contempt is supposed to be an especially apt response to superbia. Later on, all these matters will be addressed in greater detail, the point of this chapter is just to provide the reader with an overview of the general course of Bell's argument concerning the special aptness of contempt in response to superbia, so that it would be easier to understand how superbia and contempt fit together like two pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

2.1. What is superbia?

Superbia is an attitude that lies at the heart of vices of superiority. The two main examples that Bell gives of such vices are arrogance and hypocrisy, but they may also include number of other faults such as ambition or racism. What she identifies as paradigmatic cases of superbia, however, seem to fit under the concept of arrogance, so in this introductory phase I will open the concept of superbia on the example of arrogance. An arrogant person thinks highly of himself in light of his talents, virtues, or accomplishments, and wants others to recognize his comparative superiority. What makes this attitude objectionable, however, is that he seeks to exact esteem and deference *at the expense* of other people. So, he is not just innocuously seeking esteem by trying to impress other people. Instead, he will seek to put other people down and attempt to make them feel inferior in light of his superiority. This is why we can say that his attitude is characterized by ill will—the arrogant regard other people as mere tools to gain esteem and deference, they will dishonour them and/or attempt to gain esteem and deference at their expense. Next, I will illustrate this attitude by three examples.

Bell presents us with two paradigmatic cases of superbia. As already mentioned, these are both cases of arrogance. The first case concerns a company executive who refuses to sit next to a labourer on a train. He thinks highly of himself because of his status as a business

executive, and by regarding it as beneath him to sit next to a common labourer, he dishonours the other (*ibid.* 102-3). Perhaps on a surface level refusing to sit down next to a labourer does not seem that problematic. This is why I would like to draw special attention to the fact that according to Bell the problem is not so much in the particular action, but rather in the attitude behind it. In that sense, illustrating superbia by giving particular examples about how the superbious might *act*, can be somewhat misleading. In order to appropriately count the business executive as superbious, his actions must be accompanied by a morally objectionable attitude that involves ill will. Of course, since people's minds are not transparent to us, it might not always be possible to make it sure at first glance whether their attitude does in fact count as superbia or not. This is something that Bell admits in a footnote:

Of course, all we can assess is the attitude that the executive appears to express in the prompt. Perhaps the executive had a backache. If this were the reason for the executive's refusal, then his behavior would not give us evidence that he evinces a vice of superiority. But if the executive refuses to sit next the laborer because he thinks that to do so is beneath him qua business executive, as the description of the case suggests, then this attitude is morally objectionable and contemptible. (*Ibid.* 103n12)

I suggest that we, as readers of Bell, view the case as omniscient spectators who do have the sufficient background knowledge to consider the business executive as superbious, rather interpreting her as suggesting that this single instance in the train would provide sufficient ground for the labourer who does not even know the executive that well to hold the executive in contempt. The second case, however, is the following:

[A] woman, Anastasia, is talking on her cell phone while riding a Metro-North train to Connecticut. Her conversation becomes increasingly animated, and she begins to swear loudly and annoy her fellow passengers. Two employees approach her and ask her to lower her voice or move to the vestibule; if she continues to loudly swear in the compartment, they warn, she will be removed and fined. Anastasia does not take kindly to the admonishment and begins arguing with the employees. At one point she shouts, "Excuse me? Do you know what schools I've been to and how well educated I am?" Later, she exclaims, "I'm not a crazy person. I am a very well-educated person," and demands that the employees stop the train so that she can disembark. Anastasia uses her presumed status as a "well-educated person in an attempt to exact deference from the Metro-North employees whom she clearly regards as her inferiors. (*ibid.* 104)

Here, too, Anastasia thinks highly of herself in light of her educational accomplishments, and she uses her status as a well-educated person in order to put the Metro-North employees in place as inferiors. This is no innocent bragging, this is a case of denying respect to the

justified claims of Metro-North employees on grounds that they are not that well-educated. Again, the problem is not so much about the particular actions, but rather in the attitude that accompanies them, the attitude that is perhaps especially salient in her tone of voice, in the way she looks⁸ at the employees, and other cues of body language. But, of course, people can misinterpret body language, and therefore I do not mean to suggest that this might necessarily give ground for labelling her as superbia at first encounter. Perhaps she just had a bad day and then poured it all out on the Metro-North employees, without actually thinking that she is much better than them, and regretting later that this was how she treated them. If this was the case, then perhaps resentment would be a more appropriate emotion on behalf of the Metro-North employees because differently from character-focused contempt, resentment is focused on actions. And of course, once she regrets her behaviour, they might as well have a reason to forgive her.

In addition to these two paradigmatic cases, I will also introduce a third case. I think that the nature of superbia as a more prolonged type of attitude comes best forward in Bell's example of two "friends", Katherine and Sebastian⁹. Katherine is a brilliant and widely admired neurosurgeon, whereas Sebastian is bumbling and accident-prone and not an especially good doctor (*ibid.* 114). Harbouring superbia attitude would involve seeing "Sebastian as someone she [Katherine] could use as a tool to get others to recognize her high status" (*ibid.* 115), and even if this attitude would be unacted-upon, it would nevertheless count as morally objectionable (and contemptible) because it damages their relationship. But, of course, it may also be translated into actions, and that would damage the relationship in yet a further way (rendering the person especially contemptible (*ibid.* 109)):

⁸ For a discussion on how sometimes it might be a mere look that can insult, see Neu 2009: 78-81. Even though he does not think that there is any single "right way" of describing what amounts to "the wrong way" of looking at someone, he nevertheless points out that a look can sometimes have "elements of disrespect, even contempt, perhaps it verges on staring" (*ibid.* 78). But one can also insult by not looking at a person, are looking but not seeing the other (*ibid.* 79). The importance of the look as means of giving another person recognition respect has also been emphasised by Stephen Darwall, who starts his "Second Person Standpoint" (2009) by acknowledging in the preface that his theory of recognising ourselves as mutually accountable to each other might be inspired by his eye condition that makes it impossible for him to direct his eyes at the same object at the same time. What he identifies as the main problem with this condition is that: "I've had difficulty getting people to recognize that I'm trying to recognize them" (Darwall 2009: ix).

⁹ To be exact, she introduces two versions of their case—one which is not morally objectionable (Bell 2013: 114), and another that is (*ibid.* 115). I will only focus on the latter.

Suppose Katherine constantly puts Sebastian down in front of their mutual friends or regularly brags to him about her latest professional accomplishment. (*Ibid.* 114.)

Katherine may attempt to exact the esteem of her colleagues by constantly teasing Sebastian and laughing at his clumsiness in such a way as to bring attention to her own dexterity”. (*Ibid.* 115.)

These cases are a good illustration of what it means to exact esteem and deference *at the expense of* other people because Sebastian is made into a punchbag in an especially salient way here. He has been made into a measure of inferiority against which Katherine can shine with her accomplishments.

I agree with Bell on the fact that all these cases may be interpreted as instances of superbia. What I will not agree, however, is her characterisation of superbia as mainly a matter of appraisal respect (see more about the concept and its contrast with recognition respect on page 27). She emphasises in a number of places that superbia need not involve a violation of another person’s rights, i.e. failure of recognising her equal moral standing (*ibid.* 103, 105). It is rather supposed to be a matter of demanding too much positive esteem for oneself, and failing to give it to another¹⁰. I disagree, and find it rather contradictory to say that the moral wrong in superbia lies in the fact that the superbious person evinces ill will, i.e. uses other people as means, while maintaining that there is no denial of moral recognition respect involved. In addition, I will also be arguing that Bell puts a too great emphasis on the superbious person’s wish to gain the esteem and deference of other people. According to my view, the act of putting another person down might itself be a source of satisfaction and function as a boost to one’s self-esteem regardless of whether it is followed by the deference of the other person or any third parties. These are the topics I will argue in greater detail in chapter 3.

¹⁰ This is how she defines what it means to dishonour someone: “to withhold the esteem and deference the person merits (i.e., the fail to show proper appreciation for the person’s status” (*ibid.* 103). The fact that she chooses to use the word ‘status’ makes an especially clear link with appraisal respect since, as she clarifies on page 100, she uses the term status in connection with appraisal respect, and standing in connection with (moral) recognition respect.

2.2. *What is contempt?*

Bell categorizes contempt as an emotion¹¹. She relies on a quasi-perceptual account of emotion, according to which emotions can be characterised as ways of “seeing-as”. For example, fear would be partly constituted by seeing its object as dangerous. So, an important part of an emotion is constituted by an evaluative appraisal of its object. About contempt it can be said that it is a downward-looking emotion that “presents its target as having compromised her status vis-à-vis a standard that the contemnor endorses” (*ibid.* 37). It is characterised by psychological disengagement and its action tendency is withdrawal. Bell emphasises three points about contempt’s evaluative presentation of its object, and I will visit them in turn.

First, contempt views its target as comparatively low in status. As Bell notes, there is no single determiner of status, so one can measure the other as low along various dimensions. There may also be competing accounts of status which make possible what William Ian Miller calls “upward contempt” (see Miller 1998). Bell illustrates the notion of upward contempt with an example of a lowly assistant who may acknowledge that her mentor enjoys a higher social status, but still sees him as low in light of his lack of his lack of humility (Bell 2013: 37-8). I would further like to add that even though some standards may not be morally justified (e.g. it might not be fair to say that someone is low in status due to the colour of his skin), this does not compromise the fact that the attitude itself would still be characterised as contempt. Morality is just one standard for measuring people’s status.

Secondly, contempt is a globalist emotion, i.e. it takes whole persons as its object. It is not act-focused like resentment, but person-focused. Michelle Mason also illustrates this difference in everyday language:

¹¹ Michelle Mason, in contrast, speaks of it as an attitude, but she too admits that “[o]ne might just as easily refer to it as an emotion or feeling“. She notes that: ““Attitude” best captures, I think, contempt’s quality as a form of regard (a quality not characteristic of all emotions or feelings). In taking up contempt as a form of regard, I mean to justify—ultimately, morally justify— a certain affective stance toward a person, not (or not merely) the adoption of a certain belief about them (e.g., that they are contemptible).” For a longer discussion on the matter, see Mason 2003: 239, especially 239n10. So, even though she says that contempt may involve characteristics that are not shared by all emotions, she does not rule out that we could nevertheless speak of it as an emotion, and in the context of this thesis, I will sometimes be using the terms “emotion” and an “attitude” interchangeably, insofar as in case of contempt there is a considerable overlap between the two.

One typically *resents that* ____, *is indignant at* ____, or *expresses moral indignation at* ____, where what fills the blank is some propositional content referring to an act as performed by an agent or a state of affairs as brought about by an agent. For example, one may resent that Ann left one off the guest list or be indignant at the nepotism that the boss has let reign in her hiring decision. In contrast, one typically *holds* ____ *in contempt*, *regards* ____ *with contempt*, or *expresses contempt for* ____, where what fills the blanks are particular persons or groups of persons. (Mason 2003: 246)

In Bell's words, we can also say that the object of contempt is not perceived wrongdoing, but perceived "badbeing" (*ibid.* 39), and in morally justified cases this will come down to vicious character traits. The difference between contempt and resentment can also be viewed as parallel to that of shame and guilt. Whereas guilt involves remorse for what one has done, shame implies a global sense of diminishment—one feels ashamed for who he is. (*ibid.* 40)

Third, contempt is comparative, or reflexive, i.e. "the contemnor always "puts herself into" her feeling of contempt for another" (*ibid.* 42). It involves status comparisons between the subject and the target, using some standard drawn from the subject's personal baseline, which "demarcates who one would not stoop to be" (*ibid.* 39). In other words, we can also say that if the contemnor himself would fall below this baseline, he would be ashamed of himself. This explains why contempt is usually characterized by active non-identification with its object, and can be regarded as a "claim to relative superiority" (*ibid.* 42). Bell does not exclude that in some cases one may condemn another while thinking that he himself is no better. For example, an unwilling alcoholic who feels that he has utterly failed to meet his own personal baseline may condemn other alcoholics as his inferior equals, but she stresses that cases like that are rare. So, she concludes: "In most instances, contempt involves the subject seeing herself as superior to the target, and this characteristic of contempt is part of what makes it an especially apt response to the vices of superiority." (*ibid.* 43)

These were the three most important points about contempt's evaluative presentation, and will have no major objections about this. Rather than casting doubt on whether Bell is really right in her characterisation of contempt, I will simply be analysing the moral value of what she has decided to label as contempt. By now it should already start to emerge that the attitude of superbia is itself partially constituted by contempt (insofar as the person evincing superbia regards others as comparatively low in status), and that contempt might also have a role in rejecting the high status claims of those who harbour superbia. Next, I will explain these connections in more detail.

2.3. *Why is contempt an apt response to superbia?*

According to Bell, there is a special connection between vices of superiority and contempt. She formulates her hypothesis as the following: “the vices of superiority are especially contemptible”, and adds in a footnote that: “I do not claim that the vices of superiority are the *only* faults that merit contempt. Instead, I hope to show that contempt is an especially apt response to these vices” (*ibid.* 99). Even though she rules out the pretensions of saying that vices of superiority are the only ones that merit contempt, there is nevertheless some ambiguity in her claims. First, she says that *superbia* is especially contemptible. Later, she says that *contempt* is an especially apt response to *superbia*. These two claims sound similar but the emphasis is different. First singles *superbia* out as something special among the other vices. Second singles contempt out as an especially good response among the other possible responses. So, it is still an open question whether there might be some other emotion that might be an equally good response, and also whether there might be some other vice that might be equally contemptible. These are questions worth exploring in more detail but since they involve a comparison between different vices and different reactive emotions, this inquiry falls outside the scope of the current thesis. I will just concentrate on Bell’s reasons for saying that contempt is an morally appropriate response that helps to mitigate the damage wrought by *superbia*.

Bell speaks of morally appropriate contempt¹² as a hard feeling. She defines hard feelings as “forms of regard that *answer* wrongdoing and badbeing” (*ibid.* 126). So, it could be said that they constitute a special class of what Peter Strawson has famously labelled as reactive attitudes—the attitudes that are reactions to the quality of other’s wills, “to their good or ill will or indifference or lack of concern” (Strawson 1963: 56). And as we were already able to see, ill will constitutes an important part of *superbia*, but of course this only helps to maintain that some reactive attitude is called for, and does not yet help to specify that this need be contempt.

Concerning reactive attitudes, it should also be added that most of the time Bell speaks of morally justified contempt as a participant reactive attitude that concerns the quality of other’s will *toward us* and is therefore felt from a second-personal standpoint¹³. This is the

¹² Not the inapt contempt which is constitutive of vices of superiority themselves, like racist contempt which is based on the colour of someone’s skin, but the morally apt contempt that she suggests in response.

¹³ We might also speak of contempt as—what Strawson calls—“the sympathetic or vicarious or impersonal or disinterested or generalized analogues of the reactive attitudes” (*ibid.*), which concern a third-person standpoint.

focus that I seek to retain. So, strictly speaking I will only be concerned with contempt as a second-personal response to the vices of superiority, and leave it open whether it might be justified on behalf of third parties as well.

Having clarified these more general matters, let us now look on the more exact reasons that Bell lists in her subchapter “3.3 Contempt as an answer to vices of superiority” (*ibid.* 126-32). For the purposes of this thesis I have chosen to structure her reasons in a slightly different way than she does it herself¹⁴. I will first go over the reasons why in case of responding to superbia with contempt the evaluative presentation inherent in contempt fits its target. In the course of that I will revisit all the three points about the evaluative presentation of contempt that were outlines earlier. Since these reasons aim at a *correct* evaluative presentation of the superbious person, I will take these as *intrinsic* reasons in favour of contempt. This is not to deny that sometimes these intrinsic reasons may become instrumentally valuable as well, but since their main point is to correctly present its target, I will view them at first hand as intrinsic reasons. After that I will be focusing on the extra benefits that Bell thinks that contempt might have for both, the contemnor and the target of her contempt. Differently from intrinsic reasons related to contempt’s evaluative presentations, these extra benefits will be viewed in instrumentalist terms, as highlighting contempt’s practical usefulness.

I will begin with the evaluative presentation. Why are people who evince superbia an appropriate target of the contempt of those against whom they harbour superbia? First, as we know, contempt is a demoting emotion that evaluates its target as low in status. According to Bell:

Even though most of the time Bell is concerned with the victim’s point of view, at times she seems to deviate from this. For example, by referring to Kwame Anthony Appiah’s bestseller “The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen” (2010), she highlights the importance of contempt in the context of moral revolutions (Bell 2013: 19n35), but the contempt that Appiah has in mind is third-person contempt. The way how moral revolutions work is that the number of third-person spectators who grow contemptuous of the immoral practice increases, and people engaging in immoral practices will eventually cease to practice them.

¹⁴ I must admit that I have not found it easy to bring a good structure to all the points she makes about contempt in the different parts of her work. Even though I do not think that the monograph is disordered, I would have liked to see more thorough structure that would run through both, the chapters on contempt’s evaluative appraisal and also that of contempt’s non-instrumental and instrumental value. But perhaps this is too much to demand. After all, many of the points that Bell makes are closely interconnected, so it might be considered somewhat violent to break these ideas down to fit some higher-order structure.

Answering superbia in this way helps to restore the ideal equilibrium between the esteem and deference a person is given and the esteem and deference the person merits. [---] Contempt demotes the target, thereby negating his sense of entitlement and undermining his attempts at dishonoring or exacting esteem and deference. In short, contempt puts those who manifest vices of superiority in their place by presenting its targets as comparatively low in status in virtue of their superbia. Contempt presents its targets as person to be looked down upon, not persons to be admired or deferred to. (*ibid.* 128)

So, if the person evincing superbia views himself as high, then by responding with contempt we challenge his misplaced sense of superiority and view himself as low due to his superbia. Viewing the person evincing superbia as low is a protest against his unwarranted claim for superiority. Even though Bell does not explicitly mention this as part of the intrinsic¹⁵ value of contempt, I will nevertheless regard it as such because the evaluative appraisal aims at truth and justice.

Second, since contempt is person- (or perhaps it would be even more precise to say character-), not just action-focused, it is especially appropriate in case of superbia because superbia does not just consist in some episodes of disrespect but in a more prolonged attitude of regarding the other person as inferior. In other words, the superbius evinces a serious character flaw which damages the relationship between the two. According to Bell, this gives the moral contemnor a reason to seek to withdraw from the relationship. Differently from action-focused resentment, which motivates the resenter to demand that the offender would either explain away the wrong done, or else acknowledge it, take responsibility, and apologise; contempt seeks character change: “If the target does not attempt to change his ways, then the contemnor will see him as someone to be avoided altogether” (*ibid.* 127). In short, contempt fits its target because the target evinces a character flaw that damages the relationship between the two people. Furthermore, it is not just a withdrawal for selfish reasons, but also a way of holding the other person accountable for her objectionable attitude, which is something that Bell holds as intrinsically valuable (*ibid.* 162f).

Third, since contempt involves a reflexive element it is simply a function of the contemnor’s values. Since she regards the other person’s attitude as morally objectionable and harmful for her in the sense that the superbius person seeks to make her assume an inferior position, contempt for the superbius is something that grows out of the contemnor’s remaining true to her values. While Bell’s main emphasis is on the fact that a virtuous person

¹⁵ To be exact, Bell does not use the word “intrinsic” value, but speaks of “non-instrumental” value (*ibid.* 160ff). Since I fail to see a difference and find the former term more convenient, I prefer to use that instead.

must feel some negative reactive attitude towards evil (*ibid.* 161), I would also add that one of the values that she remains true to is also self-respect. As such, holding the superbia in contempt is a matter of moral integrity. Bell takes valuing to include a disposition to experience a range of hard feelings when what one values is threatened. According to her: “[t]he person of integrity is someone who not only does the right thing but also has the right attitudes toward her commitments” (*ibid.*).

In short, contempt is justified for intrinsic reasons because it aims at a correct evaluative presentation of its object by viewing him as low due to serious character flaw, meanwhile also holding him accountable for his badbeing and evincing the contemnor’s moral integrity. I will not have any major objections about the intrinsic reasons in favour of contempt. The only point that I intend to open in more detail in the beginning of chapter 4 is how exactly it denies the superiority claims of the superbia. Next, however, I will focus on the special benefits that contempt is supposed to have for the contemnor and the target of contempt.

One of the special benefits of contempt is supposed to lie in the fact that it will help to shore up the self-esteem of those who have to suffer the arrogant behaviour of those evincing superbia. According to Bell, one of the most important reasons why the moral seriousness of superbia should not be downplayed is that “[p]eople who are put down through negative comparative evaluations or dishonored as part of a process of esteem and deference seeking may come to believe that they really *do* have a comparatively low status even if this is not the case” (*ibid.* 131). If the targets of superbia can, however, disengage and dismiss the superior as low, then their self-esteem is less likely to be compromised by their superbia contempt (*ibid.* 206). Contempt is supposed to protect the stigmatised groups from shame, pain, and loss of self-esteem (*ibid.* 132, 206). In chapter 4, I intend to take up the question how exactly is contempt supposed to serve as a protective shield. The fact that the superbia person might be low in virtue of her superbia, does not seem to entail much about the contemnor herself. After all, the truth or falsity of the superbia person’s criticism towards the moral contemnor does not directly depend upon whether the superbia person is virtuous or vicious. If he denigrates one for her low education, or some physical deformity, then the fact that this criticism comes from a superbia person does not imply that the criticism might not be true. So, the question arises: how exactly is contempt supposed to shore up one’s self-esteem?

The instrumental value of contempt for its target grows out of the fact that contempt holds the superbia person accountable for his badbeing. In addition to the mere seeking of character change, Bell also notes that contempt *provides reasons* for the target to change his

ways (*ibid.* 129). To provide reasons is not to give a reason, i.e. to bring into existence a reason that would not have existed otherwise¹⁶. It means to put another in a position to appreciate the already existing reasons. The way how contempt does this is by engaging the target in a similar experience as the victim has had to endure. To put it simple: “When we respond to someone who evinces a vice of superiority with apt contempt, we give the target a small taste of what it feels like to be on the receiving end of superbia” (*ibid.* 130). The only reservation here is that the target will not be contemned unjustly, like he himself contemns, but he should still get some sense of “what it feels to be at the mercy of another’s superbia” (*ibid.*), and this should help him understand why he should not condemn other people. This point can also be linked up with the motivational value of contempt: it may motivate and inspire someone who evinces a vice of superiority to change his ways (*ibid.* 158ff). Even though this is a topic that I do not intend to take up in the current thesis, this is something that I am especially sceptical about because if contempt is indeed supposed to serve as the kind of protective shield that Bell lets it show, then it seems that a superbius person who harbours an objectionable form of contempt should already be protected from another person’s counter-contempt.

* * *

To sum up, the person evincing superbia wants to establish himself as superior, and make the other submit to an inferior position. Morally apt contempt will in response help the victim to protest the misplaced sense of superiority of the person evincing superbia by viewing him as low. This, according to Bell, will help to shore up the self-esteem of the victim, and may provide the superbius person with reasons for character change.

In the chapters to come I will revisit both, superbia and contempt as a response to it, in more detail. In chapter 3, I will provide an advanced characterisation of superbia, which will be relatively similar to that of Bell but will include an acknowledgement that superbia is not just a matter of appraisal respect but involves an important denial of recognition respect for its target. Building from this addition I will, in chapter 4, go on to analyse how contempt’s evaluative appraisal can deal with this double denial of respect, and to what extent it might protect the target of superbia from experiencing shame and developing low self-esteem.

¹⁶ See more on the concept of providing reasons from Bell 2012: 209.

3. On the exact definition and the moral wrong in superbia

3.1. An analysis of Bell's characterisation of superbia

Bell characterizes superbia by the following conditions. First three of them are necessary and jointly count as sufficient. The fourth one involves a behavioural manifestation, which is not necessary in a strict sense but will in most cases be satisfied as well. (Bell 2013: 109.)

1. The person believes he has comparatively high status.
 2. The person desires that his high status be recognized.
 3. Through his beliefs about his status and his desire that it be recognized, the person manifests ill will.
 4. The person attempts to exact esteem or deference at the expense of others.
- } necessary
} optional

She does not explicitly comment on each condition but instead lets their meaning unfold in the course of discussing two particular vices, arrogance and hypocrisy, which she considers as structured by superbia. I will first provide my interpretation of this characterisation and visit each condition in turn. Then, I highlight some problems that this characterisation causes for fitting hypocrisy as an instance of supbia, and move on to my own suggestions concerning how to improve Bell's characterisation, which will eventually also solve the problems with fitting hypocrisy.

Condition 1: the beliefs of the superbious

According to the first condition, a superbious person believes she has a comparatively high status. Since earlier Bell uses the term 'status' in order to define contempt, I am tempted to characterise the first condition of superbia in symmetry with contempt's evaluative appraisal. While contempt concerns viewing another person's status as low, superbia is about thinking of oneself as high. In the context of contempt's evaluative appraisal Bell speaks of status in terms of one's position vis-à-vis some particular standard (*ibid.* 37f), for example social

position, morality, beauty, talent¹⁷. In case of arrogance, for example, one might think highly of oneself in light of one's accomplishments or praiseworthy characteristics such as talents and virtues (*ibid.* 111). It should, however, be noted that not just any standard will do. Since status is considered as "ground for esteem and deference" (*ibid.* 99), the standard in question must be such that is considered to make one worthy of some special esteem (of course, people's opinions about that may differ). And also, in order to condemn someone, one must take the standard in question as especially relevant for the *overall evaluation* of another person¹⁸. Since in addition to status vis-à-vis a particular standard, Bell also speaks of one's position along some axis of comparison itself as something that *provides (apt or inapt) ground* for status (*ibid.* 103f), I take it that we can also speak of status in some higher sense, in terms of one's overall excellence, and overall worthiness of esteem¹⁹. And this is the sense

¹⁷ Bell does not think that there is "one single, fixed, determiner of status", but admits that there may be competing conceptions of status (*ibid.* 38). In everyday language, it is perhaps often the case that we use the word 'status' as shorthand to someone's social position, but in the context of the current discussion it is important to distinguish this as only one way to understand status. This is why a person can also condemn someone who enjoys a higher social position than her. For example, "a lowly assistant may [...] coherently harbor contempt for her famous and well-respected mentor; the assistant may acknowledge that her mentor enjoys a higher social status yet still see him as low vis-à-vis some standard she cares about, for example, humility" (Bell 2013: 37-8).

¹⁸ See Bell's discussion on how globalist evaluations are constituted by evaluative prioritisations (*ibid.* 78ff).

¹⁹ Let us consider Bell's idea that "a lowly assistant may, for example, coherently harbor contempt for her famous and well-respected mentor; the assistant may acknowledge that her mentor enjoys a higher social status yet still see him as low vis-à-vis some standard she cares about, for example, humility" (Bell 2013: 38). For the arguments sake, let us assume that the mentor is evincing superbia, and the assistant responds to this superbia with contempt. The symbolic dialogue that might take place between them, would then be the following:

Mentor: "I have high status, since I am a mentor and you are a mere assistant."

Assistant: "No, you have low status, since you lack humility."

If we were to think of status as mere praiseworthiness along some axis, this dispute should be reduced to a merely verbal dispute:

Mentor: "I score high on social hierarchy as a mentor."

Assistant: "No, you score low in humility."

The assistant could not be viewed as denying what the mentor has literally said, since she has no intentions of casting doubt on the fact that the mentor is a mentor, and as such enjoys a higher position in social hierarchy. We could not really say that by her contempt the assistant rejects the status claims of the mentor. But this is not what is actually going on. In addition to viewing the other's position along some axis, both also single this axis

in which status is especially relevant for contempt and superbia. If in case of contempt one views another person's overall status as low, then in case of superbia it is one's own overall status that she regards as high.

This raises a question about the relationship between contempt and superbia. Must the one who contemns also be superbius at the same time? No, a contemptuous person need not be superbius. To begin with, if we allow the possibility of self-contempt, as Bell does, then one's contempt for others may also be accompanied by contempt for oneself. For example, an unwilling alcoholic who has lost his close friends and family members to his disease may have contempt for alcoholics in general, including himself (*ibid.* 43). In this case one would view others as his inferior equals. Of course, Bell takes such cases as relatively rare, adding that in most cases the subject does see oneself as superior to the target of his contempt (*ibid.*). As such, the contemnor would indeed fulfil the first condition of superbia. Notice that he need not take himself superior to all other people or as scoring especially high in an objective sense²⁰. As the first condition of superbia goes, one must only take oneself to have “a *comparatively* high status” (my emphasis) in relation to certain other(s). Even though before I spoke of an *overall* evaluation, what I had in mind then was just the aggregate evaluation along various relevant dimensions, not just necessarily along one particular standard²¹. This is what it meant to have high status in general. When speaking of *comparatively* high status, however, then the focus is on one person's overall status in comparison with another person's overall status. Superbia is about taking oneself to enjoy a high overall status in comparison with at least some selected others. This is why racists and sexists can also be regarded as superbius (*ibid.* 98), even though they need not take themselves as superior to the other members of their own race or sex (see also, Dillon 2007: 106). But even as such, ordinary cases of contempt (that do not involve self-contempt) would only fulfil the first condition of superbia, and this is not sufficient to say that contempt must necessarily amount to superbia.

But does the superbius person necessarily hold certain others in contempt? While Bell often uses the rhetoric of responding to the superbius person's inapt contempt with apt

out as especially relevant for the overall evaluation of another. If the mentor is harbouring superbia, then he will take his high position as a mentor to counts as especially relevant to his overall evaluation of himself as high. And the assistant thinks that the overall evaluation is compromised by the fact that the mentor lacks humility.

²⁰ Even a vicious person who is less vicious than his contemporaries would be superior to them in some sense, this would be far from saying that this relative superiority amounts to superior virtue on some objective level.

²¹ Of course, if one thinks that human excellence can be measured only along one standard, then according to her, one standard will be enough. I personally do not think that this is the case.

contempt, I am not so sure whether this means that the superbius person must necessarily condemn other people. Contempt is about regarding the other as falling below a certain personal baseline. According to Bell, “The subject’s personal baseline is her framework of values and attitudes that constitute her value system. One’s personal baseline demarcates who one would not stoop to be” (*ibid.* 39). I would interpret it by saying that if the person fell below this level, she would harbour self-contempt and/or feel shame²². At least in case of shame, some authors argue that not just any blow to one’s self esteem will do, one must evince the polar opposite of a self-relevant value in order to feel it (Deonna et al 2012: 102). Now, I am not completely sure whether going to this extreme and speaking of the very *polar* opposite is completely right either, but I do believe that there is at least some room for falling along some standard before shame or self-contempt hits us. This is why I would say that there is also some room for the superbius to look down on other people while not yet holding them in contempt but still harbouring superbia against them. For example, a distinguished top professional may look down on professionals without thinking that they are low and uneducated in some objective sense. But this does not matter for evaluating superbia as morally objectionable, because the immorality of superbia does not derive from the first condition, which only involves taking oneself as comparatively superior, but from the ill will embedded in the third condition. So, even if we would lose the rhetoric of responding to inapt contempt with apt contempt, this would not mean that one would not have the right to hold the superbius person in contempt.

Overall, there need not be anything morally wrong with viewing oneself as having a comparatively high *status*, if this does not amount to believing that one has a higher *moral standing* (but this is already the topic of the third condition). Since the distinction between status and moral standing²³ is an important one²⁴, let me comment on it in more detail. In the context of Bell’s monograph and this thesis, moral standing is understood as something that

²² As already mentioned, I take self-contempt and shame as partly sharing the same evaluative appraisal even though their phenomenology might perhaps be different.

²³ While one might contrast status and standing in general as well, not just status and *moral* standing, I have omitted the talk of other types of standing because in the context of the current thesis this is irrelevant.

²⁴ As it was already mentioned in the introduction (see page 5), differentiating between these two kinds of respects is crucial for the defenders of contempt. It is only through maintaining that morally appropriate contempt does not involve denying its target moral recognition respect, that they are able to argue that there need not be anything immoral in contempt (Bell 2013: 170f, Mason 2003: 264f). Otherwise contempt might run the risks of regarding its object as utterly worthless, but this is not the kind of contempt that defenders like Bell or Mason would find justified.

makes people worthy of, what Stephen Darwall calls, moral recognition respect (Darwall 1977: 40), which involves taking into account that other people have certain moral rights that one ought not to violate. As Bell notes, “standing is typically thought to derive from whatever features are sufficient for one to count as a member of moral community” (Bell 2013: 100). According to an egalitarian theory of human worth, which is one that both Bell and I rely on, one has a moral standing simply in virtue of being a person (regardless of whether she is vicious or virtuous). As such, it is an all-or-nothing affair. Status, however, is something that comes in degrees and that can be measured along various different dimensions. It is something that makes a person worthy of not just basic moral recognition respect, but also positive esteem for one’s good qualities—something that Stephen Darwall labels as appraisal respect (Darwall 1977: 38f). Essentially, the first condition is about status, not moral standing, and as such, there need not be anything morally problematic with it. If the person is indeed right about his comparatively high status, then he might simply be appropriately self-confident (see Tiberius & Walker 1998: 379; Bell 2013: 111f).

Condition 2: the desires of the superbious

According to the second condition, a person evincing superbia will also desire that his high status be recognised by other people. Since Bell formulates her characterisation of superbia in such a way that every other condition builds upon the previous one²⁵, it is hard to tell how the second condition might be read in isolation from the first. According to one interpretation it might be regarded as a desire that one’s status would simply be appropriately recognised (regardless of whether it is high or low). As such, I do not see anything intrinsically wrong with it. But we might also interpret the condition as demanding that one’s status were recognised as high regardless of what it actually is. In this case, such desire would be problematic even if the person were in fact lucky and had a high status. It would be unfair to wish that one would be given unduly high esteem (though, of course, there need not be anything wrong with wishing that one were actually worthy of high esteem, in which case the esteem wished for would not count as unduly high with respect to the worthiness wished for). At the moment, we might just say that the second condition as such need not be morally

²⁵ First, she says that a person believes himself to have a high status. Then, she adds that he also wants *this high status* be recognised. Third, it is *through the above-mentioned beliefs and desires* that the person also manifests ill will.

problematic. I have added both interpretations, though, because they become relevant later onwards, when I consider whether condition one is really necessary or not.

Here, I have only one further point of clarification, and that concerns what kind of recognition it is that the superbious person desires. Since status in the context of the current thesis status is conceptually tied to appraisal respect, then what the person desires is appraisal respect. Darwall himself, the author who coined the term ‘appraisal respect’ gives a very minimalistic conception of it²⁶. He simply regards it as “the positive appraisal itself” (Darwall 1977: 39). As such, his account seems essentially *belief-centred*²⁷, and need not involve any *feelings* of respect or admiration. He does, though, suggest that “such feelings may be understood as feelings which a person would explain by referring to his or her positive appraisal of their object” (*ibid.* 39).

I take this to be very much in line with Bell’s characterisation. According to her, the recognition that the superbious person seeks for comes in the form of either esteem or deference. Whereas esteem is connected to positive feelings (and of course, it is no wonder that one may also desire those, too), deference is just a “submission to the acknowledged superior claims, skill, judgement, or other qualities, of another” (*OED*). It may only involve appraisal only at this minimal level of belief that Darwall speaks of. Bell draws the contrast between seeking esteem versus mere deference by giving an example of a student who interrupts class discussion, sighs and rolls her eyes at others’ contributions, thereby trying to silence them (Bell 2013: 115).

²⁶ Though he does not say much about appraisal respect itself, he does give a detailed description of its object, assuring its connection with what we have spoken of in terms of status: “its exclusive objects are persons or features which are held to manifest their excellence as persons or as engaged in some specific pursuit. For example, one may have such respect for someone’s integrity, for someone’s good qualities on the whole, or for someone as a musician. Such respect, then, consists in an attitude of positive appraisal of that person either as a person or as engaged in some particular pursuit. Accordingly the appropriate ground for such respect is that the person has manifested characteristics which make him deserving of such positive appraisal.” (Darwall 1977: 38f)

²⁷ Explicitly, he categorises respect as an attitude but he does not comment on what it means to have a certain attitude. Since he does not think that it involves any feelings, it seems he does not think that having such attitude would involve a very specific phenomenology. This is why I have labelled it as simply belief-centred.

Condition 3: ill will embedded in the beliefs and desires of the superbius

While the first two conditions need not be morally problematic, and the fourth only not necessary, it is really the third condition where the root of evil lies. Third condition adds to the beliefs and desires of the superbius an element of ill will that consists in seeing others as means²⁸ that one could use to get her high status recognized. This understanding becomes especially salient when she discusses why arrogance would be objectionable even if one never engaged in arrogant behaviour:

For through her unacted-upon arrogance she [the arrogant person, Katherine] would see Sebastian as someone she could use as a tool to get others to recognize her high status. This attitude would, by itself, damage her relationship with him since in regarding him as a mere tool to gain esteem and deference, Katherine would be evincing ill will toward him. (Bell 2013: 115)

Even if the person did not seek to actually use other people as tools, she would nevertheless see them as people whom she might use as tools. Here, Bell only highlights that the person evincing superbia would see its victim as a tool to get *other people* acknowledge her status or standing. But, of course, he might wish for the deference of the humiliated party as well, at least in the form of silent submission. In either case, we are dealing with the instrumentalisation of the person in the receiving end of one's superbia.

For Bell, ill will is closely connected to relational damage. According to her: "superbia damages our personal and moral relations because it manifests ill will, and it is, for this reason, objectionable" (*ibid.* 110). There are also several places where she emphasises that it is really to the relational damage that contempt serves as the best response:

²⁸ Strictly speaking, according to Kant's second formulation of categorical imperative, one should not just use other people as means, but as *mere* means. The second formulation reads: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end" (*G* 429). I admit that this approach to be somewhat simplified, and would like to point to criticism made by Jeffrey Fry: „if we take it that using someone *merely* as a means to an end is a *necessary* condition of using someone in an objectionable way, such a conclusion is surely too strong. For there are cases in which one may not use someone *merely* as a means to one's ends, but in which, nevertheless, respect for the person in question is so dwarfed by concerns to achieve one's own ends that one shows moral insensitivity. In such cases one may even act to promote the happiness of others to a degree and thus also promote, to an extent, their humanity. One does not simply ignore the ends of others, but a proper balance of interests is not achieved.“ (Fry 2000: 54.) So, whenever I point to someone using others as *mere* means, I will also allow the possibility that there might be a small degree of treating the other as and end as well.

Those who evince vices of superiority will have a difficult time forming friendships, and the relationships they do manage to create will be impaired by their superbia. Friendship involves an expectation of reciprocated good will and those who evince these vices lack this good will. In seeing others as tools they may use to gain esteem and deference, they manifest ill will that damages their relationships. This relational impairment is a central aspect of what makes these vices vicious, and it is what calls for contempt as a response. (*Ibid.* 122)

According to my interpretation, she regards ill will as constitutive of relational damage, so that there is really not much difference whether we say that contempt is the best response to the relational damage or to ill will. There is one place, however, where it might be doubted whether ill will and relational damage might become apart from each other for Bell, so that relational damage can become ground for contempt regardless of the existence of ill will:

In central cases, this will turn on whether the esteem seeking comes at *expense of others* or *for the sake of one's relationships with others*. Those who evince vices of superiority need not set out to damage their relationships. More often, they simply set out to produce some benefit and, in the process, end up damaging a relationship. But I suggest that it is the relational damage that sets the attitude at the heart of the vices of superiority apart from innocuous cases of esteem and deference seeking. (*Ibid.* 108)

Here, she highlights that the wrongdoing of those who evince superbia need not be intentional, but may simply occur as a side-effect. Unfortunately, she does not comment on the matter in greater detail but I imagine that what she has in mind is that sometimes we can insult other people unintentionally. Jerome Neu points to this possibility in his monograph “Sticks and Stones: The Philosophy of Insults”²⁹. He maintains that: “One can insult both intentionally (with awareness, with forethought, even with malice—in the ordinary sense of ill will as motive) and unintentionally (by inadvertence, by negligence, by insensitivity, by presumption)” (Neu 2009: 18f). He also notes that unintended insults are often insulting because of a “presumptuous attitude or an unjustified assumption behind a remark” (*ibid.* 21). This involves an assumption of superiority, an assumption that one's own interests are more

²⁹ Even though Bell does not refer to this book in her monograph, I imagine that it nevertheless functions as an important source for her because insults function as one of the main mediums through which people evincing superbia seek to put others in their place, and Bell has also written a review about the book, and it is already in this review that she suggests the possibility that „[o]ne way of protecting oneself from feeling insulted would be to muster a targeted counter-contempt towards one's insulters“ (Bell 2008).

important than those of the others.³⁰ This seems to be in line with the attitude of superbia, but at least according to Neu's remarks, this does not constitute ill will, at least not in an ordinary sense of the word.

Since, whether lack of regard can amount to ill will is a big topic on its own, I will have to omit a detailed analysis of that from the current thesis and leave it an open question where we should draw the line when counting people as superbia.

Condition 4: behavioural manifestation

What the fourth condition emphasizes is the behavioural tendency of those who harbour superbia. The essence of this condition is to exact esteem or deference, to make one's superior position felt in the world. This also includes making other people's inferior position felt. Even though Bell does not think that the fourth condition is necessary, she nevertheless regards it as having a "deep connection" with the beliefs and desires characteristic to superbia—if you think that you have high status, and see others as tools to recognise this status, then you will be likely to exact esteem. Since this is the component that most threatens the self-esteem of those who have to deal with people evincing superbia, and I study the role of contempt as a response to superbia, I am interested in the viewpoint of those people, this condition will have an important role to play in my analysis as well.

Bell herself justifies taking condition (4) as an important part of superbia by pointing to the "deep connection" between the vices of superbia and attempts to exact esteem and deference: "if you believe that you have a comparatively high status and desire that this status be recognized, then you will be disposed to seek or attempt to exact recognition if it is not

³⁰ These types of insults seem most common in the context of close relationships because there the expectations concerning the other person's attentiveness to our needs is especially heightened. This has also been highlighted by William B. Irvine: „when someone with whom we have a personal relationship insults us, we take it as evidence that they don't value their relationship with us as highly as they once did or as highly as we might like them to, and we are pained“; „the more we value a relationship, the greater our sense of loss will be, and the more intense our pain will therefore be, on getting evidence, in the form of an insult, that the other party to the relationship has devalued it“ (Irvine 2013: 101).

The importance of interpersonal neglect from close people has also been reported as one of the two main reasons why people feel insulted (the other being insult to one's competence or skill). See: Rodriguez Mosquera et al 2008.

given to you” (Bell 2013: 106). So, unless people already bow down at you in all possible ways so that there is really nothing more you can do to make your superior position felt in the world, your attitudes are unlikely to come apart from the exacting activities mentioned earlier.

I would like to add another reason by drawing attention to the standpoint of people who have to deal with those who are corrupted by vices of superiority. Namely, unless the person harbouring superbia also evinces it by exacting activities, her victims are not likely to be in a position to know that they are dealing with someone who harbours superbia against them, and hence they will also not be in a position to respond with a reactive attitude. While we can think of imaginary scenarios where the person against whom superbia is harboured might become aware of it by stumbling upon a journal entry, such occasions are rare. Also, even though in cases where someone merely harbours superbia we can think of damage to the relationship in abstract terms (for, as Bell points out, the person would nevertheless be manifesting ill will in his thought), this is not the kind of harm that would threaten the self-esteem of other people, for they would not be aware of being thought as inferiors. But protecting one’s self-esteem, as we will later see, is an important part of the job that contempt is supposed to do. But my main point is that while we may admit it in theory that even if it was the case that people harbouring superbia never let it show, we would still not like to have them thinking of us as inferiors and as mere means to boost their self-esteem, in reality we would not be in a position to condemn these people. And since the focus of this work is to consider the potential of contempt as a response to the superbia inherent in arrogance, there does not seem to be much point in concentrating on the cases where we would not be in a position to condemn anyway. Since we cannot peek into the hearts and minds of other people, in practice people secretly harbouring superbia who never let it show cannot be the objects of our justified contempt, for it could never be justified on our behalf to condemn someone if we lacked evidence of them being worthy of contempt. True, in some cases the contempt might luckily end up being targeted at the right person, but even if contempt might happen to be deserved, due to the above-mentioned epistemic restraint it would nevertheless be unjustified from our behalf. It would be unfair to condemn people just in case they might happen to harbour superbia. Contempt is a reactive emotion, the purpose of which is to hold people accountable for their badbeing, and this is why it would be immoral to employ it as a pre-emptive measure—in order to avoid getting hurt, for example.

3.2. My criticism and developments of Bell's characterisation of superbia

Superbia as not just a denial of appraisal respect

What I find puzzling about Bell's account of superbia is that explicitly she seems to define it as mainly a matter of appraisal respect. In some places she does not take the superbious person to violate any moral rights at all, in other places she is perhaps a bit more reserved and notes that the superbious need not have false beliefs about other people's moral standing. While I do not oppose to this softer interpretation, I disagree with the claim that the superbious do not violate any moral rights of other people. Since superbia involves treating other people as mere means, insofar as an attitude counts as superbia, it will have to involve a violation of other people's moral rights.

Bell makes the claim about no violation of any rights when speaking of the superbious executive who refuses to sit next to a labourer. She notes that "the executive does not violate anyone's rights, and, if asked, he may well acknowledge the fundamental moral equality of all persons" (Bell 2013: 103). In other words, he does not hold a false belief, according to which the labourer would not be worthy of equal moral recognition respect. Furthermore, since Bell says that he does not violate the labourer's rights, she must take it as the case that the executive does not unknowingly end up denying him equal recognition respect either. Instead, she suggests that the fault lies in the fact that he dishonours the man. To dishonour someone means "to withhold the esteem and deference the person merits (i.e., to fail to show proper appreciation for the person's status)" (*ibid.*). Since she speaks of esteem and status here, the problem is supposed to be about denying him appraisal respect.

While there is a low appraisal respect involved as well, I do not think that it can be properly said that the superbious person does not deny another person appropriate moral recognition respect. If it can be said that the executive does not violate any rights, then in this case rights should be understood in a rather narrow sense that does not amount to giving another person full moral recognition respect. But this is not the reading that Bell's words suggest. She seems to regard moral recognition respect and not violating other people's rights on par, and suggest that there is no denial of recognition respect involved. In another context where she repeats a similar idea, she makes it rather explicit that what she has in mind are "fundamental moral and political rights that all persons as persons enjoy" (*ibid.* 105). Since I see no reason why we cannot speak of a moral right not to be treated as mere means, I do not

think it could be said that a superbious person does not violate any rights. If she evinces ill will, and uses other people as mere means, then surely he does violate their moral right not to be treated as means.

While in the case of the executive, Bell said that he does not *actually* violate anyone's rights, in other places Bell is somewhat more reserved and puts the main emphasis on the fact that one simply need not have any false *beliefs* about other people's rights or moral status.

It is important to stress that those who evince the vices of superiority do not necessarily think that their status entails anything about their or others' rights or moral standing. Those who evince the vices of superiority can, and often do, recognize that other persons are their moral equals and are bearers of the same fundamental moral and political rights that all persons as persons enjoy. Nevertheless, people who evince these vices take themselves to be owed special esteem and deference given what they see as their comparatively high status. The executive may think that he deserves a seat in a VIP compartment, Anastasia may think that her education entitles her to ignore Metro-North employees, and so on, and they may perceive the world in this way while also sincerely believing that all persons have rights that must be respected. (*Ibid.* 105)

This seems a more likely explanation. Even though at some level the person may have the right beliefs about other people's moral status, since she takes oneself having a high status, she might not think that she would be denying recognition respect for anyone. All she does is takes what is due to her. This is in line with an idea put forward by Kate Moran, who argues that self-conceit is "a symptom of a more fundamental failure of reasoning" that lies in applying the moral law in a rather skewed way: "Lacking any principled way to apply the standards of theoretical and practical reason, the conceited agent constructs a chimera of objective validity that is nearly impossible to set right" (Moran 2014: 422). That kind of self-conceit may often, though not always, also apply to the superbious who may rationalise their treatment of other people as merely taking what is due to them. Formally speaking, though, I do not think that there is much difference in where we place the fault—in explicit beliefs about other people moral standing or in errors in interpreting how one should take their standing account in one's actions. This is why I would not say that the fact that a superbious person may admit that others have equal moral status actually amounts to giving them proper moral recognition respect. The superbious person may recognise another person's moral status to some extent, but if he fails to properly take it into account in his actions then he cannot be taken to give another person full moral recognition respect.

To some extent it is perhaps just a technicality that Bell does not go quite as far as to explicitly say that the superbius person does indeed deny another moral recognition respect. She does say that she uses another as means though, and she regards this as something morally objectionable, so in principle our views do not really differ that much. But I believe that bringing it out more explicitly that superbia involves a denial of moral recognition respect has certain benefits that help us better understand the nature of superbia. Namely, it allows us to see that superbia involves two kinds of denial of respect—the denial of both, appraisal and moral recognition respect.

The double-insult theory of superbia

Based on the previous insights on the two kinds of respect that the superbius person denies other people, I suggest that the nature of superbia is best framed in terms of a double-insult that consists in viewing or treating³¹ the other person as low not only in status, but also in moral standing. For example, in case of Anastasia and the Metro-North employees (see page 14), Anastasia views the Metro-North employees as low in status in virtue of not being as educated as she is. But, since she also seeks to put them down for the sake of her own good, she is also using them as means and denying them moral recognition respect. Or, let us take the case of the well-known neurosurgeon Katherine and the bumbler Sebastian (see page 15). By laughing at Sebastian's clumsiness in front of their colleagues in such a way as to bring

³¹ I do not think that the difference between viewing the other as low, i.e. actually believing that she is low, and treating her as such is especially relevant here. As already discussed before, one may on some level believe that all people share an equal moral status, yet fail to properly apply this in one's treatment of other people. The expressive message sent out to the other person is the same in either case. Perhaps it might be argued that the one who at least believes that other people share equal moral standing gives them more moral recognition respect than the one who does not, but in any case, this would not amount to giving full recognition to another person's moral standing. Similarly, there is not much difference whether one denigrates another for her ugly looks, colour of skin, lack of wit, or whichever other standard of status comparison, while actually thinking that this compromises another person's overall status or not. For example, one might not think that having ugly looks necessarily compromises another person's overall status, but she might not care about that and may nevertheless denigrate the other for her ugly looks in order to bring the other person's self-esteem low, and make her think that it does compromise her overall status. Or one might simply have an aversion against the other person that makes her look for reasons that might help to bring the other person down. The message sent out is the same: that the overall status of the other person is compromised by scoring low along some standard of comparison.

attention to her own dexterity, Katherine views Sebastian as low in status because of his clumsiness, but also denies him moral recognition respect by using him as means to exact the esteem of other people and draw attention to her own excellence.

Let me first comment on why I choose to frame the idea by appealing to a double-*insult*. According to Jerome Neu's general characterisation, insults are "about humiliation and the assertion of superiority, the assertion or assumption of dominance" (Neu 2009: 4). They are about establishing oneself as high and the other as low. In a narrow sense, insults can be conceived as expressive acts that aim in the direction of some truth about their target (Archard 2014: 4)—some truth which is supposed to hint at the target's inferiority, to be more precise. For example, one might call a fat person "Piggy!". This is the kind of insult that is related to viewing another's status as low vis-à-vis some particular standard.

But we can also speak of insults in a broad sense of not paying due respect to other people, which need not hint at any specific feature that might make the other inferior. As it is well illustrated by Jeffrey Murphy, a denial of moral recognition respect is a good example of this kind of insult:

One reason we so deeply resent moral injuries done to us is not simply that they hurt us in some tangible or sensible way; it is because such injuries are also messages - symbolic communications. They are ways a wrongdoer has of saying to us, "I count but you do not," "I can use you for my purposes," or "I am here up high and you are there down below." Intentional wrongdoing insults us and attempts (sometimes successfully) to degrade us - and thus it involves a kind of injury that is not merely tangible and sensible. It is moral injury, and we care about such injuries. (Murphy & Hampton 1990: 25)

It is already built into the notion of using another as mere means that she is given a somewhat inferior standing compared to the one who decides that his ends are more important. So, this is why if one views another person as low in status, but also at the same time uses her as mere means, we can speak of a kind of double-insult.

Secondly, I would like to highlight that regarding the other person as low in status and lowering her to the position of serving as mere means to one's own ends must also be connected to each other in some way. For example, for one's attitude to categorise as superbia it is not enough for one just think that another person is bad at cooking, and then use her as means by making her do something else for him, for instance, amuse him by telling funny stories. Using the other as means and viewing her as low must be connected to each other. This is already embedded in Bell's original characterisation of superbia as well.

According to the third condition, ill will (using the other as means) manifests itself *through* the superbious person's beliefs about his high status and his desire to have it recognised.

More specifically, the connection is the following: the superbious person reduces another to mere means, and as such, she reduces her to one single characteristic or set of characteristics that is supposed to define her as low. For instance, if the superbious person takes herself to be especially intelligent, then the other person serves as means for her in virtue of being less intelligent (unless, of course, the superbious person also takes himself as superior according to some other standard as well, in which case the other may serve as a good tool in virtue of scoring low according to this other standard). While using other people as mere means is humiliating on its own as well, there is something doubly humiliating in the superbious use of another as mere means. By definition, the other can only serve as a good tool for the superbious insofar as she will be viewed as low. In contrast, imagine a person who seeks the esteem of other people by associating himself with someone famous and accomplished. She would be using the famous person as means, but the very reason why she serves as good means is that she has excelled in something. Or, we may imagine a gladiator whom his master only sees as means for bringing honour and fame for his house, but who can nevertheless fulfil himself as a good warrior at the arena. I do not, of course, wish to suggest that slavery and gladiator fights are not morally objectionable, but there is a sense in which functioning as means for his master will not rob the gladiator of all forms of self-attainment. The target of one's superbia, however, only serves as a good tool insofar as she is bad at something. So, she has to play a role of a fool. The superbious person uses her as a touchstone of inferiority against which her superiority could shine.

And last but not least, I would also like to clarify what exactly it is that the other person serves as good means for. Bell only speaks of using other people in order to exact esteem or deference. I do not think that this characterisation goes all the way. In fact, in the next section I will be showing how one can be superbious without desiring the esteem and deference of other people. The esteem and deference are no final ends for the superbious. More fundamentally, they serve as means for boosting his self-esteem or getting further assurance about his high status. This point is well brought into foreground in Robin S. Dillon's account of interpersonal arrogance, which overlaps with Bell account of superbia in almost all respects except one. I will first briefly comment on this overlap, and then explain the difference in more detail.

Looking at the structure of both author's accounts, I am inclined to suspect that Bell characterisation of superbia is to a great extent inspired by Dillon's four dimensions of

interpersonal arrogance (Dillon 2007: 104f). In short, Dillon's dimensions of interpersonal arrogance can be summarised in the following way:

1. Conception of one's worth and status as high in relation to others.
2. Valuing of self-valuing.
3. Morally significant inordinance of the valuing of self in relation to others.
4. The manifestation of this in the attitudes towards and treatment of other people.

The first dimension is similar to Bell's first condition of superbia in that it, too, highlights the beliefs about one's comparative superiority. The third is in both cases the main badmaking feature of the attitude. While Dillon conceives in terms of inordinance, Bell speaks of ill will. Both highlight the fact that the consideration given to one's own ends and that of the others' is not in balance, but tilted towards giving weight to one's own interests. The fourth dimension/condition highlights the behavioural manifestation. It is only the second condition/dimension that is somewhat different, and I think that Dillon does a better job with the second condition than Bell. As I will be arguing later, I do not think that Bell's second condition is necessary. Dillon's second condition, however, draws attention to the fact that "[t]he arrogant person not only values the self highly but highly values having a worth and status that is both great and greater than others': when one thinks about it [---], it is a pleasurable thought and satisfying in its rightness" (*ibid.* 104). Even though this does not exactly amount to saying that the main motive of the superbious/arrogant person is to feed his self-esteem, I do not think that it falls particularly far from it. Dillon just highlights the satisfaction that one receives from this favourable comparison with other people that boosts one's self-esteem. Later on, she sheds more light to arrogant person's main motivation as well:

The motivation for interpersonal arrogance—the 'ambition' with which Kant identifies arrogance, the desire 'always to be on top'—is the desire to heighten self-esteem, an attitude of self-approval that is different from interpersonal recognition self-respect. The difference lies in the kind of self-worth which each is grounded in and expresses. Interpersonal recognition self-respect is grounded in dignity and expresses one's understanding of oneself as a being of absolute and supreme worth who is therefore themoral equal of every other person; it rests on a moral conception of self-worth. Self-esteem expresses and is grounded in the comparative/competitive social conception of self-worth. In the *Lectures*, Kant makes it clear that the kind of self-worth the arrogant person cares about is essentially comparative and competitive. Arrogance is an inclination to think highly of oneself, but it asks 'not what one is worth, but how much more one is worth than another'; the arrogant person 'already believes in his own worth, but he

esteems it solely by the lesser status of other people' (*L* 27:241). The arrogant person can't have the worth he values unless others manifestly have little worth in comparison to him and his superiority is confirmed by how others value him and themselves; hence he is disposed to demand esteem from others, to make it clear to everyone how little he values them, and to demand that they acknowledge their inferior worth and status.

(Dillon 2007: 116f)

Dillon highlights that the fact that an arrogant person needs other people because his self-worth is parasitic upon their inferiority. His self-esteem depends on being better than (at least certain) others. Similarly to Bell, Dillon, too, points it out that the arrogant person is disposed to make other people acknowledge that he is indeed better than they are. While I think that this is indeed very common, I will after a brief summary go on to argue that in especially extreme cases of superbia this need not be the case.

This is my outline of the double-insult theory. According to this theory, superbia involves viewing and/or treating another person as low in both, status and moral standing. More specifically, by reducing the other into mere means, the superbius person reduces to some single characteristic of a set of characteristics that is supposed to define her as low. And the end that this is supposed to serve lies in boosting or shoring up one's self-esteem which is at least partly³² derived from comparison with other people.

Next, I will move on make it more explicit how ill will can manifest itself through both, the beliefs and desires of the superbius person, i.e. how one can use another person as means to boost or shore up his self-esteem at mere belief level, and also how one can do so by desiring her status to be recognised as high. I will be arguing that if a person evinces ill will in either of the two ways, then from the viewpoint of moral objectionableness it does not make much difference if the other condition is fulfilled as well or not. For simplicity's sake, I will continue to label both as superbia, though it should be noted that if one does not actually believe that she is higher in some sense, calling him superbius might be somewhat misleading, and one might prefer to speak of *apparent* superbia instead. I will start with these cases, and then move on to cases of superbia that need not involve the desire to have one's status recognised.

³² I do not rule out the possibility that one might take pleasure in scoring high according some objective standard as well, but in order for one to count superbius, he must also take extra pleasure in being better than other people. In other words, Dillon's second dimension of interpersonal arrogance, which involves valuing of self-valuing must be satisfied as well.

Desire-based ill will as sufficient for superbia

When speaking of how ill will can manifest itself through the *beliefs and desires* of the superbious person, Bell's emphasis seems to be exclusively on how ill will manifests through the *desires* of the superbious, and this is what I will start my analysis with as well. She speaks of seeing others as means to get her high status recognised. A superious person would be willing to sacrifice other people's fair interests in the name of having her status appraised. She would see others as means in order to exact appraisal respect, either in the form of esteem or just mere deference.

Esteem, understood in terms of positive feelings of admiration, is usually sought from the third parties. In a paradigmatic case one might denigrate the other in order to bring attention to her own superiority and gain the esteem of other people (like it was done by Katherine who laughed at Sebastian's clumsiness in front of their colleagues; see page 15 and 36). Of course, we might be somewhat sceptical whether this is a particularly successful means for getting the esteem of other people, but this is beside the point as long as this is what the superbious person desires. There are also cases where one might indeed be successful in exacting esteem at the expense of other people, especially if her desire to do so remains hidden from the third parties. For example, Bell presents an imaginary case where she has an unjustified aversion to her sister-in-law, and she attempts to impress her in-laws with a first-rate sweet potato casserole *in order to* show up her sister-in-law whom she knows to arrive to the dinner empty-handed (Bell 2013: 107).

While one might also seek the esteem of the person whose inferiority is supposed to serve as a touchstone to highlight her own superiority, I take it as more likely that from her the superbious person might just seek to exact mere deference—a more silent and reluctant form of acknowledging her high status, not necessarily positive feelings of admiration. This is the case when Anastasia attempts to put down the Metro-North employees (see page 14). This way of exacting deference can also be well illustrated by Benjamin Franklin's young age tendency to exact submission from his conversation partners. As reported by Roberts, Franklin tried to beat the competitor emotionally into submission by using language that imported a fixed opinion, words like 'certainly,' 'undoubtedly,' 'an intelligent person would see that...,' 'one would have to be completely stupid to think that...,' and the like (Roberts 2009: 121; see also Franklin 2008: 94f). Even though Franklin admits that this was not a good way to get others join with his opinion, we might nevertheless conceive it as one means for exacting their deference, forcing them into acknowledging that one is right. Even if one

will not be esteemed for that, his self-esteem might nevertheless be boosted if this brings him the deference his conversation partners.

It might be added that in cases where one tries to seek the esteem of third parties, he might be instrumentalising them as well if he does not view them as ends in themselves, but only sees them as instruments to give her esteem and deference. He would only consider them as esteem-giving machines. This would of course be objectionable and would be a serious impairment for a relationship if all the other party wanted from you is that you boost up her self-esteem by constant praise, but there is a sense in which such instrumentalisation is somewhat more innocent. At least in this case, one would see your praise as something worth having. In order to consider someone as capable of giving proper praise, one must at least in some sense view the other as her equal. For example, well-educated Anastasia might consider the Metro-North employees as so utterly inferior as to be incapable of properly appreciating her intellectual talents. As such, she might not consider them as having a standing to give her proper appraisal respect. So, in order to make good use of another person as an esteem-giving machine, one must at some level nevertheless view the other as equal. In fact, often it is the esteem of those superior to us that boosts our self-esteem the most. Imagine a young academic whose work receives acknowledgement from a leading specialist in her field. However, even though regarding other people as mere esteem-giving machines may be a vicious form of vanity it need not amount to superbia. According to the double-insult theory one must, by reducing the others into a means for his ends, the superbius person must reduce them to some characteristic that makes them inferior. The superbius person is not simply after the praise that others might grant him as equals or superiors, he is after making other people acknowledge that he is better than they are. In that sense, superbia is a relational matter. Even though one may count as harbouring superbia with respect to some people, he need not count as superbius in relation to others.

If one seeks to make others acknowledge him as superior, then I see no reason why he would have to fulfil the first condition as well and actually take himself as superior. Insofar as the second condition can be interpreted as desiring others to recognise one's status as high regardless of whether it actually is so (see page 28), I would see this as equally objectionable, especially if we look at it from the viewpoint of the person whom he attempts to put down. Therefore, insofar as superbia simply serves as a roof term for especially contemptible vices that involve a double-insult, I see no reason why the superbius person would actually have to believe in one's high status if he nevertheless acts as if he does have one.

I would also like to highlight that maintaining that beliefs concerning one's high status are not necessary does a better job fitting hypocrisy as a case of superbia. Bell gives to examples of vices that are structured by superbia. One of them is arrogance, the other hypocrisy. While she admits that there may be other forms of hypocrisy as well (*ibid.* 116n27), in this context she only seems to confine herself to speaking of knowing forms of hypocrisy: "What is essential to hypocrisy is that one *pretends* to have virtuous or praiseworthy characteristics [---] in order to gain esteem or deference from others" (*ibid.* 117). A paradigmatic example of that kind of hypocrite is Tartuffe, who pretends to be a very pious servant of God, makes a show of his virtue by kissing the ground then praying, engages in false modesty and hypocritical moral address, and so on. But since the paradigmatic hypocrite knowingly puts on a show, he cannot at the same time sincerely believe that he truly embodies the ideal that he merely pretends to embody. The very meaning of the word "pretense" implies that the hypocrite must realize that he is merely putting on a show. And the fact that the hypocrite exacts esteem from others while knowing that he does not in fact merit it is what seems to make hypocrisy especially problematic and unfair. After all, there is a sense in which being self-deceived or deluded makes the agent less responsible. But it is nevertheless a fact, that if the hypocrite merely pretends, he cannot think that he actually is as good as he presents himself in front of others. This is why it strikes me as odd and question-begging that Bell nevertheless takes the hypocrite to think highly of himself while never commenting on why this is the case (see, e.g. *ibid.* 99, 110, 118).

The reason why I nevertheless agree with Bell that hypocrisy is a good example, and serves as an excellent complement to arrogance lies in the fact arrogance and hypocrisy illustrate the two main ways how another person can be treated as end. According to Christine Korsgaard, these two ways are coercion and deception (Korsgaard 1996: 347). While usually coercion is understood in physical terms, I would suggest that in this context we can view arrogance as a verbal form of coercion. It is usually by his words that the arrogant person tries to force the other into submission. Hypocrisy, on the other hand seeks the esteem and deference of other people by means of deception. Even though Bell just proposes these two vices as some examples of superbia, this is why I do not think that there can in principle be many other forms. Insofar as we can also speak of racism or sexism, for example, as a form of superbia, I think we might just as well subsume them under arrogance.

Having demonstrated why simply desiring others to recognise one's status as high even if one does not believe that this is indeed the case may amount to superbia, I will next move on

to showing how a person can be superious without desiring that others, too, would recognise his status as high.

Belief-based ill will as sufficient for superbia

A superbious person can use others as mere means to boost his self-esteem even if she does not care about whether other people recognise his superior status or not. This is a superbious way of using others as mere means that Bell does not mention. In order to understand how one may use another as means just at belief-level, let us have a look on Gabriele Taylor's characterisation of conceit. She compares conceit with vanity which is more oriented towards receiving others people's praise in order to sustain one's self-worth:

The conceited resemble the vain in that they, too, depend on others to sustain the conviction of their own excellence, but they differ in the nature of their dependence. While the vain need others to reflect a flattering image of themselves, the conceited use them as that against which their own superiority may be measured. (Taylor 2006: 73)

The conceited person need not care about the opinion of other people, but she will nevertheless need them because it is against them that she measures her superiority. The conceited person needs someone inferior to compare herself with and to sustain her superiority. She may of course also wish to force the other to admit that she is indeed better (thereby demanding appraisal respect at least in the form of deference), but this need not be necessary.

Even if one did not desire that her status was recognised and did not crave for constant praise, she could still evince ill will if she were conceited and derived her sense of self-worth not so much from the fact that she does well on some objective scale, but more from the fact that some people compare negatively to her. The conceited person needs other people's inferiority as a reference point in order to define himself as superior. This can be very corrosive for relationships. Imagine discovering that a friend of yours is friends with you only because it is against your inferiority that he can boost up his self-esteem. Even if one never demanded any special respect from you, this attitude would nevertheless undermine the relationship from an objective point of view, and I doubt that anyone would like to be in such a relationship and serve as mere tools for another, so that he could view himself as superior.

Using others as mere means to view oneself as superior against them is morally objectionable. The ill will of the conceited person is succinctly captured by Roberts, who comments on a potentially vicious person:

She might be humble even in her politically incorrect statement, if she does not take a certain kind of pleasure in being better than the people she compares herself with—if, for example, she would welcome everybody's being like her. A kind of pleasure in superiority that is contrary to humility is what we might call "invidious" pleasure, a pleasure that focuses not on the substance of her superiority [---], but on the superiority *as superiority*. (Roberts 2009: 125).

Roberts is right to point out that a virtuous person should not mind if others scored high on certain praiseworthy characteristics. Virtue, talents and other praiseworthy characteristics should be loved for independent reasons, not for the sake of the fact that these are the characteristics that make us better than other people. What Robert's insights highlight is the same valuing of self-valuing that was mentioned by Dillon as well. A superbious person takes a special pleasure in the fact that she is high and others are low, and this is how she wants that things would remain as well.

4. Contempt as a response to the damage wrought by superbia

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse how contempt might mitigate the damage wrought by superbia. According to Bell, contempt is supposed to immunise them from being shamed (2013: 132). This is why contempt is supposed to be especially valuable for socially subordinated groups who may become to adopt low self-esteem under the weight others', for example, racist or sexist contempt. I will start with a discussion on whether immunity from shame is in fact a goal worth pursuing at all. While many would agree that a target of inapt contempt has no reason to be ashamed and think of herself as low, it might be doubted whether immunity from shame might come at a price that we are not willing to pay. This idea has been put forward by Cheshire Calhoun (2004), who argues that the shame experienced by members of subordinated groups simply signals their capacity to take seriously fellow participants in their social world. Holding that this is a good thing, Calhoun does not think that we should strive to undermine it. I will be arguing that Calhoun's criticism rests on somewhat misplaced worries and that actually her views are not as incompatible with those of Bell as it might seem at first glance.

After rejecting Calhoun's criticism and establishing that it is nevertheless a reasonable goal to immunise minorities from being ashamed when confronted with inapt contempt, I will move on to analysing how exactly is morally apt contempt supposed to serve as a useful tool here. After all, it is a well-known fact that people can be shamed even if they do not think that they have a reason to be ashamed of themselves. For example, a racist comment can elicit shame even if its target does not think that the colour of her skin is proper ground for criticism. It is far from evident how holding the racist in contempt is supposed to make a difference here.

4.1. Is immunity from being shamed by inapt contempt a desirable goal at all?

In this section I will be focused on the question whether immunity from being shamed by inapt criticism is a desirable goal at all, and consider Calhoun's potential objections for that. My claims about immunity from shame should not be mistaken for claims about shamelessness. Shamelessness implies that one would not be ashamed of anything. For example, a criminal might shamelessly confess doing horrible things while evincing no regret. But this is not what I have in mind. When speaking of immunity from shame I am only referring to immunity from shame in case of being confronted with inapt criticism. This might involve being criticised for things that are not proper grounds for criticism, for example the colour of one's skin, but it may also involve false accusations where the thing that one is accused of would indeed be a serious matter but simply does not hold for the one being accused of it. For example, one might be accused of lying about being black since she is a relatively pale-skinned black. In this case, lying would indeed be a serious matter, but the criticism would be unjust because the person would not really be lying. (See page 49 for a more detailed description of this kind of case.)

Having said that, I will also add some introductory remarks about how Bell compares her views with those of Calhoun. She does not elaborate on Calhoun's arguments in great detail. She maintains that "If you harbor contempt for someone, they cannot shame you" (Bell 2013: 132), and simply adds in a footnote that not all theorists would agree with her:

Some may see this as giving us reason to avoid contempt. We should, some might argue, always remain open to the possibility of being shamed by others in the moral community. See Cheshire Calhoun, "An Apology for Moral Shame," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (2004): 127-146. I disagree; allowing oneself to be shamed by those one has good reason to believe are misguided evinces an objectionable lack of integrity. [---]

I believe Calhoun's ideas merit a closer look. It is, after all, an intriguing claim that we should remain vulnerable to being shamed by inapt criticism. If someone was denigrated for the colour of her skin or some other feature of hers which is unjust ground for criticism, it seems a rather natural course of action to console her by saying that she has nothing to be ashamed of³³. We do not think that people should be ashamed of themselves simply because

³³ Calhoun, too, admits that it might be "tempting" to say, "You should not be shamed by the wrongheaded opinions of others. After all, in your own view, you have nothing to be ashamed of" (Calhoun 2004: 138). Nevertheless, she seems to view such cases in terms of chastisement and fault-finding in the victim (ibid. 137). I

some bigots do not like them. Calhoun is one of the few³⁴ theorists who have challenged this idea. In what follows, I will try to show that her claims are not really as intriguing as it may seem at first glance, and that the disagreement between Bell and Calhoun is actually not that great.

One of the main reasons why Calhoun's criticism is not really as intriguing as it might seem is that she relies on very different conception of shame compared to Bell (and also many other philosophers). While most accounts of shame agree upon the fact that shame is about failure to meet certain standards, one of the questionable points is *whose* standards these are³⁵. Calhoun is one of the classic proponents of shame's heteronomy, holding that shame is by definition tied with other people's opinion of us, which need not overlap with our own. This contrasts to theories that regard shame as a failure to meet autonomously set standards (Rawls 2005: 440ff, Deigh 1983, Deonna et al 2012, Taylor 2002). Bell certainly belongs to the latter group of theorists, since judging by shame's cognitive content³⁶ Bell seems to consider it as a self-relevant equivalent of contempt. If in case of contempt it is the other who fails to meet a certain baseline, then in case of shame it is the person herself. Now, what is important for the current discussion is that shame is intimately connected with self-esteem only according to the accounts that regard it as a failure to meet the standards that one actually cares about and take as important constituents of her self-image. So, for Bell, shame goes hand-in-hand with lowered self-esteem. When she says that subordinated groups should be protected against shame, partly what she has in mind is that they should not adopt low self-esteem as a result of being denigrated. For Calhoun, however, shame need not involve a

disagree that this must be the case. Telling the other that she has nothing to be ashamed of need not imply that we think there is something wrong with her that she feels that way. I will soon explain in more detail why I think that this is the case.

³⁴ To be exact, she is the only one that I know of, but I do not take my viewpoint to be particularly limited here because Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni do not list anyone else besides Calhoun who would have defended the view either (see Deonna et al 2012: 235).

³⁵ Another question, for example is, to what extent one must fail the standards. Will only a small blow to one's self-esteem do, or will it need to involve a more serious sense of failure? Rawls, for an example, holds that a mere blow to self-esteem will do (Rawls 2005: 440f), whereas Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni argue that one must take a trait or an action of hers to exemplify the polar opposite of a self-relevant value (Deonna et al 2012: 102f). In the current thesis, this remains an open question.

³⁶ The reason why I say that it is an equivalent only in terms of *cognitive* content is that Bell also admits the possibility of self-contempt. She does not explain the difference between shame and self-contempt, but it seems reasonable to assume that it must lie in their *phenomenology*.

loss in self-esteem. She points out that even people with very strong sense of self-worth and high self-esteem are not protected from shame (Calhoun 2004: 137). So, when she says that we should not seek to immunise minorities from experiencing shame when confronted with inapt criticism, she is by no means suggesting that the minorities should therefore adopt a low self-esteem.

It is not essential for my argument to solve the conceptual issues concerning shame because I could speak of the same phenomena under a different label as well, but I would nevertheless like to say a few words in defense of regarding shame as a failure to meet standards that one agrees with, which is also the view held by Bell. More specifically, I would like to defend the account from the Calhoun's objections. My aim is to show that Calhoun's whole motivation for adopting a heteronomous account of shame is highly questionable.

What she finds worrisome about accounts that regard shame as autonomous is that according to these accounts "we must discount as irrational or immature much of the shame suffered by socially disesteemed populations—racial minorities, women, the poor, lesbians and gay men" (ibid. 135). According to her, a proper account of shame needs to accommodate the fact that people often experience shame even if they do not think they have anything to be ashamed of. Her main example is borrowed from Adrian Piper, who was raised by her parents to develop a strong sense of self-worth and cannot thereby be suspected to have a low self-esteem. The case, as Calhoun retells it, is the following:

Refusing to pass as white, although she could, Piper identifies herself on graduate school applications as black. When she shows up at the reception for new graduate students she is approached by a professor, one of her intellectual heroes, who remarks "with a triumphant smirk, 'Miss Piper, you're about as black as I am'." This is one of a series of occasions on which Piper feels what she calls "groundless shame" in response to those who accuse her of passing for black or passing for white. Her shame is groundless because she does not share her shamers' particular moral criticism of her that she is manipulative or deceitful. (Ibid. 137)

In this case we have Piper accused of lying about her race since in reality she looks relatively pale-skinned. While Piper herself knows that accusations of deceptions are groundless, she nevertheless experiences shame³⁷. Since Piper had a high self-esteem, Calhoun does not think

³⁷ Since it will not affect my argument, I will here take a *bona fide* assumption that Calhoun is right to diagnose Piper's shame as shame about being accused of lying about her race. However, I do think that the example is actually a lot more complicated than Calhoun lets it show, and the object of Piper's shame is not really that

that we should describe her as irrationally believing that she is indeed a fraud. Since the conception of shame as a failure to meet autonomously set standards seem to imply that, she takes this as reason to reject such conception. According to her, a proper account of shame needs to accommodate the cases of groundless shame without encouraging us to think that there is something wrong with people who feel ashamed when confronted with inapt contempt. Accounts that regard shame as a failure to meet autonomously set standards seem to fall short of this:

The two views we have considered so far thus encourage us, at best, to seek out psychological explanations for these irrational shame responses; and at worst, to chastise the subordinated for feeling ashamed and to

clear. What Calhoun does not mention is that there might also be other reasons that might have elicited shame in this particular situation. For example, according to Piper's own description, she has a tendency to switch on "automatic pilot" when engaged in casual social conversation, and as a result of that insults do not always register for her straight away (Piper 2001: 75f). In this case, too, she admits that it did not dawn to her straight away what the professor had meant. So, some sense of shame might also have derived from that. In addition, we might hypothesise whether the remark might have hit some special sense of pride that Piper took in passing as a black which in this context surely was a greater achievement. Hinting that she could have just as well identified herself as white might have made her doubt, at least momentarily, whether she is not in fact too ambitious. I do not wish to suggest as if there would be something wrong with feeling that way. All I want to say is that in this particular case feelings of shame might have been elicited by a number of different features of the situation, and the fact that Piper knows that she is black and does not think that she would have engaged in deception does not mean that shame might not be elicited by some other autonomously held standard. So, it need not really give ground for defending shame's heteronomy.

But even if we do agree that it was indeed "the groundless shame of the inadvertent impostor", as Piper herself explicitly identifies her shame, I am nevertheless doubtful whether this case provides us a reason to maintain that shame is essentially heteronomous. Piper does not describe her shame in terms of being ashamed that other people suspect her of being a fraud. Instead, she claims to be ashamed "at having been the sort of person who could have provoked the accusation" (ibid 77; my emphasis). So, we might say that the reason for shame is nevertheless a self-set standard not to give ground for certain types of accusations. This is not an unreasonable standard—we do not only care about living a virtuous life in our own mind, we also care about projecting a right image about ourselves to the outside world. We might well feel ashamed of ourselves for giving other people reason to think that we are deceitful, uncaring, irresponsible, and the like. According to this interpretation we can continue to view shame as a failure to meet one's own standards. In fact, this is a rather common route that the proponents of shame's autonomy have pursued in order to fit the cases that give ground to allegations of shame's heteronomy under an autonomous conception of shame. Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni, for example, suggest that the personal values that one falls short of in case of such cases of shame might be reputation and sense of privacy (Deonna et al 2012: 130ff). Velleman (2001), on the other hand, reduces all instances of shame to failures of self-presentation, which again, is a self-relevant value.

exhort them to buck up, think for themselves, be more thick-skinned, and spurn public opinion. That is, they encourage us to find the fault with ashamed people. (Ibid. 136f)

These lines voice a strong aversion against victim-blaming and other similar tendencies to locate the fault in the victim³⁸. Calhoun highlights two ways how the subordinated might be found faulty. First, there might be something wrong with their psychology. As she points out a little earlier, we might think that they are actually self-deceived in thinking that they do not really share the standards of their oppressors, or perhaps hold inconsistent views of themselves (ibid. 136). Secondly, we might accuse them of lacking strength of mind, not being true to their personal ideals and putting too much stock in what other people think of them.

We should not, of course, forget that even if there was some fault in the members of subordinated groups none of this would absolve the oppressors from blame³⁹. But putting that aside, I do agree with Calhoun that it would indeed be a disturbing claim to make that there must be some special fault in all these people who experience groundless shame. Deeming them irrational might serve as a further justification for their oppressors to rationalise their dominion. What I do not agree with is that this means that instead of seeking for psychological explanations we should altogether abandon the attempt of explaining shame in terms of failing to meet standards that we agree with. Calhoun seems to present psychological explanations in overly unfavourable light, as if they would have to involve some special fault in the members of subordinated groups (self-deception, holding inconsistent views of oneself, and the like). But this need not be so. We might just say that it is a rather common human tendency to experience feelings of shame even when one is confronted with unfair

³⁸ As Calhoun notes, the fault need not be culpable (ibid. 137n19). So, strictly speaking, we need not speak of victim-blaming. But the underlying concern is the same: the root of the problem should not be sought in the victim.

³⁹ This is a topic that I have discussed in greater length in my 2012, where I rely on Jennifer Saul's insights on the fact that even though a reckless victim who walks in dangerous neighbourhoods at night and has money hanging out from his pockets might bear some responsibility from being mugged, this does not make his mugger less culpable than had he mugged a very decent and careful person in broad daylight and in a safe neighbourhood (Saul 2012a: 5; Saul 2012b: 83). So, the fact that the victim might bear some responsibility does not necessarily reduce the responsibility of the perpetrator. The responsibility and the blameworthiness of the victim and the perpetrator are not linked in such a direct way that as we add some blame to one, we reduce it from the other. It seems to me, however, that sometimes feminist authors overdo it with trying to avoid victim-blaming, and end up in another extreme where all blame is put on the perpetrator, and the victim absolved from all responsibility whatsoever.

criticism—just like it is a rather common thing to react to a spider with feelings of fear regardless of being aware that the particular species is not poisonous.

In fact, I believe that deeming some emotional episodes as “irrational” is problematic only insofar as we rely on a full-cognitivist theory of emotion, according to which emotions are rather straightforward functions of beliefs, and for example, feeling fear would imply that we believe the intentional object of our fear to be dangerous. It is only according to these theories that we are committed to conclude that a person experiencing groundless shame must be either self-deceived or hold otherwise inconsistent beliefs. But even though evaluative judgments have an important part to play in emotions, there is no reason to adopt such a robust version of cognitivism. As already exemplified with the case of fearing a harmless spider, emotions do not directly follow from our beliefs. Peter Goldie suggests that rather than speaking of irrationality here, it would be more illuminating to interpret such cases in terms of cognitive impenetrability. According to Goldie, “someone’s emotion or emotional experience is cognitively penetrable only if it can be affected by his relevant beliefs” (Goldie 2002: 76). In other words, correcting our beliefs will not necessarily do in order to immunise us from experiencing certain emotions. Emotions are somewhat rough and dirty responses which are intelligible but not necessarily fully cognitively penetrable.

This is why I do not think that a natural propensity to experience certain emotions, even if they do not seem to make sense, would provide apt ground to single anyone out as particularly irrational compared to other people. We can simply contend that emotions are not fully cognitively penetrable. When experiencing shame we might blush and feel a sense of diminishment even if we discovered on later reflection that the criticism is indeed groundless and there is no reason to be ashamed of ourselves. This kind of shame is just a short-lived emotional episode that need not shatter our sense of worth in the long run. The reasons why we nevertheless experience shame lie in our evolutionary programming. According to evolutionary psychologists Mark R. Leary and Deborah L. Downs, self-esteem functions as a sociometer that monitors social exclusion. Since in ancestral environments being excluded from the group posed a serious risk, we have become especially sensitive to instances that may hint even a small risk of exclusion. They point out that we may even suffer “a momentary loss of self-esteem” when being rejected by an anonymous supermarket checkout clerk whom we wish to develop no further relationships with (Leary & Downs 1995: 133). They conclude by saying that:

Like other affectively based systems, the sociometer/self-esteem system responds quickly to cues that connote disapproval or rejection with minimum cognitive analysis. This phenomenon may explain why people sometimes “feel bad” when they are demeaned, ignored, or rejected by people who are, rationally speaking, of absolutely no import to them. (ibid. 134)

These lines highlight the same lack of cognitive penetrability that was also pointed out by Goldie but regardless of this lack we can nevertheless view even such fleeting emotional episodes as intelligible since looking from an evolutionary perspective it does indeed make sense to be alert about signs of exclusion⁴⁰. It might also be useful to note that whereas Calhoun assumes that there can be no loss of self-esteem involved in experiences of groundless shame, Leary and Downs nevertheless admit that there might be a momentary loss of self-esteem. I believe that we cannot exclude that. In Adrian Piper’s case, Calhoun simply points out that this fleeting episode of shame did not shatter her sense of self-worth in general, but perhaps the very reason why this was so was precisely the fact that this was just a very fleeting episode of shame, and Piper was quick to understand that the accusations are groundless. Overall, I see no reason why Calhoun’s problem cases of groundless shame could not be explained away by appealing to the fact that it is a psychologically natural thing that we feel shame even if there is no rational reason for that. There is no reason to accuse members of subordinated groups in any special form of irrationality. And this is why I take Calhoun’s account to be motivated by somewhat misplaced concerns. Rather than over-idealising experiences of groundless shame as marks of moral maturity we should simply describe them as results of our psychological constitution. In fact, perhaps it could even be said that it is precisely *because* the experiences of groundless shame are something so natural that we should refrain from making them into some special tokens of moral maturity.

This is, of course, far from a full defense of shame’s autonomy, but I nevertheless hope that I have succeeded in defending a conception of shame that holds it as a failure to meet one’s own standards against at least some counter-arguments. As already pointed out, developing a personal stance on how shame should be conceptualised is not necessary for the purposes of the current thesis. I will continue to speak of shame, as Bell does, in terms of failing to meet one’s own standards, rather than those of others, while acknowledging that this conception might need further support. Translated into these terms, Calhoun is not really

⁴⁰ A similar view has also been defended in Daniel Statman’s article “Humiliation, Dignity and Self-Respect” (2000). Statman suggests that we can speak of the rationality of emotions at different levels, and one of these levels is precisely the evolutionary level. See Statman 2000: 532ff.

suggesting that we should remain vulnerable to being shamed by inapt criticism, because she does not think that we should adopt a low self-esteem as a result of this, and this is one of the reasons why her thesis is not really that intriguing as it might have seemed at first glance. But as already mentioned earlier, the differences in conceptualising shame do not render Calhoun's criticism totally irrelevant because her account will also lead us to claims about why we should nevertheless not cultivate contempt, and now that we have had a closer look on the somewhat questionable foundations of Calhoun's account, we are in a position to better understand these claims.

The problem with Calhoun's account of shame is that in order to defend the members of subordinated groups from accusations of irrationality, Calhoun seems to propose a view that ends up in another extreme and commits us to find a fault in those who, for some reason, do not experience shame. She does not say that explicitly but since she maintains that vulnerability to being shamed on inapt grounds is a mark of moral maturity and explicitly points out that we should not encourage subordinated groups to grow a thick skin (ibid. 145), she nevertheless ends up suggesting something along the lines that the fault must actually lie in those who do not feel ashamed when confronted with inapt criticism. I fail to see how this alternative is any better. But before I move on to my reasons for saying so, let us first look at how Calhoun's line of argumentation goes.

According to Calhoun, the subordinated groups should remain vulnerable to being shamed by the dominating group's inapt criticism because this is a sign that they take them seriously as co-participants of a shared moral practice whose viewpoint is representative of how other people perceive them. In other words, we should give "practical weight" to others' opinion of us "in a sense at they articulate moral interpretations of our character and actions that any number of others within the practice might share" (Calhoun 2004: 142). She claims that refusing to take seriously the social practice of morality "amounts to refusing to take morality seriously since the various social practices of morality are the only moral game in town" (ibid. 145). Vulnerability to shame is simply an unfortunate but inevitable side-effect of fulfilling the above-mentioned commitments.

For Calhoun it is all about taking other people seriously as co-participants in a shared moral practice. She adds that the foundation of such shared practices lies in the fact that "there is something *else* that we want to do together—work in a profession, engage in religious worship, play sports, live together in a neighborhood, have a marriage" (ibid. 140). Now, the proponents of the evolutionary explanation for the experiences of groundless shame might simply say that the reason why we feel ashamed in these contexts is the fact that since

there is already something else we want to do together, we are especially alert about signs of interpersonal exclusion. Calhoun, however, maintains that there are also normative reasons that make us vulnerable to shame—we *should* take other people seriously because we cannot escape the fact that we share a common moral practice. Since other people’s opinions have practical weight we should not simply dismiss them.

While there is a lot to be told about Calhoun’s conception, I will restrict my criticism to only one rather narrow point. Namely, she seems to be presenting us with a false dilemma. According to her, people faced with others’ unchangeable critical gaze have only two options: either they refuse to take others’ seriously and become immune from being shamed by them, or they continue to take them seriously and remain vulnerable to shame (ibid. 141). Contempt, for her, seems to fall in the former category, which she describes as follows:

[S]he [the member of the subordinated group who is confronted with inapt criticism] could shift out of the participant attitude, refusing to take him seriously. He is paranoid, she might tell herself, and thus is disabled from being a competent judge. Or he is new to this profession or this school, and thus is not yet a competent judge. In short, he is only someone to be humored or resignedly suffered, or avoided, or written off. His criticism is deactivated—it now lacks practical weight—because he is not someone to be taken seriously as a competent participant in this social practice of morality. Dismissed as pathological or an outsider, his critical gaze cannot represent a general viewpoint that any number of colleagues might take. Thus what he thinks of her cannot define one of the (shameful) ways she is for others in her social world. His gaze lacks the power to shame because it is nonrepresentative. (Ibid.)

According to this interpretation, contempt would undermine its target’s standing as a fellow member of a shared social practice who has a standing to criticise her. It would mean that we totally dismiss him as someone who should not be taken seriously at any level. But this is not the kind of contempt that Bell suggests that we should cultivate. One of the distinctive features of the contempt that Bell seeks to defend is that it continues to present its target as threatening (Bell 2013: 51), and I would argue that at least in some sense this does involve taking its target seriously—seriously as someone who has the power to both, undermine one’s social status and also self-esteem. According to this reading, the opinions of the target of contempt would continue to have practical weight for the contemnor. The fact that the target of contempt would nevertheless be viewed as threatening means that this kind of contempt also involves patterns of attention that are not found in passive contempt (Bell 2013: 51). The contemnor would remain alert to the threat posed by the target of her contempt, and she would remain open to reasons for overcoming her contempt, i.e. she would nevertheless

monitor for character change. So, it is not the case that the target would become non-existent for the contemnor.

Neither can be it said that the target of contempt would lose “his standing as a co-participant in this moral practice” (ibid.) because the contempt in question would not involve foregoing moral recognition respect. This means that his words would nevertheless be taken into account not just dismissed as necessarily false. This idea gains further confirmation from Bell’s article “The Standing to Blame: A Critique”, where she makes it very clear that “[t]argets of blame should resist the temptation to try to undermine criticism by bringing up the moral record of the criticizer” (Bell 2012: 280). After all, the mere fact that criticism comes from someone who is morally corrupt does not mean that it must necessarily be ungrounded and that there might be no grain of truth there.

For these reasons it might be argued that the kind of contempt defended by Bell seems to fall somewhere between the two courses of action that Calhoun presents us. But the question, of course, is whether contempt in this form will be enough to immunise people from shame in the sense that Calhoun understands shame. While we might agree that it might help to shore up the contemnor’s self-esteem in the long run, it is not that clear whether it will protect the contemnor from the kinds of fleeting episodes of groundless shame that Calhoun has in mind. If not, then perhaps we should nevertheless conclude that the kind of contempt defended by Bell falls into Calhoun’s category of taking other people seriously and thereby being vulnerable to at least fleeting episodes of groundless shame (as perhaps momentary losses of self-esteem), though not necessarily shame in the sense of lowered self-esteem in a more permanent sense, as Bell tends to conceive it.

I revisit some of the matters concerning where the Bellian contempt should be fitted according to Calhoun’s categories in the next section. At the moment we can nevertheless conclude that the claims that Calhoun makes are largely of empirical kind. She starts by pointing out that in reality it is not really the case that people with strong sense of self-worth would not experience shame. And assuming that the only way to avoid experiencing shame would consist in objectionable forms of contempt, she concludes that if we are to remain in the bounds of morality then there is really no escape from shame: “shaming criticisms that articulate representative viewpoints are not something that people can just steel themselves against” (ibid. 146). So, rather than saying that shame is undesirable, all she says is that it is inevitable—at least in this limited form that she understands it. As such, her criticism need not cast shadow on Bell’s overall idea that we would want to protect minorities from shame insofar as it possible within the bounds of morality. It would only function as a reminder that

whereas we might be able to protect them from adopting low self-esteem, it might nevertheless be impossible to steel them against fleeting episodes of groundless shame.

Absent any further reasons to think that immunity from shame might not be a desirable goal worth seeking, I will continue to rely on the assumption that it is nevertheless a goal worth pursuing, at least insofar as it might be achievable in the bounds of morality. Even though we might doubt the extent to which this goal might be achievable, it would at minimum be important to protect people from adopting low self-esteem, and this is the main thing that Bell has in mind when speaking of immunising minorities from shame. In the next section, I will continue to discuss questions concerning how exactly contempt might be of help here. While partly this is related to empirical questions of realisability, I will focus on carving out the rationale behind how contempt might immunise from shame. For, if there is no way to rationally make sense of how contempt might undermine the claims of the superbiuous and make the victim feel better about herself, then I will take its empirical value to be somewhat compromised as well. I take it that morally appropriate self-defense should be built on rational grounds, not just mere wishful thinking.

4.2. How is contempt supposed to protect people from shame?

In general there seem to be two main strategies in order to immunise people from shame. One is a positive strategy and involves cultivating pride in either the characteristic for which one is denigrated for or in other excellences. The purpose of this strategy is constructive—it is focused on building a secure and positive self-image that would not be shattered by inapt criticism. Another strategy is of negative sort and focused on dismissing the criticism and in some cases perhaps also the criticiser. This is where contempt comes to play a role as a dismissive attitude. Rather than being focused on constructing a positive image of oneself, this strategy is more about defending the existing self-image. Its aim is to undermine the attacks to one's self-image and to help to person brush away insults as if they were not of much importance. Before I move on to a more detailed exploration of contempt, I will first dedicate a few pages to the first strategy that involves cultivating pride. Arguing that this strategy is not always sufficient and having outlined some of the criticism that it has received, I will go on to analyse whether contempt might do a better job.

On why cultivating pride might not always be enough

The positive strategy involves cultivating high self-esteem, for example by taking pride in the characteristic which is the target of other people's inapt contempt. Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni mention movements such as "LGBT pride" and "gay pride" (including the parades) as examples (Deonna et al 2012: 238)⁴¹, but we may also imagine cultivating racial pride. There might be all kinds of characteristics in which one might cultivate pride in. Victoria Modesta, for example, who is known as the world's supposedly first amputee pop artist, has turned her disability into an object of unique kind of elegance⁴².

But even though in theory one could cultivate pride in all kinds of things I am nevertheless doubtful whether this strategy would be reasonable in all cases because there are, for example, a lot of undesirable medical conditions (e.g. physical deformities, genetic diseases etc.) that are not apt ground for criticism since people are not responsible for having developed them or being born with them, but which are nevertheless considered to be undesirable. Romanticising such undesirable conditions might seem like a form of wishful thinking. True, people who have some undesirable medical condition might be proud of themselves, but in this case the source of pride is perhaps not simply having the condition but rather the fact that one does not let her condition to bring her down and stand in a way of living a happy and fulfilling life. So, in some cases it might be more reasonable to cultivate high self-esteem by focusing on other characteristics besides the one's that one is unjustly denigrated for. Even if one does score low on some standard this need not be the only thing that defines her. But while cultivating pride in certain characteristics might be a form of self-deception and wishful thinking, trying to solve the problem by excelling in other areas is not without problems either. It seems to suggest as if these people would somehow have to compensate for some of their undesirable characteristics in order to have a sense of worth and not be the targets of inapt criticism. By thinking of oneself as high on some other standard the target of superbia would end up playing the same game as the superbious does if both would

⁴¹ They do add, though, that "[s]uch public displays might [...] create a backlash that unies and exacerbates an otherwise heterogeneous and inactive opposition" (ibid. 239). So, there might be a downside to overcoming shame this way, since the incidents of being shamed might well rise.

⁴² Of course, aestheticizing disability can be dangerous. For example, in her music video "Prototype" we can see her admiration growing into a kind of cult where people decide to go through voluntary amputation in order to be more like her. This would indeed be highly dangerous. Similar issues have also been discussed in relation to blade-running. For a discussion on what if one wants to become a blade-runner like Oscar Pistorius, and wanted to have his legs amputated in order to fulfil his plan of life, see Brassington 2013: 96ff.

assume that their sense of worth derives only from excelling on some standard. So, we might yet want to have some other way of dealing with inapt criticism.

J. David Velleman has been sceptical about the effectiveness of cultivating pride. Even though his remarks are explicitly about cultivating pride in the characteristic for which one is being mocked for, there is no reason why we cannot read it as applying to cultivating pride in other “redeeming” characteristics as well:

No amount of racial pride can protect the target of racism from the shamefulness of his position. Pride would protect him from self-hatred but it can't protect him from shame, which is anxiety about disqualification rather than disapprobation, an anxiety that cannot be allayed by a sense of personal excellence, and especially not by a sense of racial excellence, which tends to be formulated in further stereotypes. What the victim of shame needs to recover is, not his pride in being African-American or Jewish, but his social power of self-definition, which he can hardly recover by allowing himself to be typed, even by his friends. (Velleman 2001: 46)

Since the problem, according to Velleman, is that of being robbed of autonomous self-presentation, it does not matter in which characteristic one strives to cultivate pride. Even though this might help one to retain a positive self-image, it does not undermine the fact that in a particular situation where she is shamed she will nevertheless be perceived in terms of the characteristic for which she is denigrated for.

This seems to be a position shared by Bell as well. She considers the strategy of distancing oneself from the negative stereotypes associated with one's race:

If one's group is stereotyped as unintelligent, for example, one could strive for academic excellence and do one's best to outperform others. However, this is not likely to be a particularly effective way of avoiding the consequences of stereotypes. Race-based contempt is focused not just on the supposedly undesirable *actions* of members of racial groups but on the *persons* themselves. If you are seen as low in virtue of your race, attempting to win esteem by outperforming others is unlikely to be successful; under these conditions, your successes are not likely to redound to your favor. Instead, you will likely be interpreted as the beneficiary of good luck or some other external factor. Also, given that contempt takes whole persons as its object, it is unlikely that any specific achievement—even if acknowledged—will be seen as giving a reason for revising contempt.

Even though being educated might help to shore up one's self-esteem, so that at least she herself would know that she is not unintelligent, at the societal level, this will not necessarily

change much. Since her self-presentation is undermined in virtue of her race, excelling in other things is likely to be written off as mere luck. The problem, as Velleman already highlighted, does not just lie in adopting low self-esteem, but also of being robbed of autonomous self-presentation. For the superbious, one is just reduced to a single characteristic that overshadows all her other qualities.

In fact, for Velleman, one does not even need to be viewed in terms of a negative characteristic in order to feel shame. In addition to deformities, one might be shamed “by any glaring feature, from bright red hair to unusual height or an extraordinary figure. Even great beauty can occasion shame in situations where it is felt to drown out rather than amplify self-presentation” (ibid. 45)⁴³. In these cases it becomes especially salient that cultivating pride in the particular characteristic is excessive, and might not solve the problem.

But before jumping into conclusions, again, some translation work is in need because Velleman, too, relies on a very specific conception of shame which not all other philosophers agree with. I have been trying to make sense of immunising people from shame by interpreting shame as a failure to live up to standards that the person herself cares about. Velleman, however, speaks of shame as failure to be a self-presenting agent. Even though I do think that Velleman is on to something important and agree that his account illuminates a number of important instances of shame, I nevertheless find it somewhat limited as an overall account of shame because there are instances where the problem is not just about self-presentation in front of others. For example, arguing against the idea that shame requires a real or imagined audience, Anthony O’Hear points out that “it is quite possible to think of people, such as

⁴³ A similar case to that of beauty can also be found from Taylor, who analyses a case where “[a] model who has been posing for an artist for some time comes to feel shame when she realizes that he no longer regards her as model, but regards her as a woman,” thereby also taking sexual interest in her (Taylor 2002: 61). Similarly to the case of beauty, the model here need not view her sexual attractiveness as something negative in order to feel shame. I will now jump ahead in this footnote a little, and add that my solution for how Velleman’s conception of shame can be seen as just one instance of shame’s autonomy (which I propose in the next paragraph), is in principle very similar to Taylor’s analysis of the model case. Taylor, too, is an advocate of shame’s autonomy, and therefore she maintains that we can only feel shame if it is the person herself who takes a critical view about her, not just the other person. Here, too, the problem is not in that the artist would take a critical view about the model (as Taylor notes, his view is likely to be that of approval), but she nevertheless suggests that we should bring in a “higher order point of view from which she is seen not as an object of sexual interest, but is seen as *being seen* as such an objection”, and adds that this is in fact a point of view that the model identifies with, and which is also a critical one in a sense that it pronounces it wrong for her to be so seen in this particular context (ibid).

writers and craftsmen, with high standards of their own, feeling shame just because they have let themselves down (not produced a masterpiece)” (O’Hear 1976: 77). For this reason I suggest that we view Velleman’s account as just one way how one may fall short of certain standards that one cares about. Shame in Velleman’s sense would therefore be falling short of the ideal of being a self-presenting agent.⁴⁴ So, strictly speaking, the object of shame, according to Velleman, is not some particular characteristic *simpliciter* but rather the fact that this characteristic overshadows all the others, and thereby compromises our capacity for self-presentation. According to this analysis, subordinated groups might often in fact be experiencing double-shame: shame for the characteristic in question, and shame for being robbed of the capacity for autonomous self-presentation. Cultivating pride in the characteristic in question can therefore only alleviate⁴⁵ shame in the first sense. Since it does not make much sense to cultivate pride in lacking the capacity for self-presentation, the shame in Velleman’s sense would nevertheless remain⁴⁶.

This notion of double-shame has an especially important role in my analysis because this is a response elicited by the double-insult inherent in a superbia. Let us go back to my double-insult theory (see page 36f). According to this theory superbia consisted in viewing or treating the other as low in two ways. First, one reduces another into mere means. Reducing another into mere means also involves reducing him to some particular characteristic in virtue of which he can serve as “good” means. Secondly, the one in the receiving end of superbia is not reduced to mere means in virtue of some characteristic which is supposed to highlight

⁴⁴ Perhaps it might be suggested that what Velleman speaks of is better described as embarrassment. Whereas there is some disagreement about whether shame requires a real or imagined audience, most philosophers do seem to agree upon the fact that embarrassment does indeed require a real observer (see, for example: Purshouse 2001: 520, Nussbaum 2006: 205, Taylor 2002: 69, Deonna et al 2012: 115f). It is also considered as one of the peculiar features of embarrassment that one can be embarrassed because of being praised. However, I will continue to speak of it under the label of shame, partly because my analysis does not have the pretension of settling the question to what extent one must fall short of certain ideals in order for the emotion to count as shame. Settling this question would be important if we wanted to differentiate shame and embarrassment because apart from requiring audience, embarrassment is often just viewed as a weaker form of shame.

⁴⁵ I am only speaking of alleviation, since as we saw earlier, due to evolutionary reasons it might be hard to immunise us from shame all the way. It is likely that one might nevertheless experience it in a form of a fleeting emotional episode.

⁴⁶ Notice that, to some extent at least, Velleman’s account of shame can be viewed as a response to the same problem that Calhoun had with irrational experiences of shame. Rather than saying that feeling some emotional episodes of shame despite being proud of who one is just something to be described in psychological terms, he moves on to give a rational explanation by appealing to having lost a capacity for self-presentation.

something positive about her. Instead, by being reduced to serve as mere means, he is also at the same time reduced to some characteristic which is supposed to categorise him as low. Because it is only in virtue of being low that he can serve as good means for the superbia to boost his self-esteem.

Shame in an ordinary sense, as a failure to live up to some particular standards that one cares about, corresponds to what would be elicited by simply scoring as low vis-à-vis some particular standard which one regards as important for his overall evaluation of himself. The special case of shame in Velleman's sense, however, can be conceived as a response to being reduced to mere means, and as such, being reduced to one single characteristic or set of characteristics which will overshadow one's all other aspects. Using other people as means consists in a violation of their autonomy, and this is precisely what shame in Velleman's sense is about—of being robbed of the possibility of autonomous self-presentation. This is why analysing how contempt can deal with these two types of shame provides us with a key for understanding how contempt helps to deal with the double-insult at the heart of superbia.

To make a brief summary, by now we have gone through a number of reasons why cultivating pride might not always be an effective tool. In some cases it might not make sense to cultivate pride if the characteristic is such that it is unreasonable to take pride in it. Of course, one might seek to cultivate pride in one's "redeeming" qualities, but this route, too, might be questionable since we might not want to say that the stigmatised person would somehow have to compensate for being who she is. And if we take into account Velleman's insights, then there might be a reason to believe that not all shame derives from the particular characteristic as such, but also from being robbed of the capacity for self-presentation. For these reasons, we might have to seek other strategies besides cultivating pride, and the main alternative, as already mentioned and as also suggested by Velleman, is to "muster a lively contempt" (Velleman 2001: 46). Next, I will analyse in more detail how contempt might fill the gaps that cultivating pride might fail.

On how contempt might do a better job than pride

The second strategy to immunise one from shame is of a negative kind in a sense that it does not involve cultivating some special sense of pride but only deals with dismissing the criticism—usually by dismissing the criticisers. This is where contempt comes to play a role, but not all forms of dismissal need to be contemptuous. Let us have a look at an example of

dismissal suggested by Calhoun when she explains what she has in mind when she speaks of taking other people seriously:

Taking agents seriously by listening to what they have to say, engaging in moral dialogue, and taking care not to give offense is compatible with denying that others have the standing to criticize us. A pro-choice woman might take seriously a religious conservative's condemnation of abortion by civilly listening and responding to that view. In the "thicker" more substantive sense, the pro-choice woman does *not* take seriously the religious conservative's moral appraisal. Because their views on abortion derive from different social practices of morality, the pro-choice woman has no reason to acknowledge the religious conservative's standing to criticize her reproductive choices and call her to account. The accusation "You murdered your unborn child" does not define who she is for others within the social worlds she claims as her own. As a result, it lacks the power to shame. (Calhoun 2004: 140n24)

In this case, one need not harbour contempt against the religious woman whose religious views one does not share in order to dismiss her. She might just view her someone with a different framework of values whose viewpoint is not representative in the social world where she lives in, and therefore does not undermine her status. But this kind of dismissal is only possible in very limited contexts where the other grouping is indeed isolated from the social world where one lives in. Calhoun's notion of a shared social practice is somewhat elusive in a sense that we can imagine ourselves as members of many social circles, some of them bigger, some of them smaller. For this reason I am not really sure whether even the religious woman's views can forego all practical weigh because at some level one would nevertheless live in a same world with her (perhaps even in a same neighbourhood, or perhaps they share the same work-place). But even if she was indeed relatively far away from one, we can nevertheless imagine many instances where remaining in different social worlds is not a desirable option. The minorities, for example, should not just avoid being in contact with those who criticise them, because it would only help to reproduce the oppressive power mechanisms (e.g. if one would not proceed to higher education in order to avoid the kind of instances that Piper had to go through). In these cases one cannot just dismiss the others by saying that they do not belong to the same social practice.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Deonna, Rodogno and Teroni might be interpreted to assume that this can be done. They suggest that, at least temporarily, in order to immunise themselves from shame, "subordinated individuals should attempt to view the denigrating attitudes of certain others from an equally irrelevant standpoint [as those of the Calhoun's religious woman's one]" (Deonna et al 2012: 238). I take them as knowingly simplifying things up since they are not very

This is not to deny that contempt might be useful in the context of more intimate relationships where one has a greater power concerning with whom one shares her life with. Bell gives several examples of this kind. She discusses how in Jane Austen's novel "Pride and Prejudice" Elizabeth Bennett rejects a marriage proposal from Fitzwilliam Darcy, whose arrogance has the potential to undermine Elizabeth's self-esteem (Bell 2013: 158-160). Without going into the details of the story, it should be noted that it does indeed make sense not to tie your life up with someone who wants you to assume an inferior position. Another example concerns rejecting a father who irresponsibly abandoned his daughter and her mother, running away with some young dancer, and then comes back to the daughter without showing any signs of remorse, and even trying to claim as if it was her fault that he run away—that she was too judgmental and unloving (ibid. 151-152). Here, too, the daughter would have had to adopt an inferior position and condone his father's morally objectionable and unfair attitude towards her in order to continue a life together. But the effectiveness of contempt in the context of intimate relations seems to rely mostly in its action tendency to actually withdraw from the relationship as well. So, one will be immunised from shame and from developing of a generally low self-esteem, not just because she will psychologically distance herself from the other, but because she will do in physically as well. But Bell seeks to maintain that contempt has a wider usefulness, more particularly with respect to the members of subordinated groups. So, it is important to analyse the cases where one cannot just physically exclude certain people from her social circles, and must settle with merely psychological distancing.

If both belong to the same social circle and there is no reasonable way out of it, then a downward-looking stance becomes crucial indeed. Since one cannot just say that the other does not belong to the same social circle (like the religious woman did with respect to the pro-choice one), the only way to dismiss him would be to undermine his status as a competent co-participant in the shared moral practice. This was the possibility suggested by Calhoun (though not as a morally appropriate one), and this is also course of action that Velleman sees as more promising than cultivating pride:

precise about their suggestion, and do not develop it any further. In fact, somewhat confusingly they continue to speak of pride instead, as if that would be logical consequence of looking other people's views as irrelevant.

A better^[48] defense against racist remarks is to muster a lively contempt for the speakers and hearers, since regarding others as beyond one's social pale is a way of excluding them from the notional audience required for the emotion of shame. If one doesn't care about interacting with particular people, then one will not feel anxiety about being disqualified in their eyes from presenting a target from interaction. Hence the victim of a racist remark can rise above any feelings of shame if he can disregard the present company as contemptible racists, so as not to feel vulnerable to their disregard. (Velleman 2001: 46)

So far, so good. Let us imagine that this is indeed the case. I will deal with the details later, at the moment I just want to highlight the limits of this strategy. Namely, as we look at how Velleman ends this line of thought, we are nevertheless back to the same problem that Calhoun has warned us against all along:

Unfortunately, this defense can be undermined by the presence of a sympathetic observer whose recognition the victim hopes to retain. A racist incident can therefore be rendered more shameful for the victim if a friend is present to see him stripped of his social agency. (Ibid.)

The effectiveness of contempt is compromised by the presence of other people, about whose opinion one might nevertheless care about. These people need not be friends, they might be other members of the social practice as well. The degree to which we care about their opinion might differ, but that is not so important here. What Velleman's words amount to is saying that even though one might not care about what a bunch of contemptible racists thinks of her, due to these racists her self-presentation would nevertheless be compromised in front of other people. And if we link up Velleman's concerns about self-presentation with Calhoun's concerns about how other people have the power to define our social identity—and I see no reason why these two things could not be linked together because being robbed of self-presentation seems to be roughly the same as having a certain kind of social identity impressed on you—then we cannot escape acknowledging that regardless of the fact that the racists' criticism might be ungrounded, their viewpoint might nevertheless be representative in a sense that it has the power to define our social identity for a number of other people. The subordinated groups are not just having a problem with a few lunatics who should belong to a mental hospital⁴⁹, they are dealing with ordinary people who are also listened and taken

⁴⁸ He compares it with trying to make the characteristic through the prism of which one is perceived by others as a part of one's deliberate self-presentation, for example, by painting a blackface on one's black face. But as we saw earlier, he regards it as a better defense in comparison to cultivating pride as well. (Velleman 2001: 46.)

⁴⁹ With my choice of words I am aiming towards an analogy with how Calhoun initially described the case of refusing to take the criticisers seriously. As she notes, in order to give a racist's opinion opinion no practical

seriously by other ordinary people. A racist can nevertheless dictate the prism through which one is perceived by other people, and this is what makes him especially dangerous. So, to the extent that shame is about lack of control over one's self-presentation, contempt for the racists would nevertheless, even according to Velleman, not protect one from shame if it is expressed in front of other people as well. Even apart from any moral reasons, not to give the racist's opinion any practical weight seems simply irrational in many cases.

Before I continue with how contempt might be of use in the limited number of cases where the racist does not in fact threaten one's social identity in more general, I will add a few other reminders about contempt's limitations when dealing with more wide-spread forms of oppression, rather than just some isolated instances of arrogant individuals. Let us not forget that Bell is not suggesting that we cultivate total shamelessness. The point is more about immunising people from being shamed by certain types of inapt criticism that usually come from people with corrupt characters. As such, however, I am rather doubtful about its power when combatting with racism, sexism, and the like. Since Bell is very strict about the conditions under which we are allowed to condemn someone (and justified in being so), and one of those conditions is that we must make sure that the person does indeed manifest a serious enough character flaw and ill will, then it will not be of much help when dealing with strangers whom we do not know well, because we would not be allowed to hold them in contempt pre-emptively. We might only harbour contempt for those whom we know better but this would leave us defenceless against the attacks of random others. So, on one hand we have an epistemic restriction here. But of course, even if people's character and motivation were transparent to us, it might not always be the case that a person that seeks out to shame another would actually evince a serious enough character flaw.

This might lead us to doubt if contempt is in fact a sufficient tool in order to function as a guardian of self-esteem. Even though cultivating pride might not protect one from shame in Velleman's sense, as a failure of self-presentation, it might nevertheless do a better job in alleviating the shame that results directly from feeling bad about the characteristics for which one is denigrated for because one could lean on it while dealing with random others as well. Differently from morally appropriate contempt which one might only be able to use in some cases, taking pride does not have any such restrictions. But, of course, to say that in some cases morally appropriate contempt might not be available due to epistemic restrictions does

weigh whatsoever, one would have to consider him as "pathological", so that "his critical gaze cannot represent a general viewpoint that any number of colleagues might take" (Calhoun 2004: 141).

not mean that it might nevertheless become important in other cases where cultivating pride might not be enough or might be seen as excessive.

As we have seen, the power of morally appropriate contempt is limited—it does not protect one from inapt criticism coming from strangers whom we are not allowed to condemn pre-emptively. But let us now focus on a case where one has a one-on-one encounter with a racist about whom one is justified to think that he evinces ill will and that his character is sufficiently corrupt.

According to Velleman, contempt was supposed to serve as good means for immunising one against shame because “regarding others as beyond one’s social pale is a way of excluding them from the notional audience required for the emotion of shame” (*ibid*). Since shame in Velleman’s sense is a kind of shame that we will only feel in the presence of an audience, contempt will serve a role in psychologically distancing ourselves from this audience. When speaking of the kind of morally apt contempt that Bell has in mind, I would not say that this would involve a total dismissal. It might instead be characterised in terms of “bracketing” the racist from the notional audience. Since one knows that the racist evinces a morally objectionable attitude, one will also know that all that the racist says should not automatically be taken seriously. This is not to say that one would be allowed to dismiss all his criticism (as it was already noted, the fact that one is vicious does not undermine his standing to blame). But one could nevertheless view all that the racists says in brackets at first, and then, after having a critical look on it, evaluate to what extent it should be taken seriously. I do not think that there is anything inconceivable in this kind of bracketing. It simply involves taking a somewhat sceptical stance about what the other has to say. Similarly, we could also take a sceptical stance towards the words of a person whom we know to be a compulsive liar. In this case, too, we would be aware of the fact that one’s utterances may be compromised by the fact that he evinces a particular vice.

One of the virtues of Velleman’s explanation is that it is in line with the ideas put forward by evolutionary psychologists. As we saw earlier, according to Leary and Downs, self-esteem functions as a monitor for social exclusion. If, however, one holds another in contempt, then she will want to distance herself from close relationships with the target of the contempt. And this is why being excluded by the superbius and viewed as low by him will not be such a big problem. As put by Velleman: “If one doesn’t care about interacting with particular people, then one will not feel anxiety about being disqualified in their eyes from presenting a target from interaction” (*ibid*).

It may also be hypothesised that this is different from just being excluded by a random shop clerk, in response to which one might nevertheless feel some momentary loss of self-esteem, because from the shop clerk one has no previous reason to distance herself from. If, however, one is dealing with a person whom she knows to harbour superbia, then she will have an active reason to distance herself from him.

It should, however, not be forgotten, that as such, contempt can only protect one from shame in a very narrow sense, understood in terms of being robbed of autonomous self-presentation. Since Velleman relies on a very specific conception of shame, his reasons for how contempt might protect one against shame do not apply to the kind of shame that one might feel for scoring low in some other respect than being a self-presenting agent. This is something that Bell seems to overlook. In several places, she refers to Velleman's reasons for regarding contempt as an effective remedy for shame (Bell 2013: 132, 206), but she fails to take into account that Velleman speaks of shame in a much narrower sense than she does.

Before I go on to explain why Velleman's reasons for contempt's effectiveness against shame do not apply to other instances of shame, I would also like to note that both, Velleman and Bell are inconsistent in their dealing with contempt in comparison with pride. According to Velleman, one does not need to recover pride in his race but his "social power of self-definition" (Velleman 2001: 47). Similarly, Bell pointed out that even if one tried to distance oneself from negative stereotypes, her efforts are likely to be written off as mere luck. Both pointed to problems with social self-definition. But in that respect contempt is no better. Rather than enhancing one's social self-definition one simply stops caring about her self-definition in front of the superbius. Even though this might save the bearer of contempt from experiencing negative feelings, this will not bring about any change in one's lack of social power of self-definition either. So, in that sense contempt does not seem much better.

But the reason why Velleman's explanation does not apply to other cases of shame lies in the fact that since the superbius person does not automatically lose his standing to blame, i.e. all he says is not automatically rendered false in virtue of his viciousness, one could not just totally dismiss what he has to say. She could only take a somewhat sceptical stance towards his words and regard them as something that should go through critical evaluation before they are taken seriously. But this does not affect the truth or falsity of his criticism. Perhaps this is not such a big problem in cases where it is especially clear that the characteristic in virtue of which one is seen as low by the superbius is no ground for proper criticism—for example, in case of racism. In these cases, bracketing the racist's criticism

might be enough because when looked at critically, it is quite clear that this kind of criticism is inapt.

Unfortunately, in many cases the superbia people actually do single out characteristics that can be considered as grounds for negative evaluation. Let us go back to the example of Katherine and Sebastian. If Sebastian is indeed “bumbling and accident-prone” and “not an especially good doctor” (*ibid.* 114), then the fact that this criticism is pointed out by a superbia person, does not render it untrue. He might nevertheless have reason to feel bad about himself. Of course, I do not wish to suggest that this should compromise his basic self-respect for himself as a person with moral standing. Since basic moral worth is all the same for everyone, Sebastian has just as much reason to have self-respect than a random criminal would have. The problem with moral standing is that it does not protect anyone from shame. Shame is about failure to meet additional standards that one cares about, not about the failure count as a member of the moral community.

I think that there is, however, a way how contempt’s evaluative presentation of its target might help to make the target of superbia feel better about oneself in these cases as well. Namely, in order for contempt to be morally appropriate one must view superbia as morally objectionable. And once we understand that is wrong to reduce people into just one single characteristic, we should be in a better position to appreciate our other qualities as well. Of course, contempt is no magic wand that would change the reality and make the contemnor better than she actually is, but assuming that most people do have at least some good qualities as well, then understanding the moral wrong in superbia should help them see themselves along other dimensions as well and appreciate these qualities.

Viewing the superbia person’s words and behaviour as deriving from a vicious attitude will also help one realise that the problem does not lie so much in the victim who is denigrated but rather in the superbia person herself who is inclined to look for faults in other people. In a somewhat similar spirit, William B. Irvine suggests that the targets of insults focus the attention to the insulter’s motives. Putting their motives under question will help to shift the focus. For the insulter, “the insult is supposed to be about us, not about him!” (Irvine 2013: 155) But once we realise that the behaviour of the superbia is just a manifestation of a character flaw in them, we can allow ourselves to take insults less personally.

Perhaps it might be questioned whether all this is not achievable without harbouring contempt. Can we not just take into account these facts, and be protected from shame while not becoming contemptuous? I do not intend to exclude this possibility. In the current thesis I

have confined myself only to a modest claim according to which contempt may at times be morally permissible. I do not have the pretensions of arguing that contempt is morally obligatory, and that we should necessarily hold the superbia in contempt. In that sense, Bell's defense of contempt goes a longer way. If we do, however, believe that a virtuous agent not only believes certain things, but that her beliefs will also be accompanied with the right emotions, then it can be argued that becoming to harbour contempt for the superbia is just a natural consequence of sincerely holding superbia as morally objectionable. For Bell, "part of what it means to be a person of integrity is that one's affective dispositions are in line with what one professes to value" (Bell 2013: 161).

Last but not least, I would also like to address the question whether contempt might be a source of special pride. So far, I have only dealt with how contempt might help to shore up the existing self-esteem, and most of the arguments have relied on the assumption that the target of superbia will have some other, redeeming characteristics as well, even if it was the case that she did score low with respect to some important standard that the superbia person has pointed out. It might, however, be questioned whether contempt, as a downward-looking attitude might not be a source of pride itself. After all, it does introduce a new paradigm (that of morality) that is supposed to balance the other paradigm of measuring one's excellence which consisted in some particular standard that was pointed out by the superbia (e.g. intelligence, etc.). I am nevertheless doubtful whether this might serve as a source of some extra pride that one is not as vicious as the superbia. This does not automatically mean that one would be a special etalon of virtue either. And insofar as the person might derive a sense of pride just by comparison with an especially vicious person, she will herself become superbia. Such attitude has been labelled as "moral snobbery" by Thomas E. Hill Jr., who characterises a moral snob by saying that "he is constantly glowing with self-satisfaction from the thought that his efforts make him so much more worthy than most others" (Hill 2000: 167). Even though this remark is made about the kind of moral snob who actually is virtuous in a more positive sense than merely fulfilling some of the basic demands of morality, this applies to the one who seeks to derive a special sense of superiority from a smaller degree of virtue as well. As I argued earlier, superbia is about deriving a special pleasure from being better than others. If the person just takes "moral high ground" in order to think of herself as better than the vicious, then she will herself become superbia because she will use the vicious person as a tool in order to measure her superiority. In addition, she will also use morality as a tool in order to boost up her self-esteem. In that

sense, she will inevitably become a hypocrite because by her contempt she will fall for the same mistake as the superbious person whom she holds in contempt.

5. Conclusion

The central question of my thesis is whether contempt could serve a morally appropriate form of self-defence against the damage wrought by superbia. This is an important question because people who have to live at the mercy of other's superbia and are constantly denigrated by them and put down, are likely to develop a low self-esteem. I analyse this question in two parts. On one hand, I give an account of superbia and the moral wrong in it. Arguing that superbia involves a kind of double-insult, I will secondly proceed to how contempt can address this double-insult and protect its bearer from, what I call, double-shame.

The in the first part of my overall project I propose a double-insult theory of superbia which consists in viewing or treating the other person as low not only vis-à-vis some particular standard of comparison (e.g. intelligence, standard of beauty, etc.), but also low in moral standing since the superbious person uses the other person as mere means to his own end. As such, superbia involves a denial of two kinds of respect, appraisal respect and moral recognition respect. These two ways of regarding the other as low do not only exist independently of each other but are also connected in a special way. More specifically, the connection is the following: the superbious person reduces another to mere means, and as such, she reduces her to one single characteristic or set of characteristics that is supposed to define her as low. While using other people as mere means is humiliating on its own as well, there is something doubly humiliating in the superbious use of another as mere means. By definition, the other can only serve as a good tool for the superbious insofar as she will be viewed as low. In contrast, imagine a person who seeks the esteem of other people by associating himself with someone famous and accomplished. She would be using the famous person as means, but the very reason why she serves as good means is that she has excelled in something. The superbious person, however, uses others as touchstones of inferiority against which her superiority could shine bright. For her, other people serve as means for boosting her self-esteem or getting further assurance about her high status. In that sense, the superbious person's sense of self-worth is parasitic upon other people's inferiority.

The second half of my project is focused on how contempt might help its bearer to deal with being a target of this kind of double-insult which is often likely to elicit shame and lower one's self-esteem. I will first analyse Cheshire Calhoun's intriguing claim that we should not seek to immunise subordinated groups from being shamed by inapt criticism. While intriguing on the face of it, I demonstrate that actually Calhoun relies on a very specific and somewhat narrow conception of shame, focusing on just fleeting episodes of shame that need not involve any lowering of self-esteem at all. As such, by saying that we should not seek to immunise people from shame, she is not really suggesting that subordinated groups should develop a low-esteem. Overall, she seems to be more worried about empirical realisability of immunising people from shame. I will nevertheless continue to view immunising people from inapt criticism as a goal worth pursuing, at least in the bounds of morality.

I will then move on to how a morally restricted form of contempt that is defended by Macalester Bell might help to immunise one from being shamed by inapt criticism. As it will be revealed by my analysis, with respect to double-insult inherent in superbia we can also speak of a kind of double-shame. Shame in an ordinary sense, as a failure to live up to some particular standards that one cares about, corresponds to what would be elicited by simply scoring as low vis-à-vis some particular standard which one regards as important for his overall evaluation of himself. However, J. David Velleman has also defended an account of shame that can be conceived as a response to being reduced to mere means, and as such, being reduced to one single characteristic or set of characteristics which will overshadow one's all other aspects. Using other people as means consists in a violation of their autonomy, and this is precisely what shame in Velleman's sense is about—of being robbed of the possibility of autonomous self-presentation. This is why analysing how contempt can deal with these two types of shame provides us with a key for understanding how contempt helps to deal with the double-insult at the heart of superbia.

Overall, I conclude that contempt can indeed help to shore up the self-esteem of those who have to live at the mercy of other people's superbia. It helps to exclude the superbious from the notional audience required for shame in Velleman's sense of the word, which lies in being robbed of autonomous self-presentation. If we want to withdraw from having close relations with the superbious anyway, then it does not matter so much what they think of us, and that our self-presentation might be compromised in their eyes. But since morally apt contempt nevertheless grants them the standing to blame, their criticism is not automatically rendered as false in virtue of their superbia. This is why excluding them from the notional

audience does not protect us from the shame that we might feel for the flaws that they choose to point out. It only allows us to suspend our judgment, so that we do not automatically take all they have to say particularly seriously but view it with critical scrutiny. In many cases this may be enough if the criticism of the superbious is inapt to begin with. If, however, they actually point out flaws and failures that we care about, then contempt might be of help in a more indirect way. Since contempt must be based on moral reasons, not just on the idea that “I will view him as low, since he views me as low”, one would need to have a greater understanding about the moral wrong in superbia. Once we realise that the superbious person just picks out our weaknesses in order to highlight his superiority, we should be in a better position to realise that we are not just to be defined in terms of this one feature that the superbious person chooses to pick out. His objectionable behaviour may have more to say about him, rather than us. So, we can take it somewhat less personally.

But as it was also revealed by my analysis, morally appropriate contempt also has its limitations. For example, since we are not allowed to condemn people pre-emptively, we will nevertheless be left vulnerable to the superbia of strangers that we do not know well enough in order to categorise them as evincing a serious character flaw. In these cases, it might be better if one has cultivated a sense of pride instead. Also, insofar as the superbious may denigrate one in front of other people, one might nevertheless have his self-presentation compromised in front of those whose opinion he actually does care about. This is why contempt seems to have the greatest potential in the context of one-on-one relationships from which has a greater power to physically withdraw as well. If physical withdrawal is not possible, and one can only engage in psychological withdrawal, then one might nevertheless have to suffer some fleeting episodes of shame, but this does not mean that contempt might not help to avoid a more permanent loss of self-esteem.

While contempt can help to shore up the self-esteem of the target of superbia, it should nevertheless be borne in mind that it cannot create self-esteem out of nowhere and if one seeks to derive a special sense of superiority by viewing the superbious as low in virtue of their viciousness then one will himself be likely to run the risk of superbia.

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Can Contempt Serve as a Morally Appropriate Form of Self-Defense Against the Damage Wrought by Superbia?

Resume

In the current thesis it is argued that the attitude of superbia consists in a kind of double-insult that involves viewing or treating its target as low in a double sense. A superbius person lowers another by reducing him to a mere status of serving as means for his ends, and as such, he also reduces him to one single characteristic which is supposed to define him as low vis-à-vis some particular standard of excellence. In other words, he uses others as touchstones of inferiority against which her superiority could shine. For him, other people serve as means for boosting his self-esteem or getting further assurance about her high status. As such, superbia is threatening for its targets self-esteem and also likely to elicit shame in a double sense. On one hand, we can speak of shame that corresponds to simply scoring as low vis-à-vis some particular standard which one regards as important for an overall evaluation of oneself. On the other hand, we can also speak of shame in the sense of being robbed of autonomous self-presentation and just being reduced to one single characteristic. While contempt can have a role in reducing shame in both senses, the instrumental value of morally restricted form of contempt is limited in many significant ways. It can help to shore up the self-esteem of the target of superbia but it does not create a sense of self-worth out of nowhere and if one seeks to derive a special sense of superiority by viewing the superbius as low in virtue of their viciousness then one will himself be likely to run the risk of superbia.

Kas põlgus on kohane enesekaitse üleolevuse tekitatud kahju vastu?

Resümees

Käesolevas töös näidatakse, kuidas üleolevuse keskmes on n-õ topeltsolvang, mis hõlmab oma objekti presenteerimist või kohtlemist madalana kahes erinevas tähenduses. Üleolev inimene madaldab teist koheldes teda vaid vahendina oma eesmärkide saavutamiseks ning nõnda taandab ta teise vaid ühele konkreetsele karakteristikule, mis määratleb teda madalana mingi täpsema täiuslikkuse standardi valguses. Teisisõnu, üleolev inimene kasutab teisi alaväärsuse mõõdupuuna, mille taustal tema üleolek võiks eriti selgelt esile tõusta. Tema jaoks teenivad teised inimesed vaid oma enesehinnangu tõstmise või selle kohta välise kinnituse saamise rolli. Sellisena on üleolev inimene ohtlik teiste enesehinnangule ning selle keskmes olev topeltsolvang võib tekitada häbi kahes eri tähenduses. Ühelt poolt võime rääkida häbist mingi konkreetse karakteristikuga, mis määratleb inimest mingi kategooria alusel madalana ning mõjutab sellisena tema üldist enesehinnangut. Teiselt poolt saame aga rääkida häbist ka autonoomse eneseesitlusvõimaluse puudumise ning vaid teatud üksikule karakteristikule taandatud olemise mõttes. Kuigi põlgusel on roll mõlema häbi leevendamisel, on moraalselt piiratud põlguse instrumentaalne väärtus siiski mitmes mõttes piiratud. See võib küll aidata teiste üleolevuse käes kannatavate inimeste olemasolevat enesehinnangut toetada, kuid kui keegi peaks üritama seda kasutada vahendina, et oma enesehinnangut pahelistele inimestele ülevalt alla vaadates upitada, siis võib ta kergesti hoopis ise üleolevaks muutuda.

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

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